A History of Leather At Pride

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1 Introduction

2019)¹.

The argument goes like this.

Kink, leather, and BDSM do not belong at Pride. First, they aren't actually LGBTQ: kink is also practiced by straight people (Baker-Jordan, 2021). Moreover, those queer people who *do* display kink at Pride expose vulnerable people to harmful symbols and acts. They wear pup hoods and rubber bodices, they dress in studded codpieces and leather harnesses, they sport floggers, handcuffs, and nipple clamps (lesbiansofpower, 2021; stellar_seabass, 2021). Some demonstrate kinky acts: they crack whips in the parade and chain themselves up on floats. Some have sex in public (kidpiratez, 2021).

These displays harm three classes of people. Children (and the larger class of minors, e.g. those under 18 or 21) are innocent and lack the sophistication to process what they are seeing: exposure to kink might frighten them or distort their normal development (Angel, 2021; Barrie, 2021). Asexual people, especially those who are sex-repulsed, may suffer emotional harm by being confronted with overt displays of sexuality (Dusty, 2021; rose-burgmelissa, 2021). Finally, those with trauma may be triggered by these displays (stymstem, 2021). These hazards exclude vulnerable people from attending Pride: kink is therefore a barrier to accessibility (RiLo_10, 2021; Vaush, 2021).

Consent is key to healthy BDSM practice, but the public did not consent to seeing these sexual displays (Baker-Jordan, 2021; busytoebeans, 2021; prettycringey, 2021). By wearing leather harnesses and chaining each other up in broad daylight, kinksters have unethically involved non-consenting bystanders in a BDSM scene for their own (likely sexual) gratification (anemersi, 2021; Bartosch, 2020; Xavier's Online, 2021a, 2021b). The lack of consent to these sexual displays constitutes a form of sexual assault (PencilApocalyps, 2021). At worst, the fact that children may be present in the crowd makes these displays pedophilia (Rose, 2021), and (if one is so inclined) exemplifies the moral degeneracy of the entire LGBTQ community and impending collapse of civilization (Dreher, 2021; Keki,

Not everyone holds all of these views, or holds them to this degree; this is a synthesis of one pole in a diverse and vigorous debate. Nevertheless, calls to ban kink at Pride remain a mainstay of Twitter and Tumblr every June. To some extent this position is advanced by anti-gay reactionaries on 4chan and Telegram channels (Piper, 2021), but this is not the whole story: many opposed to kink at Pride identify themselves as queer, or at least queerfriendly (Mahale, 2021).

Queer people arguing against kink at Pride generally seem to be younger—often in their teens and early twenties. They may lack significant experience attending Pride. There is sometimes a belief that young people, leather, and overt sexuality have not historically coexisted at Pride, and the "arrival" of one requires the removal of another. Though many kink-at-Pride opponents have some familiarity with (and even interest in) kink, few evince a deep understanding of who these kinky marchers *are*, where they've been, or what they represent. Almost nobody seems to realize that the struggle over public visibility of leather people in the queer community has been ongoing for over fifty years (Chingy L, 2019; Haasch & López, 2021).

In fact, leather people and organizations were significant contributors to the LGBTQ movement and to Pride specifically: they were present at riots like Compton's & Stonewall, and served as organizers, marchers, writers, and fundraisers from the very first Prides on (Bruce, 2016; Limoncelli, 2005; S. K. Stein, 2021; Teeman, 2020). In NYC, Leather Pride Night was for many years the single largest financial contributor to Pride, and the leather community fielded some of the largest contingents in New York and Los Angeles (P. Douglas, 1995; Los Angeles Leather History, 2021; D. Stein, 1991a). Leather communities mobilized significant financial and direct aid for people with HIV during the health crisis (P. Douglas, 1995; Mr. Marcus, 1990a, 1992a). Leather activists helped organize and marched in full gear at the 1987 and 1993 Marches on Washington, and led whip-cracking demos at Pride in San Francisco, Dallas, and New York (Califia, 1994b; B. Douglas,

¹Literally! Dreher (2021) warns, "What we are seeing here is a sign of civilizational collapse. There will soon be violence. Count on it."

1987, 1995b; NLA: Houston, 1993; S. K. Stein, 2021).

However, the relationship between queer leather and the larger LGBTQ community has not been easy. Despite facing similar forms of stigma and oppression from police and society at large, Pride organizers actually *did* try to ban leather from Pride. Queer leather groups were denied access to feminist and queer community centers, and had their writing and art excluded from bookstores and periodicals during the Lesbian Sex Wars. Calls to ban or moderate leather, overt sexuality, and drag from Pride were still ringing into the 1990s (Califia, 1987; Rubin, 2015; S. K. Stein, 2021).

This history aims to tell a small part of that story.

1.1 Why Am I Doing This?

A common refrain in the Annual Kink Debate is for young queers to "learn their history." This is easier said than done: queer history in general is poorly documented, and queer leather even less so. The impact of the AIDS epidemic casts a long shadow in our culture: my friends of that generation lost dozens, even hundreds of friends in the course of a few years. Some are the only surviving members of their leather families. Stories went unwritten or were intentionally omitted from publication. That which was recorded was often not conserved, and those records which *were* conserved are difficult to access—many are only available as physical copies in research institutions. Limited press runs and anti-obscenity laws further constrained the availability of queer leather texts.

Readers who are curious about the story of kink at Pride have a needle-in-a-haystack problem: while there *are* histories of leather, of public sexuality, and Pride in general, none (to my knowledge) address their intersection. By assembling disparate texts, I hope to make a hotly-debated and contemporarily relevant history more accessible.

I want to give fellow LGBTQ people—both kinky and vanilla—an understanding of the interplay of queer and leather communities, a grasp of how normative and radical forces interpreted and shaped the expression of Pride, and an appreciation for the people who worked to achieve the culture we have today. I hope that this history gives readers a framework for thinking about leather and Pride in a more nuanced way. As Ellen Broidy, co-organizer of the first NY Pride, put it:

Know your history. Acknowledge the fact that you did not invent this struggle. You can move it forward in new and important ways, but you didn't invent it.

I say that with a great deal of self-criticism,

given my own completely dismissive behavior towards the people who came before me, like the Mattachine Society and Daughters of Bilitis, the mainstream homophile organizations of that time. And really they were incredibly brave people. They didn't participate in the struggle in the way I thought they should have, but at 23 you think you know everything. (Teeman, 2020)

1.2 About This Work

I am a gay leatherman. I've participated in Pride events since roughly 2008, in cities from Duluth to San Francisco, as well as leather-oriented street fairs like Folsom, Dore, and Folsom Europe. I've marched in leather contingents at Pride, and I think they're a grand old time.

I am not a historian or social scientist. My research methods and theoretical understanding of these issues are amateur at best, and my time limited. I'm citing secondary sources extensively, and what primary sources I have are biased strongly by database availability. There will almost certainly be errors; there are definitely omissions in this text. I've attempted to present as much as I can find, but this work is far from complete.

In particular, I've chosen to focus on the United States from 1965 to 1995. This is the culture I'm fluent in, and which most of my sources cover. This period covers the origin of Pride, the rise of gay liberation and organized leather, and the partial acceptance of leather within the LGBTQ movement. Much of this work centers on New York and San Francisco—the city which originated Pride, and the city which became a focal point for debate over public displays of variant sexuality. These are the cities for which I have the most extensive sources available. There is more to tell in other cities, but I'm limited by time and access to archives.

This work integrates roughly thirty books, a variety of academic theses and articles, contemporary and retrospective articles, web pages, several hundred periodical issues (including leather, LGBTQ, and general-interest newspapers, magazines, and newsletters), plus archival photography and video footage of Pride. These are mainly drawn from my personal collection, digital archives like the Lesbian Herstory Project, public and university libraries, web pages, and the physical collections of the Leather Archives & Museum in Chicago. I've also drawn on my personal experience in leather and at Pride, and conversations with fellow leather people.

For copyright reasons, I've avoided reproducing many of the photographs and videos described in this work. Wherever possible I've provided links to those media in public archives so you can see them for yourself. Other images are only available in physical formats; see the bibliography for details.

1.3 A Note on Terms

Terminology and identity for LGBTQ people has shifted dramatically over the last fifty years, and vicious battles have been fought over the exact meanings and boundaries of words. In particular, readers should know that terms like "transvestite" and "drag" have changed significantly since the 1960s. I urge readers to meet the writers of the past where they were at the time, and to acknowledge their shortcomings while not losing sight of their contributions.

I use a mix of modern senses (e.g. "Pride" for a march/festival, "LGBTQ" or "queer" as a broadly-inclusive group, "trans" to encompass a range of variant gender experiences, and "BDSM," "kink," or "leather" to describe a diverse culture of variant sexualities) vs period senses (e.g. "gay liberation," "sadomasochism," "S/M," "transvestite") when describing a particular person, movement, group, or event. In general, I aim to describe people as they would like to be described, or in a way which includes people who were present but not acknowledged at the time—for example, "LGBTQ activists" instead of "lesbian and gay activists."

For individuals who have transitioned I use their later names and genders, noting changes when relevant. When describing images of unknown people, I've done my best to follow captions, or to code gender and pronouns as I understand their presentation. If I have made any errors, please accept my sincere apologies: I will be happy to correct them.

1.4 Structure

This is not a polemic, though I would dearly like to write one as a companion to this work.² It does not offer a current or complete argument for leather's presence at Pride. Instead, this work aims to provide the kind of historical context that I think would be useful to a reader who is trying to engage with questions of public sexuality at Pride.

This history begins with some background context about leather as a culture and Pride as an event. It moves on to a thematic sketch which introduces key people, events, and threads of analysis. The bulk of the work is devoted to a mostly-chronological account of LGBTQ and leather activism, Pride, and reactions. It concludes by connecting

the historical debate over leather representation with the modern discourse, through the lens of moral panic.

2 Background

2.1 What is Leather?

Part of why the kink-at-Pride debate is so messy is that so few people know what they—or anyone else—means by "kink." Kink can be read as a simple sexual practice: enjoying spanking, or a fetish for lingerie. However, in this work I'm going to speak of "leather" as a loose umbrella term for kink, BDSM, etc., but with the specific connotation of a queer subculture.³ And leather is specifically a *subculture*: one with distinct ethics, territory, language, symbols, practices, and technologies. Its recurrent focii are leather, rubber, and various types of "gear," fetishes, hyper-masculine or -feminine aesthetics, playing with power, the enjoyment of intense sensation, "out-of-thebox" sexual practices, and alternative roles for play, relationships, and social interaction.

As a subculture, leather has its own ethics: an acceptance of variant sexuality, an emphasis on consent, the transmutation of pain into pleasure or emotional catharsis, and a respect for technical skill and experience. It also has its own language, including a rich field of personal archetypes: "top" and "bottom," "Goddess," "switch," "Sir," "brat," "girl," "pup," etc.⁴

That language encompasses a broad array of symbols.⁵ The position of hankies, wallets, and keys may denote one's interest in giving or receiving an activity. In a practice known as *flagging*, colors and patterns take on associated meanings: grey for bondage, green for Daddy/boy-style relationships, houndstooth for biting, celery for "just

²"Listen here, rapscallions," it might begin. "I've actually marched with the pups, and let me tell you: kids in mid-size Midwestern towns *love* people in dog masks. They think it's fantastic, they howl at us and run out to take selfies, and everyone generally has fun."

³This is impossible to state cleanly: there are of course straight people in the queer leather community, but the predominant membership and culture centers around LGBTQ people. This history also discusses straight and pansexual organizations. In 2021, straight kink and the pansexual kink/leather community are each *sort of* their own things in a way that I can't properly articulate. Throughout our history there's been a good deal of cross-pollination between these groups, with people participating in multiple communities and running joint events. There are no firm boundaries, and yet the sense of something being "a gay leather bar" or "a lesbian S/M group" has a distinct meaning.

 $^{^4 \}mathrm{In}$ leather contexts, terms like "girl," "boy," etc. refer to adults, not children.

⁵A decontextualized misunderstanding of leather symbols such as collars, whipping, and uniforms is an essential element of anti-kink polemic. Leather wear and acts are interpreted as solely sexual, painful, and threatening, which can overshadow the relational, pleasurable, and intimate meanings they often carry for practitioners. As Vance (1992a) astutely observed, "To assume that symbols have a unitary meaning, the one dominant culture assigns them, is to fail to investigate the individual's experience and cognition of symbols, as well well as individual ability to transform and manipulate symbols in a complex way which draws on play, creativity, humor, and intelligence. This assumption grants mainstream culture a hegemony it claims, but rarely achieves."

going to brunch." Collars may denote relational status like a wedding ring, or one's role as a pup or submissive. Specific types of hats (e.g. "covers," "boy's caps") can indicate one's preferred position in a power dynamic. Leather vests are frequently decorated with patches and pins to indicate group membership, identity, and interests. Sashes identify titleholders (winners of leather pageants). It is often possible to read a good deal about someone based purely on their outfit.⁶

Likewise, leather has a richly articulated and endlessly elaborated field of roles and relationship structures, including mentoring & nurturing relationships (e.g. "Daddy/boy"), the complete exchange of power ("Master/slave"), and more playful pack dynamics ("alpha/beta/omega"). Relationships may be sexual or platonic, and last for decades or the duration of a scene. Many emphasize skills-building. These relationships may be diffuse and informal, or organized into leather families. A popular pastime is to draw someone's network on a cocktail napkin.

Leather has its own stable institutions and cultural events. Bars, clubs, and playspaces provide ongoing physical territory, and street fairs, runs, conferences and contests create temporary sites of leather culture at a campground, street, park, or hotel. When Pride events generate a temporary queer space, they often implicitly create a leather space as well.

As a culture, leather has distinctly articulated practices. These include physical acts like fisting, whipping, rope bondage, suspension in the air, piercing, play with electricity, abrasion, heat, cold, and sensory deprivation. These practices are used in play between leather people in individual or group contexts, transferred during educational classes and mentoring relationships, and performed as art. These practices may be deeply sexual or completely absent of sexual charge: there is no firm boundary. Some people orgasm from being punched in the balls. Ace lesbians can platonically tie up gay men.⁷

Each of these practices has a highly developed family of sexual technologies which allow that practice to be fun, safe, meaningful, and aesthetically pleasing. There are elaborate techniques for using a single-tail whip and for tying someone up, but also psychological techniques: playing with humiliation, for instance, in a way that is both erotic and ultimately validating. Perhaps the most important of these technologies is the concept of *negotiation*: a process of discovering what each party is into and what their boundaries are before proceeding to play. Check-ins are frequently integrated into the play itself, allowing partners to ascertain physical and emotional well-being, to offer reassurance, and to continually renegotiate consent. Play itself may be highly structured: a scene may involve negotiation, warmup, rising action, a climactic event, a cooldown, and aftercare which returns participants smoothly and safely to everyday life. Through such a scene sensations, symbols, and roles are carefully-even theatrically-manipulated to create intense, pleasurable, and fulfilling experiences. Scenes vary in intensity and publicness, from a weekend of beatings in a repurposed county jail, to dinner at a fine restaurant where one simply cannot order for oneself.

Other technologies support this play: play parties, for instance, have specific schedules, spaces, and etiquette to ensure everyone has a good time. Separate social and play spaces keep distracting conversation to a minimum and create dedicated contexts for negotiation. Playing in public (e.g. at a bar, club, or street fair) creates safety via community oversight, and in dedicated playspaces, specialized dungeon monitors may limit unsafe scenes. Other safety technologies include *safe calls* at pre-arranged times when visiting a new partner and *reference checks* through a loose reputational network. Discussions in the hours and days following a scene allow players to process emotions, to offer feedback, and to deepen bonds.

Some people participate in leather culture thoroughly, and others merely dip in from time to time. Many engage in BDSM independently, incorporating rough play into their sex or day-to-day life without a supporting culture. Some read about pup play on Tumblr and have no idea that any of this exists. Others just like to wear harnesses to circuit parties. There are, again, no absolute boundaries.

What I would like to emphasize here is that leather is more than simply "a kink." For many, leather is *the language in which they are gay*: it supports, structures, and enriches their queer sex, love, and family. The public deployment of leather clothing, gear, and practices can be an expression of personal and cultural identity.

⁶Or they may simply like the look that day! Nothing's set in stone.

⁷This hints at a problem in the construction of the "no kink at Pride" argument: it is extremely difficult to say what is intrinsically sexual vs what is not. After roughly a decade of having, watching, talking, and reading about both "classic" sex and S/M, I literally cannot tell you what sex is. Is chest-punching sex? Being tied up? Tattooing? Snoozing the day away in a small box? Are penises intrinsically sexual? Are boobs? Boots? Pancakes? For any body part, object, or action you can find someone who finds it completely blasé and another who finds it the hottest thing on the planet. These judgements vary place to place and moment to moment. A bikini can be normal at the pool and sexual in a private club. A proctology exam can be uncomfortably clinical or intensely arousing, or both. Nudity is sexual, unless it's art, unless the art is too sexual, unless it's fancy: Mapplethorpe can show hole at the Getty, but you can't show your underwear on Scruff. Marching in one's hottest gear is a profoundly unerotic experience when your feet are blistering and it's 105 degrees on the street. For lack of a better term I'll

refer to displays of bodies and leather as "sexual" throughout this work, but please understand that this category is profoundly unstable.

2.2 What is Pride?

It is tempting to view Pride as a space for universal inclusion and belonging, and Pride *is* a place which frequently engenders these feelings. But Pride—as a march, a parade, and a festival—is much more than these things. A multitude of agendas, perspectives, and social forces are at play (Dominguez Jr., 1994). Peterson et al. (2018) calls it a *polyvocal* event: a confluence of diverse people, expressions, and experiences.

Pride is obviously a celebration: there's cheering, laughing, riotous costumes, music, dance, and no shortage of intoxicants. Participants in modern Pride events report feelings of joy, belonging, and a collective effervescence (McFarland, 2012).⁸ By bringing together queer people, Pride constructs a powerful experience of collective identity and feelings of pride in one's LGBTQ nature (McFarland, 2012; Peterson et al., 2018). These feelings were reported at the very first Pride and imbue the event with lasting cultural power (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

Pride is a commemorative vehicle: it memorializes the Stonewall rebellion in particular and the LGBTQ movement in general. Participants feel connected to history. Pride's endurance is in part due to its annual nature and the collective rituals of marching and attending (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; McFarland, 2012).

Pride brings together people with diverse experiences, norms, and politics (Taylor, 2014). Trans and intersex people have different concerns than cisgender people. Leather bears and PFLAG moms have very different modes of cultural expression. To be frank, many of us can be insensitive or even cruel to one another. And yet Pride routinely engenders cross-group affinity. Lesbians walk hand-in-hand with gay men, cis people hold up trans-supportive banners, drag queens go arm in arm with leather dykes, and kids howl together with leather pups. McFarland (2012)'s interviews of people at Pride are striking:

None of my participants mentioned negative interactions with other participants....

Some participants felt that transgender people were not fully included in Pride activities. Otherwise I did not find anyone who felt left out of the social experience at Pride. (McFarland, 2012)

Pride is a political protest. Marchers carry signs advocating for specific changes to state policy and cultural norms (McFarland, 2012; Peterson et al., 2018). The participation of politicans, NGOs, corporations, and cishet allies is also a form of political speech (McFarland, 2012). The spectacle of Pride generates media coverage, which amplifies political messaging (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

Moreover, Pride is also an implicit cultural protest. By making LGBTQ people and their diverse expressions visible en masse, it forces the general public to accomodate queer people and their culture (Taylor, 2014). In a heteronormative culture, queerness ranges from invisible to illegal. Pride creates a bubble of queer norms which opposes these pressures: a *counterpublic* (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Peterson et al., 2018; Taylor, 2014). This counterpublic is *prefigurative*: participants have a chance to temporarily create the culture they wish would exist, and to show it to the world (Peterson et al., 2018).

Pride's counterpublic creates what many participants refer to as a safe social space (Peterson et al., 2018). Pride is a place to run into old friends and make new ones; to celebrate, to dance, to quietly observe; to blend in or stand out in a space with reduced heteronormative pressures. It is also a place to cruise: to seek partners for play or romance. As Gilbert Baker, inventor of the Pride flag, recalls the first years of San Francisco Pride: "I don't remember much about my first parades, because I'd go and meet someone right away; then we'd go home and fuck all day" (Hippler, 1985).

For many Pride participants, the culture they wish to manifest includes expanded norms for gender and sexual expression. We embrace our enby aesthetics, dress in outrageous drag, dance on floats in skimpy outfits, bare our breasts or go fully nude. Some hold hands. Some have sex in public. We deploy sexual symbols: suggestive candies, slogans, floats. These displays are not necessarily comfortable for all Pride participants, but they are frequent: McFarland (2012)'s survey of six US Prides in 2010 reported sexual displays at all but Fargo—a town with more reserved cultural norms and a tight-knit community. In this way, Pride functions as more than simply a social space. It is also, as Califia (1991) might put it, a sex *zone*: a city space where sex is made visible, sought out, and (sometimes) performed. Like cruising spaces in public parks, this sex zone is superimposed on the existing public territory of Pride: one aspect of Pride's polyvocal expression.

This sex zone can be a form of public expression. As Mc-Farland (2012)'s interviewer asked one lesbian attendee at Burlington Pride: "What does someone walking down the street in leather or walking down the street topless have to do with equal rights? What would be your response to that critique?"

I think that it has to do with self-expression. I think that it has to do with having the right

⁸I adore this term. *Collective effervescence*. Doing things together creates a special kind of emotional resonance. Ask people about their first Pride experiences and watch their eyes light up.

in feeling comfortable expressing themselves in the way that they would like to in an open community, and a Pride Parade seems to be really open and welcoming to people that want to express themselves in that way. (McFarland, 2012)

These visible displays of sexuality are in themselves political statements: visible displays of sexual difference allow queers to claim cultural legitimacy (McFarland, 2012). As McFarland Bruce described in her later work,

By unambiguously showing same-sex desire, Pride participants flaunt the heteronormative cultural standard that makes heterosexuality the only publicly acceptable expression of human sexuality. By summarily rejecting this standard, sexual displays are very much a difference response to heteronormativity. (Bruce, 2016)

Or, as leatherman Bronski (1991) put it:

In a world that functions on sexual repression, the sight of two queens or dykes walking down the street is a vision of the gradual cracking of the social order. The drag queen, the butch lesbian, the clone, the lipstick lesbian, are all expositions of sexual dreams—waking nightmares for the culture at large. Some might be more sexually explicit than others—and not all may be understood by the straight world viewing them—but to consciously present oneself as a (homo)sexual is to grapple with and grab power for oneself.

This is particularly true of the S/M leather scene. The blatant, public image of the leather man (or woman) is an outright threat to the existing, although increasingly dysfunctional, system of gender arrangements and sexual repression under which we have all lived. "This is about power," we are saying "and the power is ours to do with what we please. It was always ours and we have reclaimed it for our own use and our own pleasure."

From a political perspective, sexual displays are "a flashpoint for debate over how Pride parades represent LGBT people to the broader world" (Bruce, 2016). McFarland (2012) phrased this conflict in terms of *defiant* and *educational visibility*. The defiant perspective deploys sexuality to challenge cultural codes: men kiss other men, women whip one another, and genderqueer people defy binary standards on the street precisely *because* these acts used to result in social ostracism, arrest, and sex offense charges.

More than creating safe spaces for individuals to

resist heteronormative culture through partying and consumption, Pride parades are explicit cultural tools used by the meso-level group of Pride participants to challenge the macro-level construction of queerness as culturally illegitimate deviance. (McFarland, 2012)

The educational perspective emphasizes the similarity of queer people to cishet society through normative displays. It says that there's nothing implicitly objectionable about queerness, and that Pride's accurate representation of LGBTQ people as "normal" can change cultural attitudes—ultimately earning civil rights. (McFarland, 2012). Bernstein (2016) described a similar spectrum of strategies in which queer people deploy "identity for critique" to confront social norms vs "identity for education" which builds empathy with broader society. The challenge, as Bruce (2016) elegantly observed, is that educational visibility requires a conservative policing of queer expression in order to depict LGBTQ identity as compatible with mainstream standards of respectability. This requires some participants-for instance, trans and gender non-conforming people, drag queens, and leatherfolk-to suppress important elements of their personal identities in order to make cishet people comfortable.

Of course these perspectives are not exclusive: a single leather contingent can be both confrontationally "out there" and also approachably empathizable, depending on individual dress, displays, and the diverse perspectives of each observer. In allowing contingents and individuals to express a broad range of normative vs variant expressions of gender and sexuality, Pride allows a hybrid of both tactics. (Bruce, 2016).

Public sexual expression isn't just about reclaiming power and challenging cultural codes. Sexuality is socially constructed: we all start with bodies and instincts, but we *learn* how to use them. From early childhood cishet culture provides us with images, roles, and scripts for appropriate sexual expression: everything from Disney movies to country songs to Victoria's Secret billboards provide an elaborate schema for how to live a cisgender, heterosexual, and vanilla life. As M. Altman (1992) summarized a long-standing thread of feminist analysis:

The feminist investigation of sexuality begins with the knowledge that sex as we learn it and live it is not simply "natural," not simply a matter of biological needs and responses. The way a woman experiences her sexuality, the ways we represent our sexuality to ourselves and enact that representation, are almost impossible to separate from the representations our culture makes available to us. (M. Altman, 1992) But where does one learn that it is possible to be a leatherman? To be a dyke? To be enby? In order to create our sexual identities for ourselves, we need inspiration from which to draw. We need to see—and more importantly, be able to *meet* people with a variety of sexualities. As Warner (1999) argues, queer sex is learned: seeing sex is an important part of how we pass on our culture. Our sexual autonomy requires a culture of public sexuality, even though some people may find those images offensive.

The naive belief that sex is simply an inborn instinct still exerts its power, but most gay men and lesbians know that the sex they have was not innate or entirely of their own making, but learned—learned by participating, in scenes of talk as well as of fucking. One learns both the elaborated codes of a subculture, with its rituals and typologies (top/bottom, butch/femme, and so on), but also simply the improvisational nature of unpredicted situations. As queers we do not always share the same tastes or practices, though often enough we learn new pleasures from others. What we do share is an ability to swap stories and learn from them, to enter new scenes not entirely of our own making, to know that in these contexts it is taken for granted that people are different, that one can surprise oneself, that one's task in the face of unpredicted variations is to recognize the dignity in each person's way of surviving and playing and creating, to recognize that dignity in this context need not be purchased at the high cost of conformity or self-amputation....

The dominant culture of privacy wants you to lie about this corporeal publicness. It wants you to pretend that your sexuality sprang from your nature alone and found expression solely with your mate, that sexual knowledges neither circulate among others nor accumulate over time in a way that is transmissible. The articulated sexuality of gay men and lesbians is a mode of existence that is simultaneously public-even in its bodily sensations—and extremely intimate. It is now in jeopardy even within the gay movement, as gay men and lesbians are more and more drawn to a moralizing that chimes in with homophobic stereotype, with a wizened utopianism that confuses our maturity with marriage to the law, and perhaps most insidiously of all, with the privatization of sex in the fantasy that mass-mediated belonging could ever substitute for the public world of a sexual culture. (Warner, 1999)

Restrictions on public sex serve, Warner argues, to extinguish sexual culture and enforce distorted hierarchies of acceptable sexuality. To some, two women kissing is a positive example of "love is love"—but a woman tying up her lover is distasteful, degrading, even violent. In many ways, the "no kink at Pride" argument maintains the same sexual hierarchies which Rubin catalogued in her landmark 1982 essay *Thinking Sex*—for example, by demanding that marginalized sexualities remain private and therefore invisible (Rubin, 1982a).

Debates over the appropriate degree of sexual expression at Pride have been ongoing since the creation of the event. Indeed, it is hard to find an aspect of Pride which has *not* been a site of contention! As Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi (2020) wrote:

Debates about respectability, commercialization, protesting versus partying, and the place of women, drag queens and people of color became inextricably entwined in the implementation of Pride during its first decade. Power struggles, heated exchanges and hurt feelings were perhaps inevitable. The organizers were passionate people navigating their own experiences of trauma and marginalization even as they put together an enormous public gathering that sought to reflect a vastly diverse community. (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020)

The tension between political-march vs carnival-parade, the debate over sexual expression vs normative displays, how to frame the historical context, and how to balance "a safe space" with broad inclusion of variant groups: these conflicts are arguably inextricable from why Pride *works*. *Griswold* (1987) suggests that cultural objects with multiple interpretations have more "cultural power," and as a polyvocal event Pride has many interpretations indeed. Because of these interpretations, and Pride's hybrid march/parade/fair format, Pride remains adaptable to many places, cultures, and political moments. We can run different floats each year, choose to be more or less political, more or less sexual. This versatility allows Pride to remain a powerful cultural institution (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

3 A Brief Sketch

This history weaves together several themes: the LGBTQ movement more broadly; the development of leather culture, and its integration with the LGBTQ community; the history of young people, sexual displays, and leather at Pride; and finally, the concept of a moral panic. Before we dive into the chronological history, I'd like to offer a brief précis of each of these themes.

3.1 The LGBTQ Movement

In the 1960s, the Black civil rights and women's liberation movements led LGBTQ activists to adopt a more radical stance than the (generally) mild-mannered homophile movement of the postwar era. This emerging activist stance, called *gay liberation*, engaged in civil protest and constructed an understanding that being "gay" was more than a medical condition or deviant sexual practice, but a distinct, positive cultural identity subject to shared oppression (Weeks, 2016). In response to ongoing police raids of gay bars and other queer spaces, LGBTQ people engaged in a series of violent and non-violent rebellions, including the Stonewall Inn in 1969.

Although it was not the first such event, Stonewall was viewed as a landmark act of resistance, and radical activists organized the first Pride in 1970 to commemorate it (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Pride was launched as a multi-city event in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago, and was adopted in subsequent years by other US cities. Debates over its form and function were frequent, as a microcosm of the debates around gay liberation in general. Regardless, it grew each year and became an increasingly visible symbol of the LGBTQ movement.

During the 1970s an ethos of shared sexual oppression gave way to a proliferation of gay identities grounded in different politics, classes, genders, races, and variant sexualities. In particular trans people, bisexual people, women, and people of color fought for inclusion in decision-making and the recognition of their needs, and advocated for specific political goals in the burgeoning movement (Weeks, 2016).

Increased visibility and political organizing led to cultural and policy gains, including city-level nondiscrimination policies for homosexuals. This generated conservative backlash. In 1977 Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign and the Briggs initiative deployed a powerful rhetoric that gays and lesbians were a threat to children, and tried to remove LGBTQ teachers from schools. The religious right adopted the anti-gay charge in earnest by the mid-1980s (Endres, 2009; Rosky, 2021; Side, 1977). These challenges were compounded by the arrival of HIV in 1981, which led conservative politicians to frame gay sex as a threat to public health. Cities moved to close bathhouses and cracked down on sex in bars. The mainstream gay community responded by distancing itself from sexual radicals.

Throughout the 1980s, LGBTQ theorists (and in particular Black feminists) developed sophisticated frameworks for thinking about sex and gender, and their relation to class, race, and power. A complex intersectional analysis arose, and with it an emphasis on pluralism and diversity (Weeks, 2016). As a microcosm of the LGBTQ community, Pride events grew to encompass a broad array of contingents. In 1987 LGBTQ activists organized a massive March on Washington, and ACT UP began a confrontational direct action campaign to end the AIDS crisis (Brown, 2016).

ACT UP's legacy led to the founding of Queer Nation in 1990, and the development of a coherent queer theory and activist wing of the movement (Brown, 2016). Meanwhile, mainstream lesbian and gay activism grew more institutionalized and increasingly emphasized moderate requests for civil rights—as in the 1993 March on Washington—while leather, bisexual, and trans people continued to push for inclusion in the movement (Warner, 1999).

3.2 Young People at Pride

It is tempting for each generation to believe they are the first young people to participate in Pride, and that Pride needs to change in order to become youth-friendly. This is a natural assumption to make: as a young person at Pride, almost everyone there is older than you! Moreover, kids and teens in 2021 experience a much friendlier climate for coming out than generations past—it is reasonable to assume Gen Z's presence at Pride is unprecedented.

Nevertheless, young people of all ages have participated in Pride events since the early 1970s. Many of the Stonewall Inn's patrons were teenagers (M. Stein, 2019): New York Times (1969) described "a melee involving about 400 youths" during the Stonewall rebellion, and the Village Voice called some rioters "kids" (Truscott IV, 1969). The first New York Christopher Street Liberation Day in 1970 included groups of teens in the crowd (N. Tucker, 1970), and a 1971 spread from the Advocate shows a small child holding a "Gay Power" sign at the LA parade (The Advocate, 1971a). The next year in New York, straight couples and children waved at marchers from the windows over the Stonewall Inn (Wicker, 1972), and fathers "hoisted their children onto their shoulders" to watch the march (Blumenthal, 1972). In San Francisco, workshops on gay youth and a gay student council meeting were held at Bethany Methodist as a part of 1973 Pride (Bay Area Reporter, 1973b). One 16-year-old named Wendel marched in SF Pride in 1974, and went on to become "a black man on a black Harley wearing black leather" by 1988's parade. "It hasn't changed. It's still great," he said (Hippler, 1988).

In 1976, two school-age children marched in front of the Eulenspiegel contingent, who carried their banner for S/M liberation (Fink, 1976a). By 1977 flat-bed trailers carried lesbian mothers and their children down the streets of New York City (New York Times, 1977) and kids marched in the "We Are Your Children" contingent in San Francisco; photographs of both parades show babies and tod-

dlers (Crawford Barton, 1977c, 1977b, 1977a; Fink, 1977a). The following year San Francisco's parade offered organized childcare for marchers, and school-age kids held signs at the parade while others watched (Caroline Barton, 1978; Mendenhall, 1978; Scot, 1978). In 1979, the "Gays Under 21" contingent in SF demanded to have their rights taken seriously by both straight and gay adults, who were "accepting straights' position that young people have no sexuality," and "excluding us from the larger gay community" (Gays Under 21 Contingent, 1979).

Adrienne Maldonado was five years old when she marched with her gay dad Santos in San Franciso's 1985 parade, and she returned in 3 of the next 4 years, declaring it "colorful and nice" (Hippler, 1988). In 1986, Chicago Pride included a parents of gay children contingent, and Rist (1986) describes a family with two small boys, all delighted by a drag queen with a bevy of cock-shaped candies. In SF's 1988 parade, gay and lesbian parents marched with their children, some in baby carriages (Richards, 1988). The next year, "underaged gay boys and girls from the Billy de Frank Center represented those youth who have early on discovered their gayness and are proud of it" (McMillan, 1989).

In 1991 the "Romper Room" contingent at SF Pride had 30 gay and lesbian youths, ages 15-23 (Greenbaum, 1991). Parents and children made up the 5th contingent at the 1993 March on Washington, followed shortly by a queer youth contingent (The Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, 1993).

While the character and density of youth attendance has shifted, Pride has included people of all ages for 50 years.

3.3 Sexual Displays At Pride

The first Pride events in 1970 were generally more conservative than today's in their displays of sexuality. New York organizer Fred Sargeant recalls "no boys in briefs" at the first NYC Christopher Street Liberation Day Parade (Sargeant, 2010), and video footage of the event shows far more button-downs than bare breasts (Vincenz, 1970).

Nevertheless Bruce (2016) argues that the open expression of sexuality was central to all first Pride marches. Karla Jay of the Radicalesbians said "We wore Halloween costumes, our best drag, tie-dye T-shirts, or almost nothing" at NYC's 1970 Pride (Kaufman, 2020), and marchers proceeded to Central Park where the Gay Activists Alliance had planned a "gay-in." As Lahusen (1970) reported, "Gay lovers cuddled and kissed while TV cameras ogled at the open show of gay love." Participants went naked, cuddled shirtless, and one pair attempted to break the world record for the longest make-out while other attendees debated the "orgy" at the event (Grillo, 1970; Vincenz, 1970). Meanwhile in Los Angeles, the Gay Liberation Front ran an infamous float with a large jar of Vaseline, and topless contestants waved from a convertible (The Advocate, 1970). In the following year's parade a 35-foot penis-caterpillar careened into a police car causing laughter and applause (The Advocate, 1971b).⁹

By 1973 San Francisco had gotten into the swing of Pride: the Bay Area Reporter cited "an abundance of male cheesecake" (Bay Area Reporter, 1973a) including a man wearing only a few grapes, and men clad only in towels on the Barracks float (Pennington, 1988). By 1975 San Francisco Pride featured public nudity (M. Owens, 1975) and barebreasted women on motorcycles (Vector, 1975). In 1976 this bacchanal atmosphere reached new heights. Women and men went nude in the heat, and Jim Gordon stood "stark naked at Castro and Market" before boarding a bus he described as "an orgy" (Berlandt, 1982). The celebration in Marx Meadows featured "rampant nudity" (Pennington, 1988)—"EVERYONE stripped to their most comfortable level; and there was much hugging, kissing, and squeezing" (Hardman, 1976).

In 1977 Anita Bryant's Save Our Children campaign deployed footage of San Francisco's indiscretions (Pennington, 1988), claiming that San Francisco was "a cesspool of sexual perversion gone rampant" (Pettit, 1977c). Parade organizers reacted to homophobic backlash by banning nudity and other "negative imagery" in 1977 (Pettit, 1977b), which led to a considerably more buttoneddown parade (Associated Press, 1977). Despite the ban and threats by parade monitors to involve police if people refused to wear clothes, 1978 featured "about ten barebreasted women" (Mendenhall, 1978), men in *very* short shorts and lamé bikinis, as well as "a semi-naked man roller-skating past the camera with considerable aplomb, wearing only knee pads, a thong and butterfly wings" (KPIX, 1978).

By 1980 a sense that Pride was too political, coupled with a drop in attendance, led co-chair Bruce Goranson to declare that San Francisco Pride needed to reach out to drag, women, leather, and the business community. The nudity ban appears to have held for several years (Berlandt, 1982; Gay Freedom Day Committee, 1980) but in 1980 and 1983 San Francisco police ignored "partial nudity" and at least one "totally naked" man (Spunberg, 1983; Sun, 1980). Elderly women in New York City watched shirtless men in shorts pass by and commented on "so many naked people" (Clendinen, 1981). By 1986 Chicago's parade included "drag, leather, and near-nudity" (Rist, 1986), and in 1989, San Francisco's "Sexuality was proudly and boldly represented" by scantily clad porn stars in convertibles, many bare-chested men (and occasional women),

⁹I can't believe I actually get to write this.

and completely naked Dykes on Bikes (McMillan, 1989; A. White, 1989). New York police looked aside in 1991 as lesbian marchers removed their blouses and T-shirts, and one man wore only a white jockstrap and matching ostrich feather headdress (United Press International, 1991).

In 1992, an impromptu block party in San Francisco's gayborhood featured two men who danced, showed hole, and sucked each other off while perched on top of a newspaper stand. Their audience consisted of "wall-to-wall people clapping and cheering," others who tried to jump up and join in, and a family "watching with their mouths open in disbelief." The next day at the parade, some Dykes on Bikes rode bare-breasted, and one fist-fucked an inflatable sex doll (Martin, 1992).

Video of Dallas' 1993 Pride shows floats with masculine figures in bikinis and women's swimsuits, and no shortage of shirtless men (some in Daisy Dukes) in the crowd (Bucher, 1993). In 1993, San Francisco's Radical Faeries marched nude (Provenzano, 1994a) and New York women marched with bare breasts and dildos. At Castro Street Fair that same year, police were "everywhere" to prevent public nudity, and accosted four nude walkers (Barnes, 1994). In 1995, New York's AIDS Prevention League had a flatbed trailer where "four men clad only in briefs simulated various sex acts, some quite graphically" (Dunlap, 1995).

3.4 A Brief History of Leather

The origins of gay leather in the United States are somewhat unclear, but popular accounts discuss a wave of gay men who were discharged from the military following World War II, combined with a rebellious, masculine image of black-clad motorcycle gangs in the 1950s (Addison, 2012). Gay men organized their own motorcycle clubs (which sometimes, but not always, included a BDSM component) and formed S/M clubs in the 1950s and 1960s-but these organizations were largely secretive (Clark, 1996a). In the 1960s S/M fashion and image became more widespread: D. Stein (1991a) indicates that experienced S/M players withdrew to more insular, established circles. On the other hand, Clark (1995) asserts that by 1969, New York's "leather men lived and worked in good and bad neighborhoods... they went to leather bars, and some belonged to leather, S/M, or motorcycle clubs."

Like mainstream gay bars, leather bars and baths were targets of police harassment—sometimes violent (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; S. K. Stein, 2021). The LAPD raided the Black Cat in 1967 (beating patrons and rupturing one bartender's spleen), a Homophile Effort for Legal Protection fundraiser at the Black Pipe in 1972, and the Mark IV baths "slave auction" fundraiser for gay charities in 1976: an effort which involved roughly a hundred officers, two helicopters, a dozen vehicles (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021; Rubin, 1982b; S. K. Stein, 2021). In 1978, San Francisco's vice squad conducted an extensive harassment campaign against South of Market leather bars (Califia, 1987).

The development of a coherent leather community and political identity trailed gay liberation by roughly a decade. Per Rubin (2015),

... SM was far less institutionally developed than was homosexuality. Communities were relatively unstructured, and personal identifications as sadomasochists or fetishists were rarely as common or as well established as were those of homosexual men and women.... it took longer for a significant number of sadomasochists (straight and gay alike) to start perceiving themselves as an oppressed minority rather than as people with a psychological condition. In the US, that transformation, the reconfiguration of personal problems as political ones, occurred primarily in the 1970s. (Rubin, 2015)

That transformation required institutions and media for cultural exchange: kinky people had to talk to one another. In 1970 Pat Bond and Terry Kolb founded The Eulenspiegel Society (TES) to promote education, social gatherings, and political advocacy for straight and queer people into BDSM. As with gay liberation, TES drew on previous social movements to develop a political language for SM, and repositioned SM as a sexual minority identity (Green, 2021; Rubin, 2015). San Francisco's Society of Janus (another mixed-orientation group) followed suit in 1974, and an increasing number of queer people began to come out as kinky (Rubin, 2015).

Increased visibility led some lesbian and gay leaders to "normalize" the gay community by excluding BDSM (S. K. Stein, 2021). In the early 70s, Kantrowitz (1989) says, "gays asked leathermen and drag queens to wait" until "more important issues were dealt with." S/M was especially threatening to the feminist and lesbian movements of the 1960s and 1970s, who often considered the practice a violent reflection of patriarchal domination (Califia, 1987). In 1978 San Francisco lesbians founded Samois, which melded The Eulenspiegel Society's political creed with lesbian feminism. The conflict between Samois and the antiporn, anti-S/M group Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) became a major front in the Lesbian Sex Wars (Rubin, 2015). Meanwhile, popular media represented leather sexuality as a seedy underbelly of gay life. The 1977 "Save Our Children" campaign and documentaries like CBS's 1980 *Gay Power, Gay Politics* equated homosexuality with sadomasochism and characterized S/M as violent, nonconsenusal, and morally corrupt. In response, lesbian and gay leaders sought to reposition the movement as a narrow interest group rather than a demand for broader sexual liberation (Bernstein, 2016).

Citing distorted media bigotry, fagbashing, and "the oppression of our lifestyle within the larger gay/lesbian community," Brian O'Dell founded New York's Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA) in 1980, and the Lesbian Sex Mafia (LSM), a New York lesbian S/M group, was founded the following year (Rubin, 2015). City-scale S/M organizations proliferated and converged on a message that S/M activities could and should be consensual, non-exploitative, and safe (S. K. Stein, 2021). Leather periodicals flourished and leather bars ran increasingly popular "titles": pageants featuring fetishwear, interviews, and fantasy skits. In the second half of the 1980s, leather titleholders began to play increasingly political roles as fundraisers, organizers, and writers (S. K. Stein, 2021).

In response to the AIDS crisis, straight and LGBTQ society alike often blamed leather people. "The fisters caused this crisis," recalls Rofes (1991). "Kinky men with extreme sexuality are getting their due." Leather remained a mark of stigma for many LGBTQ people, and police raids continued. Mr. Marcus (1986) described police harassment of "leather fags" in San Francisco, LAPD conducted a series of raids of leather bars in 1988 (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021), and in 1987 Operation Spanner began in Britain: an effort which would detain hundreds of gay men and charge dozens of consensual players with "assault" and "unlawful wounding"—16 were convicted and eight imprisoned (S. K. Stein, 2021). Nevertheless, by the end of the 1980s leather activists had achieved major gains: formal inclusion in the 1987 March on Washington (B. Douglas, 1995b), seats at the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force's Creating Change conferences, and the formation of national-scale political networks like the all-gender, allorientation National Leather Association (Rubin, 2015).

By the early 1990s, leatherfolk had developed a thriving press including written and visual erotica, how-to manuals on technique and safety, and political argument—often combined in the same magazine. In 1991, Chuck Renslow and Tony DeBlase founded the Leather Archives and Museum to conserve leather culture (including many of the sources for this essay). Despite continued arguments from normative lesbian and gay activists who wanted to exclude drag and leather from the movement (S. K. Stein, 2021), national-scale organizing continued through the 1993 March on Washington (The Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, 1993). Police harassment faded in the 1990s: Boston police arrested three organizers of the Thunderheads Christmas Party in 1991 (S. K. Stein, 2021) and the LAPD raided the Dragonfly in 1993 (Feld-webel, 1994). S. K. Stein (2021) states that no major BDSM organization faced criminal charges after 1999.

3.5 Leather In Support of Queer Life

If Pride is understood in part as a commemorative vehicle which honors the history of the LGBTQ movement, then a part of leather's cultural legitimacy at Pride stems from leather's contributions to that movement. Despite opposition, queer leather people and organizations worked to support the broader cause of queer rights: organizing political actions, building spaces for queer centers, supporting people with AIDS, and raising money for Pride events.

Leather people were involved in the organization of, and participated in, the very first Pride parades. For example, Leatherman Peter Fiske frequented the Stonewall Inn, was at the Compton's Cafeteria riot in 1966, and marched in the first San Francisco Gay Freedom Day in 1970 wearing a leather vest and chaps (Teeman, 2020).

Bisexual leatherwoman Brenda Howard is often referred to as "the mother of Pride"; Limoncelli (2005) states she coordinated a rally honoring Stonewall one month after the riots, and L. Nelson (2005) claims she originated the idea of Pride Week and was a member of the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee in the 1970s and 1980s. Although members of New York's Gay Liberation Front contest claims of her centrality in Pride's origins (San Francisco Bay Times, 2021), there is documentation of her marching in the 1980s (Unknown, 1980s, 1987) and serving on the organizing committee for the 1987 March on Washington (S/M-Leather Contingent, 1987). Limoncelli (2005) also claims she advocated for the inclusion of "bisexual" in the title of the 1993 March on Washington, and worked on the Stonewall 25 march in 1994. While leather people sometimes downplayed their S/M interests to remain palatable to a broader LGBTQ community, Howard marched in leather contingents wearing gear. The photograph commonly used in biographies of Howard is actually a crop of a larger image, which reveals that she was marching under The Eulenspiegel Society's banner next to Lenny and Sharon Waller-the manager of New York's Hellfire club, the Vault, and Manhole. She appears to be clipped to the person next to her via a leather lead (Unknown, 1980s).

Reverend and leatherman Troy Perry served as one of three chief organizers for the first Los Angeles Pride, and was arrested for leading a protest fast after the parade. In January of 1970, Perry had officiated a wedding ceremony for two lesbians (Warner, 1999), led 250 homosexuals in a march for police reform in LA (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021), and a hunger action on the steps of the LA Federal Building for gay rights (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). In 1971, Perry led a march from Oakland to Sacramento (nearly 100 miles away) to support Willie Brown's consenting adults bill (Pennington, 1988). He also spoke at the 1979 March on Washington (*National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 1979). Perry founded the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), which you may know from their supportive presence in Pride events around the world. MCC continues to be both queer- and leather-friendly to this day.

Larry Townsend, author of *The Leatherman's Handbook*, founded the Homophile Effort for Legal Protection (HELP) in 1969 (Fritscher, 2009) and was arrested during its monthly fundraiser at The Black Pipe in 1972 (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). He also founded the Hollywood Hills Democratic Club: possibly the earliest openly gay democratic club (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). Morris Kight, another of the organizers of the first LA Pride and founder of LA's Gay Community Services Center, volunteered to be auctioned off as a leather "slave" for a day in 1976 (Humphries, 1976).

Eric E. Rofes was one of the organizers of the 1979 March on Washington (Rofes, 1991), and went on to work at community centers in the 1980s. Cookie Andrews-Hunt, leather historian and co-founder of the National Leather Association, helped organize the 1987 and 1993¹⁰ marches on Washington, as well as Stonewall 25. Leather people also participated in direct actions: in 1989, Jim Kelly was arrested for blocking traffic during an ACT-UP sit-down demonstration which called for AIDS funding (GMSMA, 1989a).

In 1983-before the age of corporate Pride sponsorship—New York Pride experienced a budget crisis. New York's leather community responded by throwing a fundraiser at a prominent leather bar (P. Douglas, 1995). Through bootblacking, auctions, raffles, and flea markets of leather gear and erotica, they raised enough money to ensure that Pride happened the following year (EDGE Media Network, 2015; GMSMA, 1987). By 1985 Leather Pride Night (LPN) contributed a sixth of NY Pride's budget (D. Stein, 1985), and in 1987, Heritage of Pride (HOP) remarked that LPN "raised more money for the New York march and rally than any other event HOP has been involved with" (GMSMA, 1987)-a relationship which continued well into the 2000s (EDGE Media Network, 2015; GMSMA, 1990a). LPN raised more than \$350,000 over the next three decades for NY Pride, GLAAD, community centers, AIDS assistance, queer youth, and more (EDGE Media

Network, 2015; Leather Pride Night, 1996). Jo Arnone, co-founder of the Lesbian Sex Mafia and regular auctioneer at LPN, went on to help raise over a million dollars for leather, LGBTQ, and other charitable organizations (Arnone, 2020). Leather Pride Nights sprung up in other cities as well (Street, 2018).

When the newly-founded Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center denied access to Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA), GMSMA President Richard Hocutt confronted the Center's board at a public hearing and won crowd support for the inclusion of the leather community (P. Douglas, 1995). GMSMA volunteers rehabilitated space for the Center, donated chairs, and later offered significant financial support (D. Stein, 1985). By 1989, contests like Mr. Leather New York were raising as much as \$20,000/year to support the Center (GMSMA, 1989c).

In San Francisco, leather bars and baths were major sponsors of Pride. SF leathermen like George D. Burgess founded the AIDS Emergency Fund (AEF), which provided direct assistance to people with AIDS (Mr. Marcus, 1990a), and Mr. S Leather's Alan Selby ran fundraising for the organization (A. White, 1985). By 1985 titleholders like Patrick Toner (International Mr. Leather 1985) were regularly hosting AIDS benefits, and AIDS fundraisers were regular fixtures at leather bars like Chaps: a single weekend could raise as much as \$7,000 through spanking, paddling, and raffling off gear (Mr. Marcus, 1985a). In the early 1990s, bare-assed leatherfolk began marching to raise money for AEF (Mr. Marcus, 1992a).¹¹ By the mid-1990s, leather bars were major fundraising sites: Mr. Marcus (1994) remarked that the San Francisco Eagle's "outrageous" fundraisers had generated millions of dollars for AIDS and other queer causes. In 1992, San Francisco's LeatherWalk featured bare-assed kinksters in gear marching down city streets to raise money for the AIDS Emergency Fund (Mr. Marcus, 1992a); the event became an annual institution.

Leather people also served as Pride organizers and marshals. By 1984 GMSMA had three members on New York's Pride committee (GMSMA, 1984). Jo Arnone announced New York Pride in 1985 (Arnone, 2020). After years of work in previous Pride parades, Helen Ruvelas (of International Ms. Leather's (IMsL) steering committee) served as co-chair of the parade committee in 1986 (Rein, 1986). Zach Long (Leather Daddy V 1987) served on the board of the Larkin Street Youth Center, worked for the AIDS Healthcare foundation, and served as SF Pride's parade marshal in 1990 (Bay Area Reporter, 1991; Mr. Marcus, 1990b). Shadow Morton, a trans man and the co-founder of International Ms. Leather, co-chaired SF Pride in 1995

¹⁰B. Douglas (1995a) refers to this as the 1994 March on Washington—I suspect this is a typo.

¹¹Despite the AEF's origins and ongoing fundraising, in 1994 a board member found time to complain about the leather community's "depravity."

(Bradley, 1995). Pat Baillie (International Ms. Leather 1995 and president of the IMsL foundation) went on to serve as co-president of Albequerque Gay Pride in 2006 (IMsL Foundation, n.d.).

At the national scale, leather people were explicitly included in queer organizing efforts by the late 1980s. In 1986 GMSMA sent members to early meetings on whether to hold an LGBTQ March on Washington, which led Brenda Howard (representing LSM) and Barry Douglas (representing GMSMA) to co-chair the march's S/M contingent (B. Douglas, 1995b; Limoncelli, 2005; S/M-Leather Contingent, 1987). Leatherwoman Peri Jude Radecic served as legislative and executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (B. Douglas, 1995b), and leatherman Ivo Dominguez, Jr. served on its board (Dominguez Jr., 1994). The NGLTF's Creating Change conferences included leather panels, and leather people in full gear joined the NGLTF in meeting with the National Endowment for the Arts to discuss right-wing censorship of queer art. (B. Douglas, 1989, 1992; NGLTF, 1991).

3.6 Leather at Pride

As a high-visibility event which represented queer people to the world at large, Pride served as a focal point for arguments over leather's place in the LGBTQ movement. While leather-wearing motorcycle clubs and kinky people in leather gear participated in the earliest Prides (Hardy, 2003b; Teeman, 2020; The Advocate, 1970) explicitly S/M-focused contingents did not (to my knowledge) appear until 1972 (Fink, 1972a; Green, 2021). Their presence in parades was fiercely debated in the late 1970s, when San Francisco Pride attempted to ban BDSM imagery and leather clothing from the parade (Califia, 1987). By the mid-1980s leather and visible S/M groups were a regular fixture of Pride parades in New York and San Francisco, where they have remained ever since. However, Pride's inclusion of leather and drag remained targets of criticism: the right viewed them as symbols of queer people's depravity (Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, 1985), and some LGBTQ people positioned leather and drag as impediments to mainstream acceptance (Kirk & Madsen, 1989; S. K. Stein, 2021; W. Tucker, 1983). Just as LGBTQ leaders cautioned pride participants to tone down variant displays, some leather leaders called members of their own community to exercise discretion-while others asserted the importance of exuberant expression.

Cycle MC (a NYC gay motorcycle club) participated in New York's first Pride parade in 1970 (Hardy, 2003b; Los Angeles Leather History, 2021), and a leather-clad motorcycle brigade rode Harleys in Los Angeles that same year, which "tended to shock straight spectators into silence" (The Advocate, 1970). However, motorcycle clubs did not necessarily participate in S/M or represent it to the public. Some leather individuals did wear gear to early Pride events. Peter Fiske marched in chaps and vest in San Francisco, 1970 (Teeman, 2020). The earliest record I have of an S/M-focused Pride contingent is from New York, 1972, when The Eulenspiegel Society carried a banner reading "Freedom for Sexual Minorities" in NY (Fink, 1972a). The following year, the Gold Coast leather bar marched in Chicago. Their float included a classic car featuring a leather "Bonnie and Clyde," followed by a huge black leather boot with chains, along with over a dozen leathermen (Dunfee, 1973).

In 1974, leatherman Doric Wilson marched in a leather vest with his mother in New York, while one woman sported aviators, bra, short shorts, knee-high boots, and a singletail whip astride her bicycle (Fink, 1974a). Others flagged and wore leather collars on leads (Fink, 1974b).

A letter to the Bay Area Reporter complained about the sight of "slaves on chains, licking grime off their master's boots, in full view of 50,000 people," at San Francisco Pride in 1975, and demanded a "responsible parade" of "real gays" (Joplin, 1976). By 1976, leathermen were parading down the streets of New York with whips on display, and being led cuffed and chained by leashes (Fink, 1976b). In 1977 Chicago Pride was led by a color guard of men in leather (Associated Press, 1977), and Midland Link Motor Sports Club "played a founding role in organizing" Birmingham Pride (Bishopsgate Institute, n.d.). Despite calls to tone it down after the extravagance of 1976, leather was well-represented in SF's 1977 parade: leather columnist Mr. Marcus (1977a) was pleased to see bikers, leather men and women, and South of Market clubs in the parade, but emphasized the need for participants to avoid "flaunting their sexuality."

I hope to see the bikers, and the leather men and the cowboys and levi men. And I hope and pray you will remain calm, peaceful, and for once not try to be outrageous, overly campy or cause anyone embarrassment or shame. This is OUR national pride day. This is our chance to raise the consciousness of many people who are ambivalent about Gay Human Rights. Don't blow it! Make San Francisco's straights PROUD of their Gay population.... (Mr. Marcus, 1977b)

1978 marked San Francisco Pride's first entry of an explicitly SM-focused organization as opposed to bars or baths. The Society of Janus marched joined by members of Samois, a lesbian S/M group. Their contingent included a red Jeep with a woman chained to the front, and lesbians marched bearing visible whip marks. Patrick (then Pat) Califia, co-coordinator of Samois, recalled jeering, spitting, and shouts of "Nazis" from the crowd. Despite Janus having a permit from the Pride committee, Pride monitors attempted to expel the contingent on the basis that it violated regulations against "images that were sexist or depicted violence against women" (Califia, 1987). The SF Chronicle ran a large photograph of the Janus contingent (Mendenhall, 1978), and Priscilla Alexandra compared them to Nazis in the Bay Times (Califia, 1987).

When Samois applied for a permit for 1979's Pride, the parade committee attempted to pass a regulation banning the wearing of leather and S/M regalia by participants, with police enforcement if necessary (Califia, 1979, 1987). Samois members responded by joining the March subcommittee, organizing a leaflet campaign, and ultimately passing regulation supporting the freedom of Pride attendees to wear whatever they wanted (Bay Area Reporter, 1979; Califia, 1987). However, S. K. Stein (2021) writes that SM contingents in San Francisco faced recurrent attempts to ban their participation over the next six years.

Despite this opposition Samois marched in 1979 and 1981, and distributed their literature at the festivals afterwards. The Society of Janus continued to march as well. Califia (1987) recalls that that crowds grew friendlier, "although we still got hissed and booed occasionally," and the majority of their membership still felt it was unwise to march. Meanwhile Jo Arnone (co-founder of the Lesbian Sex Mafia) marched in full leathers in New York's 1979 Pride (Arnone, 2020), and the New York Times recorded that "the leather-jacketed marchers of the Eulenspiegel Society, which advocates sadomasochistic relationships" was among those contingents receiving the loudest cheers (New York Times, 1979). In Miami, the Thebans motorycle club led the parade "dressed in the usual apparel" (Histo, 1979).

1979 also occasioned a major LGBTQ march on Washington, DC. Leatherman Eric E. Rofes helped organize the event (Rofes, 1991), and Troy Perry spoke (*National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 1979). Despite Alan Young's welcome message highlighting the broad diversity of queers (including "those who bite and those who cuddle") (*National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 1979), leather participation was banned from the march (S. K. Stein, 2021). Rofes (1991) recalls a fellow organizer demanding marchers remove their handcuffs because of local regulations.

In the 1980s leather clothing and S/M gear became staples of Pride parades. In 1981 GMSMA began marching in NYC (though they faced "initial opposition" per S. K. Stein (2021)), and they fielded increasingly visible contingents each following year (GMSMA, 1984). New York marchers wore "leather and chains" (Clendinen, 1981). In San Francisco, photographs of Pride show leather people of all genders wearing chaps, vests, arm and wrist bands (A. White, 1982), or studded "Mister & Mistress" collars (Hicks, 1982). Some smaller Prides, like Santa Cruz, included leather "contingents" as small as one person (Reporter, 1992). Photographs of NY Pride in 1983 show women in full leather with collars (Unknown, 1983a), floggers, handcuffs, and padlocks (Unknown, 1983b). In San Francisco, titleholders rode in South of Market contingents (Stewart, 1983), and wore vests, collars, and chaps (Rink, 1983). One "straight sympathizer" wrote to the Bay Area Reporter complaining of the "sexual circus" at Pride: "all they saw was tit clamps and campy drag, chains and leather, and embarrassing public displays of eroticism"—to which the BAR replied "Take the sex out of sexual liberation and there's no liberation" (W. Tucker, 1983).

By 1984 the Lesbian Sex Mafia (LSM) joined GMSMA at New York Pride, and marchers wore leather chaps, vests, and harnesses with cock-straps running down into their shorts (GMSMA, 1984; D. Stein, 1985; Unknown, 1985). San Francisco's parades featured industrial tow-trucks bearing leathermen hanging from the back in "slings" and tossing flowers to the crowd (Stewart, 1984). 1984 also saw the first Folsom Street Fair: a public BDSM-oriented event which helped convince Pride officials that leather participation was OK (S. K. Stein, 2021). By 1986 the Society of Janus, the Outcasts (a lesbian S/M group) and the 15 Association (a gay male S/M group) joined forces in an official S/M community contingent (Rubin, 2015), fielding more than a hundred marchers and running a booth at Civic Center plaza (Bay Area SM Community, 1986, 1987).

At the March on Washington in 1987, roughly 700 leather people from around the country marched wearing "lots of leather" in the S/M-Leather contingent, to cheers from spectators (B. Douglas, 1987; Hardy, 2003a; S. K. Stein, 2021). Video shows raucous applause, leather in abundance, and multiple marchers leading one another on leashes—among them Brenda Howard herself (Unknown, 1987).

In 1987 San Francisco's leather community encouraged marchers to join them wearing "your hottest gear," and fielded the Precision Drill Whip Team, which performed synchronized whip demonstrations—a Pride tradition which continues to this day (Bay Area SM Community, 1987). Following them was leather bar Powerhouse, whose float was "covered with writhing, dancing men partially dressed in black leather chaps and armbands" (Linebarger, 1987). Leather was an increasingly integrated part of public queer life: the Society of Janus' erotic art exhibition at Castro Street Fair drew "a big crowd" that year (Mr. Marcus, 1987b), and Urania (1987) reported "a great cheering section" and "lots of wonderful support" for New York's leather contingent. In Seattle, leather people marched in chaps, harnesses, and nipple clamps (G. Nelson, circa

1987-1988b). One photo shows a man in cutoff shorts and nipple clamps in an elaborate rope harness serving as as an anchor for a cluster of helium balloons (G. Nelson, circa 1987-1988a). The following year, the Editrix of Bound and Determined rode with her motorcycle club, The Sirens, in NYC—"literally cracking her bullwhip as she rode" (Bound & Determined, 1988). Leather-clad S/M dykes also marched in London (Disgrace, 1988b, 1988a).

Despite increasing acceptance, calls to reduce or remove drag and leather participation from parades continued. Laura L. Warren's letter to the BAR complained that such displays hindered acceptance:

I think we will all get a lot further in the area of gay rights if we show that we are not a lot of freaky people waving wands and wearing funny clothes, that we are all normal people who simply want to lead a normal life. (McMillan, 1988)

To this, McMillan (1988) responded:

So you see, it was a group of "freaky people wearing funny clothes" back then who made it possible for you and me today to sit undisturbed, sipping cocktails in the bars of our choice... We are most emphatically not, for love and life, going back. We are not going to act or dress or speak the way with which the majority of straight society might feel comfortable. (McMillan, 1988)

Others like McPherson (1988) noted that their initial discomfort with leather, S/M, and drag participation had faded as they learned more about those subcultures, and that they now found those displays a valuable form of playful self-expression.

In 1989 the S/M-Leather contingent was one of the largest in New York's march (GMSMA, 1989d; D. Stein, 1991b). Los Angeles's largest contingent in 1990 was the National Leather Association, which fielded more than 400 people over two city blocks (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). B. Marcus (1989) wrote "we are now warmly welcomed by most participants," though many leather people still avoided marching for fear of losing their jobs, family, or friends. Indeed, S. Carlin Long marched in GMSMA's contingent in 1992, was spotted by co-workers, and fired the next morning (Long, 1992).

While S. K. Stein (2021) argues that parade organizers in the early 1990s mostly discouraged BDSM marchers from displaying whips and chains, or engaging in overt BDSM displays, and while Memphis went so far as to ban minors from any event even *describing* sadomasochism (not to mention homosexuality!) (O'Neill, 1990), San Francisco continued to embrace leather. Photographs of 1989 Pride show a whipping scene in front of houses in the parade assembly area (Jur, 1989a) and at least one marcher in the leather contingent showed off a jockstrap (Jur, 1989b). The Pride festival at Civic Center included a "leather stage" in 1989 and 1990 (Mr. Marcus, 1989a, 1990b) as well as booths by the National Leather Association and Drummer Magazine, where Mr. Marcus (1990b) says one could see demonstrations of bondage and piercing. Meanwhile, marchers with Seattle Men of Leather wore codpieces and harnesses (G. Nelson, Circa 1990), and Chicago Pride featured large leather contingents (S. K. Stein, 2021). In Dallas, video of the 1992 and 1993 Pride parades shows wild applause for their leather contingents, led by singletail whip displays (Bucher, 1992, 1993; NLA: Houston, 1993). Leather floats in San Francisco received "loud applause" in 1992 (Mr. Marcus, 1992b).

As 1993's March on Washington approached, leatherwoman Brenda Howard advocated for the inclusion of "bisexual" in the title of the march (Limoncelli, 2005), and GMSMA and other leather organizations constructed a political platform for the S/M contingent (B. Douglas, 1992). The S/M-Leather contingent included marchers in short shorts and gear (Dubois, 2014). "All along the march route, the crowds cheered and applauded the leather men and women that made the trek through the streets of our capital" wrote an ebullient Mr. Marcus (1993). Tala Brandeis, a trans dyke from San Francisco, entertained the contingent with whip demonstrations, raising blood through the shirts of some bottoms (Califia, 1994b).

As usual, the religious right used these displays to drum up opposition for LGBTQ rights. 1993's "The Gay Agenda" used footage of San Francisco Pride, including "scantily clad men in chain-mail G-strings and leather" to drum up opposition for LGBTQ military service in Washington D.C., and to build support for anti-gay propositions in Oregon and Colorado (Conley, 1993; O'Neill, 1993). A chorus of normalizing queer writers like Bruce Bawer were upset by sexual displays, drag queens, and bondage as a public aspect of LGBTQ life (Bawer, 1993), or blamed drag and leather for reinforcing anti-gay stereotypes (Kustin, 1993). Indeed, March on Washington organizers-concerned about the public-relations impact of associating the movement with sadomasochism-refused to show images of the leather contingent in press releases, video, or discussions (Califia, 1994b).

The LGBTQ debate between normalizing and radical forces reached a focal point in 1994's New York Pride. Seeking to emphasize the political nature of the event, *Stonewall* 25 banned Dykes on Bikes, denied requests for trans inclusion in the title of the event, and removed floats with drag queens (Bergstedt, 1994; Califia, 1994b). Organizers had a policy of no S/M play at the march, but the policy was not well-disseminated: whipping and paddling scenes in the

march assembly area were halted by organizer request (Califia, 1994b). However, roughly 3,000 people marched in the leather contingent displaying sashes, harnesses, and "a fair amount of bare flesh (Grabow, 1994; Mangels, 1994; S. K. Stein, 2021; The Leather Journal, 1994a). In response to popular demand by marchers, Tala Brandeis led the roughly 3,000 members of the leather contingent by cracking her bullwhip in the air and setting off a "wave" in marchers ahead (The Leather Journal, 1994a). This touched off a shouting match between different factions of the leather contingent: some leather organizers and titleholders felt that the display was a public safety hazard or a public-relations disaster; others thought that assimilation was antithetical to the function of a Pride march (Califia, 1994b; Rhodes, 1994; The Leather Journal, 1994a).

The incident touched off a kerfuffle in queer and leather circles. A flurry of articles explored the dynamics of assimilationism vs radical expression, of Brandeis' identity as a trans dyke vs the predominantly cis gay men who opposed the performance, and of the difference between an east coast leather culture eager for establishment acceptance vs a west coast leather culture which embraced rebellious self-expression. Arguments emphasized various scopes of consent: the crowd's clear demand for Tala to crack the whip, the potential for bystanders (especially children) to see the whip-cracking without having consented to it, and the fact that Tala was whipping thin air, rather than an actual person (Bergstedt, 1994; Califia, 1994b; Drewery, 1994; Kane, 1994; Pope, 1994; Rhodes, 1994; The Leather Journal, 1994a; Westerfelhaus, 1994).

The right-wing Lambda Report produced a video on Stonewall 25, urging conservative politicians to present all homosexuals as into S/M (S. K. Stein, 2021). In 1995, David Greer of the Log Cabin Club compared both drag and leather with the KKK, suggesting both were "extremists" who held contempt for mainstream society. However, calls to dissever leather from public LGBTQ events were unsuccessful. Leather contingents continued to march in cities large and small: Califia & Sweeney (1996a) mentions that even Columbus, Ohio had a lesbian S/M group, Briar Rose, which marched regularly at Gay Pride, and Bound by Desire marched in Austin. In 1995 the New York Times wrote that drag, trans and leather people deserved protection: "A just society must offer the same protections to men in leather and chains as to those who wear Brooks Brothers suits" (New York Times Editorial Board, 1994).

3.7 Moral Panic

When I tell people that I'm working on a piece about how folks want to ban leather at Pride, a nearly universal reaction from those who are not Extremely Online is a sense of confused disbelief. "You're serious? Young *queer* people are saying this? Have they... actually been to Pride?"

This confusion is understandable: leather has been a staple of Pride for nearly 50 years, and crowd reactions—at least in major cities—have been generally positive since the mid-1980s. Leather people at Pride are widely understood to be interested in celebrating their culture and pursuing consensual BDSM with other adults, not in abusing children or ruining the day for asexual people. Where does this intense revulsion and fear *come* from? Why is it focused on consensual adult kink, rather than actual child abuse? How did the visibility of leather symbols become rhetorically equivalent to sexual assault?

One lens that might be helpful in understanding the historical and present evolution of this debate is the concept of a *moral panic*. Per Weeks (1981):

The moral panic crystallizes widespread fears and anxieties, and often deals with them not by seeking the real cause of the problems and conditions which they demonstrate but by displacing them onto "Folk Devils" in an identified social group (often the "immoral" or "degenerate"). Sexuality has had a peculiar centrality in such panics, and sexual "deviants" have been omnipresent scapegoats. (Weeks, 1981)

In the United States, moral panics have taken many forms. In the 1880s through early 1900s, urbanization and increasing mobility for young women led to fears that White women were being trafficked (often by immigrant men) into sexual slavery. This culminated in the 1910 Mann Act which ostensibly prohibited trafficking for prostitution "or any other immoral purpose"-but was in fact deployed against consenting adults, and especially against Black people and those in inter-racial relationships. In the 1950s a panic over the newly constructed category of "sex offender" led to mass investigations and purges of homosexuals, especially in government jobs (Rubin, 1982a). In the 1960s, accusations of lesbianism led to purges in the National Organization for Women (Vance, 1992b). In the 1970s through 1990s, new moral panics emerged over homosexuality, child pornography, and BDSM. Their repercussions are still echoing today (Rubin, 2015).¹²

¹²In recent memory, renewed concern over human trafficking has led to crackdowns on sexual content through laws like SESTA/FOSTA, which created new penalties for platforms like Facebook, Craigslist, and Tumblr should they be found to have enabled trafficking. Those platforms reacted by banning many forms of sexual expression: Craigslist shut down their personals ads entirely, and Tumblr deployed a hamfisted automated content banning system along with new community guidelines which censored, among other things, "female-presenting nipples." Arguably these policies wound up harming sex workers and queer people: sex workers were deprived of a safer business channel, and Tumblr's vibrant network of LGBTQ leather blogs essentially collapsed in late 2018.

Because sexuality in Western societies is so mystified, the wars over it are often fought at oblique angles, aimed at phony targets, conducted with misplaced passions, and are highly, intensely symbolic. Sexual activities often function as signifiers for personal and social apprehensions to which they have no intrinsic connection. During a moral panic, such fears attach to some unfortunate sexual activity or population. The media become ablaze with indignation, the public behaves like a rabid mob, the police are activated, and the state enacts new laws and regulations. When the furor has passed, some innocent erotic group has been decimated, and the state has extended its power into new areas of erotic behavior. (Rubin, 1982a)

Not all forms of sex are socially condoned. As Rubin (1982a)'s landmark paper *Thinking Sex* coherently argued, Western society generally privileges forms of sex which are heterosexual, performed in private, in pairs, within marriage, reproductive, between people of the same age, and non-kinky. An elaborate system of social approval, religious prohibitions, media representation, and state policies incentivizes privileged forms of sex and disincentivizes deviant forms. It also creates the conditions required for a moral panic (Rubin, 1982a; Vance, 1992a).

The system of sexual stratification provides easy victims who lack the power to defend themselves, and a preexisting apparatus for controlling their movements and curtailing their freedoms. The stigma against sexual dissidents renders them morally defenseless. Every moral panic has consequences on two levels. The target population suffers most, but everyone is affected by the social and legal changes.

Moral panics rarely alleviate any real problem, because they are aimed at chimeras and signifiers. They draw on the pre-existing discursive structure which invents victims in order to justify treating "vices" as crimes. The criminalization of innocuous behaviors such as homosexuality, prostitution, obscenity, or recreational drug use, is rationalized by portraying them as menaces to health and safety, the family, or civilization itself. Even when activity is acknowledged to be harmless, it may be banned because it is alleged to "lead" to something ostensibly worse (another manifestation of the domino theory). Great and mighty edifices have been built on the basis of such phantasms. Generally the outbreak of a moral panic is preceded by an intensification of such scapegoating. (Rubin,

1982a)

In the late 1970s to mid 1980s a conflict erupted in feminist and lesbian circles over the role of BDSM and pornography: the Lesbian (or Feminist) Sex Wars. Anti-porn feminists interpreted pornography as a form of violence against women (Rubin, 1982a), and deployed decontextualized images of sadomasochism to argue that such acts were inherently degrading to women. Like today's debates over the role of kink at Pride, this position was spoken by and for a marginalized group: women (and in particular: lesbians). Anti-porn feminists attempted to bar lesbians who enjoyed BDSM from publishing articles and books, from holding conferences about sexuality, and from marching in Pride (Califia, 1987; Rubin, 1982a).

Concurrently, Anita Bryant's campaign was the face of a new moral panic among religious conservatives: one which centered the image of an innocent child endangered by homosexual teachers. In the mid-1980s these movements reached an unlikely confluence: antiobscenity ordinances put forth by anti-porn feminists were adopted eagerly by the religious right, and the analytic framework which used BDSM to characterize porn as intrinsically violent was taken up by the decidedly un-feminist Meese commission on pornography (Rubin, 2015).

Moral panic over BDSM was later used to justify the censorship of leather media throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. Leather books and magazines were routinely seized by mail inspectors. This campaign extended to harassment of general LGBTQ publications and bookstores as well. In the early 1990s, the conservative crusade to defund the National Endowment for the Arts also relied heavily on BDSM to bar the government from supporting various forms of queer art (Rubin, 2015; Vance, 1992a, 1992c).

4 History

With our themes established, we turn to a detailed history of leather at Pride. This section comprises the bulk of this work, and proceeds largely chronologically from the mid-1960s to 1995. Each subsection covers a period of a few years, and integrates a few themes.¹³

 $^{^{13}{\}rm I'm}$ so sorry—this section is nowhere near as complete, organized, or polished as I would like. I've been scrambling for months to get this written in nights and weekends, and at this point I've just got to get it out the door so I can move on with my life!

4.1 The Climate of the 1960s

"The first Pride was a riot," young queers often remind one another.¹⁴ While a useful reminder of Pride's radical origins, this slogan is not entirely correct. The first Pride was *not* in fact a riot but a peaceful march: one which served as a commemorative vehicle for the 1969 riots at the Stonewall Inn. It was not entirely original: New York activists co-opted an earlier, more conservative political march for lesbian and gay rights. Moreover, the Stonewall uprising was not the first act of collective queer resistance to police abuse. Indeed, the pivotal centrality of Stonewall is a myth which began to form immediately following Stonewall (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). If we want to understand why Pride functions the way it does, we need to understand the shape of queer life and activism leading to Stonewall itself.

Following a spirit of post-war liberal optimism, activists in the 1950s began to advocate for public acceptance and an end to legal oppression of lesbian and gay people: the homophile movement. In the US, the moral panic of the "Lavender Scare" and McCarthyite purges of homosexuals during the 1950s made this activism hazardous, and homophile organizations proceeded (in very broad terms) with assimilationist caution: denouncing gay men's "swish" mannerisms and pursuit of sex.¹⁵ As Mattachine's president wrote in 1956,

We must blame ourselves for much of our plight. When will the homosexual ever realize that social reform, to be effective, must be preceded by personal reform? (J. Jackson, 2016)

Homophile activists made important political gains, organized in-person networks, and published regional and even some national periodicals which offered a lifeline for homosexuals (Weeks, 2016). LGBTQ people had also formed thriving subcultural enclaves in US cities, and were tentatively stepping into public visibility. However, the 1960s remained a hostile climate. The Hays Code prevented Hollywood depictions of queer characters; media representation of LGBTQ people was generally limited to negative stereotypes (Bruce, 2016). Homosexual sex was criminalized via anti-sodomy laws in every state but Illinois (McFarland, 2012).¹⁶ In New York, bars which openly served gay customers were considered "disorderly houses" by the State Liquor Authority; many had their liquor licenses suspended or revoked. Cross-dressing was illegal in many states including California, and used as pretext for police beatings (Los Angeles Almanac, n.d.). Police raids of gay bars were frequent, and entrapment of gay men for cruising was a standard practice of vice squads in many US cities. (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Chauncey, 2019; Humphreys, 1970). Even a kiss between two men was sufficient grounds for a conviction of lewd conduct in California—a legal standard which forced many homosexuals onto sex offender registries (Dominguez, 2017).

Visible mass gatherings of queer people were essentially unheard of, and there was no widely-read queer press to mobilize LGBTQ people across the country. At the end of 1964, there were only a handful of national-scale queer periodicals¹⁷ in the US, and none had a circulation of more than 3,000 (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). In the late 1960s, the nascent gay liberation movement (particularly in New York) began to cultivate media contacts in the mainstream and alternative press: articles in Harpers and Village Voice began to discuss homosexual issues (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

4.1.1 Leather

During the 1960s leather and S/M images grew more popular. Magazines specifically devoted to fetish and BDSM let kinky people exchange erotica and discuss theory and practice—including an understanding of consent as an ethical framework for BDSM. As early as 1961, an author in Fantasia cited "whipping between consenting adults" as an ethical practice, and Carlson Wade emphasized "freelygiven consent" in Exotica, 1962 (S. K. Stein, 2021).

In 1964 Life Magazine introduced middle America to the concept of a leather bar, in their article on the growth of urban homosexual communities. "A secret world grows open and bolder. Society is forced to look at it—and try to understand it" (Life, 1964).¹⁸

These brawny young men in their leather caps, jackets and pants are practicing homosexuals, men who turn to other men for affection and sexual satisfaction. They are part of what they call the "gay world," which is actually a sad and often sordid world....

But today, especially in big cities, homosexuals are discarding their furtive ways and openly admitting, even flaunting, their deviation.... This social disorder, which society tries to suppress, has forced itself into the public eye because it

¹⁴Stonewall activists have spoken in favor of "rebellion" or "uprising" rather than "riot." I use both terms throughout this piece.

¹⁵This is an overly-broad characterization of the homophile movement, which was both a product of its time and had its own radical constituents. See J. Jackson (2016) for an overview.

 $^{^{16}\}mbox{13}$ of those anti-sodomy laws remained on the books until 2008's Lawrence vs. Texas.

¹⁷Armstrong & Crage (2006)'s survey cited The Ladder, the Mattachine Review, and ONE Confidential as the only three with significant national distribution.

¹⁸Note the framing that one is *forced* to look at a marginalized sexuality. Implicit in this view is the notion that queerness should remain invisible in order to accomodate a straight public which does not consent to its presence.

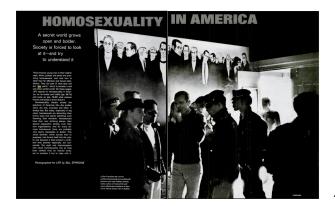


Figure 1: Life Magazine, 1964

does present a problem—and parents especially are concerned....

On another far-out fringe of the "gay" world are the so-called S&M bars. (Life, 1964)

The medicalized framing of homosexuality as a "social disorder," and one which threatens children in particular, reflects the moral panic over homosexuality in the mid-1900s.

In 1969, D. Stein (1991a) suspects there were perhaps a couple hundred serious BDSM players in the US, and a few hundred more on the periphery—most of whom knew each other. As leather's image broadened in the 1960s, these players had withdrawn to established circles, private clubs, and parties. Clark (1996a) characterizes the clubs of the 50s and 60s as secretive and looked down on by "fluffy queens." By 1969, New York leather people were given "a wide berth," said Clark. "We were still looked at as a pariah, maybe a semi-pariah" (Clark, 1996a). And yet:¹⁹

... there was casual sex for the gay man, into leather or not, just about anywhere in New York, and other large cities. Leather men lived and worked in good and bad neighborhoods, and held jobs with the responsibility they were competent to hold, they went to leather bars, and some belonged to leather, S/M, or motorcycle clubs.

In the Village there were better bars for leather cruising, and a leather man could be found at the Candlelight in my own West Side neighborhood. Most gay bars were taking on a fetish clientele....

There was sex to be had in bookstores all over town, the men's rooms at both Grand Central and Penn Stations, movie theaters, and especially the Park/Miller, the many bath houses, and any park with at least one tree and/or bush. The sexual revolution in New York was off to a roaring beginning. (Clark, 1996b)

4.1.2 Raids & Resistance

In the 1960s police raids of gay bars and events were routine, and targets of police harassment generally knew the script: police entered, stopped activity, and arrested patrons. Public exposure in newspapers sometimes led to job loss or other social consequences (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). However, the 1960s saw several instances of nonviolent and violent resistance from queer targets of police harassment.

In May 1959, a trans-friendly Los Angeles donut shop called Cooper Do-nuts was the site of a minor uprising when two LAPD officers attempted to arrest two trans people of color, two gay men, and a hustler. John Rechy recalled that patrons threw donuts, coffee, and dishes at the officers, forcing them to retreat. When news spread that evening, queer people spilled out of the bars and into the streets, followed by a police action to contain the "riot" (Los Angeles Almanac, n.d.).

On Jan 1, 1965, San Francisco police raided a homophile dance held by the Council on Religion and the Homosexual, setting up paddy wagons around California Hall and photographing everyone coming and going (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Pennington, 1988). Instead of admitting the police, lawyers demanded a search warrant; three lawyers and one ticket taker were arrested for obstructing an officer (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Ministers from the Council held a press conference following the event and called out the police department, the ACLU defended the victims, and meetings between police and homophile activists "dramatically curtailed" police harassment (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Pennington, 1988). San Francisco's local homophile publication Vector covered the raid as a triumph of homosexual courage and cooperation, but as Armstrong & Crage (2006) argues, there was no "culture of commemoration" to give rise to a memorial event like Pride. Nor did a culture of accomodation between police and the homophile establishment lend itself to public protests.

A wholly different form of resistance occurred the following year at Compton's Cafeteria: a hangout for San Francisco's trans people, hustlers, drag queens, street

¹⁹Clark's accounts are fascinating but maddeningly difficult to corroborate, and often appear self-contradictory: if leather people were "semi-pariahs," why were most gay bars "taking on a fetish clientele?" I cite his account here because it's something you're unlikely to come across in other books or essays on this part of LGBTQ history, but I would take it with *several* grains of salt.

kids, conservative gays, hair fairies, et al. Instead of being arrested, rioters threw cups and saucers at police, broke windows, kicked cops and struck them with heavy purses, smashed a police car, and set a newspaper stand on fire (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Among them was leatherman Peter Fiske (Teeman, 2020). The next day, a picket ensued when the cafeteria refused to allow "the drags" back in. While a successful act of resistance, there was almost no record of the event in the mainstream or homophile press, or public records, and its significance was only later documented in the literature. There was no legal challenge or change in police practices, and no commemoration—perhaps owing to the accomodationist relationship between SF homophiles and the police (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

On Jan 1, 1967 Los Angeles plainclothes officers grabbed and beat patrons of the Black Cat, a leather bar,²⁰ for exchanging New Years kisses. Police then followed patrons to the New Faces bar where they beat the bar owner, manager, and bartender. 14 men were arrested and a bartender's spleen was ruptured (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Los Angeles Almanac, n.d.; S. K. Stein, 2021). The local homosexual community was outraged and organized a protest outside the Black Cat with two to six hundred participants: an unprecedented turnout. Among them was leatherman Alexei Romanoff, who went on to co-found the Avatar Club (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Dominguez, 2017; Ehrenreich, 2015). LGBTQ people also joined forces with Black, Mexican-American and young activists to protest police abuses. The Tavern Guild set up a legal defense fund. However, there were no police reprimands, the Supreme court declined to hear the cases of the six found guilty of lewd conduct (i.e. kissing), and both bars later closed. The lack of a clearly victorious narrative made it difficult to commemorate the raid, as did the absence of a large-scale homophile press (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Dominguez, 2017).

Despite a general sense of defeat, the Black Cat raid had some positive consequences for LGBTQ activism. It fueled increasing anger at police oppression, and served as the impetus for activist Dick Michaels to expand circulation of The Advocate: by September 1969, the magazine had a circulation of 23,000 copies in major cities across the US (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). When police raided the Patch Nightclub in 1968, patrons resisted and the Advocate was able to cover it as a "solid display of defiance." When police murdered a gay man outside the Dover hotel in March of 1969, LA activists organized a 120 person rally and march to a police station (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

Some of these activists were leatherfolk. In January 1970, Reverend Troy Perry, founder of the Metropolitan Community Church (MCC), led 250 homosexuals in a march for police reform down Hollywood Boulevard. He went on to hold a hunger strike for gay rights on the steps of the Los Angeles Federal Building, which ended eleven days later when Councilman Robert Stevenson agreed to speak with him. Perry would go on to help coordinate Los Angeles' first Pride parade (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021).

In short: by the end of the 1960s, local LGBTQ communities had begun to establish a pattern of resistance to police abuse—as well as the networks and press required to mobilize mass actions.

4.1.3 The Annual Reminder

In 1965, East Coast Homophile Organizations (ECHO) drew on the success of civil rights actions by Black and women activists, and organized a series of pickets of government buildings. They advocated for lesbian and gay rights with slogans like "Discrimination against homosexuals is as *immoral* as discrimination against negroes and Jews" (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; J. Jackson, 2016).

These pickets were "an entirely new style of activism" (J. Jackson, 2016), and formed the seed for an annual demonstration on July 4th in DC and in front of Philadelphia's Independence Hall: The Annual Reminder (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Picketers aimed to remind policymakers that gay and lesbian people still lacked rights, and to present themselves as respectable, "unthreatening" citizens worthy of social accomodation. Marchers were required to walk in an even line, in silence, and with a strict dress code: jackets and ties for men and dresses for women. Washington Mattachine organizer Frank Kameny's goal was for homosexuals to appear employable and presentable. Trans people were excluded from participation (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Sargeant, 2010; Waters, 2019).

The Annual Reminder (and other civil rights actions undertaken by LGBTQ activists during the second half of the 1960s) established a pattern of organized, visible, and annual marches for lesbian and gay rights: another key technology for the development of Pride.

4.2 The Stonewall Rebellion: 1969

The Stonewall Inn, located on Christopher Street in New York City, served an eclectic mix of queer people including hustlers, drag queens, and underage youths. Most were men and would have seen themselves as some kind of homosexual, but lesbians did attend, and some patrons may

²⁰The precise nature of the Black Cat is somewhat difficult to pin down. S. K. Stein (2021) definitely states it was a leather bar. Dominguez (2017) describes it as working-class. Ehrenreich (2015) describes "15 or 20 men in wigs and gowns" who squeezed into the Black Cat the night of the raid. None of these descriptions are contradictory, but if you have a definitive source, I'd like to hear about it.

have seen themselves as straight. A significant number were poor, Black, and Brown; many were what we might today interpret as genderqueer or trans (M. Stein, 2019). As leatherman W. Charles Clark recalls:

In the late 1960s, I would go to the Stonewall Inn, which served a cross-section of gay lifestyles, black and Latin, leather and drags, fluffy and butch fags, wealthy queens and hungry boy prostitutes, and drugs... (Clark, 1996b)

Leatherman Peter Fiske was also a regular at the bar in 1968 and 1969, and was present for three police raids (Teeman, 2020):

I was in there the last time the cops raided it before June 28, 1969. You'd get no notice of a raid. The first evidence was the music being turned off, and the lights turned on. It was about 1 in the morning when it happened that final time before Stonewall itself.

The cops would come in, and you would have to line up and show them your ID. If you were not wearing three items of clothing that matched what they deemed to be your gender, or if you were underage, you were arrested. They called us "queers" and "fags." They were mean and bullying.

If your ID was OK, they let you leave, and the bar reopened afterwards. That last raid before the one the night of the riots, people were angry and muttering. Stonewall was a street bar. There were hustlers, street people, homeless people, poor people, and also suburban people, people of color, leather folks. I was one of them. I used to go there after going to the two leather bars New York had in those days. (Teeman, 2020)

Accounts of the rebellion are contradictory to say the least, but the rough sketch is this: police raided the Stonewall at about 1:20 AM on Saturday, June 28 and arrested patrons and employees. A crowd of queers and straight allies milled about on the street outside the bar, chanting, singing, and blocking traffic. When police emerged, shouts turned to violence and some of the police were forced back into the bar. The crowd attacked the building and attempted to set it on fire. The Tactical Patrol Force arrived and attempted to clear the street of nearly a thousand people (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Leitsch, 1969b; M. Stein, 2019).

As Armstrong & Crage (2006) noted, gathering on the street violated the script of a standard police raid, and the Stonewall's site in a pedestrian-oriented gay neigh-

borhood allowed the crowd to grow quickly. The following evening there were again hundreds on the street outside the Stonewall, including "for the first time, a large 'leather' contingent" (Leitsch, 1969b). Doric Wilson, playwright and leatherman, may have been among them (Gelbert, 2011). As the night went on, the crowd swelled to nearly 2,000. Leitsch (1969a) contrasted the scene with the Annual Reminder:

Shouting "Gay Power" and blocking traffic is a far cry from the old days when all homosexuals were furtive and "kept their place." The "riots" were also as far as could be imagined from what homosexuals have done before.

This was no carefully planned, super-straight picketing demonstration of 20 or 30 overdressed and severely middle-class homosexuals; nor was it a cop-out, like the "mass meeting" held by a self-styled homosexual leader under the Arch in Washington Square Park—complete with hymnsinging, speakers, and an audience of 40 or 50 tourists from Peoria....

The "riots" came about spontaneously, and were not planned by any organization or group. They were unpremeditated protests against police harassment, unfair laws, uncaring public officials, and inequality. (Leitsch, 1969a)

Or, as Clark (1996b) remembers:²¹

There wasn't much in the papers about the Stonewall incident, but there was lots of news spread by word of mouth and telephone. The next night I was in the village and there was a changed atmosphere. Something unusual was happening. It was a lighthearted party atmosphere tinged with danger.

It was a young crowd. Few older men were there either in or out of leather. A leather man I knew who was an executive with a large national retail firm said liberation was not the leather man's fight, he was already liberated sexually and emotionally. Most leathermen apparently agreed for few were there.

A typical standoff between armed police and potential rioters slowly developed, not unlike the student/police confrontations. Gays of all persuasions milled around, traffic was blocked by the crowd from 6th Ave. to Hudson Street, for blocks along the Christopher Street corridor,

 $^{^{21}{\}rm If}$ it's not clear by now, accounts of the Stonewall Rebellion vary wildly in their perspectives, and tend to emphasize different aspects of the events.

mostly people looking at people, which led to gays cruising gays.

There were more gay matches made that night than ever before in the history of male sex, because never before had so many gay men been gathered together at one time.²² The fact that the "rioters" were gay boys would be made into history. (Clark, 1996b)

New York's developing culture of gay liberation encouraged activists to frame the events at the Stonewall Inn as a pivotal moment. On Sunday morning they distributed flyers emphasizing the historical importance of the event. Unlike Compton's, the Stonewall crowd included not just marginalized but also more privileged queer people—in particular, homophile organizers, journalists, and activists who had been cultivating connections with New York's press. Craig Rodwell contacted the NY daily papers, and press coverage (even if homophobic) brought increasing numbers to the street outside Stonewall in following nights (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

Although New York lacked a well-developed local gay press, coverage from The Advocate combined with mainstream and alternative papers transmitted news of the Stonewall uprising to a national audience (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). Regional homophile publications also spread the news. The fact that the rioters were partly successful in resisting arrest created a narrative worth commemorating. Furthermore, protest efforts in LA, the queer claiming of space during the Stonewall Uprising itself, and marches like the Annual Reminder all gave New York's LGBTQ activists a template to draw on in creating a commemorative vehicle: Pride.

4.2.1 Co-Optation of the Annual Reminder

On July 4th, one week after Stonewall, the 1969 Annual Reminder was held as usual (Bruce, 2016). Photographs of marchers at the event show them in full suits and dresses (N. Tucker, 1979), but some picketers refused to follow the strict dress and behavioral code. A group including at least two women "broke ranks, and held hands, gleefully showing affection with same-sex partners" (Bruce, 2016; Sargeant, 2010). Organizer Frank Kameny broke the handholders apart, saying that there would be "none of that." In frustration, Craig Rodwell, Fred Sargeant, Ellen Broidy, and Linda Rhodes proposed a change at the Eastern Regional Conference of Homophile Organizations (ERCHO) in Philadelphia: that the Annual Reminder be moved to New York City on the anniversary of the Stonewall rebellion, and that it be open to all ages and manners of dress (Bruce, 2016; Sargeant, 2010).

... that the Annual Reminder, in order to be more relevant, reach a greater number of people, and encompass the ideas and ideals of the larger struggle in which we are engaged—that of our fundamentaly human rights—be moved in time and location.

We propose that a demonstration be held annually on the last Saturday in June in New York City to commemorate the 1969 spontaneous demonstrations on Christopher Street and this demonstration be called CHRISTOPHER STREET LIBER-ATION DAY. No dress or age regulations shall be made for this demonstration. (Bruce, 2016)

Despite the objection of moderate delegates the resolution passed, and the Christopher Street Liberation Day Umbrella Committee was formed to organize the event. Organizers leveraged the networks and mailing lists of local homophile organizations as well as the nascent gay press to cement the importance of Stonewall, and reached out to homophile organizations across the US to plan the first Pride marches (Armstrong & Crage, 2006; Bruce, 2016).

Although activists across the US were aware that the Stonewall Rebellion was not the first incident of LGBTQ resistance, a sort of "collective forgetting" began almost immediately. Queer publications quickly adopted the narrative of Stonewall as the spark for gay liberation—a myth which continues to this day (Armstrong & Crage, 2006).

4.3 The First Prides: 1970

Three cities formally participated in the first Christopher Street Liberation Day: New York City, Los Angeles, and Chicago. A small, informal band also marched in San Francisco. Leather people helped organize and marched in at least NY, LA, and SF (McFarland, 2012; Teeman, 2020).

4.3.1 New York

In New York, Brenda Howard—a bisexual Jewish leatherwoman—helped coordinate a rally in honor of the Stonewall Rebellion one month after the event (Limoncelli, 2005). There are circulating claims that she went on to help organize the first round of Pride events in 1970, that she originated the concept of "Pride Week," served on the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee in the 1970s and 1980s, and that she may justly be termed the "Mother of Pride" (L. Nelson, 2005). However, I haven't been able to find any contemporary sources confirming these claims, and the extent of her involvement is disputed by members of New York's Gay Liberation Front (GLF) (belowdesire, 2020; San Francisco Bay Times, 2021).

New York's organizers had an activist background and

²²Hot take: The first Pride was a hookup.

wanted the event to be serious: a march rather than a parade (McFarland, 2012). Marcher Perry Brass recalls:

... suppose the bars want to take it over and want to have floats and go-go boys. And we said, Martha [Shelley] and Bob and other people said no, this has got to be a political march, we have got to bring politics into this, it is going to be most of all a consciousness raising event ... (McFarland, 2012)

Yet as a political event the march was broadly aimed at *cultural* change, rather than a specific policy objective. Martha Shelly remembers:

The most important thing was to be out in public, to say that we were not going to take it any more, to say that we were not going to let the police beat us up and cower in the closet. And a lot of people could get behind that, people who didn't have a political view... (McFarland, 2012)

NY activists sought to explicitly confront the heteronormative public with queer visibility. Brass remembers "We saw the march as... overtly, unshamlessly (sic), unapologetically gay" by "showing people in broad daylight that we exist" (McFarland, 2012). As marcher Jerry Hoose said during the march: "We're not in a dark bar anymore, we're out of the shadows and in the sunlight" (McFarland, 2012).

The New York Christopher Street Liberation Day March drew approximately 3,000 marchers, who discovered a remarkable sense of community belonging and joy from being out in public together. "I saw that my identity as a gay man was worthy of political formulation, worthy of a march up an avenue in America in 1970" said Stephen F. Dansky, 1970 marcher (McFarland, 2012). McFarland's interviews of Pride marchers also emphasized the effervescence of openly showing affection for their same sex partners. Perry Brass described not just another protest march, but "a contact high, just touching each other, being with each other, everyone just smiling and laughing, and hugging and kissing and people who were my friends" (McFarland, 2012).

The march was relatively clothed by today's standards (Solomon, 2019) with no shortage of long-sleeved pants and button-down shirts. Activist Fred Sargeant remembers looking back at the march: "There were no floats, no music, no boys in briefs" (Sargeant, 2010). Nevertheless, it represented a radical departure from the Annual Reminder's restrictive dress code. Marchers wore "flamboy-ant costumes, burnooses, capes, drag, heels" (Bruce, 2016). The Radicalesbian's Karla Jay, who was a co-organizer of the first marches in NY and LA, remembers "We wore halloween costumes, our best drag, tie-dye T-shirts, or almost nothing" (Kaufman, 2020). Photos from Waters

(2019) confirm the inclusion of drag.

Unlike the Annual Reminder, New York's march included trans, leather, and young people. Cycle MC, a New York motorcycle club, marched (Hardy, 2003b; Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). So did Sylvia Rivera and Marsha P. Johnson's Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) (Waters, 2019). Stonewall's patrons were often underage, and ERCHO's resolution was explicitly all-ages, so it should come as no surprise that groups of teens were in the crowd (N. Tucker, 1970).

After the march participants conducted a "gay-in" in Central Park, where many cuddled shirtless or fully naked, and made out with one another (Grillo, 1970; Riemer & Brown, 2019). Throughout the meadow, gay couples cuddled and kissed while TV cameras "ogled at the open show of gay love and affection and solidarity," which went on well after sundown (Lahusen, 1970).

The only planned activity in the Park was sponsored by Gay Activists Alliance, which provided an abundance of body contact by conducting sensitivity games in the soft grass of the meadow. Their gay love pile—composed of dozens of warm, wiggling bodies in one fantastic heap—let forth the most spontaneous, if inarticulate, yelp for liberation heard all day.²³ (Lahusen, 1970)

The Library of Congress has video footage of the event (Vincenz, 1970), which shows queer people cuddling and kissing in piles. One homosexual couple tried to break the world record for the longest makeout (9 hours), and Lahusen (1970) indicates they were successful.

4.3.2 Los Angeles

As Armstrong & Crage (2006) put it:

In 1970 hosting a gay parade was indistinguishable from a gay protest or political demonstration: a public gathering of homosexuals was perceived by authorities as confrontational and by homosexuals as a courageous display of political commitment. (Armstrong & Crage, 2006)

Obtaining a permit from the LAPD proved challenging, with the chief of police stating "Granting a parade permit to a group of homosexuals to parade down Hollywood Boulevard would be the same as giving a permit to a group of thieves and robbers." (Armstrong & Crage, 2006)

Los Angeles' *Christopher Street West* parade was chiefly organized by leatherman Troy Perry, Morris Kight, and Rev Bob Humphries (Bruce, 2016). Los Angeles organizers also

²³Even hotter take: the first Pride was an orgy.

involved a broad swathe of organizations: the Gay Liberation Front, the homophile Daughters of Bilitis, public health groups like Stamp out Syphilis, and even "Homosexuals for Ronald Reagan" (McFarland, 2012).

Roughly 1,200 marchers participated. Unlike New York, Los Angeles framed their event as more of a parade, with drummers, flags, clowns, five floats and a broad spectacle of marchers (The Advocate, 1970). Among them was a leather-clad motorcycle contingent on Harleys which "tended to shock straight spectators into silence." As The Advocate (1970) relayed one conversation between onlookers:

'Don't tell me *they're* part of it,' a girl said in a small voice.

"They couldn't be," her slender young male escort muttered, "They couldn't be." (The Advocate, 1970)

The provocative displays included topless contestants in a convertible, the Grand Duchess (a drag queen) from San Francisco, and nods to sexual practices. The LA Gay Liberation Front submitted a float topped with a large jar of Vaseline, which went on to become infamous (The Advocate, 1970). As LA and NY marcher Ruth Weiss recalls:

We were not like the homophile movement. We were out there and we were in your face.... Part of the impetus was a counterpoint to the 4th of July marches by Mattachine which had a dress code. We were just going to get out there in whatever you wanted to wear and very festive and tie-died. (McFarland, 2012)

As McFarland (2012) argues, open expressions of sexuality were central to the first Pride events in New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. By reframing the public declaration of sexuality as an explicitly political act, participants engaged in a new form of collective action. "Through overt sexuality and non-normative gender displays, the LA parade in particular featured contingents that played on, rather than reduced, mainstream negative stereotypes of gays and lesbians" (McFarland, 2012).

However, the LA march still included elements of direct political action. After the march, Troy Perry was arrested for leading a protest fast (The Advocate, 1970).

4.3.3 San Francisco

San Francisco's activist establishment rejected the commemoration of a riot, worrying that it might worsen police harassment (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). However, a small group of hippies and hair fairies organized a "Gay Freedom Day" march and "gay-in" at Golden Gate Park (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020). Among them was leatherman Peter Fiske, who marched in leather vest and chaps (Teeman, 2020).

4.3.4 Reaction

The debate over public respectability at Pride began as early as the event itself.²⁴ Vincenz (1970)'s footage of the 1970 NYC gay-in captured this discussion between two participants:

"As long as you keep it at an intellectual level. All of this orgy stuff... I think it's kind of ridiculous."

"If straight people can do all of this carrying on and holding hands and kissing in the park, why can't I do it?"

"No, I'm talking about some guy dropping his pants"

"... Straight people can do it; why can't we?" (Vincenz, 1970)

In Los Angeles, an anonymous letter to The Advocate in August of 1970 argued that LA's parade had done "more harm than good." The reader was embarrassed, and asked where the "normal-looking fags" were.

By showing us off as a group of silly freaks, those queens sure lowered our public image to the level public opinion has set it for years. How can we make demands for equality, based on our rights as normal citizens, when our public image is constantly destroyed by flamboyancy and poor taste? (Name Withheld, 1970)

Yet other readers praised the parade, noting that LGBTQ rights were not dependent on conformity (Name Withheld, 1970), and reminding assimilationists that drag queens and swishy gay men, not "closet queens," fought back at Stonewall (Griffe, 1970).

In New York, the Gay Activist Alliance (GAA) went through a series of internal struggles over whether to include drag and trans people in their actions. In 1970, The GAA's Street Theatre Subcommittee argued that since gay liberation's aim was to produce a culture where respect is afforded to those with unconventional sexual expression, the most effective thing to do was to champion the most unconventional type of homosexual: homosexual transvestites. They planned to carry a transvestite on a litter down Lexington Avenue, but cultural reformers argued that this would reinforce stereotypes. Many homosexuals were uncomfortable with transvestites, or even calling themselves "gay." However, Street Theatre members maintained that

²⁴I assume respectability was also furiously debated during ERCHO's initial debate over the Pride resolution, but I can't offer a source.

the goal was not to show homosexuals were the same, but to force people to acknowledge sexual diversity (Marotta, 1981).

Forms of this argument would echo for the next fifty years.

4.4 Early S/M Organizing: 1970–1976

In 1970, Pat Bond founded The Eulenspiegel Society (TES) in New York City. As an all-gender, all-orientations organization, Eulenspiegel provided a nexus for networking, education, and political action around BDSM. Indeed, Rubin (2015) argues that TES was the first organization to politically agitate for S/M.

When the Village Voice refused to run an ad for TES in 1971, Eulenspiegel organizer Terry Kolb started agitating. Two months later the Village Voice published a letter from Kolb which addressed common misconceptions about masochism and established a civil-rights framework for S/M identity. Shortly thereafter, TES published *The Eulenspiegel Creed*, which asserted that sadomasochism was a valid and healthy sexual preference, and that like other sexual minorities kinky people deserved to meet and exchange literature, to practice their sexuality, and to educate and be accepted by the public. Instead of viewing BDSM as a deviant psychological condition, TES centered the practitioners who enjoyed it (Rubin, 2015).

The Eulenspiegel Society kicked off a series of letters by gay leathermen in the nascent gay press. S/M—still poorly understood by the larger queer community—became increasingly visible. In 1972, TES member Larry S wrote an article on sadomasochism in the Gay Liberation Front's *Come Out!* magazine. It laid out the overlap and difference between motorcycles, leather fashion, and S/M, articulated various S/M activities, and argued that to enjoy S/M was not fundamentally sick or violent, but rather a consensual, ritual, and healthy expression of sexuality (S, 1972). The article was so controversial that it led to the collapse of the entire paper (Rubin, 2015).

In Los Angeles, 1972, police raided the Homophile Effort for Legal Protection (HELP) fundraiser held at leather bar The Black Pipe. They arrested HELP president and leather author Larry Townsend. To the surprise of police, the organization fought back (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021).

In 1974 Cynthia Slater and Larry Olsen formed the Society of Janus in the San Francisco Bay Area: an all-gender, allorientation BDSM group founded on similar principles to the Eulenspiegel Society. Like TES, it offered social events, kink education, and aimed to effect social and political change. While it offered a womens support group, Janus was primarily straight (Califia, 1987; Rubin, 2015). Gay S/M clubs also began to coalesce in the 1970s. 1971 saw the founding of the Chicago Hellfire Club (CHC) (GMSMA, 1984). Unlike motorcycle clubs, Rubin (2015) argues it was the first club specifically oriented around gay BDSM. In 1975 The Catacombs opened in San Francisco, providing a dungeon space and social hub for LGBTQ²⁵ fisting and BDSM enthusiasts (Rubin, 1991). In 1976 New York's Mineshaft provided a similar space almost exclusively for gay men. Unlike TES and the Society of Janus, these institutions did not adopt a significant political component. Rubin (2015) notes many of their members were also members of gay liberation or homophile organizations, which may have channeled political energy elsewhere.

4.5 Building Steam: 1971–1974

Mass LGBTQ gatherings like Pride created something special: a sense of collective identity and playful ebullience. The gay liberation movement also led to a renaissance of queer loves, acts, and living arrangements.

By coming out, people could begin to show the world that they existed, but as important it would show other lesbians and gay men that they were not alone, that through coming out all could come together, and construct new narratives about who and what they were....

A very large number of these new stories were about sex. For many gay and bisexual men, but for many lesbians also, the revolution was a sexual revolution above all else, the opportunity to affirm or realize desires that had for too long been denied. The 1970s immediately following Stonewall was a period of mass sexual experimentation in the major urban cities where gay life flourished—exploring pleasure in multiple forms, and different patterns of relationship, in many different venues, challenging the reproductive and monogamous norms of the culture, throwing light on what had been a dark secret, confined to shameful silence, in the all too recent past. Sex was pleasure, but it was also political, transgressing against familiar and repressive restrictions, and showing different ways of being erotic, and being human. One result was an explosion of public sex amongst gay and bisexual men, in saunas, backrooms, parties; another was a flowering of life experiments, as the 1969 generation explored new types of relation-

²⁵The Catacombs is a fascinating example of a primarily gay male sexual space which opened its doors to lesbians and trans people, resulting in a rich constellation of friendships and lesbians playing with gay men. For more on this, see Rubin (1991).

ships, new ways of living sexually, challenging taboos around bodies, age, gender appearance, promiscuity, partnership, and love. Sexual liberation was for many the essence, the very meaning of gay liberation, and in later years many survivors of that first generation lamented new emphases within the movement on lesbian and gay parenting, same-sex marriage, and chosen families as an abandonment of that founding inspiration. (Weeks, 2016)

For many, Pride became a vehicle for the expression of that newfound sexual liberation. As early Pride parades took root, they generated increasingly bold expressions of sexuality.

4.5.1 Los Angeles

Calls to normalize Los Angeles' Pride in 1970 were unsuccessful. The Advocate's coverage of 1971's Pride included leotards, a float with 10 young men in swim trunks, and photographs of the Grand Duchess herself, as well as a man marching in briefs and a young child holding a "GAY POWER" sign (The Advocate, 1971a). Seven young men piloted a thirty-five foot long blue-and-white tubular "caterpillar" down the street—which had a pink head, fluttering pink eyelashes, a vertical slit for a mouth, and a red sac with two lumps at the end (The Advocate, 1971b). Stan Williams of the GLF described it as a "surrealistic cock."

Whether by design or simply because those powering it lost control, the caterpillar-cock staggered directly into a police car on crowd control duty at one point during the parade. Spectators burst into laughter and applause as its pink head butted against the car's windows. (The Advocate, 1971b)

The LAPD and city attorney worked together on a possible obscenity charge (The Advocate, 1971b), and Kaye (1984) later wrote that the "cockapillar... had the 'respectable' liberals so pissed they threatened to write a law against marching in costume."²⁶

Bruce (2016) states that conservative community members withdrew support for the parade over what they viewed as offensive sexual displays. The Homophile Effort for Legal Protection requested a guarantee from organizers that incidents like the Vaseline jar and cockapillar would not follow in 1972. Other LA organizers like Morris Kight and Del Whan emphasized that gay liberation required open expression of sexuality, not "exclusionary" censorship. Ultimately Los Angeles Pride requested, but did not enforce, that parade contingents consider their

public impact; HELP withdrew their support anyway. The parade avoided provocative displays in 1972, but shrank to less than a quarter of its 1971 attendance (Bruce, 2016).

4.5.2 San Francisco

San Francisco queers again held a small action in 1971, but major lesbian and gay organizers sat on the sidelines. Troy Perry, however, did lead 13 marchers that year from Oakland to Sacramento for a rally on Willie Brown's consenting-adults bill (Pennington, 1988).

In 1972 San Francisco organized a more formal march, and emphasized inclusion. "A joyous outpouring of our gayness for all the world to see," proclaimed one flyer, "which belongs to all Gays" (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020). After some debate over what forms of expression warranted inclusion in the parade, the committee "voted without dissent that the Parade will include all peoples and adopted a Non-exclusionary and Non-judgemental policy toward all entrants" (B., 1972). Rev. Humphries, one of the organizers, described it thus:

The parade is a Community-wide political and consciousness-raising demonstration....

Furthermore, it is a fun thing. It offers something for everyone—bar owners, lesbians, bike riders, drags, militants, conservatives, street queens, freaks, and every other segment of the gay community. (D. Jackson, 1972)

Per the Advocate's coverage, San Francisco's 1972 parade included "drag queens, gay businesses, entertainers, religious groups, prison groups, gay organizations, reigning 'royalty,' leather men, radicals, street people, conservatives, lesbians, and 'hunky guys'." (Bruce, 2016). However, not everyone felt included. Following an incident in which organizer Raymond Broshears punched a gay woman from San Jose (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020), Beth Elliott wrote to the Bay Area Reporter arguing that drag was sexist:

I am both offended and oppressed by the glorification of the Drag Establishment, which perpetuates sexist male stereotypes of what a woman is supposed to be. If Broshears truly believed that 'no one will be excluded from the parade unless they exclude themselves' (his words), why did he attack my sister? If the Gay community's transvestite minority represents that community, than so do Lesbian Feminists, who are much more numerous. (Elliott, 1972).

Other writers to the Bay Area Reporter viewed drag and sadomasochism as reflections of "downward social mobility" or self-degradation:

 $^{^{26}\}mbox{It's}$ not entirely clear if this was the same cockapillar, or if there were multiple incarnations over the years.

Psychometric survey has established that there is a strong corelation [*sic*] between S&M, ultraconservatism and downward social mobility. When a man is found working in a job that is below the station in life to which we [*sic*] was born, chances are he is into S&M and/or ultaconservatism [*sic*]. Because of employment and licensing discrimination, the Gay community has a high percentage of downward social mobility, and hence a high incidence of S&M. There is nothing we can do about it. We will just have to put up with S&M until Gays are given equal opportunity, and downward social mobility stops....

But S&M is not the only way of acting out degradation. Other Gays turn to drag. For males raised with the deepseated conviction that females are inferior, despised creatures, drag is a conspicuous way to act out degradation. (D. Jackson, 1973)

San Francisco's 1973 parade grew to an estimated 42,000 participants, and again invoked a spirit of universal inclusion (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020). Letters from the Gay Freedom Day Committee mentioned that there would be a large contingent of leathermen and motorcyclists, and that they were explicitly welcome—although nudity and political candidates were not:

Over and over again we have said that the parade and all events are open to everyone, anyone gay, women and men, drag and leather, longhairs and crewcuts, black and white, jew and catholic, everyone and anyone that is GAY! (Gay Freedom Day Committee, 1973a)

The parade ... is open to all gaypeoples, women and men; freaks and shorthairs; drags, TVs and leathermen, motorcyclemen; white, black, red, yellow and brown, tall and short....

The parade is open to ALL gaypeoples. The only rules are: no nudity, no persons running for political office and no trailers attached to vehicles. (Gay Freedom Day Committee, 1973b)

The Bay Area Reporter confirmed the inclusion of a motorcycle group in the 1973 parade.

Seeking to balance diverse community needs, organizers expanded Pride from a singular march and festival to full weeks of programming in 1971 (Bruce, 2016). Pride Week in San Francisco, 1973, featured workshops held at Bethany Methodist on S&M, another for gay youths, and a gay student council meeting (Bay Area Reporter, 1973b).

Despite the prohibition against public nudity, the parade

included no shortage of provocative attire. Paul Brown of the Naked Grape marched in only a few grapes (to loud cheers from the crowd) and men clad just in towels rode on the Barracks float (Bay Area Reporter, 1973a; Pennington, 1988). As Bay Area Reporter (1973a) put it, "The parade featured some costumes that made Salvador Dali's works seem conservative."

There was an abundance of male cheesecake. Loud cheers came for Mr. Naked Grape who wore plastic grapes to cover his mid body and for Mr. Gay San Francisco, a wellbuilt young man wearing a cowboy hat, a leather jacket, and tight cream colored slacks. (Bay Area Reporter, 1973a)

In 1974, San Francisco Pride included "many San Francisco based motorcycle clubs" (Bay Area Reporter, 1974), and a 16-year-old named Wendel marched in his first Pride. As he recalled in a later interview, "It was nice, it was great. What else are you gonna think at 16?" In 1988, he'd join the parade as "a black man on a black Harley wearing black leather," and told reporter Hippler (1988), "It hasn't changed, it's still great."

Debates over Pride's goals and which groups should participate continued in 1974, as Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi (2020) summarized:

The San Francisco Gay Liberation Alliance protested the participation of the Imperial Court, a charitable organization of drag performers, in that year's Gay Freedom Day Parade. GLA decorated a vehicle with representations of "dead" drag royalty, asserting that the Imperial Court was "a poor representation of the gay community and a waste of monies." ...

Behind the festivities, another aspect of the Gay Freedom Day Parade returned year after year throughout the 1970s: arguments about goals, disagreements on tactics and fights over inclusion and representation. The drama we see today in news coverage and social media about Pride fights has a history as old as the event itself.

Debates about respectability, commercialization, protesting versus partying, and the place of women, drag queens and people of color became inextricably entwined in the implementation of Pride during its first decade. Power struggles, heated exchanges and hurt feelings were perhaps inevitable. The organizers were passionate people navigating their own experiences of trauma and marginalization even as they put together an enormous public gathering that sought to reflect a vastly diverse community. (Gerard Koskovich & Sueyoshi, 2020)

4.5.3 New York

As early as 1971, celebrants at New York pride marched in boots, cuffs, and harnesses (Fink, 1971b). Men made out shirtless, jeans unzipped, or went completely nude in the park (Grillo, 1971; Wandel, 1971).

In New York's 1972 Pride, straight couples and children waved at the marchers from the windows over the closed Stonewall Inn (Wicker, 1972). "Several fathers, apparently thinking a parade was coming, hoisted their children onto their shoulders, only to go ashen-faced as the marchers passed" (Blumenthal, 1972). The Eulenspiegel society also marched, including one man in a Muir cap and leather jacket (Fink, 1972a). Bondage gear made an appearance: men sported handcuffs and padlocked chains around their necks (Fink, 1972b).

In 1973, the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee invited "all sisters and brothers, gay, non-gay, homophile, or otherwise" to "bring ... your favorite drag (be it leather or feather)" (Grillo, 1973). Leather bars, transvestites, drag queens, and families marched together. Photos show families and children watching from the sidewalk (Fink, 1973a). The New York Times mentioned spectators aged 13 and 15, and described the march thus:

At least seven homosexual bars were represented, including the so-called "leather bars," such as the Roadhouse and Frizby's, whose marchers were dressed in cowboy motif, complete with a horse rented for the occasion.

There were also, for the first time, organized groups of transvestites under the banners of the 82 Club and Harry's Back East bar.²⁷

"These people have rights," observed Gwen Saunders, the club's owner, who drove a blue Pontiac from which Ty Bennett, a female impersonator, tossed kisses right and left.

Near the front of the march were three parents from a newly formed organization called "Parents of Gays." Among them were Dr. and Mrs. Jules Manford, marching next to their son, Marty, and bearing a placard that read: "I'm proud of my gay son." (Darnton, 1973)

The Eulenspiegel Society also marched in 1973, and a photo shows multiple shirtless marchers, as well as one man in boots, a leather jacket, cap, and sash helping bear

a banner which reads "Eulenspiegel: Freedom for Sexual Minorities" (Fink, 1971a; Green, 2021). Others wore boots, chaps, and vests (Fink, 1971a, 1973b), or sported chains, padlocks, handcuffs, and whips on their belts (Fink, 1973c).

In 1974, leatherman Doric Wilson marched in a leather vest with his mother (Wilson, 2008). Attendees stripped down to their briefs (Fink, 1974c), and a group of leather/levi men marched with black balloons representing the DC Eagle and the Spike (a NY leather bar) (Fink, 1974d, 1974e). One woman sported aviators, bra, short shorts, knee-high boots, and a singletail whip astride her bicycle (Fink, 1974a). Others flagged and showed off leather collars on leads (Fink, 1974b).

4.5.4 Chicago

Public displays of sexuality as a part of Pride week events began early in Chicago. In 1971, activists in Chicago staged a mass "kiss-in" at Civic Center Plaza to protest the trial of two activists recently charged with public indecency for kissing in public (Bruce, 2016). By 1973, Chicago Pride drew a crowd of over 3000 and included a float by the Gold Coast, a legendary leather bar. A classic car featured the Gold Coast's version of "Bonnie and Clyde," and following them was a huge black leather boot with chains, carrying over a dozen leathermen (Dunfee, 1973).

4.5.5 GAA and Drag

Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) mobilized New York LGBTQ people around a city human rights ordinance in late 1969. Following early debates over drag and transvestite participation, GAA adopted a radically inclusive policy: the GAA preamble to their constitution emphasized maximal bodily autonomy, and stated that no one would be asked to stay behind the scenes because of their dress (Bernstein, 2016). In 1971, activists from GAA testified in full drag before city council on behalf of the nondiscrimination bill (Bernstein, 2016). Unfortunately the bill failed. For Marotta (1981), confusion between transvestism and homosexuality played a significant role in that failure.

Over the next three years, GAA gained increasing access to the New York polity, and passage of the bill appeared more and more likely. GAA leaders chose to narrow their agenda by excluding drag queens. At one council hearing, GAA activists stood quietly by as an amendment to exclude transvestism was introduced (Bernstein, 2016). In Bernstein (2016)'s analysis, this shift in policy represented a transition from *identity for critique* (deploying queer identities in confrontational ways which challenge social norms) to *identity for education* (putting one's best face forward to break down stereotypes and obtain civil

 $^{^{\}rm 27}{\rm STAR}$ had already marched in prior years; it's unclear what made these groups "the first."

rights).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, activists and organizations across the US would respond to organized rightwing opposition by engaging in similar normalizing campaigns, seeking to distance the lesbian and gay movement from its initial, radically inclusive goals of sexual liberation. Less "acceptable" elements of the queer community—including trans people, drag, and leather—would find their participation in community events challenged (Bernstein, 2016).

4.6 Bacchanalia: 1975-1976

In the mid-1970s San Francisco Pride became a celebration of bodies and sexuality. Earlier prohibitions against nudity appear to have been rescinded or under-enforced: Bay Area Reporter (1975b) described men in bikinis on floats, and M. Owens (1975) discussed "public nudity and onthe-street drinking." Photographs in Vector (1975) show women riding on motorcycles with breasts proudly on display. In Santa Cruz, the Gay Pride Week schedule included a workshop on sadism and masochism held at Cabrillo College (Bay Area Reporter, 1975a).

Public sexuality at Pride included BDSM displays. Men in leather cracked whips (Endres, 2009). One letter to the Bay Area Reporter complained about S/M visibility, as well as the emphasis on corporate presence, taverns, and the Imperial Court.

Are they *uplifted* at the sight of slaves on chains, licking grime off their master's boots, in full view of 50,000 people? Do they *really* believe that *this* is Gay Liberation at work? ...

I'm ready to see a responsible parade, a parade of *real* gays who are good and *angry*, dammit, at being oppressed for 200 years, and who demand Gay Equality and Freedom *Now*! (Joplin, 1976)

In 1976, San Francisco took public sexuality to new heights. Photographs show men in bikinis and boots (Hardman, 1976) and one leg-revealing outfit I can only describe as science fiction extravaganza (Nicoletta, 1992). The Bay Area Reporter described:

Lesbian women bared their chests and proudly displayed their abundant femininity; gay men adorned their bodies or displayed them as they saw fit. Hordes of men and women—blacks, whites, and many other races—joined together in a common show of unity as gay brothers and sisters celebrating gay freedom and progress....

While there were some grumblings from the ultra-conservatives in our crowd, the parade on

the whole was the best yet.... Sutro Baths capitalized on their Co-Ed policy with a luscious lady "au natural" on their float.... Marx Meadows in Golden Gate Park afterward was akin to a crowded bar—body to body. A bucolic and permissive atmosphere prevailed.... Due to the intense heat, EVERYONE just stripped to their most comfortable level; and there was much hugging, kissing, and squeezing. (Hardman, 1976)

After the parade, a "wild celebration in Marx Meadows" included "rampant nudity" (Pennington, 1988). In a 1985 interview, Gilbert Baker (creator of the rainbow Pride flag) recalled the experience:

"I don't remember much about my first parades, because I'd go and meet someone right away; then we'd go home and fuck all day."

The 1976 parade he distinctly remembers, however, for it was then that he saw *everyone* wearing costumes. He just *had* to run home to put on a dress. "That was the best parade ever," he insists, for people went "absolutely crazy." The parade and the concert following in Golden Gate Park turned into a "complete orgy." People ran naked and fucked all over the city.

"People remember it as a great shame, but it was fabulous," he recalls. "It was so liberating, taking power into our own hands like that." (Hippler, 1985)

In a 1982 interview with Jim Gordon, he "still remembered fondly" the 1976 parade. Gordon was "stark naked at Castro and Market before boarding a bus to the celebration site in Golden Gate Park that year. He describes what happened on the bus as an orgy."

The weather that day was incredibly hot, sweat running down unclad bodies—both women and men. One float was an old-fashioned fire truck that frequently squirted water to hose down the steaming crowds. (Berlandt, 1982)

In New York and Chicago, parades continued to build steam. In New York, 1975, photographs show men dancing down the street in nothing but briefs (Fink, 1975a), or wearing zippered briefs and a collar (Fink, 1975b). Jo Arnone, co-founder of the Lesbian Sex Mafia, marched in New York Pride in 1975—though she wouldn't do so in full leather until 1979 (Arnone, 2020). At least one marcher did sport the full Tom of Finland look (Fink, 1975c).

In 1976 both families and leatherfolk took part: a "Dykes and Tykes" contingent planned a float (Bay Area Reporter, 1976), and a woman in stockings, bra, and collar marched

with a single-tail whip displayed on her belt (Fink, 1976c). The Save Our Children campaign used footage of the San Other marchers sported metallic briefs and vests (Fink, 1976d). Lots of them (Fink, 1976e).²⁸ The Save Our Children campaign used footage of the San Francisco Freedom Day Parade in ad campaigns to position queer people (and their civil rights) as a threat to

One man marched in a bikini, cuffed at wrists and ankles, and wearing a studded collar—all connected by elaborate chains. He was led on a leash by a leather-jacketed figure carrying a flogger, crop, multiple handcuffs, and possibly a quirt.²⁹ The Eulenspiegel contingent, carrying their banner for S/M liberation, marched just behind two school-age children who were accompanied by a pair of adults (Fink, 1976a).

Scandalized by earlier public costumes, Los Angeles's Christopher Street West board voted in 1976 to ban a marcher from dressing as a giant phallus (Braun, 1984).

1976 also saw a major raid whose consequences echoed through the leather community. The Mark IV baths in Los Angeles held a "slave auction" fundraiser where men volunteered to auction themselves off for a date with the highest bidder. LAPD dispatched 100 officers, two helicopters, and multiple police vehicles to raid the event, and arrested dozens on charges including violating state laws against slavery (Andy, 2008; Los Angeles Leather History, 2021; S. K. Stein, 2021). In covering the event, The Advocate actually ran the LAPD's point of view (S. K. Stein, 2021).

4.7 Bryant & Briggs: 1977

Civil rights advances and public visibility generated organized right-wing backlash. In 1977 a conservative Christian coalition fronted by Anita Bryant (a singer and brand ambassador for the Florida Citrus Commission) launched a campaign to repeal a recently-passed civil rights ordinance in Dade County which prohibited anti-gay discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation. The "Save Our Children" campaign argued that the ordinance violated Bryant's religious freedom, revived long-standing views that homosexuals were dangerous and immoral, and synthesized a new moral panic that gay schoolteachers would "convert" and "sexually molest children" (Endres, 2009; Rosky, 2021; Side, 1977). The religious Right used Pride as a lever to generate public outrage against LGBTQ people.

Said Anita Bryant Aide Michael Thompson, "Thousands of homosexuals recently staged a bizarre Gay parade in San Francisco, then held daylight orgies, with no arrests by sheriff's deputies, in Golden Gate Park." Pettit (1977c) The Save Our Children campaign used footage of the San Francisco Freedom Day Parade in ad campaigns to position queer people (and their civil rights) as a threat to morality—and in particular as a threat to children. They showed images from Marx Meadows, as well as "men in leather snapping whips, dykes on bikes, and drag queens in fabulous dresses" and contrasted it with footage of "wholesome" straight parades (Endres, 2009; Pennington, 1988; SuchIsLifeVideos, 2014).

The Orange Bowl Parade: Miami's gift to the nation. Wholesome entertainment!

But in San Francisco, when they take to the streets, it's a parade of homosexuals. Men hugging other men. Cavorting with little boys. Wearing dresses and makeup. (SuchIsLife-Videos, 2014)

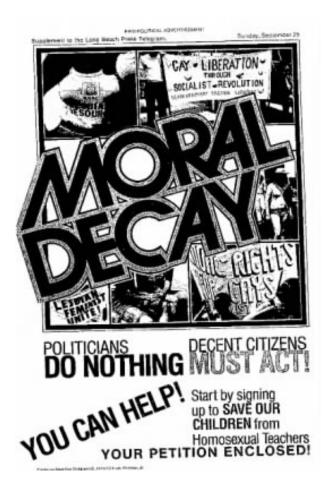
The Bryant campaign positioned gay teachers as especially dangerous, due to their proximity to children.

Homosexuals, the Save Our Children folks said in a recent full-page ad in The Miami Herald, used to be stoned to death. But nowadays, they said, there's developed "an attitude of tolerance ... based on the understanding that homosexuals will keep their deviant activity to themselves, will not flaunt their lifestyles, will not be allowed to preach their sexual standards to, or otherwise influence, impressionable young people." O'Leary & Voeller (1977)

Save Our Children became a nationwide fight, with gay bars dumping Florida orange juice and conservative groups across the country urging bans on gay teachers (Side, 1977). As Pettit (1977c) wrote: "Miami TV ads trashed previous San Francisco Gay parades in 11th-hour desperation to save 'Save Our Children'.... The EXAM-INER displayed as its lead story June 2 an SOC assessment that San Francisco is 'a cesspool of sexual perversion gone rampant.'"

²⁸Was there, like, a *memo* here, or...?

²⁹A classic struggle among leathermen—as with many gays—is the desire to bring *all* one's accessories to the ball.



In California, Senator John Briggs adopted Bryant's tactics, running a direct-mail campaign and full-page newspaper ads which shouted "MORAL DECAY" over images of LGBTQ protest signs (Shilts, 1982). "Politicians do nothing / Decent citizens must act! You can help! Start by signing up to save our children from Homosexual Teachers" (California Defend Our Children, 1977). Briggs used descriptions of grisly murders, fisting, and public sex in parks, beaches, and bathhouses to argue for the immorality of homosexuality.

Briggs' "California Defend Our Children" organization and "California Save Our Children Initiative" sought to make "public homosexual conduct" a fire-able offense for teachers. This conduct was not limited to queer sex. Marching in a parade, drinking in a gay bar, supporting a gay teacher, or even opposing the Briggs initiative could be considered grounds for firing. The following year, a similar proposal passed in Oklahoma (Rosky, 2021).

4.7.1 LGBTQ Retrenchment

The Bryant and Briggs campaigns threatened LGBTQ people as a group, but they also had second-order consequences. By highlighting more "deviant" aspects of queer life like drag, leather, and trans people, Save Our Children induced a repressive, normalizing response within the LGBTQ community.

Anita Bryant began her campaign to Save Our Children in 1977. The emergence of an anti-gay backlash, coupled with fundamentalist Christianity, had the mainstream lesbian and gay community up in arms. The impact of the backlash on other sexual minorities is less well documented. Because Bryant's hate campaign involved painting the ugliest, most sensationalistic picture of the gay community possible, she naturally focused on fringe and minority elements of the community. This created a meanspirited and frightened attitude in the mainstream gay movement. Pedophiles, transsexuals and transvestites, tearoom cruisers, hustlers, young gays and S/M people were disavowed and urged to keep quiet and become invisible. (Califia, 1987)

This retrenchment manifested in restrictions on nudity and sexuality at Pride in 1977, which the committee framed partly in terms of inclusion for more conservative LGBTQ people.³⁰

Nudity has been banned from this year's activities, and group applicants are being asked to sign a statement that they will monitor behavior in their entries. Charles Lee, committee co-chair, said persons baring genitalia will be asked to put their clothes back on or leave. "If that doesn't work, we will ask the police to cite them," he said.

Carol Hilder, the other co-chair, emphasized that Gay people are simply being asked to observe the same legal standards imposed on heterosexuals. She said that, to the contrary of any intent to judge Gay lifestyles, the committee this year is reaching out to evermorecomprehensive Gay elements—including those who have voiced objections to previous imagery.

Yet the nudity prohibition was primarily attributed to the desire to curb media exploitation. With the Anita Bryant hysteria, newspapers and television are likely to document Gay life in the U.S. more fully than before, and a

³⁰I see many parallels between the Bryant campaign and the modern Kink at Pride polemic, including the narrative of innocent children who are polluted by mere proximity to visible queerness and the construction of an idealized "family-friendly" public. There are also parallels in the LGBTQ reaction: sexually provocative displays are reframed as an accessibility barrier which drives away more conservative elements of the LGBTQ community.

need for positive images is critical, according to the planners. (Pettit, 1977a)

The parade committee initially planned to enforce the ban by asking police to cite violators. Following a boycott campaign and concerns about police abuse, the committee backed off from direct police involvement.

While reaffirming its ban on nudity this year, at week's end the committee modified its enforcement plans. Previously the committee had announced that, if nude persons refused to put their clothes on and also refused to leave the festivities, "we will ask the police to cite them." On June 5, the committee declared it would not be held responsible for law-enforcement of persons baring genitals.

Protests that police powers could conceivably be garnered against the committee's own sisters and brothers came from three quarters: a spokesperson for Lesbians Organizing, committee attorney Walter Caplan, and Larry Rice of Gays Opposing Discrimination. (Rice had leafleted the city urging a boycott of the parade.) After the enforcement modifications—which still insisted that all internal Gay community measures would be brought against nudity—all three said their reservations had been satisfied. (Pettit, 1977c)

On June 23, 1977, Bay Area Reporter (1977a) urged LGBTQ people to "march and be proud," but warned marchers to maintain "decorum." The Bryant campaign had "politicized" the campaign, and the number of monitors had been significantly increased.

In past years, the parade has been a festive, at times licentious, event (to the embarrassment of some watching along the route). This year's Parade Committee decided early in their planing to curb public indecency and ruled out nudity. The sudden jettison of the Gay Rights battle into the national media with Anita Bryant et al has caused deep concern throughout the Gay community here over the parade—fearing the repercussions of a bad press.

There will be more contingents of professional people and groups. Friends of Gays, family units ... mothers and children. (Bay Area Reporter, 1977a)

Politican Harvey Milk was similarly "urging all participants in the Gay Freedom Parade NOT to give the Bryant forces any more ammunition" (Mendenhall, 1977). His position was echoed by Conover (1977), who urged par-

ticipants to leave their drag at home in favor of a "re-spectable" appearance.

The annual Gay parade is about to sashay forth on Polk Street. We must stop to consider that the whole world will be watching, appraising, and judging as never before. We must consider what we want them to see.

Those that oppose the Gay community will be on hand in force to gather ammunition for the battle ahead. We have the dual opportunity of unloading some of their guns and corralling some new support from the greater community that we will desperately need. The key to our success in this event is an exhibition of DIGNITY.

If ever there was one, this is the year to park your boas and rhinestones in the closet. We are not fighting for the right to cross-dress but the greatest battle of free existence in the community. This year let us not flaunt our defiance but showcase our normality. (Conover, 1977)

The Parade Committee's ban on nudity was not without controversy. In a delightfully nuanced letter to all marchers, Anarchist Flashers argued that social ills like unemployment and imperialism were far more offensive than nudity, acknowledged the double standards for male and female nudity and how objectification affected women differently, and encouraged everyone to dress or undress as they wished.

The anarchistic dykes and faggots who set off the Stonewall Rebellion did not debate beforehand whether or not they would be offending the Church or State....

Sexual Liberation is impossible if we regard our own bodies as 'obscene' or 'offensive.' Nudity *is* offensive when used as a sexual weapon or commercial enticer, as it has been on many of the bar floats in the parade. (Flashers, 1977)

One arch flyer took the ban to its satirical conclusion, urging marchers to purchase "official Gay Day suits" from local retailers. "It is imperative that we portray gay people as socially acceptable members of the bourgeoisie."

OFFICIAL PARADE DRAG: gray business suits?

Anita Bryant's photographers will be lining our streets on June 26, snapping their instamatics at the slightest hint of weirdness. TV cameras will be zeroing in on any attire that viewers coast-tocoast might consider "abnormal".

"It is imperative that we portray gay people as socially acceptable members of the bourgeoise, "states Larry Rice of Gays Opposing Discrimination. "All over the country, people will be glued to heir TVs, judging all gays by what they see in this parade. People will walk off their jobs and rush home to watch the news. Churches Vill broadcast to their congregations. PGAE is anticipating a major ower blackout as a result of this media event."

"GRAY BUSINESS SUITS are the only costume which will endear us to the silent majority."

The majority of gays are upstanding citizens and business owners who have suffered too long from the adverse publicity caused by a small group of transvestites, nudists and other weirdos who claim to be gay. Only by expelling these negative images from the parade can we prove to society that gays believe in the ideals of this country too.

Gray business suits are not enough--we must all be sure that our ties are straight, if we want to convey a proper image. And blue shirts look best on TV. A class in tying neckties will be held immediately before the parade, for those unacquainted.

SHOULD GAY WOMEN ALSO WEAR GRAY SUITS? "It doesn't matter because straight society doesn't acknowledge the existence of Lesbians anyway. But I'm sure the straights would like it better if they wore skirts."

SHOULD THE POLICE CITE ANYONE NOT WEARING A SUIT? "That won't be necessary--the parade will be self-policing. Anyone not wearing a suit is undoubtedly an outside agitator, paid by Anita. There will be plenty of gays with the courage to teach these weirdos why we call this a FREEDOM paradel"



AUTHORIZED ATTIRE

"GRAY BUSINESS SUITS are the only costume which will endear us to the silent majority."

The majority of gays are upstanding citizens and business owners who have suffered too long from the adverse publicity caused by a small group of transvestites, nudists, and other weirdos who claim to be gay. Only by expelling these negative images from the parade can we prove to society that gays believe in the ideals of this country, too....

SHOULD THE POLICE CITE ANYONE NOT WEAR-ING A SUIT? "That won't be necessary—the parade will be self-policing. Anyone not wearing a suit is undoubtedly an outside agitator, paid by Anita. There will be plenty of gays with the courage to teach these weirdos why we call this a FREEDOM parade!" (Unknown, 1979)

At the same time, the Committee in charge of Pride avoided calling for any particular dress code:

The Gay Freedom Day Parade Committee was informed today that flyers are circulating in the Gay community that might cause confusion. Charles Lee, co-chair, stated "We take no responsibility for anonymous flyers." One read that marchers had to dress in a certain way.³¹ Said Lee, "People may wear whatever they like. Hopefully, they'll keep constantly in mind that the eyes of the nation will be focused on San Francisco's parade. (Bay Area Reporter, 1977b)

In the end, marchers *did* tone down their variant displays. Associated Press (1977) noted fewer men in drag than in years prior, and the Gay Pride Foundation's Paul Hardman said that marchers "seem to be following in the advice we put out to cool it and keep a decent image."

Debates had raged for at least two years regarding whether the annual event should be more political statement, as represented by sloganeering on the one hand, or more celebration and alleged commercialism, as represented by floats on the other.

After the June 7 victory against Gay people by the Save Our Children forces, the political statement advocates had the clear edge for the first time. The parade organizers' ban on nudity and other "negative imagery" stuck. There was a new self-discipline, borne of a near-universal acknowledgement that Gay liberation has entered a new era—an era contending with serious backlash for the first time, because Gay liberation is being taken seriously at last. (Pettit, 1977b)

SF mayor George Moscone similarly congratulated Pride participants on putting their best foot forward. "This important event showed the nation that the San Francisco Gay Community comports itself with dignity and respect for the law.... I am proud that our Gay community turned out in such record numbers and demonstrated to the country that San Franciscans have learned how to live with one another in peace and respect" (Moscone, 1977).

Mr. Marcus, a leather columnist for the Bay Area Reporter, wrote that queer people needed to be be aware of how much the public disliked gays, and that "flaunting" sexuality had political consequences.

The complacency of Gays in San Francisco that was so prevalent in Pre-Dade County days is over. Gay men and women have mobilized, albeit falteringly, to fight for the rights guaranteed by a democracy. But do you realize that 70% of the population doesn't like homosexuality as an alternate lifestyle? Further, they are completely turned off by what they see in the way of lewd and lascivious conduct on Castro, Polk, and Folsom Streets as well as at Land's End and Buena

 $^{^{31}\}mathrm{I}$ don't know that this was about the Gray Business Suits flyer, but I hope it was.

Vista Park, where several Gay men (and women) display their private and more often sexual side in public. The general masses are simply not into flaunting sexuality in public, "decent" or otherwise....

Therefore, you can save YOUR human rights by respecting the human rights of OTHERS, and this does not include flaunting your sexuality on the streets or any other public place. (Mr. Marcus, 1977a)

This is not to say that leather, bikers, bars and baths were altogether excised from the parade. Marcus went on to describe the South of Market (a leather-centric territory in San Francisco) contingent:

It was an exhilarating experience to see virtually EVERY lifestyle presented but personally, to me, the number of bikes, leather men, and overlays of various clubs were a treat! South of Market was represented by the Stud, Bolt, Boot Camp, Febe's, Club Baths, Tattoo Lagoon, cowboys, bikers, levi men galore with both men and women. (Mr. Marcus, 1977a)

Leatherfolk also participated in other Pride events. Associated Press (1977) reported that in Chicago, a color guard of men in leather and visored caps led 2,000 marchers in that year's parade. In New York, the L.I Spuds Motorcycle Club flew their colors with no shortage of thigh on display (Fink, 1977b). In the UK, the Midland Link Motor Sports Club "played a founding role in organizing" Birmingham Pride (Bishopsgate Institute, n.d.).

The Bryant campaign also inspired gay youth and families to demonstrate that homosexuality was not incompatible with children. Photographs of the San Francisco march show babies and toddlers being carried in the parade (Crawford Barton, 1977b, 1977a). In an explicit nod to "Save Our Children," kids in San Francisco marched in a "We Are Your Children" contingent (Crawford Barton, 1977c). In New York, "A flat-bed trailer carried lesbian mothers and their children" (New York Times, 1977), and small children rode on their parents' shoulders (Fink, 1977a).

4.8 The Lesbian Sex Wars: 1976–1979

The women's movement of the 1960s and 1970s was hostile for S/M women. Prior to the mid-1970s, there was essentially no discussion of female sadism, and only a little of masochism (Califia, 1987). In the mid-1970s, lesbians began to come out as kinky in print. Articles like Barbara Ruth's "Cathexis" and Joan Bridi Miller's 1976 "Sado-Masochism—Another Point of View" forced lesbians and feminists to confront the fact that some of their comrades were into BDSM (Califia, 1987; Rubin, 2015). This concept was not entirely palatable to mainstream 1970s feminism. As one article in Big Mama Rag put it:

Sadomasochism in any form is a reinforcement of the sex violence link which is an integral component of male defined sexuality... this is the psychology which leads to rape and all form of sexual intimidation and objectification ... For feminists to play with these forms and make games of them is as stupid as it is dangerous ... Sadomasochism is in no way a component of lesbian feminism (BMR Collective, 1976)

In late 1976, Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media (WAVPM) coalesced around a critique of pornography—and in particular, sadomasochistic pornography—as akin to violence against women and inimical to a liberated feminist ethic. As Rubin (2015) and Califia (1987) have argued at length, WAVPM's analysis of pornography's evils relied heavily upon S/M imagery, and despite not taking an official stance on S/M the organization was fundamentally opposed to women who found kink an enjoyable and rewarding aspect of their sexuality. WAVPM began marching in San Francisco's 1977 Pride (Pettit, 1977b). By 1978, the feminist anti-porn movement was "very powerful" in San Francisco's lesbian feminist circles (Califia, 1987; Cameron, 2002; Rubin, 2015).

On June 13, 1978 a group of lesbians (many of whom were also active in Society of Janus) formed Samois: the first organization devoted to lesbian S/M. They melded lesbian feminism with the Eulenspiegel Creed, and emphasized that lesbians could pursue BDSM activities in a safe, consensual, and fulfilling way. The confluence of WAVPM, Janus, and Samois set the stage for one of the first major battles over leather participation in Pride (Rubin, 2015).

4.8.1 San Francisco Pride: 1978

1977's attempts to normalize Pride were insufficient for more conservative San Franciscans. In a 1978 interview with the Bay Area Reporter, Dianne Feinstein held San Francisco gays responsible for the course of the nation generally and for San Francisco's population decline in particular, blamed sadomasochists for "imposing their values" on others, and complained that the gay community had failed to set reasonable standards for public behavior:³²

The Gay community in San Francisco, in my

³²In a nod to the growing influence of feminist anti-pornography rhetoric, Feinstein also blamed pornography for the ills of the Tenderloin and expressed confusion that gay people would see control of pornography as anti-gay.

opinion, bears an immense responsibility for what will happen throughout the United States. If we can demonstrate that we can become a sound, stable, secure community where everybody can live-not with one imposing their human rights on another but with a sense of dignity, living a full and constructive life-then we will make it easier for Gays throughout the United States. This brings up the whole area of human rights and where we are. I think people have a right to live without imposing their values on others. What I see happening in San Francisco—in the bar scene, in the street scene, in the S&M scene—is an imposition of a lifestyle on those who do not wish to participate in the lifestyle. I'm very concerned that there be balance. We have a major problem in the city, because we're losing families. The school system has lost 30,000 youngsters since 1970. We're losing population. We've lost 7% of our population since 1970, and lost just in the last two years alone 11,000 people from the city. Most of these are families....

The degree to which the Gay Freedom Day Parade has been used as a device to continually press for a less structured city, a more anythinggoes city—at that degree the movement and I part company. I now look at the Gay Freedom Day Parade as again continuing this thrust beyond what I consider to be that which is necessary to live in a mixed community. To acclaim, well, "We'll take over the community, the heck with everybody else, we're going to do our own thing and we don't really much care what anybody else thinks"—I've seen that happening on the streets now in an attitude. I've been getting letters from constituents all over the city indicating their concern about it. Last year after some pressure, the parade was brought under control. The year before I don't think it did San Francisco any good. To parade nudity and obscene symbols is something I would not like to see supported with public money.

I've tried to talk to various leaders in the Gay community to say that the community needs to set some standards. The community needs to get together and decide what will be and what will not be, in terms of what's good for the majority of all people. I have not been able to secure a commitment. When it's all over the streets, many people want to see a crackdown. I'm very concerned that, unless some standards are set within the Gay community, there will be increased public cries: "How can we let this happen? Why do we sanction the Gay Freedom Day Parade? (Pettit, 1978b)

Just a few months later, Supervisor Dan White³³ attempted to deny the street closure for the parade, saying "this is our only opportunity to approve or disapprove of what goes on in our streets" (P., 1978).

What we have here is not simply a parade. In the past there have been obscene floats and behavior we wouldn't approve of if it were heterosexual. The vast majority of people in this city don't want public displays of sexuality. (Pettit, 1978a)

The Bryant & Briggs campaigns of 1977 also weighed heavy on gays who felt the need to self-police. One letter to the Bay Area Reporter urged:

The "straight" world considers us abnormal, un-American. What we have to show them is that we are as normal and as American as they are. The Briggs people will be at the parade taking pictures to be used in their campaign as similar pictures were used in Dade County. They'll use these pictures and ask, "Do you want this type of person teaching your child?" They will naturally play upon the emotions of parents to hide the real issues. Are we going to give them ammunition for such an attack on us?

We must fight the attack according to their rules. We must put on the biggest performance of the All American Guy and Girl ever done in a Gay event. We have to "play the game according to their rules" until we are assured of our rights. I urge restraint!!! (Manring, 1978)

Manring went on to tout the possibility of a marching band as an excellent example of "all-American" Pride, and suggested groups of athletes, veterans in uniform, and flag waving.

As in years prior, the parade wound up including a mix of families and leather bars & baths. Video shows kids participating and spectating (Caroline Barton, 1978; C. W. Barton, 1978). Childcare was offered as a part of the parade (Pettit, 1978a), and photographs show children holding signs and standing under banners like "Let Every Pansy Bloom" (Mendenhall, 1978; Scot, 1978). Lesbian Mothers, Gay Fathers Group, Parents of Gay People, and "Gaze Under: Gays Under 21" all marched—just a few entries behind the Sutro Baths float, where anonymous sex

³³White assassinated supervisor Harvey Milk and mayor George Moscone six months later. It is not lost on me that White felt public displays of sexuality were morally reprehensible, but was personally willing to murder a gay politician.

was the order of the day (Bay Area Reporter, 1978). Dykes on Bikes were represented, and Arena (a leather bar) and Black & Blue marched together wearing leather vests and riding motorcycles (Bay Area Reporter, 1978; Clay, 1978).

Organizers of the 1978 San Francisco Gay Freedom Day Parade had strict rules about "objectionable conduct." People appearing nude would be given two warnings by monitors to put their clothes back on, and if that failed, police would be called to intervene (P., 1978; Pettit, 1978a).

Nevertheless, video shows abundant drag, skimpy shorts, and one "semi-naked man roller skating past the camera with considerable aplomb, wearing only knee pads, a thong and butterfly wings" (KPIX, 1978). Participants sported showgirl costumes (Ueda, 1978) and revealing tribal outfits (Crawford Barton, 1978), and drag queens showed off their legs (Jarvis, 1978). Bare-breasted women carried signs for "equal breast laws" (Robert Pruzan, 1978). Mendenhall (1978) felt that the roughly ten women with bare breasts "out of many, many thousands" represented an improvement over past years, but deputy police chief Jeremiah Taylor found the "considerable female nudity" "a problem."

The bigger problem for Pride organizers was that "some S&M entries" followed the Women Opposed to Violence and Pornography in the Media contingent (Bay Area Reporter, 1979): following internal discussion in May and June of 1978, the Society of Janus fielded a small contingent (Rubin, 2015; Society of Janus, 1978b). With them were members of Samois, including Janus co-coordinator Patrick (then Pat) Califia (Califia, 1987; Hardy, 2003b).³⁴ "For the first time, an S/M organization (as opposed to leather bars or S/M baths) marched in the parade" (Califia, 1987). As the Society of Janus's July newsletter mildly remarked:

Janus marched as a group in the Gay Freedom Day Parade and was generally well-received. Most members probably saw the group's picture that appeared the next day in the Chronicle. (Society of Janus, 1978a)

Califia's account in *Coming to Power* offered a more complex view, including harassment by crowd members and Pride officials (Califia, 1987):

Although Janus had applied for and received a permit to be in the parade, our contingent was hassled by monitors who did not believe we had a right to be there. They tried to expel us from the parade on the grounds that we violated a parade regulation excluding images that were sexist or depicted violence against women.

I'll grant you, we must have looked weird to the monitors. We were definitely out of the leather ghetto, marching with other political and social groups. One of the members was driving a big red jeep, and one of the women members of Janus had chained herself to the hood, to make it look more like a float. At the monitors insistence, she eventually unchained herself. I could understand that their concerns about safety made this a reasonable request. But then the monitors became hysterical about a lesbian couple who were marching together. The bottom had a ripped-up shirt that showed her whip marks, and she was wearing a jewelry chain around her wrist and fingers. The top was holding the other end of the chain. "Take that chain off that woman!" one of the monitors kept screaming. "Unchain her!"

"I can't," replied the unruffled mistress. "I welded it on myself this morning." The monitors disappeared, frothing at the mouth, and called the head of security, who turned out to be a lesbian who was just as rabid as they were. I argued with her about our right to be in the parade practically the entire way down Market Street. While we argued, photographers kept leaping in front of the contingent and taking pictures of us and journalists kept shoving microphones in my face. One of the reporters shouted at me, "How would you feel about someone who wanted you to cut their leg off?" The crowd was equally hostile. We were booed and hissed, there were shouts of "fascists" and "Nazis," and some people threatened us or spit as us.

There was a lot of confusion about who we were. Many of the spectators assumed we were the gay Nazis, despite the fact that not a single swastika was in evidence. This confusion was increased when Priscilla Alexander published "Masters and Slaves by Any Other Name" (Bay Times, July 1978) and compared us with Nazis.

After the parade, Janus set up a booth and distributed literature. A lot of people came up to talk to us (mostly gay leathermen) but even the S/M people thought it was weird that we were in the parade. They were ashamed of their sexuality, afraid to make it public, afraid it would attract more misunderstanding and harassment, and didn't understand why anybody would think S/M was a political issue. We also

³⁴Hardy (2003b) says that Califia was instrumental in getting Society of Janus to march in the first place. Society of Janus newsletters from the late 1970s suggest that Califia was very active in the group, but I don't have a direct corroborating source.

got a lot of shit from gays of all sexualities who thought in the Year of Briggs we should all come to the parade in pinstripe suits and polyester pantsuits. Of course, the San Francisco *Chronicle* ran a large picture of our contingent with their story of the parade, which confirmed these fears.

Nevertheless, I was proud to march with Janus. and I think it was long overdue for S/M people to make themselves more visible in the gay parade. Individual sadomasochists and the gay businesses South of Market have made a big contribution to the gay community, and we are entitled to recognition and respect. In times of repression, it is always tempting to police and censor your own community. But I don't believe gay people can make themselves conventional enough to escape persecution. We are hated because we have a different kind of sex, the wrong kind of sex. I have always wanted freedom to be as queer, as perverted, on the street and on the job as I am in my dungeon. I don't think radical perverts should obey gay or lesbian or feminist mind police any more than they should obey the vice squad. (Califia, 1987)

1978 appears to have been a rough year for San Francisco leather. The Chronicle's spread juxtaposed images of children in the parade with the S/M Liberation contingent, and Chronicle satirist Art Hoppe poked fun at the concept of masochists wanting to be liberated (Mendenhall, 1978). In October, SFPD's vice squad stepped up harassment around South of Market's leather establishments, and Alcoholic Beverage Control revoked or suspended the liquor licenses of "roughly half the leather bars in the Folsom Street area." The crackdown caused some bars to clean up their acts and close down the backrooms where one could engage in sex or rough play; others grew more suspicious of outsiders and women, or became private clubs. According to Califia (1987) the local gav press refused to report on this: it took the Milk & Moscone assassination, followed by additional police harassment of non-leather gay bars, to provoke press coverage. Both Milk's murder and the Janus/Samois contingent would shape 1979's parade (Califia, 1987; Comeau, 1979).

4.8.2 San Francisco: 1979

Following the joint march with Society of Janus, Samois members voted to march in the 1979 Gay Freedom Day parade,³⁵ submitted their application, and immediately became embroiled in a conflict with the parade commit-

tee. One of the parade monitors who had harassed the Janus contingent, along with several other members of the march subcommittee, attempted to pass regulation which would ban leather and S/M regalia from the parade altogether. Following the feminist anti-porn discourse, "this was supposed to be a natural extension of the ban on sexist imagery or imagery which promoted violence against women" (Califia, 1987).

In response, Samois mobilized. Members joined the parade subcommittee and protested the regulation, arguing that the presence of a lesbian S/M contingent was not inherently harmful to women:

We told people over and over again that we were not fascists or rapists; that we were not disruptive or violent; and that we had as much right to be in a gay parade as drag queens or lesbian mothers or bar owners. (Califia, 1987)

Califia writes that he asked the parade monitor how they planned to enforce the regulation: if random people turned up for the parade dressed in leather, how would monitors respond? Echoing previous tactics for nudity enforcement, the monitor responded that they would turn matters over to the police.

Samois distributed leaflets on Folsom street, called sympathetic friends, and managed to get enough votes on the subcommittee to support the freedom of Pride attendees to wear whatever they wanted (Califia, 1987).³⁶ As the Bay Area Reporter announced on April 4, 1979:

The 1979 Gay Freedom Day Committee will apparently take the advice of its March Subcommittee and not attempt to bar persons who appear in chains, leather and other bondage symbolism in the eighth annual parade on June 24.

Several of the core of 60 people who have participated in this year's planning meetings had objected to a 1978 "parade" occurrence. Some "S&M" entries had immediately followed Women Opposed to Violence and Pornography in the Media.

Bondage symbolism, objectors this year contend, provides not only sensation for non-Gay media coverage, but also emits a message contrary to the freedom theme of Gay Pride Week. Thus, they proposed a ban on leather and chains for this year's celebration. The 1977 and 1978

³⁵Califia (1987) notes that not all of Samois was for marching in public: some preferred a more private approach.

 $^{^{36}}$ S. K. Stein (2021) says that the committee did ban BDSM organizations from participating, and that those organizations would face recurrent attempts to bar participation in the parade over the next half-dozen years, but I can't completely square this with Califia and Marcus' accounts.

events in San Francisco attracted 250,000 to 300,000 people and received national publicity.

However, a majority of the GFDC had decided that the "freedom" theme itself requires that people be allowed the attire of their choice.

Many subcommittee members see a parallel between this latest controversy and another of several years' standing involving men in female attire ("drag"). A 1976 guideline on sexism (adopted also by succeeding committees) resolved that "dressing in drag on the part of either sex is not sexist of itself" and is offensive only if it "demeans women or is degrading to Gay men." (Bay Area Reporter, 1979)

As leather columnist Mr. Marcus (1979) sardonically observed, San Francisco's Gay Freedom Day Committee had been accepting donations from leather & public sex institutions for years: Boot Den, The Black & Blue, Leather Forever, Leatherworld, Liberty Baths, The Steam Works, Sutro Baths, and the 21st Street Baths were all sponsors of Pride. Refusing participation by leather *people* was in somewhat poor taste:

It was REAL nice to hear the news that the Gay Freedom Day Committee is allowing us sick leather, chain-wearing leather freaks to march with them on June 24; golly, they'll accept our greenback donations to pay for it, won't they? Prohibit leather dudes, indeed! (Mr. Marcus, 1979)

In the end Samois did march in 1979: their contingent began with a half-dozen people and grew over the course of the parade. They ran a booth at Civic Center afterwards and talked to people about the group, and also distributed copies of their newly-printed "What Color is Your Handkerchief": the first hanky code for lesbians (Califia, 1987).

Society of Janus marched as well, carrying a banner which read "Straights-Bi's-Gays [*sic*] Say Consenting S/M is OK." One marcher's sign proclaimed "Don't deny my freedom to be a slave" (J. Altman, 1979). Califia (1987) recalls that the "crowd was friendlier" that year. Dykes on Bikes received "resounding roars from the crowd" (Pennington, 1988). Even the chief monitor of the parade wore "black leather drag with handcuffs curling on the back of his belt" (Comeau, 1979).

Denim, leather, keys. Beer cans and boredom. Drunks and well-dressed straight couples. Cameras and knapsacks and babies in wheelers. Dogs and wine bottles and semi-drag. (Comeau, 1979)

Again, Lesbian Mothers and Gay Fathers marched

(Comeau, 1979), as did a "Gays Under 21" contingent, which demanded to have their sexuality taken seriously:

Gay young people are invisible to the straight people who repeal adult gay rights bills under the guise of "saving" youth....

Gay adults sell out our rights, by accepting straights' position that young people have no sexuality, and by excluding us from the larger gay community. (Gays Under 21 Contingent, 1979)

4.9 Growth Of Leather: 1978–1979

Outside San Francisco, Pride continued to push the envelope for public displays of sexuality. In 1978 marchers in New York sported bikinis, quarter-inch inseams, and jockstraps in the park, not to mention briefs on the sidewalk and this incredible combination of striped face paint with a string bikini (Fink, 1978a, 1978b, 1978c, 1978d, 1978e).

In 1979 Jo Arnone, co-founder of the Lesbian Sex Mafia, marched in full leather: she claims to have been the first woman to do so (Arnone, 2020). Also in the 1979 march were leathermen in vests, covers, boots, and motorcycle club shirts (Fink, 1979a). In Central Park afterwards, one man led another by a chain leash attached to a leather collar, and another man sported a chain & padlock collar with an asymmetric chain harness (Fink, 1979b, 1979c). Both Eulenspiegel and family organizations marched, as usual:

The loudest cheers went up as a few banners passed by: those of the New York City Parents of Gays, the Lesbian Herstory Archives, the Gay Daddies, the Coalition for Gay Deaf Rights, the Gay Advocate Newspaper, which handed out balloons saying "Let Go and Live," and the leatherjacketed marchers of the Eulenspiegel Society, which advocates sadomasochistic relationships. (New York Times, 1979)

Sacramento Pride in 1979 had a gay students contingent. In Miami, the Thebans M.C. led the parade "dressed in the usual apparel" (Histo, 1979).

4.9.1 1979 March on Washington

Spurred by the Bryant campaign, the murder of Harvey Milk, and continued injustice in policing, jobs, housing, family policy, and military service, LGBTQ activists organized the first large-scale March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights in 1979. While the March had an explicitly political focus, it also functioned as a celebratory counterpublic and unifying, collective space—much like Pride. One group of topless women cheered together (Rosemary, 1979), and Alan Young's welcome message was almost universally inclusive, reflecting the unifying ethos of the gay liberation movement (Weeks, 2016).

Today in the capital of America, we are all here, the almost liberated and the slightly repressed; the butch, the femme, and everything in-between; the androgynous; the monogamous and the promiscuous; the masturbators and the fellators and the tribadists; men in dresses and women in neckties: those who bite and those who cuddle; celebates and pederasts; diesel dykes and nelly queens; amazons and size queens; Yellow, Black, Brown, White, and Red; the shorthaired and the long; the fat and the thin; the nude and the prude; the beauties and the beasts; the studs and the duds; the communes, the couples, and the singles; pubescents and the octogenarians. Yes, we are all here! We are everywhere! Welcome to the March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights! (National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gav *Rights*, 1979)

Per S. K. Stein (2021), leather participation was banned from the march. However, leatherfolk did participate! Troy Perry spoke (*National March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights*, 1979), and leatherman Eric E. Rofes helped organize the event.

The scapegoating of leathermen for AIDS reminds me of criticism S/M men experienced before the health crisis: We gave the community a bad name by being flagrantly erotic. Our celebration of manliness and images of hypermasculinity were indications that we hated women. We were responsible for everything from failures of gay rights bills to fires south of Market. Leathermen were the queerest of the queer during an era when respectable gay men wore Lacoste shirts and khaki slacks.

As an organizer of the 1979 March on Washington for Lesbian and Gay Rights, I sat and listened to a respected colleague demand through a bullhorn that marchers remove their handcuffs because of local regulations. I've had to listen to staff members question my common sense because I served as director of a one-day leather institute at a national lesbian and gay health conference while I was employed as director of an AIDS organization. I've witnessed community centers debate whether it was acceptable for support groups of leather-people to rent meeting space. (Rofes, 1991)

4.10 Fragmentation: 1980–1982

The 1970s saw the generation of a shared gay identity, the formation of Pride, and an explosion of queer lifestyles. LGBTQ people explored new forms of gender, love, and sex through trans, drag, and leather identities (to name but a few!)

A common sense of sexual oppression held people together at first in the gay liberation movement, but it was soon obvious that a common label obscured a range of sexual needs and desires, with different social, cultural and political contexts, positions, and emerging subjectivities and ways of life... Gay liberation, far from dissipating identity, inspired a dynamic explosion of new identities that shaped the post gay liberation period. (Weeks, 2016)

By the end of the 1970s, private S/M clubs and subgroups of motorcycle clubs were no longer the only options for LGBTQ people into BDSM. San Francisco's South of Market offered a broad array of leather bars and baths along the so-called "Valley of the Kings" (Rubin, 1998). Vogel (1995) recalls the late 70s to early 80s in New York City as having a thriving leather culture integrated into the physical territory of the gay village:

At Tiffany's Restaurant, on West Fourth near Christopher Street," (just around the corner from Stonewall Inn) "you would find leathermen having a burger and fries at 7 a.m. after a night at The Saint and Mineshaft. Dressed in their leathers, black T-shirts wet and torn, they'd eat and listen to conversations by drag queens bragging and moaning about their lost loves of the night before....

Around the corner on Christopher you'll see Boots & Saddle across the street from Citibank. That establishment was usually my first stop on my s/m trips into the Village. (Vogel, 1995)

One block west of Stonewall Inn, on Bleecker Street, was the Marquis de Suede: "a terrific little leather shop," and two blocks west on Christopher, the Leather Man (which is still there today!), where "The front display window is frequently changed making for interesting comments (and judgements) by gay vanilla or straight strollers/tourists" (Vogel, 1995).

All-orientation and lesbian S/M organizations like The Eulenspiegel Society, Society of Janus, and Samois were established in New York and San Francisco. These organizations, bars and baths, and individual leatherfolk took to the streets each Pride, making the leather subculture visible to the broader LGBTQ community and to straight

society.

This visibility generated organized conservative backlash in the form of the Bryant and Briggs campaigns, which leveraged images of non-conforming queer people to generate a moral panic over homosexuality in general. Gay and lesbian leaders responded in part by attempting to tamp down variant gender and sexual expression. Similarly, the emergence of organized lesbian BDSM collided with a feminist analysis of sadomasochism as inherently violent and degrading to women. Although leather people were constructing an increasingly sophisticated and visible subculture with new symbols, acts, and institutions, social conservatives and anti-porn feminists pushed gay society to engage in a sort of cultural gatekeeping: deciding who, exactly counted as gay. Bernstein (2016) dates this transition to roughly 1980:

Framed as an issue of sexual freedom, sadomasochism could easily be considered an appropriate goal of gay liberation. But because sadomasochism was a part of both heterosexual and homosexual sexual practices, and thus not strictly a "gay and lesbian" issue, it could be pushed off a gay rights platform. The public disavowal of sadomasochists by lesbian and gay leaders was part and parcel of the movement's transition to a narrow interest group, seeking political reforms from one that strived for sexual liberation.

The state and lesbian and gay rights opponents played a central role in forcing the lesbian and gay movement to renegotiate what it meant to be lesbian and gay, who could be a part of the movement, and what were the appropriate goals of activism. The parameters of what constituted an appropriate gay and lesbian issue or even identity were continually negotiated and renegotiated. Uproar over sadomasochism made homosexuality seem tame by comparison. By disavowing any connection with sadomasochism, lesbian and gay activists hoped to move closer toward achieving public and political respectability, as opposed to marginalization and pathologization. (Bernstein, 2016)

This social pressure often came in the form of arguments that homosexuality was incompatible with family. The National Enquirer, on August 12, described a "shocking sign held on the sidelines by a young girl" at Pride which read "I love my gay mother." Anita Bryant Ministries also aired *The Anita Bryant Spectacular*: a two-hour television special combining patriotic and religious songs with themes of military struggle and child-raising, aimed at bringing the nation back to "decency, morality, and wholesome family

life" (O'Connor, 1980).

On the S/M front, the CBS documentary "Gay Power, Gay Politics" aired in 1980, and ostensibly depicted the rise of gay voting influence in San Francisco. Using inflammatory images of BDSM (many recorded at a heterosexual club!), it depicted S/M as violent, nonconsensual, dangerous, and morally corrupt (Bernstein, 2016; Rubin, 1982a, 2015). CBS implied that S/M was rampant in San Francisco due to gay political influence, and groups across the country raced to distance themselves from BDSM. Meanwhile, the crime thriller Cruising featured Al Pacino diving into the leather subculture to track a serial killer targeting gay men—which sparked protests from many gays who were upset not that it linked S/M with murder, but that by depicting the leather subculture, it presented gays in a poor light. In 1981, Mayor Feinstein decided to shut down safety classes for BDSM offered by the city coroner (Rubin, 2015).

Anti-S/M attitudes were also adopted by lesbian and gay movement leaders. In 1981, Skip Aiken advocated at the International Gay Association in Italy for the inclusion of BDSM in the lesbian and gay movement. Echoing the 1979 March on Washington, he was told that the problem was not BDSM *people*, but that their visible participation in leather, uniforms, and BDSM gear.³⁷ S/M inclusion would give the public the wrong idea about the lesbian and gay movement (S. K. Stein, 2021).

In 1982, the Society of Janus' article *Don't Close Up the Closet Door* identified BDSM people as oppressed in much the same way as other sexual minorities:

While lesbians and gay men marched militantly out of their closets, we were urged to keep a low profile, leave our leather at home, and keep quiet about the whole business in general. (Society of Janus, 1982)

In response, Society of Janus (1982) wrote, SM people took off their boots, put on their sneakers, and made a play for acceptance "by misrepresenting ourselves to people who weren't going to accept us anyway." The strategy, the author felt, was unsuccessful: the media, politicians like Feinstein, and conservative coalitions like the moral majority continued to vilify S/M people, and gay rights orgs moved to exclude or disavow their presence.

Within the movement for sexual liberation, we are labeled "divisive" by those whose "politically correct" sense of "unity" somehow always seems to exclude us. (Society of Janus, 1982)

By 1984, leatherfolk had followed in the footsteps of gay liberation and begun to construct an ethos of collec-

³⁷"Love the sinner, hate the sin."

tive cultural identity. Writers like Geoff Mains described the San Francisco leather scene as a distinct subcultural "tribe" with its own ritual, symbolism, language, dress, and territory.

Today, men like David and John not only accept their leather identities but have pride to the point of making occasional incursions in ethnic dress to the outside world. Like their Gay brothers and Lesbian sisters, they are often accused of flaunting it.

Notwithstanding this embrace of the Gay subculture and its fundamental aims, leathermen are poorly accepted by that group. Their secretive institutions and relatively closed culture go misunderstood, and mainstream Gays often take little time to investigate before they comment. To many, leathermen are seen as aloof, dangerous, or sick. Pontificates Dennis Altman: "I wouldn't want to say S/M is a sickness, but I'm not convinced it's particularly healthy... I can not see S/M as other than the product of a very deep sexual repression..." (Mains, 1984)

4.10.1 The Lesbian Sex Wars

In 1980, hostility against leather was frequently expressed by lesbians and feminists. The National Organization of Women (NOW) passed a resolution condemning S/M (Cameron, 2002). As Califia (1980) recalled one anonymous comment:

I hope you only do those things in leather bars. If I ever saw women doing S/M in a lesbian bar, it would make me so angry I'd want to beat them up. (Califia, 1980)

As Califia (1987) argues, Bryant, Briggs, and WAVPM all pushed the San Francisco gay community to condemn their own minority elements. Anti-porn activists tried to exclude SM people, images, and texts from bookstores, conferences, and meeting places (Cameron, 2002). Feminist bookstores refused to stock Samois publications like *What Color is Your Handkerchief* and *Coming to Power*, and lesbian S/M texts became the target of petitions and street protests by WAVPM. Newspapers refused to run ads for lesbian BDSM events. Attacks on S/M were published in the lesbian press: Lesbian Connection, Body Politic, Off Our Backs, and Sapphistry all ran articles condemning lesbian BDSM (Califia, 1987; Cameron, 2002; Rubin, 2015). This conflict became known as the Lesbian Sex Wars.³⁸

Although Samois did not have consensus over the Sex Wars or porn in general (Califia, 1987), all-or-nothing

rhetoric employed by anti-porn activists induced many Samois members to participate in a series of counterprotests against WAVPM (Rubin, 2015). In so doing,

[Samois] was groping towards a kind of protoqueer politics that contained a broader and inclusive sense of sexual oppressions based on specifically sexual inequalities. Samois consolidated several disparate threads of political critique pertaining to SM, helping to shape subsequent SM political consciousness and agenda. (Rubin, 2015)

In preparation for San Francisco's 1981 Pride parade, Samois attempted to hold a meeting for out-of-town women interested in organizing their own lesbian S/M groups, and were denied access to meeting space at the San Francisco Women's Building. Despite the Women's Building hosting high school dances, weddings, and meetings of non-feminist and even all-male groups, lesbian BDSM was a bridge too far. Samois had to argue extensively for their case, organized a petition signed by 30 prominent local feminists, and were ultimately granted access to the space—only to discover, after paying, that they couldn't engage in "offensive" behaviors like wearing leashes. Building security would monitor Samois members to make sure they complied (Califia, 1987).

Ultimately Samois considered their meeting at the Women's Building a success: women attended from San Jose, Los Angeles, Portland, New Mexico, New York, and Canada, and the friendship networks established at that meeting became the seeds for regional S/M groups across the country. However, the Women's Building refused to host further Samois meetings, citing a lack of consensus, before adopting a policy in 1981 which banned any S/M group from using their space (Cameron, 2002). Samois moved to renting meeting space from a gay male art gallery & performance space in South of Market (Califia, 1987).

The Lesbian Sex Wars reached a flashpoint in the 1982 Barnard feminist conference on sexuality. As the antiporn movement constricted dialogues around sex, participants sought to create a safe space for a nuanced, broad-ranging, and intersectional discussion of women's pleasure and the dangers of sexuality in a heteronormative, patriarchal society. In response, anti-porn feminists launched a telephone campaign in the week before the conference, alleging it had been taken over by "sexual perverts." Despite a moderate and wide-ranging program with no particular focus on BDSM, the president of Barnard College went so far as to confiscate all printed copies of the conference booklet to prevent its distribution. Women Against Pornography then picketed the conference, claiming it advocated for sado-masochism,

³⁸Also the "Feminist Sex Wars," or simply "The Sex Wars."

pornography, and butch/femme roles. They also dis- Leather magazines like Drummer also emphasized the tributed literature shaming individual feminists by name for their perceived enjoyment of stigmatized sexual behaviors (Vance, 1992c).

4.10.2 Leather

In New York, two new leather groups were founded: Gay Male S/M Activists (GMSMA) in 1980, and the Lesbian Sex Mafia (LSM) in 1981 (Davis, 1991). Unlike The Eulenspiegel Society, these groups were specifically for lesbian and gay men. Like TES, they combined social gatherings, educational outreach, and political activism. Both LSM and GMSMA were open groups, advertising their meetings publicly and allowing anyone to attend. Both owed their existence to the gay press, which published their letters seeking like-minded people (Rubin, 2015; D. Stein, 1991a). As GMSMA founder Brian O'Dell's letter to Gay Community News urged:

With distorted media bigotry (Cruising and CBS' "Gay Power, Gay Politics") fagbashing of brothers going to the Mineshaft, Spike, and Eagle, and the oppression of our lifestyle within the larger gay/lesbian community, we need to unite and work together. (Rubin, 2015)

As P. Douglas (1995) understood it:

O'Dell aimed to [create] a vehicle for addressing the sexual politics of S/M and combatting anti-S/M prejudice in the rest of the gay world (no one thought we'd have much success trying to educate the straight world). (P. Douglas, 1995)

Similar groups emerged in other cities. Around 1982, Los Angeles leatherdykes frustrated with the collapse of local rap groups founded Leather and Lace: a lesbian SM group which circulated a newsletter, as well as offering members club structures including patches, uniform shirts, and initiation rituals (Fish, 1993).

Perhaps in response to a growing moral panic over BDSM, S/M organizations increasingly emphasized consent in their public messaging. The Lesbian Sex Mafia "united in the principles of confidentiality, consensuality, and safety." Samois' Statement of Purpose declared "SM must be consensual, mutual, and safe"-a position its members articulated in their newsletter, two books, and articles by several members, including Patrick Califia, Gayle Rubin, Victoria Baker and Carol Truscott. The 15 Association, a private San Francisco gay SM group, insisted on "consensual, safe, and responsible SM" (S. K. Stein, 2021). Society of Janus members defined SM as "an exchange of power between mutually consenting persons," and by the early 1980s, "agreed all SM activities can and should be consensual, non-exploitative and safe" (S. K. Stein, 2021). need to "consent to a definite energy exchange" (S. K. Stein, 2021).

Leatherfolk also responded to the unfolding AIDS crisis via mutual aid and fundraising. In 1982 San Francisco leathermen including George D. Burgess "were the catalysts" for what later became the AIDS Emergency Fund (AEF) (Mr. Marcus, 1990a). The AEF offered financial assistance to people with AIDS, including food, beds, utilities, and rent (A. White, 1985). Burgess went on to become the president of the AEF, and by 1985 Mr. S. Leather's Alan Selby was in charge of the organization's fundraising (A. White, 1985).

4.10.3 Pride

In San Francisco the political-vs-festival pendulum swung yet again: Parade committee co-chair Bruce Goranson discussed the marked drop in 1979 attendance and complaints that the overly-political focus of previous years kept Pride from being "a true celebration." He suggested adjusting the committee makeup to increase participation from bars, the Imperial Court, women, and leather people:

The court systems (Emperor/Empress), the leather people, the business community have been ignored. I'm trying to change that. We don't want to see anyone excluded from this year's parade. (Berlandt, 1980)

Organizers kept the 1977 nudity ban, defined as "exposure of the genitals or buttocks or complete disrobing" and parade guidelines forbade "lewd conduct" (Berlandt, 1980; Gay Freedom Day Committee, 1980). Nevertheless, the Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Committee voted 16-11 to publish a full-page ad for San Jose's Watergarden baths, which depicted two naked men in the missionary position (Berlandt, 1982), and at the parade "A reporter saw a policeman not even blink an eye as a totally naked man sauntered by him" (Sun, 1980). In 1982, parade safety monitors would "ask anyone nude (exposing genitals or anus) or engaging in sexual activity to clothe themselves and cease overt sexual acts" (llen White, 1982).

In the early 1980s leather contingents formed an increasingly visible aspect of Pride. The Society of Janus marched in 1980 and ran an informational booth after the parade (Society of Janus, 1980). One photo from San Francisco's 1980 Pride shows a lesbian S/M support group (Rink, 1980).³⁹ By 1981, Samois' contingent had swelled to 30 women, many from out of town (Califia, 1987). The response from the crowd "was the most positive it had ever

³⁹Perhaps Samois?

been, although we still got hissed and booed occasionally," Califia recalled. Nevertheless, an estimated 3/4 to 7/8 of Samois' membership felt that they couldn't be public enough to march (Califia, 1987). Samois didn't march in 1982, but an unaffiliated group of S/M lesbians did form a contingent (Califia, 1987).

In San Francisco, Karr (1981) recorded his delight at the range of queer expressions on display at Pride:

Every year the Gay Freedom Day Parade amazes me as I realize anew the incredible diversity of the Gay lifestyle. I actually expect, and look eagerly for, each more outrageous, even scandalous, expression of unique individuality. My eyes are always rewarded.

More amazing than the diversity of Gays is their willingness to announce themselves and celebrate their peculiarities in public... (Karr, 1981)

As usual, Dykes on Bikes led San Francisco's 1982 parade (A. White, 1982), and photographs show a pair with "Mister & Mistress" studded collars (Hicks, 1982) and leathermen in chaps, vests, and arm & wrist bands (A. White, 1982). In Santa Cruz, Scott Smitherum was "the sole marcher in a 'leather contingent' of his own invention," wearing a leather arm band and a label identifying his "group."

In New York, marchers in 1980 wore thongs and leathermen cruised each other in the street (Fink, 1980a, 1980b). The New York Times reported that in 1981 some groups marched "with leather and chains," which led one woman in a pink bonnet and mesh pink gloves to wag a finger: "It's in the Army, for you guys. They'll knock the devil out of you!" (Clendinen, 1981).

As some elderly women in the park watched a stream of shirtless young men in shorts pass, one of them said: "I just can't believe it. So many naked people. I'm surprised that they allow it. But I suppose I'm just part of the older generation." (Clendinen, 1981)

That may have been Gay Male S/M Activists: 1981 marked GMSMA's first participation in NY Pride (GMSMA, 1984). There was initial opposition to their contingent—GMSMA (1983) mentions that the "gay establishment" wanted them gone, but they were successful in gaining entry (S. K. Stein, 2021).

Children and families participated too. San Francisco women carried and walked with toddlers in 1980 (Crawford Barton, 1980), and the SF Chronicle in 1981 again juxtaposed images of children in the parade with leathermen carrying balloons. In 1982, San Francisco featured a Gay Fathers group (A. White, 1982).

4.11 Lending Support: 1983–1985

Samois' 1979 choice to join the San Francisco march subcommittee was prescient. In the first half of the 1980s, leather communities contributed volunteer hours, leadership, and financial resources to broader LGBTQ institutions. The relationships they built helped ensure inclusion.

In 1983, New York gained a lesbian and gay community center. Gay Male S/M Activists requested space for their meetings, but much like the SF Women's Building, the Center balked at hosting an explicitly S/M oriented group. Through a series of public arguments, a donation of folding chairs, and volunteering to fix up the space they would use, GMSMA earned a place at the Center (P. Douglas, 1995):

Putting the letters s/m in our name was a bold, 'in your face' action that has rarely been imitated. That caused our first battles. For example, the original board creating the new Gay and Lesbian Community Center decided GMSMA was not appropriate to use their facilities. Richard Hocutt, our President, attended an open forum and confronted the board in public. After a vivid discussion, the crown [sic] agreed with Richard's position that leather people are a part of the gay and lesbian community and must be included. GMSMA got the right to meet in the center-of course, we had to fix up the big room downstairs by cleaning, repairing, building a stage, putting in lights and a sound system, and providing chairs. In the end, we are now strong supporters of the center and vice versa. (P. Douglas, 1995)

And in a private communication with Ianotti (2014), GMSMA's Bruce Marcus recalled:

The key factor was probably put into play when a politically savvy member of GMSMA's board announced to one of the Center's planning meetings that the GMSMA membership had collectively raised a large amount of money to support hundreds of folding chairs to the center "as a gift." The decision to allow GMSMA a home in the center followed almost immediately. (Ianotti, 2014)

By 1985, GMSMA was one of the Center's largest users of meeting space, enjoyed a "good working relationship" with the board, and was strongly represented at Center fundraisers (D. Stein, 1985).

A similar story unfolded when the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee (the organizing body for New York

Pride) experienced a budget crisis in 1983. GMSMA and others from New York's leather community responded by organizing a fundraising event with a silent auction, raffle, and flea market for used leather gear and BDSM magazines. "Pride Night at the Spike" raised \$2390 for Pride and ensured that the march happened again the next year (P. Douglas, 1995; EDGE Media Network, 2015; GMSMA, 1990b; Leather Pride Night, 1996). Leather Pride Night (LPN)—as it later came to be called—became an annual institution. In 1985, LPN contributed a full sixth of NYC Pride's annual budget (D. Stein, 1985). LPN grew to include dozens of leather groups from the New York region, including GMSMA, the Lesbian Sex Mafia, the Defenders, Pocono Warriors, Trident International, Eulenspiegel, and more (EDGE Media Network, 2015; GMSMA, 1990b; Leather Pride Night, 1996).

Many of the organizing figures behind Leather Pride Night became directly involved in Heritage of Pride (which took over from the Christopher Street Liberation Day Committee). By 1984 there were three members of GMSMA on New York's Pride committee (GMSMA, 1984). Leatherwoman Jo Arnone, who was a regular auctioneer in LPN's early years, went on to announce the 1985 Pride in NYC and continued to do so for almost 40 years (EDGE Media Network, 2015). In 2012 Arnone was recognized for having helped raise over a million dollars for queer, leather, animal, youth, and elder organizations (Arnone, 2020).

Leather contests and bars also became fundraising engines for the general gay community. In San Francisco, the Eagle held a beer bust in 1983 to support the Harvey Milk Film Project (Stewart, 1983). By 1985, AIDS fundraisers were regularly organized at leather bars like Chaps, the Brig, and the Eagle, where demonstrations of spanking, paddling, mummification, clothespins, and rope tricks, as well as raffles of leather goods, went to support the San Francisco AIDS Fund and other causes (Mr. Marcus, 1985b, 1985a). One 1985 headline of Mr. Marcus's BAR column proclaimed "\$7000 Plus Raised South of Market" in a single week of events:

And who would believe all the Sunday afternoon beer busts at the SF-Eagle so far this year have raised more than \$37,000 for the various causes in our community? That's right—\$37,000. Now you know why they call South of Market the Miracle Mile. It will take miracles to help fight the AIDS crisis, as well as help every other cause in town. Bravo, and thanks to all of you! (Mr. Marcus, 1985a)

In the mid-1980s, the leather title system began to shift from being simply fun, sexy bar events towards generating charitable funds and selecting figureheads for leadership roles. The first Mr. Leather/New York contest in 1984 raised \$11,000 for Gay Men's Health Crisis (D. Stein, 1985). International Mr. Leather 1985 Patrick Toner was elected the male Co-Chair of SF Pride by the general membership (Kalikimaka, 1985), and was the first IML to raise funds for AIDS (S. K. Stein, 2021).

In 1984 San Francisco's leather community organized the first Folsom Street Fair: a public festival devoted to all things kinky. The fair pushed the boundaries for public expression of BDSM, and its success helped convince SF Pride officials that BDSM representation in Pride was OK (S. K. Stein, 2021).

Through the early 1980s, organizations devoted to S/M were starting to crop up in cities across the US—for example, the Disciples of de Sade, who organized forums on S/M in the Dallas area in 1985 (Voice, 1985). In New York and San Francisco The Eulenspiegel Society and Society of Janus had been active for nearly a decade. However, these organizations remained local: as with the gay liberation movement of the late 1960s, there was some crosspollination through friendship networks, but no coherent national leather organization. In 1984, GMSMA began to explore the possibility of tying together those regional clubs into a loose network: a process which would culminate in the 1987 March on Washington (GMSMA, 1984).

4.11.1 Lesbian Sex Wars

Following the Barnard conference, anti-porn advocacy grew from vigorous debate in feminist periodicals to organized campaigns for government constraints on S/M imagery. In 1983, Andrea Dworkin and Catharine MacKinnon authored a model anti-pornography ordinance for Minneapolis which defined porn as a form of sex discrimination, and allowed individuals to seek economic damages. Unlike existing obscenity law, it forbade books, movies, etc. from graphic depictions of "the sexually explicit subordination of women," including "postures of sexual submission" or "being penetrated by objects." While the bill was introduced by feminist and progressive communities in Minneapolis, conservatives and fundamentalists flocked to support similar legislation at the city and county level nationwide (Vance, 1992c).

This uncomfortable alliance between progressive feminists and moral conservatives seeking to "restore [women] to what ladies used to be" generated significant resistance from the broader feminist community—especially as increasing numbers of long-standing feminist authors and activists found themselves labeled anti-feminist "sexual liberals." Ultimately the ordinance passed only in Indianapolis, and was struck down in 1986 by the Supreme Court (Vance, 1992c).

4.11.2 Pride

In New York, expressions of leather and sexuality at Pride were well-established by the mid-80s. Photographs of 1983's Pride include a woman in a leather outfit with handcuffs, a padlock, and a flogger at her hip and a photographer wearing a leather vest, studded leather collar, wristbands, and sandals (Unknown, 1983b, 1983a). One man wore the tightest shorts I have ever seen (Fink, 1983).⁴⁰

Leather visibility allowed participants to discover previously unknown aspects of their own sexuality. Canter (1995) remembered the leathermen at his first Pride as scary, but erotic:

Then, in 1983, I attended my first Gay Pride Parade, having just moved to New York City with my lover. We marched with the Dignity contingent, a safe, comfortable place. Not far away from us, however, was a group of men that was both frightening and exciting at the same time. Many of them had beards and looked sort of rough. Most of them were wearing leather. At first, I thought they were a motorcycle gang. They looked like pictures I had seen of Hells Angels. But it was a group calling themselves activists—and I found myself getting a raging hard-on, again!

It would be almost four more years before my second coming out⁴¹ would begin and I would get up enough nerve to go to my first GMSMA meeting. (Canter, 1995)

Not only did Canter join GMSMA—he went on to become the organization's president (Canter, 1995).

GMSMA marched again in 1984, this time with a black Jeep (GMSMA, 1984; D. Stein, 1985). One fantastic photograph shows a man in leather harness, high boots, and short shorts, with his arm around a queen dressed all in white. She is wearing gloves, stockings, garters, and bodice. Both smile infectiously while a child looks on from the sidelines (Unknown, 1984).⁴² Another shot shows GMSMA's outfits: black leather harnesses with straps running down to the crotch, leather collars, chaps and vests (Unknown, 1985). The Lesbian Sex Mafia, regular collaborators with GMSMA, marched as well (GMSMA, 1984), and their contingent made the news (D. Stein, 1985). By 1985, GMSMA was running informational booths at the festival after New York's march (D. Stein, 1985). In Berkeley, 1983, Dykes on Bikes led the parade while "police officers looked aside at partial nudity." Both Louise S/M Dykes and the Gay and Lesbian Student Union marched (Spunberg, 1983). Photographs of San Francisco's 1983 parade show leathermen in vests, collars, and chaps (Rink, 1983). In 1984, one woman rode her motorcycle in a bodice, boots, cover, and choker (R. Pruzan, 1984).

The leather title system had been growing since the late 1970s, and in the early 1980s, titleholders joined drag queens as public fixtures at Pride. In San Francisco's 1983 parade, Stewart (1983) reports:

The So/M contingent included a very butch bunch of black jeeps and trucks loaded with the Arena staff. Steven Studly was in seventh heaven as he drove former Mr. International Mr. Leather (and Mr. Drummer '82) Luke Daniel, who was wrapped around Colt Thomas. (Stewart, 1983)

In 1984, the South of Market contingent included huge silver and floral disco floats, as well as Mr. Drummer Sonny Cline (Stewart, 1984). The Stud and the BG drove fire engines down the parade route, while Chaps bar ran a float with Mr. International Leather Ron Moore, clad in what appears to be a jock and chaps, riding a motorcycle in the bed of a pickup (Stewart, 1984). One delightful photo shows him together with a femme queen (A. White, 1984). Two industrial tow trucks supported leathermen Tony Valentine and Gary Martin hanging trapeze style from "slings," tossing flowers to the crowd (Stewart, 1984).

In 1985, IML Patrick Toner served as Co-Chair of San Francisco's Pride Committee and rode on the SF Eagle's SoMa/leather float (Mr. Marcus, 1985b). One striking photograph of the parade shows a bare-assed leatherman raising a gloved fist towards the sky, wearing thigh-high boots, a chest harness, a sash, and a leather thong (R. Pruzan, 1985).

Again, children were very much a part of Pride. In San Francisco, R. Pruzan (1984) photographed a father and son together at the parade, and Rink (1984) captured Tracy

⁴⁰No, seriously, *trade*. I want this look. I love everything about it.

⁴¹"Second coming out" is a common phrase among leatherfolk for the process of self-discovery and public establishment of one's leather identity after having done the work of coming out as queer.

⁴²This photograph is undated, but D. Stein (1985) remarked on the popularity of the black Jeep in 1984, and Unknown (1985) shows the same Jeep and riders in 1984.

⁴³Dubois (2014) states that 1984 was the first year a leather contingent marched in SF Pride, and that they encountered "disapproving silence." Samois, Janus, and SoMa contingents had already marched in previous years—perhaps this was a newly-organized leather contingent, or a typo?

⁴⁴Goldberg (1984) describes an incident in which a trans woman who was present at the original Stonewall rebellion was asked to help carry a banner for the Eagle leather bar's contingent, then disinvited the night before the parade. The cause is unclear: Goldberg thought it probable that Pride organizers had pressured the Eagle to uninvite her on account of her being trans, but I can also imagine that politics within the leather community led to her exclusion. There could be a story here about the intersection of leather, drag, and trans identity—but without further sources I'm not sure what to say.

and Michele, who rode their motorcycle with their fouryear-old son Mario perched on the tank. In 1985, fiveyear-old Adrienne Maldonado traveled from Cincinnati to march in San Francisco's pride with her gay dad, Santos. She'd return in 3 of the next 4 years; in 1988 she described the parade as "colorful and nice" (Hippler, 1988).

4.11.3 Reaction to Drag & Leather

Anita Bryant's deployment of images of leather and drag at SF Pride to instill fear that homosexuals posed a danger to children proved a powerful tactic. In the following years it was taken up both by mainstream publications like the San Francisco Chronicle and by an emerging niche press devoted to stopping homosexuality. For example, Paul Cameron's Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality published a 1984 pamphlet What Causes Homosexuality and Can It Be Cured, which used images of men marching in leather shorts and vests to open a propaganda of gay sex acts (including piss play and whipping) as "biological horrors" (Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, 1984). 1985's Homosexuality: Everybody's Prob*lem* used a photograph of two dykes on a motorcycle, one sporting a leather collar, before launching into a polemic of LGBTQ sexuality (everything from oral sex to fisting) as a threat to public health, children, and "good social order" (Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, 1985):

You, and all you hold dear, are threatened by homosexual practitioners. Although bi- and homosexuals comprise only about 4% of the population, they are an especially dangerous 4%....

You are 15 times more apt to be killed by a gay than a heterosexual during a sexual murder spree. (Institute for the Scientific Investigation of Sexuality, 1985)

Some LGBTQ people themselves viewed San Francisco Pride's return to more liberal norms as a "blatant sex carnival." In the Closet (1983) wrote:

The news that the Gay Parade this year is to be dedicated to AIDS victims seems to me to be in appallingly bad judgement and poor taste. With the single exception of the year of Anita Bryant the parade has been nothing more than an opportunity to give the finger to the world in the form of a blatant sex carnival and has provided the media with miles of film and endless stock shots of "homosexual bizarre." Is this to be our form of "respect?" Have we lost our reason? (In the Closet, 1983)

In Chicago, Page (1985) recalled a friend fuming that Pride floats tended to look like "a bacchanalian orgy on wheels."

"Someone ought to write something about what a colossal display of vulgarity [gay pride] is."

Both drag and leather were viewed by straight and queer people as too sexual for public display. As one straight "sympathizer" to the gay cause wrote to the Bay Area Reporter:

...A minority based on sexuality has an inherent problem: it is too sexual. A walk through a gay ghetto is enough to convince *any* sensitive person, gay or straight, this is true. It reduces a whole culture to a red-light district... I find that sex obscures almost all gay issues. This year's parade, despite its concerns for the problem of AIDS, was another sexual circus. I went with friends because I'm concerned about AIDS and its victims and I wanted them to be too. But all they saw was tit clamps and campy drag, chains and leather, and embarrassing public displays of eroticism. There was more to the parade than that, of course, but they didn't see it. (W. Tucker, 1983)

To which the BAR responded: "Take the sex out of sexual liberation and there's no liberation" (W. Tucker, 1983). Their position was shared by Mayfield (1983), who emphasized the contextual nature of dress, and viewed public drag as a form of resistance to social control.

As far as [public drag], Debra Stein, like all other people who are attracted to positions of power realizes, consciously or unconsciously, that one of the ways to control people is to control the clothes they wear. Just as your boss, if you work in the highrises, considers the lack of a tie "inappropriate," so drag is "inappropriate" only because it is a signal that you are not being controlled. (Mayfield, 1983)

The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence (an order of drag nuns) were a recurring site of contention in the debate over the public face of the gay movement. As "Just Plain Jim" (1984) insisted in a letter to the Bay Area Reporter, leather, drag, and Dykes on Bikes only served to reinforce negative stereotypes, and had to be stopped from appearing at an upcoming gay rally at the Democratic National Convention:

The world press and TV coverage of the Democratic National Convention will be enormous. They are going to focus their cameras and microphones towards the weird, the radical, and the "shocking." In short, they are going to try to make San Francisco out to be the Kinky Capitol of America. They always have. And how could they help it—it sells! Drag Queens, Leather Queens, half-naked Queens, Sissies, and Bulldykes on Bikes—that what America (and the rest of the world!) will see.

We (Gays) are on a downward spiral already with AIDS scaring everyone to death from Miami to Seattle and back again. We are not looked on with the respect we have fought so hard and long to get. Suddenly we *are* the dirty, penisbreath shit eaters that all the folks back home used to call us. We *are* sick and germ-filled. We *are* perverse and disgusting to millions of people who had just begun to think better of us.

I pray that AIDS will dealt with through modern medicine very soon. But who is going to deal with the likes of the publicity-cracy [*sic*] "Sisters." People like the Sisters and other groups of small town Sissy Marys like them have invaded San Francisco and made a mockery of everything—sex! politics! homosexuality! God! our city! our lives!

Stop the Sisters! Stop the protestors! Stop the publicity Queens! Stop this self-destruction! ("Just Plain Jim", 1984)

This led Brower (1984) to respond that those radical, shocking members of the community were, in fact, the vanguard of gay liberation:

However, there are far too many hypocrites of the ilk of "Just Plain Jim," who need to be addressed by those of us in the community who have a higher regard for Gay Rights. The queens, leather queens, "sissys," and dykes that he rails against have been in the forefront of the "Gay liberation struggle" since the first shots were fired at the Stonewall in New York City. Where in the hell were you when the "queens" were getting their asses kicked in the streets; hiding at home and sucking dick in your closet? If we waited for you faggots from the Sunset with your two car garages and 3 piece business suits to start the fight for OUR liberation, we would have to wait for a long goddammned time wouldn't we?

Well, I wear my leather jacket and earring (even to work at a rather respectable job outside the city). I've paid my dues in the struggle for Gay Liberation, but realize that the fight is by no means over until everyone is free.

And let Middle America see what Freedom is like (since they have so little of it in their everyday lives). Maybe it will inspire them to join the cause of freedom (some of them? One of them?) and we will be able to spread freedom all over this great (but not yet free) country of ours. (Brower, 1984)

Or, as Schell (1984) pithily opined:

If I am to listen to the rambling explicatives from the stages of the Parade or the streets of the National March, let those voices be heard from the mouths of drag queens and leather men, from the punks to the Sisters or all those who are categorized by our current zerobrained zealots as the "less acceptable elements of the community. (Schell, 1984)

4.12 Integration: 1986–1988

4.12.1 Leather

1986 to 1987 saw a sea change in the structure of US leather activism, which unified informal personal networks and city-scale clubs into a national, inclusive political movement for BDSM advocacy (Rubin, 2015). In 1986, the National Leather Association became the first US-wide organization for kinky people of all genders and orientations (Rubin, 2015), and in 1987 the March on Washington served as a focal point for national-scale activism. These national movements were supported by new national-scale press institutions. Los Angeles' David Rhodes launched the Leather Journal in 1987, circulating news of upcoming events, new titleholders, and political news (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021). The nascent internet also allowed leather people to find each other: in 1987 Robert D. Reite founded SM Board, one of the first S/M-oriented BBS systems (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021).

Previously secretive regional clubs like Boston's Dreizhen "went public," announcing their presence to the larger queer community (Str., 1986b). These organizations were not always welcome: in Albuquerque, one gay community center banned PEP, a BDSM group, from meeting there (Chain Link, 1987). Leather activists also engaged in civil actions wearing fetish gear: Kelly (1988) describes attending a Philadelphia community speak-out on violence and discrimination wearing full leather and a nipple chain.

Leatherfolk took increasingly active roles in Pride organizing. In San Francisco, Helen Ruvelas (from the International Ms. Leather steering committee) had coordinated portable toilets, the treasury, Pride's site and budget, and served on various task forces before being elected Co-Chair of the SF Parade committee in 1986 (Rein, 1986). In 1987, the SF Eagle patio was packed for fundraisers benefiting the Pride committee (Mr. Marcus, 1987a). In 1987, more than 600 leather people packed The Saint in New York for Leather Pride Night. Through raffles and auctions of leather gear, bootblacking, and tarot readings, they raised \$8,000 for Heritage of Pride (the NY Pride organizing committee) and the upcoming March on Washington (GMSMA, 1987). As Heritage of Pride's Candida Piel said:

We didn't think it could be done a fourth year in a row, and we didn't think it could be done with a split between two beneficiaries. But the leather community came through for us. Once again, Leather Pride Night raised more money for the New York march and rally than any other event HOP has been involved with. (GMSMA, 1987)

In 1988 LPN raised \$8300 for Heritage of Pride and NY's Lesbian and Gay Community Center (M., 1988): a dramatic change from when the Center refused to rent space to GMSMA (D. Stein, 1989). (Stockman, 2010) recalled:

... us leather queers and perverts were using the power of fundraising and donations (and lots *and lots* of argument) to buy us a seat at the table with other gays, many of whom were ashamed of this subculture and would just as soon have us remain in the closet, or worse. (Stockman, 2010)

Leather contests became increasingly political. In 1986, Mr. Leather NY raised \$19,000 for the AIDS Resource Center and Gay Men's Health Crisis (Str., 1986a). Following in the footsteps of Patrick Toner, International Mr. Leather 1986 Scott Tucker also raised funds, and encouraged other titleholders to involve themselves in community organizing (S. K. Stein, 2021). By 1987, International Ms. Leather (IMsL) launched with the expectation that titleholders were already politically active (S. K. Stein, 2021). In 1989, Mr. Leather NY raised \$20,000 for the AIDS Resource Center (GMSMA, 1989c).

On the West coast and in Britain, police harassment of leather people intensified. Mr. Marcus (1986) warned readers of SFPD officers who "hate fags, especially leather fags on motorcycles," and increasingly frequent arrests in South of Market bars. In 1988, the Los Angeles police and fire departments made a series of raids on LA leather bars, including AIDS fundraising beer busts. Activists demanded a meeting with city councilman Mike Woo to stop police abuses (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021).

4.12.2 Pride

In Chicago's 1986 parade, Rist (1986) describes "drag, leather, and near-nudity" with "some dressed in studded leather and others in spangled bikinis." Two leathermen showed off their bondage skills to the crowd:

Dressed in black leather and chains, Randy Esslinger, 28, and Rick Carbonaro, 31, stood on Broadway holding aloft a blindfolded teddy bear strapped to a sign saying, "Bound up with pride."

While many marchers in the parade said they hoped to dispell hostile stereotypes of homosexuals, Carbonaro said, "It's who we are and what we are," he said from beneath a leather visor obscuring his face. "We want people to laugh, not to laugh at us necessarily, but to laugh with us." (Bravin, 1986)

1986 also saw the first "officially designated" S/M community contingent in San Francisco Pride. The Society of Janus, the Outcasts (a lesbian S/M organization which followed Samois), and the 15 Association (a gay male S/M club) joined forces (Rubin, 1996, 2015; S. K. Stein, 2021).

The Gay/Lesbian Day committee eschews all the old prohibitions on esoteric marchers and this year the 15 Association and the Janus Society along with another group will march together for the first time, asserting their S&M existence in our society.⁴⁵

The flyer for the contingent encouraged leather people to join them in the parade, and featured a lady in fishnets and a gentleman in a five-way harness and lace-up codpiece (Bay Area SM Community, 1986). More than 100 people marched (Bay Area SM Community, 1987), and at the festival afterwards the S/M community ran an informational booth (Bay Area SM Community, 1986). The Outcasts not only co-sponsored the S/M community contingent, but also marched in their own contingent (Rubin, 1996).

The following year the Bay Area SM Community Contingent's flyer depicted people of all genders in harnesses, collars, leashes, and what appears to be a zippered hood (Bay Area SM Community, 1987).

Last year more than 100 of us marched. This year we have the Precision Drill Whip Team"....

Wear a mask or hood if needed, and your hottest gear. (Bay Area SM Community, 1987)

The Precision Whip Drill Team performed synchronized whip demonstrations in the parade, serving as a sort of kinky color guard (Mr. Marcus, 1987a). In 1988 they returned, led by drummer Markalan Joplin (Bay Area Reporter, 1988), and became an annual institution at San Francisco Pride—a tradition which continues to this day.

San Francisco's 1987 parade was again joined by "all 400"

 $^{^{45}{\}rm I'm}$ so sorry: I've lost this citation and despite frantic searching I can't find it again.

Dykes on bikes, most "garbed in sensible black leather" (Linebarger, 1987).

The south of Market bar, Powerhouse, had its float covered with writhing, dancing men partially dressed in black leather chaps and armbands. (Linebarger, 1987)

Photography by R. Pruzan (1987) depicts at least twenty leather people in various forms of gear riding on the 1987 Eagle & Powerhouse float, including a shirtless Mr. Drummer Mark Alexander raising his fist. At that year's Castro Street Fair, the Society of Janus put on an erotic art exhibition which drew "a big crowd" (Mr. Marcus, 1987b).

In New York, GMSMA marched in 1986 wearing chaps and harnesses (D. Stein, 1991b). The following year, New York police remarked that the parade was less offensive:

Police officials along the route said the parade no longer offended heterosexual spectators and tourists because there seemed to be fewer transvestites and leather-clad motorcyclists. "They've cleaned it up," said Deputy Inspector Mayronne. "It's done more to make a statement and less to outrage people." (Gross, 1987)

Yet that same year members of the Massachusetts SM group Urania, along with Bound and Determined, marched with the Lesbian Sex Mafia—although Urania didn't form a dedicated contingent in that year's Boston Pride, since too many of their members were riding motorcycles or marching in other contingents (Urania, 1987). Urania's newsletter reported that NYC's crowds had "a great cheering section" and offered "lots of wonderful support" for the leather contingent:

A lot of New Yorkers seem to have a very pleasant tendency to scream and applaud when they see black leather. (Urania, 1987)

Jim Provenzano recalled NYC's 1988 Pride as a confluence of diverse identities:

That painted lavender stripe was like a magnet. I saw drag queens and hunky men and dykes with babies and rows of PWAs in wheelchairs and fabulous floats. (Provenzano, 1994b)

Among them were GMSMA's contingent, which fielded more than 100 marchers in denim and leather, and who received a generally warm reception from the crowd (T., 1988). The Editrix of Massachusetts' Bound and Determined also rode in New York Pride that year:

Your Editrix rode with her motorcycle club, the Sirens, of NYC, literally cracking her bullwhip as she rode. (Bound & Determined, 1988) The Lesbian Sex Mafia didn't march as a group in 1988, which made it difficult to find leatherwomen (Bound & Determined, 1988). However, Kantrowitz (1989) recalled drag & leather marching in unity—and commented on the reframing of queerness away from sexual practices:

Just as straights asked gays to wait until "more important" issues were dealt with, gays asked leathermen and drag queens to wait in the early seventies when New York's gay antidiscrimination law was being discussed and our kind of sex was an embarrassment in the City Council's chambers. So "sexual orientation" was defined explicitly *not* to mean the style of sex that we get off on. It simply referred to choice of partners. S/m and drag were not considered "homosexual issues."

What kind of issue was it that brought Doric Wilson in full leather and the late Billy Blackwell in a garden party dress with a Scarlett O'Hara straw hat to the same gay pride mach, parading arm in arm to the consternation of those who thought that drags and leathermen were sworn enemies? (Kantrowitz, 1989)

Leather contingents spread to more US cities. In Seattle, G. Nelson (circa 1987-1988a) photographed a leather float with one man in chaps and a chest harness, and another shirtless, his torso wrapped in a rope harness, serving as the anchor for helium balloons. Another Seattle float emblazoned "Dare to be different" included one rider wearing nipple clamps connected by chains (G. Nelson, circa 1987-1988b). In 1988, Seattle Pride included titleholders riding a jeep representing the National Leather Association (Unknown, 1988).

An incredible series of 1988 photographs by Del LaGrace Volcano⁴⁶ shows a crew of decked-out leather dykes on the way to Oxford Street Gay Pride, including one pair who appear to be pushing a stroller with an baby (Disgrace, 1988b). During a pause in the march, "those troublesome SM Dykes" sat under a "Lesbian Strength" banner (Disgrace, 1988a).

Even as leather's representation in Pride grew, children and families continued to participate. In New York, 1986, march participants included a toddler in a stroller, holding a bottle (Unknown, 1986a), and a young Black child watched from the sidelines as the "Support Gay Teachers" contingent passed by (Unknown, 1986b). In San Francisco, 1987, "a small girl holding a freebie heart-shaped balloon asked her mother, 'What's a dyke?'" (Linebarger, 1987). Nine-year-old Adrienne Maldonado marched with her gay dad Santos (Hippler, 1988), calling the parade "colorful

⁴⁶A.K.A. Della Disgrace, Del LaGrace.

and nice." In San Francisco 1988, "gay and lesbian parents strolled with their children, some in baby carriages," while for the first time San Francisco's Mayor joined the parade: Art Agnos rode in a car with his wife, their two sons, and Jim Lansdowne—a man with AIDS (Richards, 1988).

4.12.3 1987 March on Washington

In 1986, GMSMA's board agreed that some of their members should attend a meeting on whether to hold a march on Washington in October of 1987 (B. Douglas, 1995b). There was some opposition from those like gay journalist Andy Humm, who felt that the presence of leather people would hurt the cause of lesbian and gay rights. However, GMSMA and other leather activists rallied support from radical feminists, drag queens, and trans organizations to win a seat for the S/M-Leather community on the steering committee of the march: the first time a national coalition of LGBT organizations invited leatherfolk to be a part of leadership (B. Douglas, 1987, 1995b; Ianotti, 2014; S. K. Stein, 2021).

Brenda Howard (of the Lesbian Sex Mafia) and Barry Douglas (GMSMA) became co-chairs for the S/M contingent (Limoncelli, 2005; S/M-Leather Contingent, 1987). Leather historian and artist Cookie Andrews-Hunt also helped build the march—and went on to help organize the 1994 March on Washington and Stonewall 25 (B. Douglas, 1995a).

GMSMA set about forming a national network for the leather contingent:

An independent committee was formed to do outreach and organize a national political conference for s/m activists. Initial funds came from GMSMA and all the New Committee members were GMSMAers, but... it couldn't just be a GMSMA event. We created a national network. After research, calls, letter writing, and listening to a few grapevines, we sent out ten regional coordinators so that there was someone near each locality who could provide access to the central committee and who could know how to build his or her area. (B. Douglas, 1995b)

In particular, the S/M-Leather contingent insisted on a broadly inclusive view of the leather community, and made "Safe, Sane, and Consensual" (SSC) their main political slogan. While the concepts behind SSC had been circulating for at least two decades, SSC's phrasing took off within leather communities and also filtered into a broader public understanding of BDSM (B. Douglas, 1995b; S. K. Stein, 2021):⁴⁷

We made two very important decisions: if you thought you belonged in the community, you did. Gay, het, male, female, person of color, disabled, old, or youngish, into heavy scenes or just liked the look. Everyone was welcome. And this didn't mean just wanting them to join us. It meant recruiting in places not usually approached and providing opportunity to as many different voices as possible.

And we decided to have only one demand: that all adults have the right in private to express affection in any manner that is safe, sane, and consensual. The exact origin of the phrase is muddled, but our using "Safe, sane, and consensual" as the watch cry of the contingent has turned it into a mantra that has given some common ground to an otherwise uncommon collection of people. (B. Douglas, 1995b)

The day before the March on Washington, the S/M contingent put on the largest BDSM conference ever. At least 700 attended⁴⁸(B. Douglas, 1987), and the contingent hung a huge banner from a federal government building (Davis, 1991). Much as Samois' meeting at the Women's Building in 1981 germinated an informal national network of lesbian kinksters, conferencegoers laid groundwork for a national network of leather organizations (B. Douglas, 1987).

At the March on Washington itself, leather people of all genders and orientations deployed a "Safe-Sane-Consensual" banner (Hardy, 2003a), and marched in leather gear to cheers from spectators. Estimates of the contingent proper ranged from ~700 (S. K. Stein, 2021) to more than a thousand (D. Stein, 1991b); hundreds more leatherfolk marched with other contingents (S. K. Stein, 2021).

S. K. Stein (2021) says the contingent wore "lots of leather, but no chains, whips, or other overt indicators of BDSM." This is not entirely true. In fact, video of the contingent shows several collars around necks, and at least two leather people leading others on leashes! One of them is Brenda Howard herself, wearing a leather vest and holding the collar of a grinning figure; she shouts (possibly to Cookie Andrews-Hunt) to get a picture. The crowd is cheering wildly (Unknown, 1987).

While S/M contingents had been marching in Pride events for over a decade, there was a sense of generative opti-

⁴⁷As S. K. Stein (2021) chronicles, "Safe, Sane, Consensual" became a

normative slogan in a series of internal debates over *edge play*: BDSM activities perceived by other players as risky, unethical, or intensely distasteful. The concept of consent was also extended to new domains, like the exposure of leather conference-goers to cigarette smoke.

⁴⁸Hardy (2003a) says thousands attended the conference, but B. Douglas (1987) is a contemporary, more direct source.

mism among leatherfolk. B. Douglas (1987) likened the march to a "political coming-out." and S. K. Stein (2021) reports that leather people at the time felt that the March signaled the start of a national leather community.

4.12.4 Reaction

In the late 1980s the general social climate for leather people in urban LGBTQ spaces had begun to shift—at least in some circles—towards a more welcoming norm. When two GMSMA speakers presented at Long Island Gay Men's Group, one audience member took offense:

There are some things that *should* be repressed. Even if those impulses do exist, they should be kept under control and hidden. People should stick to normal sex. (Str., 1986b)

But Str. (1986b) notes that this opinion was "clearly in the minority":

Neither of GMSMA's speakers had to defend S/M at that point. It was another member of the local community who spoke up, immediately and forcefully, echoing the GMSMA speakers' earlier point that these were the same verbal weapons that traditionally have been used against gays in general. (Str., 1986b)

With particular respect to Pride, LGBTQ people continued to voice profound disagreement with the public expression of sexuality. Rist (1986) recalls a friend's disgust with Chicago Pride, and notes that the boundaries of what constitute "sex" are highly subjective:

Drag, leather, and near-nudity have offended John, as well as flagrant sex (holding hands and kissing on the street.) He says acridly, "They seem to think it's *sick* to be discreet."

"Gays shove everything they do in people's faces," he spits *sotto voce.* "Why should anyone put up with this? Let me tell you something, if I had kids"—he backhands the air toward a man, a woman, and two small boys (the four of them delighted by a drag queen's dole of cock-shaped candies)—"I'd do everything I could to stop it." (Rist, 1986)

By 1988, debates over respectability in Pride were understood to be a perennial phenomenon. As McMillan (1988) summarized:

Pretty soon now, as springtime nears summer, you will realize it is almost time for the annual Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade. And, coincidentally, time for the annual articles to the gay community expressing the hope that this year, for heaven's and propriety's sake, the drag queens will leave their dresses home and march in dignified street clothes. (McMillan, 1988)

He was responding to Laura L. Warren's letter to the Bay Area Reporter, which repeated a long-running trope that gays needed to demonstrate they were "normal." Laura complained:

I think we will all get a lot further in the area of gay rights if we show that we are not a lot of freaky people waving wands and wearing funny clothes, that we are all normal people who simply want to lead a normal life. (McMillan, 1988)

McMillan argued that not only did those "freaky" queers have a historical right to be a part of Pride, but that normalizing programs would lead to a new form of closeting:

So you see, it was a group of "freaky people wearing funny clothes" back then who made it possible for you and me today to sit undisturbed, sipping cocktails in the bars of our choice... We are most emphatically not, for love and life, going back. We are not going to act or dress or speak the way with which the majority of straight society might feel comfortable.

It will be a sad (opposite of "gay") day when we no longer display our sense of humor, but feel compelled to keep it hidden behind our closet doors, along with our ball gowns and high heels. Next we will have to relegate our leather chaps and cowboy hats to private parties only, safe from the scrutinizing eyes of the public.

Much like Canter (1995), whose experience seeing leather at New York's 1983 march led him to discover new aspects of his own sexual identity, McPherson (1988) chronicled his own journey from finding BDSM contingents weird and "a little frightening" to embracing them as a playful expression of identity.

In years past I was embarrassed by such representations as full leather, S&M, whip and drill team, drag queens, etc., in the parade. In seeing them, the press and the straight community would lump us all together as "weird." *I* didn't understand it, either. As a naive parade-viewer, I found these "kinky" groups a little frightening and intimidating.

Having spent the last two years observing and, to some degree involved in the South of Market community, I now have a better understanding of our "hardcore side." We gay people are living out our fantasies and having fun doing it. Beneath the leather and drag facades, for the most part, is an underlying playfulness. It doesn't intimidate me any more. I can even respect other people's trips.

It's all at its most playful in the parade. Last year the whip and drill team shocked me. This year I saw it as a takeoff on the S&M community. International Mr. Leather in leather shorts, with a bone through his nose, looked heavyduty. "Iron Mike," in fact, is a teddy bear. We can laugh at ourselves.

I now feel comfortable enough that I could proudly march in our parade with *all* its diverse representations present. Someday the world will see the real us, if they really want to. (McPherson, 1988)

4.12.5 Obscenity Laws

Among feminists, the Lesbian Sex Wars started to fizzle out around 1986. Vance (1992c) thought that the arguments around S/M and pornography were thoroughly trod in feminist circles, and anti-porn feminists' scorchedearth tactics, combined with their model anti-obscenity ordinance being taken up by religious conservatives, had left a sour taste in many feminists' mouths. However, the New Right found that the moral panic over BDSM and pornography was readily adaptable to a conservative political agenda (Rubin, 2015).

In 1985 Reagan appointed the Meese commission, which sought to control "the problem of pornography" through aggressive obscenity laws. Conservative commission members were able to re-purpose Women Against Violence in Pornography and Media's "feminist" talking points to argue for distinctly anti-feminist objectives. Panelists refused calls for sex education, and instead proposed model legislation which increased penalties for women prostitutes and banned devices for "stimulating human genital organs"—for example, vibrators (Vance, 1992c).

Like WAVPM, the Meese commission relied on decontextualized S/M imagery to argue that all pornography was intrinsically degrading to women. Prominent anti-porn feminists testified before the commission and even played the Woman Against Pornography BDSM slideshow for the commissioners (Rubin, 1993, 2015; Vance, 1992c). As Rubin (2015) put it: "the commission leaned heavily on SM erotica for their case that sexually explicit imagery was 'violent'."

Viewers were unfamiliar with the conventions of SM sexual behavior and had no access to the codes participants use to read these images.⁴⁹ The panel provided the frame: SM was nonconsensual sex that inflicted force and violence on unwilling victims. (Vance, 1990)

Many of the Commission's 1986 recommendations for stricter control on sexual content passed into law. The US Department of Justice established an obscenity unit, and employed RICO to seize assets from those convicted of obscenity. Telephone and cable television were restricted from transmitting some forms of sexually explicit content. Much as Anita Bryant's campaign positioned children as endangered by homosexual teachers, conservatives rebranded anti-obscenity programs as anti-childpornography. However, these new obscenity charges were frequently deployed against adult queer pornography having nothing to do with children at all. Prosecutions and book seizures followed (Rubin, 1993; Vance, 1992c).

The US was not the only country which pursued state censorship of queer texts. In Canada circa 1986, antiobscenity statutes banned "degrading and dehumanizing" material. In practice, this material included ordinary gay and lesbian publications, but enforcement was heaviest against S/M erotica (Rubin, 2015). In England, 1987 saw the beginning of Operation Spanner: police across Britain, encouraged by anti-obscenity laws, initiated a crackdown on BDSM publications and practitioners. Between 1987 and 1989 police raided men's homes and publishers' offices, seized videotapes of private parties, and used the resulting information to detain and question hundreds of gay men (S. K. Stein, 2021). Raising money for the Spanner defendants became a national cause in the US leather community.⁵⁰ Despite the fact that all participants in these events consented, and no injuries required medical treatment, 42 men were charged with assault and unlawful wounding. 16 were eventually convicted, and eight received prison sentences of up to four and a half years (S. K. Stein, 2021).

4.13 Leather Pride: 1989–1991

4.13.1 Leather

By 1989, organized leather people were a significant presence in New York, SF, LA, and other major US cities (D. Stein, 1991a), and cultural attitudes were shifting to accept them. As Mr. Marcus (1989a) glowingly described the International Mr. Leather contest:

... Chicagoans exposed to the presence of a leather force in their midst responded with courtesy, awe, acceptance, and startled face-to-face encounters with a gay sub-culture that many gay men and lesbians even today cannot

⁴⁹Gosh does this sound familiar!

 $^{^{50}\}mathrm{I}$ assume Spanner was a huge cause in Britain as well—I just don't have any texts from their leather community which I could cite here.

find in their own community. Gay leather pride made it up another rung of the ladder to total acceptance. Waiters, maids, waitresses, cabbies, desk clerks, telephone operators to mention only a few were aware, enlightened, and made positive responses to the [IML] invasion. Even Chicago's teenage prom night celebrants (always the same weekend as IML) responded with good-natured acceptance and curiosity as well as some 5,000 young black teenagers attending a sorority and fraternity convention in the surrounding hotels. (Mr. Marcus, 1989a)

On the other hand, Rofes (1991) (the creator of NLA's Living in Leather conference, and an organizer at the 1979 March on Washington), described a pattern of mixed hostility and support from the broader LGBTQ community. He described graffiti in the heart of SF's Castro district which read "No More Nazis! No More S/M!" being rejected from "a key position at a national organization" due to the reputation of the leather community, and covered his S/M identity to preserve his job at an LGBTQ community center.

New organizations cropped up each year: in 1989, Jim Richards helped organize a series of workshops on BDSM together with the Chicago Hellfire Club, Black on Black Leather, the Dallas County Health Department, the Firedancers, and the Disciples of de Sade (Vercher, 1989).

The Lesbian Sex Wars cast a long shadow: Karla Hudgins, the only out leatherwoman in Firedancers, described the scene for kinky lesbians as sparsely populated and stigmatized:

S/M has always been equated with violence, and since [the advent of] the feminist movement, violence against women is just not acceptable. (Nash, 1989)

Indeed, the Women's Building in San Francisco maintained their policy of banning S/M groups until 1989, when a formal petition by the lesbian S/M group the Outcasts convinced them to allow meetings (Cameron, 2002).

In addition to SM education and play parties, leather organizations new and old took on explicit charitable aims. In 1989, Texas' Firedancers donated \$2,000 to the AIDS Resource Food Pantry (Vercher, 1989). In New York, the leather community continued to be a major sponsor of Pride. In 1989 Leather Pride Night raised over \$10,000 for GLAAD and Heritage of Pride, and HOP commented that LPN had always been HOP's largest fundraiser (GMSMA, 1989b). In 1990, LPN raised \$15,500 (GMSMA, 1990a).

New York's LGBTQ Center enjoyed an increasingly close relationship with the NY leather community. In 1989

GMSMA volunteered money and labor for renovations (D. Stein, 1989), and in 1990, Leather Pride Night, individual donations, and the Leather and Lace Halloween Dance helped fund the Center's operations (GMSMA, 1990b). In 1990 GMSMA and LSM shared a membership in the Center (GMSMA, 1990b).

Building on the 1987 March on Washington, leatherfolk pursued roles at national-scale LGBTQ organizations. GMSMA's B. Douglas (1989) wrote about attending the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (NGLTF)'s *Creating Change* conference in 1989, and noted a friendlier attitude towards leather. Leather people also engaged in direct political action for LGBTQ rights. In Philadelphia, Jim Kelly was arrested as a part of an ACT-UP sit-down (GMSMA, 1989a).

In 1989, the National Leather Association advocated for improved public relations between leather and the broader LGBTQ community (Vercher, 1989). As NLA cochair Jim Richards wrote:

We need better communication between the leather community and the rest of the gay community. We're all fighting for the same goals. We're fighting against AIDS. We're fighting for the repeal of 21.06. We're fighting for equal rights. But for a long time, the leather community has been excluded by the rest of the gay community. We hold a lot of fundraisers to help the community, but you will seldom see anyone from one of the major boards at a leather fundraiser. Because they don't want to be identified with a leather organization. (Vercher, 1989)

As police harassment of gay leathermen continued, mainstream gay voices were sometimes hesitant to defend them. On December 20, 1990, Boston police raided the Thunderheads Christmas play party held in a private rented home (B. Douglas, 1991; S. K. Stein, 2021). Despite few community complaints (mostly around parking), police forced everyone present to lie on the floor and conducted an illegal search of the house. They found no illegal substances, but did charge attendees with possession of a dangerous weapon (a studded wristband) and running a house of prostitution (B. Douglas, 1991). As Thompson (1991) recapped:

Leatherfolk and the issues we raise have been as difficult for gay Americans to accept as for our heterosexual neighbors.

This intolerance takes many forms, sometimes crudely so. In early 1991, for instance, police busted into a Boston home where members of the local leather community regularly met for private parties. No warrant was presented; words like "faggots" and "fucking AIDS carriers" were used by officers the night they brutally searched the house and the 30 men inside. Three organizers were arrested, and the names and addresses of others entered into the public records. One man was so traumatized by the raid that he killed himself soon thereafter by jumping off a freeway ramp. "What a colossally stupid waste of time," said the editor of a local gay newspaper. "Let's hope our organizations spend as little time as possible on it." Said another community leader, "[The raid] doesn't seem like a gay and lesbian issue."

During the early years of the health crisis, moral revisionists propagated the belief that men into leather were in some way responsible for AIDS; the perceived excesses of radical sexuality, in this case, were seen to equal death. Leatherfolk are well aware too of their betrayal by gay leaders who distance themselves for the sake of mainstream appeal. (Thompson, 1991)

Facing community ostracism, the party organizers felt they had no choice but to leave town. Despite the clear role of homophobia in the case, it fell to GMSMA and other leather organizations to advocate for the Thunderheads case and to raise money for their defense. All charges were eventually dismissed (B. Douglas, 1991).

4.13.2 Pride

In 1989 Tony Deblase created the leather pride flag, which immediately flew in Portland, SF, and NY prides (Hardy, 2003a). The concept of "leather pride" was commonly deployed in leather periodicals to describe leatherfolk visibly identifying with their community.

In 1990 and 1991 organized leathermen and women—not to forget dykes on bikes—were a significant presence in the Pride Day marches in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other big cities. (S. K. Stein, 2021)

GMSMA's B. Marcus (1989) celebrated a new feeling of warmth and respect among the general gay community. Still, Marcus noted, many leather people remained scared to march.

... we haven't always been welcome [at Pride]. In the past, efforts were made to exclude men and women in leather from the parade. Fortunately, we have been able to educate our sisters and brothers, and we are now warmly welcomed by most participants. In fact, the s/m leather community has won substantial acceptance over the last several years. We are a respected part of the Lesbian and Gay Services Center, and groups as diverse as the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Southeast Conference of Lesbians and Gays have sought our involvement....

Still, many members of our community stand on the sidelines. Some rightly fear for their jobs if they are seen in an s/m-leather contingent at a gay pride parade; others are concerned about their family and friends. (B. Marcus, 1989)

In New York 1989's Pride brought the "largest leather contingent ever assembled" (GMSMA, 1989d). Comprising 20 organizations from across the northeast (including Excelsior MC, FFA/CAC, GMSMA, the Gay Men's S/M Cooperative, Griffins MC, the NY Eagle, the Spike, and the Thunderbolts) and hundreds of individual members, the S/M contingent was one of the largest in the parade (Desmodus, 1989; D. Stein, 1991b, 1991a). Several hundred people of all genders marched in the NY Pride S/M contingent in 1990, including GMSMA (GMSMA, 1990b, 1990a). In 1991,

Police looked aside as a number of lesbian marchers removed their blouses and T-shirts as they marched in humid mid-80s temperatures and went bare breasted....

The mood was generally one of celebration, with some costumes frankly erotic and worthy of Carnival in Rio. There were lesbians in black leather on motorcycles and marching in Madonna-style black bras and shorts and a man garbed only in a white athletic supporter and white ostrich feather headdress. (United Press International, 1991)

In Los Angeles, 1990, the Avatar Club wrote of continuing discrimination against leatherfolk, and invited them to march down Santa Monica Boulevard "in front of God, Gays, and the national media" as a part of the National Leather Association contingent:

Not only have we suffered as many losses of friends, lovers and relatives as the rest of our Gay brethren, we have also had to endure those ravages while also enduring the continued scorn and disaffection of those we kindly refer to as "vanilla." We rarely frequent "that side" of town, and they only sneaker [*sic*] into "our" bars on Sunday afternoons (when it's light)....

It's time we pulled down our own walls, guys. This month, in the Christopher Street West parade, we will all have an opportunity to take a step for freedom.... What's at stake? The same as in Eastern Europe: freedom of expression, freedom from our own hiding places, freedom from fear, freedom from our own frustrated longings for love and understanding. (L., 1990)

The resulting leather contingent was the largest in the entire Los Angeles Parade, including over 400 marchers stretching over two blocks, as well as dignitaries and titleholders on floats and convertibles. Dykes on Bikes, Trident, Avatar Club LA, Leather and Lace, and Somandros joined the contingent (Los Angeles Leather History, 2021).

San Francisco's 1989 Pride embraced sexual pluralism. As Murphy (1989) described the event:

From the serious to the silly, sado to masochistic, frivolous to downright freaky, we managed to include nearly every aspect of our diverse, yet very colorful community. However, it was unity that seemed to be the key word from speakers at every stage in the Civic Center Plaza. (Murphy, 1989)

In San Francisco's 1989 Pride, "Sexuality was proudly and boldly represented": porn star Brandon Wild rode "scantily clad in a convertible" and men and women went barechested (McMillan, 1989). Pruzan (1989) photographed one woman rejoicing with breasts covered by a fishnet top; someone behind her wore a chest harness. Drag also made a strong showing, including a float of queens from the original Stonewall rebellion (McMillan, 1989).

Clad in everything from black lace stockings to leather corsets—although a few wore nothing—the riders rode side-by-side through the cheering crowd that lined both sides of the boulevard. (A. White, 1989)

The Bay Area S/M Contingent marched in 1989 with the leather pride flag, jockstraps, and leather vests (Jur, 1989b; McMillan, 1989). One member of the S/M Contingent wryly remarked that she was "finding it difficult to eroticize the pain in her sore feet from so much marching" (McMillan, 1989). Afterwards, the S/M community organized a leather stage at the festival on Polk and Golden Gate (Mr. Marcus, 1989b).

San Francisco's 1989 Pride also included public BDSM scenes. Jur (1989a) photographed a whipping taking place in the parade assembly area: a residential neighborhood with onlookers taking pictures.

In 1990, Zach Long (Leather Daddy V 1987) served as the Parade Marshal for San Francisco Pride, following his work for AIDS Healthcare Foundation and on the board of the Larkin Street Youth Center (Bay Area Reporter, 1991). Mr. Marcus' column that year announced a broad "Leather Pride" contingent which would march following the AIDS Emergency Fund's float, and invited "everyone of the leather persuasion" to attend (Mr. Marcus, 1990b). Perhaps cognizant of previous whipping scenes, he urged an upstanding vision of leather pride:

I trust any overt S&M activity will be absent along the parade route. If the leather pride of the community is publicized in any way, on video or in the mainstream media, let them see you marching tall and proud of your accomplishments you, and your leather brothers and sisters have done and are still doing. I think you all know what I mean—and this is in no way meant to discourage your participation. (Mr. Marcus, 1990b)

Following the parade, the NLA staffed a booth at the festival, and again a leather stage was set up at Civic Center. Despite calls to avoid "overt S&M activity" on the parade route, Marcus encouraged attendants at the festival to "See the staff of Drummer Magazine do bondage demos in their booth while Jay Marston does piercing" (Mr. Marcus, 1990b).

In Seattle, circa 1990, men in leather harnesses walked their (literal) dogs, while the Seattle Men of Leather marched—one wearing what appears to be a steel codpiece (G. Nelson, Circa 1990). In Hartford, Connecticut's 1990 Pride, Fred Reardon marched with the Hartford Colts—a gay S/M-Leather club (Marsh, 1990). Dallas and Chicago had large leather contingents in 1990 as well (S. K. Stein, 2021). In 1991, San Francisco Pride included leather titleholders in jocks and harnesses (Gerharter, 1991), and IML Mike Pereyra posed with the women of Mitchell Bros. "Stripper Float" (Marcus, 1991).

Organized youth groups continued to march. In 1989, San Francisco's "Underaged gay boys and girls from the Billy de Frank Center represented the youth who have early on discovered their gayness and are proud of it" (McMillan, 1989). In 1991, SF's "Romper Room" contingent had 30 gay and lesbian youth, ages 15-23 (Greenbaum, 1991).

4.13.3 Reaction

Pride's sexuality continued to be a sticking point for the conservative US public. In 1989, the Contra Costa Times ran a front-page article on San Francisco Pride. The mere textual description of nudity at the event induced publisher Dean Lesher to threaten to fire the employees responsible (A. White, 1989). As Lesher said:

I did find it repulsive because it did not represent a major interest in our community....

We have a family newspaper here. To have a

story that says that a number of people had no clothes on, I don't think is good family reporting. It said some were undressed. I didn't like that part of it. If they are going to act that way in San Francisco, let them do it in San Francisco, but that's not the type of parade I think we would countenance here in Contra Costa County. (A. White, 1989)

Pride was also the target of critiques by a new wave of normalizing LGBTQ authors. Marshall Kirk & Hunter Madsen's After the Ball: How America Will Conquer its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90s argued that Pride's inclusive vision of community was a strategic mistake: by presenting bigots with extreme instances of LGBTQ stereotypes (ranging from trans people and drag to leather and NAMBLA), we only reinforced anti-gay hatred:

We're assumed to consist entirely of extreme stereotypes: men ultraswishy and ultraviolet, Frankensteinian thug-women with bolts on their necks, mustachio'd Dolly Parton wannabes, leather-men in boots and whips, ombudsmen of pederasty squiring their ombudsboys-all ridiculous, deranged, or criminal. And when we are *finally* allowed to rally and march, to lay our case before the cameras of the straight American public, what do we do? We call out of the woodwork as our ambassadors of bad will all the screamers, stompers, gender-benders, sadomasochists, and pederasts, and confirm America's worst fears and hates. You can call it gay liberation if you like: we say it's spinach, and we say the hell with it!...

"Fringe" gay groups ought to have the tact to withdraw voluntarily from public appearance at gay parades, marches, and rallies, but they don't seem to care whether they fatally compromise the rest of us....

What it boils down to is that this community isn't the personal turf of drag queens and pederasts. We greatly outnumber them, and they have no right to set themselves up as spokespersons for the rest of us—especially when the rest of us are working our butts off to convince straights that, in all respects other than what we like to do in bed, we're exactly like folks.⁵¹ (Kirk & Madsen, 1989)

Instead, *After the Ball* argued for an incrementalist approach: to portray gays as victims and to engender sympathy in the US public, it was critical not to make straight people feel uncomfortable.

In practical terms, this means that cocky mustachioed leather-men, drag queens, and bull dykes would not appear in gay commercials and other public presentations. Conventional young people, middle-aged women, and older folks of all races would be featured, not to mention the parents and straight friends of gays. (Kirk & Madsen, 1989)

This incrementalism was critiqued at a 1990 forum on S/M image in the media, held at the New York Lesbian and Gay Community Services Center (Newhouse, 1990).

[One lesbian] pointed out that s/m was, indeed, gaining traction and even support in the lesbian community, a process helped by the collaboration of leathermen and leatherwomen in many community organizations, and the swift response of such groups as GMSMA in the face of the AIDS crisis. She proposed that this could serve as a model of how gay men and lesbians can work together and create a positive image. [Chris Cooper, former co-chair of GLAAD] wondered if this might be a basis for integrating drag queens and leather people into a positiveimage campaign: the last one had faltered when the Human Rights Campaign received a sample video including drag queens and leathermen in stony silence and refused to finance it unless such people were cut from it.

One man thought that leathersexuality need not be condemned as in *After the Ball*, but it should be "toned down" in public because people can easily be offended by any blatantly sexual behavior. Brian Marcus responded that people sympathize with gay rights, not because we look nice, but because they recognize *our* rights as *their* rights. At that point an old-timer grumbled that the whole discussion reminded him of similar disputes in the gay liberation movement of twenty years ago—you won't change your image until you identify yourself as gay (or leather) to begin with. (Newhouse, 1990)

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) was not the only LGBTQ organization to reject S/M. Per B. Douglas (1990), Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) "still refuses to recognize us or that the s/m community exists and is a part of the broader lesbian and gay community" (B. Douglas, 1990). After years of forbidding people into S/M from attending, and barring women from wearing leather, The Michigan Women's Festival begrudgingly allowed attendees to wear leather in 1990—but only if they did not "say or do anything that would be offensive to other people in other people's judgements" (B. Douglas,

⁵¹I too once vigorously protested, "I'm not like other gays."

1990).

Still, among many leather people there was a sense of optimism about the early 1990s. Davis (1991) thought that S/M—at least in urban centers—was no longer perceived as a threat, and specifically cited the rise of leather boots and harnesses displayed visibly at Pride.

As S. Tucker (1991) summarized the debate:

Just as the far right and the Supreme Court declare that gay people are too deviant to deserve full human rights, so there are gay people who claim leatherfolk and sadomasochists are too queer to be gay. The argument is well known: We have enough trouble convincing the straight world that gays are just like everybody else, with the major exception of what we do in the privacy of our bedrooms—so why destroy this illusion by associating ourselves with leatherfolk and drag queens?

Precisely because it is an illusion. If we fail to defend the real diversity of lesbian and gay people, we won't just be cutting the ethical heart out of the movement; we'll also be cutting the political ground out from under our own feet. Can we convince ourselves that the Supreme Court would grant our right to privacy if only drag queens, leatherfolk, and other queers would stop parading in public? Our right to privacy will never be secure until the public world is truly free. That's why our annual parades are both celebration and protest. The right to privacy is well worth fighting for, but it will be a sad victory if it means nothing but the continued enforcement of sexual secrecy. We have an equal right to the public world, to be indistinguishably similar to straight people, or to be distinctly different. (S. Tucker, 1991)

Within the leather community, an emphasis on consensuality led to new analyses of community norms. Kantrowitz (1989)'s essay on Nazi symbolism in leather spaces argued vigorously against the public display of those symbols:

Good S/M is consensual, and forcing strangers to be an unwilling audience to theatrical displays of Nazism is a form of cruelty, since some of those spectators have participated in a reality that no decent person would force them to remember. True S/M is not cruel; it is a loving fulfillment of the partner's needs. (Kantrowitz, 1989)

This analysis of bystander consent—commonly deployed in deciding the boundaries of acceptable scenes in shared

leather play spaces—would later be extended to broader contexts like Pride.

4.13.4 Obscenity

In 1989, a retrospective exhibition of gay photographer Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs, including images of nude Black men, flowers, and queer BDSM, generated significant backlash from the religious right. Work by queer artists like Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano led conservative lawmakers like Jesse Helms and William Dannemayer to call for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to be defunded (NGLTF, 1991; Rubin, 2015). NGLTF (1991) described the proposed policy as barring the NEA from funding any work the NEA considered "obscene," including "depictions of sadomasochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children, or individuals engaged in sex acts."

In response to this conservative backlash, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force joined forces with activists from the S/M-Leather and art communities. At the 1991 Creating Change conference, leather representatives met with NEA officials to discuss these new attacks on freedom of expression. Among them were NGLTF legislative director (and leatherwoman) Jude Radecic, former GMSMA chairman Barry Douglas, and Cee Brown (executive director at Creative Time, a cultural advocacy group) (NGLTF, 1991).

The appearance of the activists—most wearing full leather regalia—at the government agency prompted a security guard to wonder aloud "Why is a motorcycle club meeting with the NEA?" (NGLTF, 1991)

As with anti-porn feminists' obscenity statutes, conservatives found BDSM a powerful rhetorical instrument in the fight against queer art. Jesse Helms denounced BDSM in the Senate, and used it to argue that the NEA's funding of queer art was against the moral interest of the public (Rubin, 2015; Vance, 1992c).

In this war on culture, sexual images figured prominently, both as highly condensed statements of moral concern and as powerful spurs to emotion and action. The sensational media coverage, however, did little to reveal the symbolic manipulations that were instrumental in this sexual panic. Typical sleights of hand were at work here: even occasional nudity or mere reference to homosexuality were called "sexually explicit," while any representation containing sex or gender innovation was called pornography. Soon, Congress required that NEA grant recipients sign loyalty oaths, promising not to produce art work which "might be considered obscene."...

In addition, the literal and singular interpretations of art works offered by fulminating ministers and senators worked to erase the diversity of viewers and meanings, effectively establishing a fictive unity of opinion among decent citizens. Indeed, the creation of the "outraged taxpayer" denied the existence of a large number of citizens-feminists, gays and lesbians, sadomasochists—who might have welcomed the use of tax dollars for images which acknowledged their existence, having taken the phrase "no taxation without representation" to heart. The sex panic surrounding the NEA was an effort to make not just particular images, but entire topics and constituencies, invisible and disempowered. (Vance, 1992c)⁵²

Vance (1992c) traced the right-wing crusade against "obscenity" back to the Lesbian Sex Wars:

Between 1982 and 1992, a series of moves brought the subject of pornography from inside feminism—where it was only one strand in a complex, multi-layered discourse about sexuality—into mainstream politics, to be used by conservative groups as a major weapon to overturn feminist gains. (Vance, 1992c)

The growing moral panic over queer & S/M imagery in art led Memphis's city council to pass an ordinance in 1990 which banned minors from live performances deemed "harmful to minors," including "those that include displays or descriptions of homosexuality," or "sadomasochistic abuse." In an example of how even symbolic *representation* of variant sexuality was repositioned as a moral pollutant, the ordinance did not simply ban homosexual or sadomasochistic performances themselves. Any "description or representation" of forbidden activities was forbidden as well (O'Neill, 1990).

Meanwhile, state censors abroad engaged in a campaign to prevent the dissemination of queer erotica—even for private consumption. A recurrent theme in leather periodicals from the early 1980s through 1990s were letters to the editor complaining of state interference.⁵³ One writer to Drummer in 1982 complained of years of intermittent seizures by English customs:

It was interesting to note that when issue 47 came it was the first envelope I ever received which had not been ripped open. I can only assume that no. 49 got through because of the New Year festivities. It probably hit the Customs at that time when they were not looking so hard....

Please try harder to get your magazines into England. Can't wait to get them, I don't know where I am with your "Run No More" story. (S., 1982)

To which Drummer replied:

It is a sad commentary that the country where many of our freedoms originated now has agencies that legally determine what their fellow countrymen can read. England wasn't quite so choosy on shipments from the States when Hitler, that other devotee of censorship, was battering down the walls. We will try harder for our many English subscribers, along with those in Canada and Australia who are also subjected to censorship and seizure of their mail. (S., 1982)

A decade later, censorship issues were still ongoing: Drummer's editors noted they had evidence that Customs was still seizing, returning, or destroying mail (LMS, 1992).

4.14 Whips and Chains: 1992–1995

4.14.1 Leather

In the mid-1990s collaboration between the leather community and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force continued. 1992's Creating Change conference included famous leather author John Preston as a keynote (B. Douglas, 1992). In 1995, B. Douglas (1995b) reflected on GMSMA's history of collaboration with NGLTF, and activism more broadly:

There have been leather panels at every Creating Change conference and GMSMA has been a part of all of them. By networking with the activists and professional gays and lesbians who come to this conference each year, we have

⁵²The audience invoked by today's kink-at-Pride opponents often assumes a unified, well-defined view of what practices and symbols constitute sexuality, and which forms of sexuality are acceptable in public. Of course this unity is illusory: for many leatherfolk the sight of a pair of a good pair of boots is intensely arousing, whereas others couldn't care less. There are no shortage of families and children who delight in seeing and meeting leather people at Pride, and other families with more conservative preferences.

⁵³Growing up with the internet and widespread access to almost any kind of porn imaginable, it may be hard for younger queers to fully appreciate the nature of this climate: the anti-porn, anti-S/M move-

ment was partly successful in making text and images describing queer sex—both kinky and vanilla—illegal. Magazines *were* seized, publishers and queer bookstores were subject to police harassment, and editors toned down their erotic content to try to meet censorship requirements. Califia, whose work was censored, has written several essays on this topic.

gained respect and opened doors. For example, after participating in the 1987 Contingent, Peri Jude Radecic came out as a leather woman. When she later became executive director of the NGLTF, she knew what we stood for and so arranged for us to join a group lobbying the National Endowment of the Arts about support for the Mapplethorpe exhibition and other s/m artists.

We have led fights to differentiate s/m from violence and to bring community pressure against the Michigan Women's Music Festival so they will stop harassment of s/m women. It was GMSMA that made the treatment of the Thunderheads a national issue and raised money for their defense. (B. Douglas, 1995b)

By the early 1990s, leather titleholders were generally expected to be activists, disseminating political information, raising funds, writing articles, and organizing events (S. K. Stein, 2021). In San Francisco, Shadow Morton (a gay trans man active in Female to Male International, and co-founder of International Ms. Leather) co-chaired the SF Parade Committee in 1995 (Bradley, 1995).

Fundraising accelerated. In 1994, Leather Pride Night raised \$20,000 for the Spanner legal defense fund, Heritage of Pride, and Kids with AIDS (The Leather Journal, 1994a). By 1996, LPN had raised roughly \$120,000 in total, \$40,100 of which had gone to funding New York Pride (Leather Pride Night, 1996). The event continued until 2015, and served as the model for other leather pride nights around the country, which used kinky demos and raffles to raise money for a variety of charitable queer causes (EDGE Media Network, 2015).

Mr. Marcus (1994) wrote that the San Francisco Eagle was home to "what is now the biggest fundraising patio in San Francisco (one that has been instrumental in raising millions of dollars for various AIDS and other charities)":

There have been so many outrageous fundraisers, bike blessings and christenings, contests and parties at the Eagle, almost all of them fundraisers for AIDS and other charities. (Mr. Marcus, 1994)

In 1992, San Francisco's Art Tomaszewski organized a fundraising march called LeatherWalk to kick off Leather Pride Week. Roughly 35 marchers dressed in full leather uniforms (or barely anything) walked down San Francisco's streets to raise \$8991 for the AIDS Emergency Fund (Mr. Marcus, 1992a; Tomaszewski, n.d.). One photograph of the first LeatherWalk shows Jayme Black baring his butt on a public sidewalk (Mr. Marcus, 1992a). LeatherWalk became an annual institution in San Francisco. Despite gains in acceptance, more conservative LGBTQ people still argued that leather and drag did not belong in the LGBTQ community. In 1995 David Greer (national director of public affairs for the Log Cabin Club) compared drag and leather with the KKK, suggesting both were "extremists" who "show contempt for mainstream society" (Davis, 1995).

When the opera *Harvey Milk* premiered in Houston, I read that the local gay establishment was outraged that its creators had dared to include the likes of leathermen and drag queens in its collage of the community. Seems they didn't want corporate opera-goers getting the impression that homosexuals are freaks. (Davis, 1995)

For Davis (1995), mainstream gay and lesbian culture—and in particular, the theater—had constructed a "Leather Curtain" which separated "acceptable" gays who sought civil rights and a normative lifestyle from gender and sexual radicals.

The Leather Curtain disguises human sexuality in general; for by refusing to show the breadth of sexuality, the curtain encourages the public in its belief that 'the norm' corresponds to just a narrow range of desires. The curtain perpetuates silence, secrecy, and guilt. (Davis, 1995)

In his leather history retrospective, Clark (1996b) felt that the majority of gays and lesbians still didn't understand leather, and asked, "If it weren't for our fundraising, would we be welcome each June in Stonewall parades?"

4.14.2 Raids

Police harassment of leather events continued into the mid-1990s. In 1993, Los Angeles police raided the Dragonfly, a BDSM gathering place (S. K. Stein, 2021). As Checkmate described the raids:

On Sunday, 4 April 1993, the LAPD raided a dance club called the Dragonfly which, at the time, catered to the male and female leather community on Sunday evenings.

Approximately 20 men and women were arrested and charged with lewd conduct, even though more than twice that number of witnesses testified through signed testimony that no lewd conduct of any kind was taking place at the Dragonfly at that time....

The task force which attacked the dance hall included some 30 officers, ten squad cars, two fire vehicles, and one helicopter.

As of the writing of this editorial on 13 October,

active prosecution was still being pursued by city authorities. (Feldwebel, 1994)

16 people at the Dragonfly were ultimately charged with lewd conduct and "performing obscene acts" (S. K. Stein, 2021).

Following the Spanner convictions, English police continued to harass BDSM clubs and private play parties in Yorkshire, Herfordshire, Hoylandswaine, and more. 60 officers, accompanied by dogs, raided the Reflex Club in Sutton in October 1994 (S. K. Stein, 2021).

4.14.3 Pride

Children continued to play a role in Pride. One photograph of Seattle's 1993 Pride shows a child marching with the Commission for Lesbians and Gays (Council, 2012). In 1994, Provenzano (1994b) photographed a toddler marching with her two moms.

As in years past, leatherfolk continued to march in all kinds of gear. In New York, 1992, leather titleholders marched in collars, vests, and short shorts (Chaparro, 1992). San Francisco Pride 1992 included leather marchers in masks, shorts, studded codpieces, and harnesses (Mr. Marcus, 1992b). Among the titleholders present were IMsL "Blair," IML Lenny Broberg, Ms. SF Leather Lupe Rosenabum, and International Mr. Deaf Leather Philip Rubin. Their float received "loud applause" on Market Street (Mr. Marcus, 1992b).⁵⁴

Leather contingents could be found in Prides across the US and Canada. In Seattle Pride, 1992, leathermen wearing chaps, harnesses, and fanny packs walked a pair of dachshunds in their own leather caps and studded harnesses (Arias, 1992). In Toronto's 1994 Pride, marchers wore leather, rubber, drag, and fetish clothing (The Leather Journal, 1994b). Lesbian S/M group Briar Rose were "very active politically" and regularly marched at Gay Pride in Columbus, Ohio (Califia & Sweeney, 1996a). Likewise, Bound by Desire took part in Austin, Texas' Pride (Califia & Sweeney, 1996a).

However, many leather people still feared the consequences of marching openly in leather contingents. In 1992, S. Carlin Long marched with GMSMA, was observed by co-workers, and fired the next morning (Long, 1992).

S. K. Stein (2021) claims that parade organizers in the early 1990s mostly discouraged BDSM marchers from displaying whips and chains, or engaging in overt BDSM

displays. However, spectacular BDSM displays were a part of Pride parades in San Francisco, NY, and Dallas, as well as other public spaces. In 1992, San Francisco's AIDS Emergency Fund ran a "pirate ship" float where a shirtless Art Tomaszewski stood tied up in rope bondage (Mr. Marcus, 1992b). In 1995, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence hosted the Hunky Jesus Contest in Collingwood Park, San Francisco—a well-known cruising spot where the Pervert Scouts showed off singletail whips, collars, and leather restraints (Cleland, 1995).

In 1992, Dallas Pride's NLA contingent featured a bullwhipcracking display by Ms. Jan Lee. NLA: Houston (1993) reports the crowd went into a frenzy and gave the NLA contingent a "warm welcome." Indeed, video of the parade shows raucous cheering for Lee at 39:30: the audience's excitement is palpable. I can only describe Lee's outfit as "spectacular": a leather vest over bra, short shorts, sunglasses, bracers, collar, and what might be an oversized chastity belt. She was followed by a float with men wearing vests and harnesses (Bucher, 1992). They earned the Freedom Parade's "Best Out of Town" award (NLA: Houston, 1993).

Video of the following year's Texas Freedom Parade shows (at 1:10:00) a leather contingent of roughly twenty people in harnesses, chaps, and studded codpieces who marched led by another bullwhip-cracking display. The leather contingent was immediately followed by a gay student group. Drag and bodies were again on full display: floats featured masculine figures in bikinis and women's-style swimsuits, and what appears to be a trans and/or drag contingent. Many men in the crowd went shirtless or sported short shorts (Bucher, 1993).⁵⁵

For some marchers, Pride was a chance to explore new ways of being queer. In San Francisco, Susanna Trnka joined Dykes on Bikes as a "motorcycle virgin," and wrote about it in an article titled *My Fifteen Minutes of Leather*:

Cathy turned around and snapped a leather collar around my neck, informing me she had originally bought it for her dog, but luckily it happened to fit both me and her Sheltie. She hooked on the leash and wrapped it around in her palm—the price for my fifteen minutes of fame....

... it seemed like flying—careening down Market Street on the back of a motorcycle, wearing very little clothes, holding on to a beautiful woman. The crowds cheered and waved frantically. Cathy was really getting into it, gunning

⁵⁴Mr. Leather Boston / Mr. Leather Europe A.J. Steigenberger, was supposed to attend, but was detained at customs in LAX where his chest harness with metal spikes was considered a "weapon" (Mr. Marcus, 1992b). The mores of airport security remain unpredictable for leatherfolk to this day.

⁵⁵At 25:00 the videographer abandons their documentary mission of cataloguing each contingent to cruise some of the men in the crowd, including a lingering zoom in on a pair of well-formed buttocks in daisy dukes. Dear reader, I just about lost it.

the motor and showing off the leash. I didn't think it could get any better, but then during a standstill, I spied my long-gone ex, waving at me enviously from the stands.⁵⁶ (Trnka, 1994)

Public displays of bodies and sexuality remained an important part of Pride. In 1994, San Francisco's Radical Faeries marched nude (Provenzano, 1994a)—though at Castro Street Fair that year police were "everywhere" to prevent a recurrence of public nudity, and arrested four naked walkers (Barnes, 1994). Siegel (1994) described her son marching nude, painted green, with the Radical Faeries in New York Pride—and another nude man (also green!) walking with P-FLAG in San Francisco, 1994. Dunlap (1995) characterized NYC's 1994 parade as containing "plenty of toplessness... but little of it involved women."

Sexual displays were also linked directly to political action:

Easily the most provocative float was that sponsored by the AIDS Prevention Action League. On a large bed on the back of a flatbed trailer, four men clad only in briefs simulated various sex acts, some quite graphically. "Fight AIDS, not sex," declared a billboard on the float. (Dunlap, 1995)

Pride also included instances of public sex, in the most literal senses of both words.⁵⁷ Martin (1992) described one particularly memorable incident in which two men commandeered the top of the newspaper stand outside the Walgreens in SF's Castro neighborhood:

One was naked, his pants down around his ankles, dancing and spreading his ass to the crowd, while the other man gave him head, sucked him off, went down on his (condomless) penis. We were transfixed for a moment, at the sight of wall-to-wall people clapping and cheering this circus-like debauchery, while others even tried to jump up and join in. As we walked away, I noticed a family standing on the corner of 18th and Castro, watching with their mouths open in disbelief....

The women's motorcycle contingent led the parade in leather, wedding dresses, bare breasts and other assorted attire and roared up Market St. This year I noticed something different. One woman was riding with an inflatable humansize doll tied onto her back. I thought this was slightly humorous until a second bike carrying two women went by, this time the woman on the back was holding another inflatable doll and fist-fucking it! (Martin, 1992)

For Martin, the shadow of Anita Bryant loomed large:

It's not the public display of nudity or sexuality I object to; I just expect more out of my community. We need to go beyond this behavior that only serves the ultra-right and others who want to keep us in the social ghetto. Now more than ever we need to be strong, thoughtful, and intelligent role models. How inspiring it would have been to have someone up on top of the newspaper stand giving a speech instead of someone showing off his shortcomings. And when I think of the woman on the motorcycle molesting the doll, I wonder if this is the image we want to put out to the world and especially to the many pro-gay straight families that come to the parade to show their support. Remember, what we do in public today may be used in the next political commercial to try and take away our rights tomorrow. (Martin, 1992)

4.14.4 Reaction

Conservatives continued to use images of sexuality at Pride to constrain queer expression and activate their political base. In 1992, Pat Buchanan's presidential campaign ran attack ads in California which criticized the Bush administration for allowing the NEA to fund Tongues Untied: a documentary on the lives of Black queer men. The ad used footage of "hunks scantily clad in leather straps gyrating erotically at the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade" (Botkin, 1992).

Meanwhile, the voice over denounces the Bush administration for squandering \$5,000 of taxpayer's money to fund such trash. (Botkin, 1992)

Likewise, the Colorado for Family Values campaign (which had advocated for a state constitutional amendment barring protected legal status for lesbians, gays, and bisexuals) showed videos of SF Pride in conservative churches, positioning drag, leather, and nudity as threats to moral order (Brook, 1992):

Leatherfolk, the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence and various miscellaneous naked people were shown along with the caption "this is what 'Gay Rights' means." (Brook, 1992)

⁵⁶Mood.

⁵⁷Well-meaning people engaged in the kink-at-Pride debate have emphatically stated that Sex At Pride is not a thing that ever happens. From both personal experience and historical documentation: it, uh, definitely does. That's not to say that public sex is *always* hyper-visible, as it was in this particular case. Indeed, Warner (1999) echoes Humphreys (1970) in characterizing "public" sex as characteristically discreet, relying on a careful protocol of distinct places, times, and symbols to avoid offense and create safety for participants. However, queer publics like Pride have expanded norms, and some people fuck in them!

In 1993, a southern California conservative religious organization created a video entitled *The Gay Agenda* which exploited footage of San Francisco, LA, and NY Pride to engender opposition to gay rights laws. Taking another page out of the Anita Bryant playbook, the footage included nudity, simulated sex acts, drag, and NAMBLA, interspersed with faces of children in the crowd, including "scantily clad men in chain-mail G-strings and leather, topless women parading before children, men in various forms of outrageous drag, and a sign that reads 'God Is Gay'." Purported experts on homosexuality like psychologist Joseph Nicolosi explained that gays were compulsively driven to exhibitionism, recruitment, and pedophilia (Conley, 1993; O'Neill, 1993).

The film circulated on Capitol Hill and at the Pentagon in an effort to maintain anti-LGBTQ policies in the military, and was also distributed to voters in Oregon and Colorado via the 700 Club as a part of a push for anti-gay ballot measures (Califia, 1994b; Conley, 1993; O'Neill, 1993).

In 1994 the Lambda Report—a right-wing anti-gay journal—produced a film titled *Stonewall: 25 Years of Deception*, which urged Newt Gingrich and other conservative politicians to present all homosexuals as into sadomasochism (S. K. Stein, 2021). Robert Dornan, a Republican from California, attacked the National Endowment for the Arts for funding "homosexual film festivals"; in his view, they fostered "tolerance of sadism and masochism" (Kielwasser, 1994).

While deploying images of sexual behavior at Pride in attack ads against LGBTQ people, conservatives also attempted to *suppress* their visibility in an attempt to preserve a heteronormative standard of "family values." In 1994 a petition by 90 members of Australia's Federal Parliament demanded that the Australian Broadcasting Company not run coverage of the Sydney Gay and Lesbian Mardi Gras Parade (Kielwasser, 1994). As Senator Parer said:

What I object to is a campaign to foist these deviant practices on the vast majority of normal people. That objection is strengthened when the taxpayers' own broadcast network, the ABC, becomes involved in activities that denigrate true family values. (Kielwasser, 1994)

A growing chorus of normalizing lesbians and gays also felt that the public face of Pride represented them poorly, and that the lesbian and gay movement needed to grow up and become respectable. Bruce Bawer's 1993 A Place at the Table complained about how images of other queer people being sexual gave "normal" gays a bad name. Bawer objected to photographs of drag queens and black-clad men in bondage, and the sexual displays at New York's Pride parade, including nipple rings and spandex bicycle shorts (Bawer, 1993).

Drag was a recurring target for LGBTQ people, who sometimes felt that such outrageous modes of queer expression had no place in the modern, dignified quest for civil rights. As Hayden (1992) wrote regarding drag queen Sadie Sadie's debate performance on the Donahue Show:

This is not to minimize nor disregard the contributions of drag queens of the gay rights movement in the past... They had the balls to be out front when few dared to join them. But time has marched on and today drag only gets in the way of serious debate. (Hayden, 1992)

In a letter to the Washington Blade, Kustin (1993) also blamed drag, pageants, and "parading down Pennsylvania avenue in leather thongs" for reinforcing stereotypes of gays as "freaks."

... Gay men and most lesbians are normal, everyday human beings who bear little resemblance to the most outrageous members that the media focuses on during Pride Day parades. If one chooses to dress in drag; no problem. Just don't do it on television while the rest of us are trying to help straight America realize that we're no different than they are. (Kustin, 1993)

For Provenzano (1994b), this debate was old news. "Prepare yourself for another round of reactionary spew," he warned:

We criticize our groups for not having their act together, but if they do, then we slam them for being too assimilationist. It's impossible to please a crowd, especially a queer one, where diversity is an understatement. (Provenzano, 1994b)

Provenzano attested that diversity and sexual expression were key elements of the beautiful, contradictory queer explosion that formed Pride. "Stonewall is the exaltation of sexual dissent," he said (Provenzano, 1994b). As he recalled marching in New York, 1988:

That painted lavender stripe was like a magnet. I saw drag queens and hunky men and dykes with babies and rows of PWAs in wheelchairs and fabulous floats....

Yes, it's all a mess, and the power hungry will always grab the microphone, and the drag queens and leather folk will always be caught in the Christian cameras, for they are so bilious with envy that they cannot help but be fascinated by us. (Provenzano, 1994b) The early 1990s also saw a flurry of debate over public nudity in the SF Bay Area. Oros (1993) complained of nudity, "flaunting" of bodies, and transvestites at gay events. "Where's the dignity in all this?" they asked.

All we've ever shown society is that we are sex fiends baring our genitals and breasts at street fairs and parades, expressing our lifestyle with a sexual connotation, and, forcefully insisting that we must be accepted....

... the majority of us are not sex fiends, drag queens, effeminate or transvestites. (Oros, 1993)

To which the BAR replied:

While we agree that our parades may disconcert some heterosexuals, they are no less conventional than Mardi Gras—and we don't see too many laws passed against those people who partake of that revelry. (Oros, 1993)

Complaints over the role of public nudity in San Francisco's queer community generated vigorous response in the pages of the BAR:

I could go to a street fair dressed in a suit and tie and bigoted people *still* would say that I am a detriment to society and not give me my equal rights. (Copani, 1993)

Mensch (1993) felt that those who sought to tamp down public nudity weren't really interested in queer civil rights:

... anyone who is willing to deny me equal rights because they saw a naked fag dancing at a street party wasn't much interested in my civil rights in the first place. There is absolutely no point in pandering to the lot which thinks this way; they'll find other excuses to work against gay and lesbian people should the supply of naked dancing fags suddenly dry up. (Mensch, 1993)

Whereas Downye Soft emphasized that the exercise of one's right to go nude (after all: public nudity had been an aspect of public life in San Francisco for much of the 1900s, and was legal under state law) was a intrinsically worthy, liberatory display:

Stephen's point that a few people are ruining it for the rest of us is *really tired*. If we are not ourselves in public, of all places, then we are never truly free. Stephen, what you view as a public display of blatant disrespect, I see as a public display of blatant freedom and liberation. (Soft, 1993) The sight of bodies at Pride also prompted consternation from some straight people. R. Summer, a straight woman, wrote to the Bay Area Reporter in 1994 to complain at length regarding 1994's San Francisco Pride. She demanded an apology from the gay community for their outrageous behavior:

Last week was my first Gay Pride Parade and I was really excited to attend, because I have always had genuine respect for gays and lesbians. That is, until the parade. I expected to see beautiful costumes, wonderful floats, singing and dancing reflecting the many artistic, talented members of the gay community, whom I have known and shared much of my life with....

My husband, myself, and four of our children attended what we expected to be a wonderful afternoon and memorable Father's Day. Something a little different....

Boy! Were we shocked and surprised. This most likely will be the first and last Gay Pride Parade for all of us. What a shame. And what a horrible way to introduce the gay and lesbian community to our children!

Let's cut right to the nitty gritty. "Dykes on Bikes" is a wild and exciting sight normally. But what right do they have to parade around halfto-totally naked? What costumes some did decide to wear were in very bad taste. They made total fools of themselves in front of thousands of people.

I'm certainly not going to let the gay men off the hook either. The "girls" who were camping it up in drag were wonderful, and that one float was great. But who the hell gave those others the right to parade around with their genitals hanging out and flopping around?...

We heterosexuals would never do such a disgusting thing in public, and if we did, we'd be arrested on the spot! How did they get permission to do such a thing? In public, on Sunday, in daylight, in the center of Downtown San Francisco... on Father's Day?...or any day for that matter?

I am angry and upset. I want an apology to all of us who attended the parade. We attended to show our respect, and in return were slapped in the face with disrespect, insulted. (Karr, 1994)

As Karr (1994) replied: "The nature of the gay parade hasn't changed in 20 years... Child, for Dykes on Bikes,

that was normal."58

But Irwin (1994) was saddened that a straight ally felt too offended to return to Pride. "I have been marching for gay liberation for 23 years, but I never marched for the right to be offensive or publicly indecent," he said.

Broad-minded, friendly heteros have long been a boon to gay liberation. For God's sake, let's make them feel welcome at our functions. Make them comfortable about bringing their children and families. The parade shouldn't be only for gays and lesbians, any more than St. Patricks Day should be only for the Irish... These groups don't need to broadcast their mating habits; we shouldn't either.

No, I'm not saying don't dress in your ostrich feathers or leather harnesses or nun's habits. The more outrageous, the better. Let's flaunt our artistic ability, our musical and theatrical talents, not our dicks. Those who feel the need to expose themself in front of an audience can do so at a private club where such behavior is appropriate, not in public places. (Irwin, 1994)

Irwin's choice of norms—allowing leather harnesses, but not dicks—illustrates the mutability and subjectivity of norms at Pride. Just 16 years prior, Pride officials had argued that wearing *any* leather gear represented violence against women and would be met with police intervention.

Other parents argued that public nudity was in fact a public *good*. Laura Siegel, a PFLAG parent, empathized with feelings of shock at seeing nude bodies. However, in her experience feelings of discomfort soon changed to appreciation. She urged Summer to embrace what made her uncomfortable:

I was once uncomfortable with naked bodies myself. There's the desire to stare at the penis (I mean the man) in the sauna. If you lower your eyes, it doesn't do much good. My nakedphobia was cured at Harbin Hot Springs (a "clothing is optional but you'll be embarrassed if you wear any" resort). When you see one or two naked people walking down the street, you're perhaps a bit stunned. But after a while the variation of breasts and bellies gets to be fascinating. Your judgement of what constitutes a "beautiful" body dwindles....

The most beautiful sight I saw in New York

was of a statuesque woman walking down 67th street totally naked and proud. Everyone cheered, at which point she squatted, placed another woman on her shoulders, and continued down the street to Central Park. They looked exquisite.

A woman once told a P-FLAG parent that she was uncomfortable with "all the gays on Castro Street."

"Go there more!" the parent advised.

So I offer you this suggestion. Go back next year. When you see a swinging penis or an exposed breast, examine your own discomfort. Then take off your sweater. (Siegel, 1994)

For conservative leatherman Ron K., the consent of bystanders required leatherfolk to moderate their sexuality in public. Instead, leather needed to build alliances with broader LGBTQ organizations, and focus on a humanrights framing. K. (1994) also offered a clear summation of the modern bystander-consent argument:

I wouldn't want to watch some vanilla couple screw on the back of a float in a parade and I don't think they would want to watch an SM couple in some expression of SM on a float in a parade... What I'm advocating for is that we be conscious of the impact our behavior has on those around us.... I do not advocate public displays of our sexuality when people who do not participate in our sexuality are exposed to our sexuality without our consent; i.e. the parade scenario. (K., 1994)

And Wolf (1994) expressed a similar desire for leather to accommodate existing public norms in an incrementalist approach:

The public behavior of members of our community should be tailored to the occasion and it would be foolish to expect that the level of tolerance for or acceptance of our interests would be expanded by untoward incidents. Whether it is wearing a Tee shirt and a bar vest to a meeting with the President or parading down Main Street with bare breasts and a dildo hanging from your jeans, we must ask ourselves if this is appropriate behavior for the circumstances and whether it will advance our cause. Passionate belief in our right to do something is not the same as it being the right thing to do at the time....

Limits in politics, like those in S/M, are best overcome through gradual expansion, not by

⁵⁸My favorite line from Karr (1994): "'On Father's Day?' What delicious irony—reverent, yet with just enough camp to keep things from getting as sanctimonious as yourself."

direct challenges of the established limits of the other involved individual(s). (Wolf, 1994)

But other leather people inclined to conservative personal dress found vibrant sexual expression a vital force:

Unfortunately, the consolidation of the S/M community has been accompanied by a division within gay ranks. Flamboyance in dress and non-vanilla relationships are brought to question by those who feel that those who dress oddly or who like to whip people or tie them up provide ammunition for the common enemy. The fragmentation which results is virtually without limit, even within the S/M community.

Your editor, who is given to plaid shirts and blue jeans 365 days a year, is not one for outrageous appearance personally. However, those who wish to force gays, particularly leathermen and other fetishists, into a more conservative mold are really building a bigger closet to replace the one from which we still have not fully escaped. It is ironic that many of those who have attacked the revised Clinton gay military policy are themselves advocating a form of "don't ask, don't tell." (Cox, 1994)

Cox (1994) went on to celebrate a recent editorial in the New York Times, which insisted that a just society should defend more than just "normal" lesbians and gays:

The cross-dressers who sparked the Stonewall event remain an issue in the gay rights struggle today. The religious right uses them to fan fear and hatred. Gay moderates and conservatives, even organizers of the Stonewall parade, seem to feel a constant obligation to divorce themselves from gay flamboyance, to assure the country that the vast majority of gay people are "regular" people just like the folks next door.

The fact that gay people are fixating on folksnext-doorness is understandable, given how they have been demonized. But the measure of a just society is not how it treats people who dress in business clothes. A just society must offer the same protections to men in leather and chains as to those who wear Brooks Brothers suits. (New York Times Editorial Board, 1994)

In short: a feeling of momentum among leatherfolk in the late 1980s and early 1990s appears to have been tempered by the recognition that mainstream LGBTQ culture still struggled with the inclusion of leather people. The Leather Journal (1994a) noted that coverage of New Yorks's 1994 Pride generally lacked images of leather and

drag. Dominguez Jr. (1994) wrote that Pride organizers in the mid-1990s were still questioning whether and how to limit the visibility of leather people in Pride, and went on to note the lack of leather visibility in professional journals and conferences, and the absence of a coherent national organization to speak for BDSM people in politics and culture. Two years later, Califia & Sweeney (1996b) summarized the debate:

When we first showed up at gay pride marches, some attempts were made to keep us out by mainstream gays who thought we made them look bad and by followers of outmoded feminist theories that made no distinction between S/M and violence. Then for several years our presence was grudgingly accepted. But our right to participate in these events is being challenged once more. The New Christian Right loves to videotape people in leather and chains flogging one another, and they broadcast this footage when they try to pass laws denying gay citizens equal civil rights in Colorado, Oregon, Washington, and other states. The leather community's right to participate in gay pride events is being threatened by mainstream gay politicos who don't know how to talk to Mom and Pop about us and don't particularly care to learn.

Some leather activists have put forward the idea that we ought to tone down our public presentations and stop playing into the hands of bigots who will misuse our festive behavior. An equally vigorous segment of our community has labeled such ideas assimilationist thinking and adamantly refuses to leave the bullwhips at home. It has been pointed out that our enemies could always use material from S/M porn or how-to classes on S/M safety and technique at leather conferences. And, in fact, writers for the *Lambda Report*, a homophobic right-wing journal about "the gay agenda," infiltrated the leather conference at the 1993 march on Washington and published detailed reports about the contents of several workshops. A long-term strategy to keep harmful S/M imagery out of the hands of the New Right is doomed to fail. But if we don't want to censor ourselves, we still have to do something to confront those antigay bigots and to update the squeamish civil-rights gay activists who ought to be our allies. No individual or group in the leather community seems prepared to take on that intimidating task. (Califia & Sweeney, 1996b)

(Califia & Sweeney, 1996b) went on to note that although

fetish *imagery* had never been more common in media, that imagery was divorced from the actual people, practice, and culture of leather. BDSM clothing, tools, and practices were presented for titillation, for humor, or as a signifier of an erotic Other—but not spoken about as an honest, empathetic practice of connection.⁵⁹

4.14.5 The 1993 March on Washington

In 1993, LGBTQ people again marched in Washington DC. As in the 1987 March on Washington, some organizers wanted to exclude BDSM and drag from participating: Susan Wright says that the S/M-Leather contingent was denied a slot in the speaker line-up (Ianotti, 2014). The Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence advocated for trans inclusion in the march, but march organizers denied them a speaking slot as well, and "officially discouraged drag." The Sisters flew to DC and marched in drag anyway, and reported "In contrast to the organizers, the crowds couldn't get enough!" (Perpetual Indulgence, n.d.).

As in 1987, leather people were involved in the organizing process. Brenda Howard (along with other bisexual activists like Lani Ka'ahumanu) successfully advocated for the inclusion of "bi" in the title of the 1993 march (L. Nelson, 2005). Again the march included an S/M-Leather contingent, and GMSMA proposed a broad political platform (B. Douglas, 1992). Articles in the leather press, like this issue of Checkmate, helped advertise the march:

In this country there will be a march on Washington on 25 April 1993 supported by a broad spectrum of the gay and lesbian community. The objectives include the repeal of antisodomy laws, and all laws restricting private sexual expression between consenting adults, passage of a Gay and Lesbian Civil Rights Bill, a genuine national commitment to the fight against AIDS, the right to control our own bodies, an end to attempts to censor images of gays and lesbians, and the call for an executive order banning anti-gay discrimination in the government, including the military.

The March will be supported by the S/M-Leather community through the S/M-Leather Contingent (SMLC). (Feldwebel, 1992)

As in 1987, a conference on BDSM was held in DC before the march, along with community events. Mr. Marcus (1993) cited 3,000 participants in the Dungeon Dance and SM conference, which also served as a community fundraiser.

The march itself comprised roughly 90 contingents reflecting the diversity of the LGBTQ world. Ocamb (1993) described the march like a huge Pride parade, including demonstrations by ACT UP, nudity by dykes and radical faeries, and of course, plenty of leather. Parents and children were the fifth contingent, followed by queer youth (The Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, 1993).

The S/M-Leather contingent marched 20th (The Gay and Lesbian Parents Coalition International, 1993), and included activists like Brenda Howard (Limoncelli, 2005) and Cleo Dubois—(Dubois, 2014) shows marchers wearing full leathers, short shorts, and other gear. As Mr. Marcus (1993) glowingly recalled, the March on Washington "appeared to have finally opened the eyes and hearts of our very own community to their leather brethren. It's almost unbelievable that the leather/SM/fetish community may finally have been lifted out of the realm of 'our most misunderstood subculture.'"

All along the march route, the crowds cheered and applauded the leather men and women that made the trek through the streets of our capital. Leather title holders, bike clubs, women's groups, and fetish-oriented organizations basked in the looks of admiration and remarks of appreciation generously dispensed by the onlookers. (Mr. Marcus, 1993)

Tala Brandeis, a trans leatherdyke from San Francisco, remembered:

It was wonderful to look back and see 5,000 leather people marching. It was a sight that really filled me with pride. (Califia, 1994b)

As is typical for large marches, the March on Washington involved long delays: Brandeis described a three hour wait before the leather contingent could set off (Califia, 1994b). Leatherfolk kept morale high with performances: one photo in Mr. Marcus (1993) shows an "unidentified cutie" in knee-high boots, a thong, and a bra with tassels, who "entertained the leather group just before they stepped off for the March." Brandeis herself stepped forward to demonstrate whip technique, using her 12-foot bullwhip to lash multiple bottoms. As Audrey Joseph, producer of International Ms. Leather, described her performance:

People were so hot and tired. The disabled folks in our contingent were having an especially hard time. And Tala just stepped out and en-

⁵⁹I think this is also the case today, though in a somewhat different form. We've definitely made advances in presenting kink as a consensual erotic practice, and detailed depictions of BDSM can be found in both mainstream entertainment and in queer internet circles like Tumblr. That said, an understanding of leather as a culture lags: I meet an awful lot of LGBTQ people who find kinky erotica intensely attractive and engage in rough play themselves, but who have never experienced the intimate euphoria of subspace or the compassion of proper aftercare. Porn and infographics are useful tools, but no substitute for 20 minutes on the Eagle patio watching a rope demo.

tertained us. People adore her. She is a good person, a shy person, and she gave us a lot of pride and fun that day. She gave us a new way to look at us, to look at women. (Califia, 1994b)

As is common for singletail whipping scenes, Brandeis' whipping caused burns and drew blood on some bottoms. When asked about HIV safety and the potential for cross-contamination, she explained that her technique in these demos was to perform only a few strikes, through clothing, on each bottom. The whip itself remained blood-free, and only after she had moved on did blood seep to the surface (Califia, 1994b).

Some March on Washington officials were not happy about this. GMSMA's Barry Douglas remarked:

I know that we were not visible in the March on Washington. Having been the target of rightwing attacks and having a notion that we want to convince people that we're just like the people next door, depsite the fact that we [leatherfolk] were 50% of the executive committe, people [i.e. MOW organizers] felt unable with Tala to have shots of the leather contingent in news releases, the videos, and in discussions of the event (Califia, 1994b, brackets Califia's)

I get the impression that more conservative elements of the leather press were similarly concerned that the whip demos could damage the leather community's newfound accommodation with the LGBTQ community, driving leather back into the closet. Recaps of the March on Washington in Mr. Marcus' Bay Area Reporter column and GMSMA Newslink appear to have completely omitted any mention of Brandeis.⁶⁰

4.14.6 Stonewall 25

In 1994, the 25th-year anniversary of the first Christopher Street Liberation Day was held in New York City. Brenda Howard helped organize the event (Limoncelli, 2005). As Hayyim Obadyah, a member of her Bible study group, later described her presence at Pride:

Brenda truly understood the meaning of "living in leather." I have never seen Brenda as happy as she would be on Pride Day, walking down Fifth Avenue, with her beloved partner Larry, surrounded by men and women in leather. She had such great joy in celebrating the pride, sensuality, creativity, and egalitarianism of leathersex. (Obadyah, 2005)

Following bitter internal debate, Stonewall 25 organizers decided to emphasize the political nature of the event rather than Pride's festival aspects (Califia, 1994b). Organizers banned Dykes on Bikes, NAMBLA, and floats with drag queens; requests to include transgender people in the title of the event were denied (Bergstedt, 1994; Califia, 1994b). In protest, Buttercup (1994) urged drag, leather, and other non-conforming individuals to march anyway:

The queer rights movement is at a fork in the road. For too many years, we have taken the "right" road and pined for acceptance by the world community. We are supposed to tell the drag queens and leather folk to go away; pack up their sequins and whips, they're not welcome here....

Go to NYC to send a wake up call. That we are not all "normal," boring, straight-acting and self-hating. Let the world know that queers come in all shapes, sizes, genders, sexualities, and colors. Wear your best drag, whether sequins or leathers, or wear nothing at all. It's liberation time brothers and sisters—not assimilation time; that was last year's news at the March on Washington. Let's realize the potential for real radical changes in our movement. (Buttercup, 1994)

An official policy banned S/M play at the march, but as Califia (1994b) observed, this was not mentioned in the program.

How could anybody expect to successfully enforce a policy that required a dramatic change in people's behavior, when there was no advance publicity, no discussion, and in fact no consensus that this was a good idea? I think we are very lucky that a brawl did not ensue. (Califia, 1994b)

Indeed, during the march assembly there were at least two S/M scenes: one person was whipped against a tree, and another paddled over someone's lap. According to GMSMA's Brian Marcus, committee members asked them to desist, explained that it would be "more useful" not to be seen engaging in that kind of play, and emphasized the need for bystander consent (Califia, 1994b).

S. K. Stein (2021) reports roughly 3,000 members marched in Stonewall 25's SM/Leather/Fetish contingent, showing off lots of leather and a fair amount of bare flesh. Jocks and harnesses were on display (L. Owens, 1994). At least

⁶⁰This is a recurrent problem in trying to trace the more radical threads of leather history: not only were the general LGBTQ press and organizations trying to avoid perceptions of radical sexuality—even some leather writers engaged in a careful process of covering. I only learned of the Brandeis whip demos thanks to the Leather Archives & Museum's archivist Mel Leverich.

two women in the contingent went bare-breasted, and another had a dildo sticking out of her front (The Leather Journal, 1994a). One photo shows leather marchers in jockstraps, vests, covers, kilts, and harnesses (Grabow, 1994).

The Bay Area Reporter's photo of the march shows leather titleholders in sashes and harnesses "leading the contingent" (Mangels, 1994). What the photo did not show was Tala Brandeis, who for much of the march led the contingent by cracking her 12-foot bullwhip (Califia, 1994b).

In San Francisco Pride since 1989, and at the 1993 March on Washington, Brandeis had cracked her whip without incident and to positive reaction from crowds (Califia, 1994b; Rhodes, 1994). Encouraged by chants of "Tala, Tala, Tala" from the leather contingent,⁶¹ and with roughly a hundred volunteers creating safe clearance, Brandeis cracked her whip (in the air-no bottoms were involved) at the head of the contingent. Photographs by L. Owens (1994) in The Leather Journal show her whip flying, and leather-clad volunteers holding hands to create a broad circle of open space. Rhodes (1994) recalls "just about everyone" at the front of the S/M-Leather contingent was cheering her on. Brandeis continued cracking her whip for a half mile, until the march paused for three minutes of silence outside the United Nations (Califia, 1994b; Rhodes, 1994; S. K. Stein, 2021; The Leather Journal, 1994a).

After the pause at the UN, three prominent leather organizers (Los Angeles' Guy Baldwin and GMSMA's Barry Douglas & Bruce Marcus) approached Brandeis and asked her to desist (Califia, 1994b; Rhodes, 1994). Baldwin, himself a whip top, expressed concern for public safety and accidental injury should Brandeis lose control. Brandeis thought this was silly: she was used to doing this type of whip display with only a handful of monitors, and here she had dozens (Califia, 1994b). Police confirmed that the whip-cracking was acceptable, and they would only need to intervene if it made contact with a person (Rhodes, 1994).

The more serious problem appears to have been public relations. Rhodes (1994) reported (secondhand) that one of the organizers felt the whipping "sends the wrong message" about the leather community. A shouting match ensued in which organizers expressed a fear of negative media images and what the religious Right would do with the footage (The Leather Journal, 1994a). Indeed, a documentary crew (alternately described as from the Christian Broadcasting Network or British documentarians) circled during the debate (Califia, 1994b).⁶² Supporters of the

whip display shouted "Two, Four, Six, Eight! We will not assimilate!" and asked "Why should we hide who we are, especially during Stonewall 25?" (The Leather Journal, 1994a).

Things turned ugly when a former international titleholder and his boy raced to the front of the crowd, tripping over and damaging Rhodes (1994)'s wheelchair in their haste (Rhodes, 1994; The Leather Journal, 1994a). They insisted that the whip cracking was sending the wrong message, and in the following screaming match, the boy threatened to slug a staffer from The Leather Journal (The Leather Journal, 1994a). In the end things settled down, and Brandeis resumed cracking her whip until the streets became too narrow to do so safely. As The Leather Journal (1994a) described the remainder of the march:

Oblivious to the hostilities in the leather camp, marchers in front of the leather contingent formed a wave each time the whip cracked. The wave made it all the way to the front of the parade, according to some, but none of those at the front knew how it started. (The Leather Journal, 1994a)

4.14.7 Reaction to the Brandeis Whip Demo

Brandeis' whip demonstration caused a kerfuffle in leather circles, with numerous articles in both the queer and leather press debating the acceptability of the display. Califia (1994b) characterized the incident as a microcosm of long-running debates within the leather and broader LGBTQ communities regarding leadership, norm-setting, and the purpose of Pride:

[The debate] raises serious questions that we have to discuss: "Who are our leaders? What do we want our leaders to do? What is the political agenda of this community? How should we present ourselves to potential supporters? Do we try to make a coalition with the larger gay and lesbian community, or do we just assume that is a lost cause? What about mainstream heterosexual society? How do we defend ourselves against defamation? What is the purpose of large public gatherings? Do the same rules that apply at a play party apply at a street fair, a conference, or a demonstration? What the hell does"safe, sane, and consensual" mean anyway? Who gets to decide what behavior (or which individuals) conform to this definition of "good" versus "bad" S/M (or S/M versus violence)? What is the appropriate thing to do if you believe you are dealing with behavior or

you.

⁶¹Brandeis also said that a representative of American Leatherman 1991 José Uclés initially encouraged her to lead the contingent; Uclés disputed this precise account but supported her nonetheless.

⁶²If you know what happened to this footage, I would *love* to hear from

individuals who are unsafe, insane, or nonconsensual? (Califia, 1994b)

"Some astute observers have pointed out that it is absurd to be obsessed about the propriety of an event commemorating the anniversary of a riot," Califia (1994b) wryly observed. Westerfelhaus (1994) concurred that Brandeis was taking part in a long-running tradition of visible sexual expression at Pride:

Correct me if I'm wrong, but I thought that we were marching for and celebrating freedom of sexual expression at the 25th anniversary of the Stonewall riots in New York....

I understand that some members of our community think that it gives the wrong impression of us to crack whips or show bruises and marks. What impression would we rather give—That we all go home to houses with white picket fences and have babies? (Westerfelhaus, 1994)

She emphasized the quest for self-expression and leather people's struggle to "come out" into the larger queer community. More generally, she emphasized that a critical part of queer community was learning to embrace those whose tastes varied from your own:

We cannot accept self-censorship, any more than we can accept censorship from outside the community. One of the first things I was taught when I came out into leather was acceptance of those whose tastes varied from mine. If we can't accept each other, why would we expect the outside world to accept us? (Westerfelhaus, 1994)

Anne "Spencer" Bergstedt (IMsL 1994) was "so appalled by the level of hypocrisy and assimilationist politics in our community" that she left the parade. She emphasized the double standards at play: organizers who demanded Brandeis cease cracking her whip passed directly by exposed boobs, dildos, bare asses, and visible cane marks & bruises on marchers (Bergstedt, 1994):

[The events of Stonewall 25] signify something frightening about our movement—are we, in the face of rightwing bigotry, simply buying their rhetoric, and are we internalizing their homophobia and leather hatred? Are we trying to conform—when we are essentially nonconformists? And why are we doing this? What crumbs are we waiting to have drop down to us from the table—both from straights and from other queers—when we are willing to cover ourselves and our sexuality for the sake of media control? The right has us running scared. We react instead of act. And in our fear, we fall victim to their ingenious ways of separating, dividing, and conquering our community. (Bergstedt, 1994)

For Drewery (1994), the public focus of leather contingents should be arguing for the rights to practice "safe, sane, and consensual" kink in private & SM-friendly contexts—not public streets. "There are many things wrong with this sort of display in a non-leather/non-consented space" (Drewery, 1994).

[LGBT] celebration attendees have become accustomed to SM/leather/fetish people and our attire, most even expect us to be there. However, by attending the event as an *onlooker*, have they consented to a forced display of our sexuality? I say, "NO!" This is even more true of the nonlike-minded women, men, and children who witnessed this spectacle by accident. (Drewery, 1994)

Guy Baldwin also emphasized that bystanders could be children, and they might be frightened by the sight and sound of a whip cracking—though, as Califia noted, some of those bystanders and children would grow up to become leather people themselves (Califia, 1994b). Moreover, after decades of conservatives deploying images of S/M during Pride, Baldwin perceived a public-relations disaster should the Right acquire images of BDSM scenes. "Every time she cracks that whip, we lose 5,000 votes," he told a fellow spectator during the march (Califia, 1994b).

Rhodes (1994) felt this concern over consent was misplaced, since there was no bottom involved:

I have to admit that my reaction to Tala's whip cracking at the 1993 March On Washington was not good, but I got over it in a few minutes. My objection would have been on the issue of consensuality, but when I realized that in Washington, D.C. and in New York that there was no bottom on the receiving end of the whip, I knew that I was wrong. (Rhodes, 1994)

Rhodes went on to dispute the concern over public messaging. If the whip cracking was sending "the wrong message,"

The wrong message to whom? To the suburbanites who do everything they are told by moneyhungry corporate America? To the Religious Yeah, Right that already has all of the damning film footage that it needs if it wants to use it? Or perhaps to the bleached, pale-faced gays and lesbians who are already giving in to this assimilationism? I didn't come out as gay and later as leather so I could sit at a McDonalds while wearing a pair of Dockers pants, and look and feel like the rest of American society that is under the press of mass marketing. (Rhodes, 1994)

Kane (1994) echoed these concerns. In his view, Douglas, Marcus, and Baldwin's attempts to control the public image of leather were misguided: the Right would *never* be satisfied with leather people. He also emphasized that marchers and onlookers alike celebrated Brandeis' whip display:

Tala, a highly loved and respected member of the Leather/S/M Community, has, in many people's eyes, become a symbol of our right to be ourselves in many public arenas. She led the contingent in Washington and at our own Gay Pride Parade. The applause and admiration of the other contingent members is apparent. She even had the cops in NY whooping and hollering.

The issue here, folks, is control. Barry Douglas said to me personally that this is not the way he wants to be represented to the world. Well, he has the right to his feelings, but not the right to speak for others. Personally, that parade was mine, yours, ours. I was not there to paint a prettier picture for the "world at large!" They chose to view our parade, they were not necessarily honored guests. Personally, if a certain "Guy" from L.A. had chosen to lead this contingent, people would have kissed his butt. The fact that Tala is a strong, out-there dyke is a threat to many people, henceforth, she was not an acceptable representation. Bullshit! Tala can represent me anytime! She's a person who refuses to assimilate in order to emotionally "buy" people's acceptance. We all could learn a great lesson from her in self-acceptance.

The above-referenced "Guy" from L.A. even had the audacity to say that he was concerned that Pat Robertson would get footage of this part of the parade and circulate it across America on the 700 Club! C'mon folks, if we were wearing Brooks Brothers suits, he would portray us as those faggots trying to look normal so we can have easier access to their kids. Fuck him! We don't need to live in fear of our enemies. Our strongest weapon against bigotry is to remain proud and diverse. (Kane, 1994)

To this, Pope (1994) replied that Brandeis had put her sexuality over community responsibility. This wasn't about her being a Dyke, about assimilation, or self-acceptance. It was about responsibility and the boundaries of acceptable public behavior—norms which should apply equally to queer and straight people alike.

The way gays and lesbians have sex is what sets them apart from the straight world. As leatherfolk, S/M is our sex, it is our fucking, and it is what sets us apart from that world as well. The gay and lesbian community has not advanced its cause as far as it has by fucking in the streets. And nor will the leather community. (Pope, 1994)

As Mr. Marcus had previously urged in the Bay Area Reporter, leather visibility for Pope (1994) came with strict boundaries. It was OK to march wearing leather and whips, and to wear G-strings, but not to fuck in public.⁶³ When Tala cracked her whip—even though no bottom was involved—she was "fucking in the streets, she was having a scene in public in the Pride March. She was wrong" (Pope, 1994).

Brandeis and her lover, Anne Williams, said that this felt like a matter of gay male sexism and dyke-phobia within the leather community—although they noted many gay men were also present in the circle of spotters assisting Brandeis (Califia, 1994b). As Califia summarized,

In [the leather dyke community] the incident is being viewed this way: "A bunch of prissy fags tried to tell an up-front leather woman to tone down her act and go back into the closet. What else can you expect from a bunch of boys? They obviously hate women. Fuck them! Leathermen seem much less united, depending on how closely they are affiliated with the women's community and how committed they are to street theater and the politics of confrontation. (Califia, 1994b)

Califia also noted a split between the west coast and east coast leather communities: New York's leather community generally emphasized a more buttoned-down approach to public visibility, and in their public messaging around "Safe, Sane, Consensual," centered the moral right to *private* BDSM practice. "SSC" was generally a product of a midwest and east coast leather culture, Califia argued, whereas San Francisco's community emphasized more radical expression and cross-orientation, bi, and pansexual play.

San Francisco tends to view the opportunity to

⁶³If there's one thing I can say with confidence after reading roughly three thousand sources on sexual expression at Pride, it's that the boundaries between "normal" and "unacceptable" dress and behavior vary *wildly* from person to person.

fill downtown with thousands of outrageouslydressed queers as a very political matter, a way to put the straights' noses out of joint and remind the powers that be that we are a huge and rowdy bunch who would just as soon burn down City Hall as piss on it. (Califia, 1994b)

While fear over decontextualized images of SM being exploited by conservative media remained a common theme in 1994's debate, Brandeis herself questioned whether those images were purely bad:

I think that probably those images are a good thing in one sense. Before I came out, the only images that I had of queer people were those negative images that I got in the media. And without them I wouldn't have even known that there were queer people, and I would still think that I was the only one. If you think about it, who is giving us publicity? It ain't NBC, CBS, or ABC. They refuse to even show us. (Califia, 1994b)

In these responses I see many precursors of the modern kink-at-Pride debate: argument within a minoritized community over appropriate public norms and desirable representation; the deployment of confrontational identity for critique vs an accomodating identity for education; and an ethical analysis grounded in interlocking domains of consent: between players, contingents, leaders, and bystanders.

5 Final Thoughts

Discourse over the acceptable bounds of sexuality in public has gone on since the very first days of Pride, and debates over leather visibility followed shortly thereafter. In a sense, the present debate is continuous with normalizing arguments from the 1970s through 1990s, as expressed both by conservative lesbians, gays, and straight people who viewed leather, drag, and trans people as (depending on viewpoint) scary, too sexual, a public-image risk, degrading to women, or a danger to children and the fabric of civilization.⁶⁴

To conclude, I'd like to talk about we can learn from this history, and how we can understand and advance the dis-

cussion going forward. We will likely be engaged in this conversation as long as LGBTQ people are coming into the world—but perhaps we can do so with more nuance, context, and conceptual sophistication.

5.1 Is Leather Actually Harmful?

First: it seems obvious that leather, sex, nudity, drag, and trans people—in various forms—have co-existed with families and children at Pride for fifty years. This is not to say that this mixture is necessarily easy or ideal, but it *is* documented. This mix continues today: there are no shortage of parents willing to say that their kids are fine seeing kink at Pride, and in my personal experience marching, families are often delighted to cheer for leather contingents. This raises the question: is there actually significant *harm* here?

After all, if seeing a trans sex worker of color, a Sister of Perpetual Indulgence in her bearded made-up glory, a dyke baring her breasts on the back of a motorcycle, or a man on a leash cavorting down Market Street were commonly traumatizing to children... shouldn't we *know* by now? The first kids to witness and march in Pride are quite literally baby boomers, and each generation afterwards has only participated more. I don't know how to track these people down and talk to them in any sort of statistically-meaningful way, but I think it'd be neat for someone to try.

This is not to say that Pride is a universal good for all people at all times. Participants can feel everything from mild discomfort at the sexual atmosphere to experiencing outright physical assault. And of course all kinds of public experiences-from seeing breasts to breakfast foods-can trigger emotional distress. But I also think it'd be a mistake to claim that these problems can best be mitigated by eliminating leather from Pride. Discomfort at seeing things we don't want to see is an inherent aspect of public life. More to the point—reckoning with and growing through discomfort is an intrinsic part of every queer person's journey to self-acceptance in a world which exerts immense pressure around normative gender and sexuality.⁶⁵ Ultimately, any collective norm-setting exercise must balance the value of variant sexual displays-their potential to engender joy, creativity, eroticism, and education—with those displays' potential for harm.

⁶⁴These critiques sound inconsistent because they are: they represent a range of positions held by different people with vastly different moral frameworks and cultural norms. Today's kink-at-Pride discourse is also multifarious (a challenge made worse by the context collapse of media like Twitter) and cannot be understood or addressed in unitary terms. Simple responses like "People aren't having sex at Pride," "Kink isn't inherently sexual," "This is a 4chan psyop" or "This is internalized homophobia" are hotly contested because they are, in many cases, simply not applicable! We need a more nuanced suite of responses which meets each person where they are.

⁶⁵I cannot begin to catalogue the ways that I personally was uncomfortable with LGBTQ life during my teens and early twenties, from "I am better off dead than being gay" to "I wish they wouldn't march with so many *flags*" to "Do Equality Riders *really* need to stage die-ins on Brigham Young's private land?" I wrote this piece (in part) to extend a bridge to others grappling with similar feelings.

5.2 Visibility As Public Good

Ideas about what constitutes outrageously sexual or unacceptably perverse behavior are *highly* contextual: they depend strongly on place, era, community norms, and individual taste. Calls to ban drag queens from participating in Pride would seem (for many queers) unthinkable today, and yet they were a consistent fixture of LGBTQ discourse well into the 1990s. Simply wearing leather was sufficient for parade monitors in San Francisco to call for the ejection of the Society of Janus contingent, with threats of police enforcement. The present discourse around acceptable public conduct involves a similarly broad range of incompatible expectations: some people think piss play in public parks is normal and desirable, and others believe that wearing a pup hood is too sexual. Appeals to a unitary public standard ignore the ace whip top who delights the crowd with their bullwhip skills, the spectator with trauma who feels safest in rope surrounded by their leather family, and the kids who want to howl back and forth with pups on floats.

This diversity around norms is to be expected. Sexuality is, after all, culturally constructed: a product not only of our bodies but of society and personal experience. And an important aspect of Pride—as a prefigurative space—is the ongoing and dynamic construction of new norms for a our own queer counterpublic. I think this is a good reason for leather people and other "weirdos" to actually march: to express the huge range of possible queer identities.

The flip side of expressing identity is *perceiving* it, and I think another important aspect of attending Pride is opening oneself up to new possibilities for sex and gender. As many of these excerpts relate, it's possible to go from perceiving these variant displays as distasteful or frightening to understanding, appreciating, and even participating in them yourself. Conservatives might argue this is a slippery slope to moral collapse, but I think there's real value in coming to recognize and validate other people's queerness, even when it's different from your own. I'm not personally interested in seeing boobs, but my life is richer for being able to celebrate Dykes on Bikes roaring down the street—and I think that all of us benefit from an atmosphere of mutual support.

In another sense, I think we can read the history of normalizing discourse around Pride as an effort to maintain the sexual hierarchies laid out in Rubin (1982a). As Vance (1992a) argues, that hierarchy requires that variant sexualities remain invisible and unacknowledged.

The system of sexual hierarchy functions smoothly only if sexual nonconformity is kept invisible, hence the interpersonal tension when sexual difference surfaces. For dominant sexual groups, the appearance of the sexual lower orders produces anxiety, discomfort, the threat of pollution, and a challenge to their hegemony...

Our relative ignorance about the actual range of sexual behavior and fantasy makes us into latter-day sexual ethnocentrists; the observer is convinced that her own sex life is normal, understandable, and tasteful, while the observed's preferences may be frightening, strange, and disgusting. The external system of sexual hierarchy is replicated within each of us, and here in lies its power. Internalized cultural norms enforce the status quo. As each of us hesitates to admit deviations from the system of sexual hierarchy, nonconformity remains hidden, invisible, and apparently rare. The prevailing system retains hegemony and power, appearing to be descriptive as well as prescriptive, a statement of what is as well as what should be. (Vance, 1992a)

There's a complex story here—Foucault's *History of Sexuality* comes to mind—about how conservatives also intensely scrutinize and reproduce selected images of variant sexuality, but I think Vance's point remains fundamentally valid: when leather people are visible, they assert their normality and resist marginalization.

It's tempting to read arguments around leather at Pride in terms of identity for education vs identity for critique (Bernstein, 2016). Normalizing LGBTQ factions have argued that Pride's purpose should be to present an approachable and realistic representation of LGBTQ people. Leather at Pride is in-your-face, confronts normative culture, and expands the Overton window of acceptable queer expression. But to some degree, both of these approaches apply to leather itself. In a cultural environment saturated in unrealistic sexual imagery, BDSM is all too often understood as a purely sexual, abstract Other. The presence of real live kinksters representing leather as it is actually practiced—as a rich subculture including distinct forms of sex, gender, and social expression, with a sense of humor and play, from chastely asexual to scandalously erotic, as people you can walk up and talk to: this is identity for education, too. Leather contingents serve not just as protestors, but as ambassadors.

5.3 The Acceptance of Drag

As an aside, I want to highlight that drag has historically been construed by more conservative lesbian and gay people as if it were as dangerous and offensive as BDSM: critiques and defenses of both drag and leather often went hand-in-hand. Today, drag is much more accepted in queer (and even straight!) culture, and drag queens seem frequently viewed as "safe" for kids.⁶⁶ How did the "deviant" practice of drag become recoded as a normal form of queer public expression?

Surely we have to credit people who *did* drag in public—a complex group which includes trans people, the International Court System, the Sisters, and a dazzling array of individual queens. But I suspect there's more to this story than simply marching in face.

When I ask other leather people about the shift in drag acceptance, they jump immediately to *Drag Race*. For better or for worse, RuPaul turned drag into gay football: an immensely popular cultural touchstone accessible not just via 21+ bars, but watchable in the family living room. It made some of the language and archetypes of drag visible, legible, and familiar to a mass audience.⁶⁷ Likewise, films in the 1990s began to depict drag in more nuance and detail. I suspect that programs like *Pose* and *Legendary* are doing the same for ballroom culture today.

Could there be a *Leather Drag Race*? I'm not sure. Our bar demos are public art performances, and at first glance, a leather contest might be readily adaptable to a realityshow competition format. On the other hand, leather is only *partly* about appearance and performance. At its core, leather is about what we call "play" (or "work," or "sex"): the exchange of sensation, trust, power, and intimacy which binds and connects players. One imagines bondage and impact-play scenes might be palatable to a mass media audience. Indeed, when I've done rope bondage demos on public streets, passers-by often stop to watch, ask questions, and appreciate the exchange of energy. Fisting... might be more of a stretch.

Even if there *could* be a mass-market leather media program: would we want that? I'm honestly not sure. *Drag Race* represents only a narrow vision of drag. I'm certain that any leather equivalent would similarly flatten and distort leather, giving outsiders the illusion of understanding without true cultural fluency. That might still be preferable to watching online teens shout that wearing a pup hood outside is actually pedophilia every June.

5.4 Folk Devils

When thinking about sexual harassment at Pride, we should remember that a moral panic attaches community anxieties to a marginalized "folk devil" which can be blamed for those anxieties, excised from the group, and regulated to resolve them. In the kink-at-Pride discouse the target is leather people, but in the past (and arguably in other conservative discourses today) drag and trans people have also served as folk devils.

Barring leather participation in Pride would be a legitimate response if leather people were responsible for community fears-e.g., if they were sexually harassing people in the crowd, or molesting children. Of course no groups in Pride advocate for sexual harassment. There were groups, such as NAMBLA, which advocated for relationships between adults and children. These groups did pose a real harm: broad differentials in power, experience, and social development between adults and children mean that children cannot meaningfully consent, and such relationships are broadly understood to be unethical. NAMBLA-never large, and whose presence was long controversial in the LGBTQ movement-was ejected from Pride, disavowed by major LGBTQ organizations in the mid-1990s, and has, thankfully, all but vanished from public queer life.

Contrary to NAMBLA, the leather community has no interest in children. Indeed, leather culture strongly emphasizes that play is only ethical between *consenting adults*. Children and bystanders are neither, which is why leather people are not, as a rule, running through Pride with paddles in hand, swatting random strangers before fleeing into the crowd. Rather, the purported harm that leather poses is in the *visibility* of BDSM acts or symbols.

Is this focus on leather as a primary vector of harm justified? Arguably a focus on public kinksters at Pride redirects attention away from the places where abuse primarily occurs: in the private sphere, and often in the contexts of acquaintances, relationships, and family. This is not to say that harassment in public is not a problem—but that such harassment is often moderated by the social pressure of the surrounding crowd.

Moreover, what harassment does occur in public spaces is a *broadly distributed* problem. I have personally been subjected to unwanted sexual comments, groping, slapping, and even attempts at penetration at bars, at Pride, and even on public streets. Most of this harassment came from vanilla gay men; a significant proportion from straight women. Relatively little of it occurred in leather contexts. This is not to say that leather spaces and people are perfect, but it *does* suggest that excising leather people from Pride will not adequately address the problem of harass-

⁶⁶There's a whole discussion here about the ways in which the 1970s meanings of "drag," "transvestite," and "transsexual" shifted, intersected, and divided to become modern drag and a rich constellation of trans identities. There's also a lot to say about the ways in which various forms of gender-variant expression are construed as acceptable vs perverse: in particular, trans people still face enormous stigma from lesbian, gay, and bisexual people—not to mention straight society. I'm optimistic that this tide is turning, but we have a lot of work to do.

⁶⁷I have a vague sense that a shift in the sexual aspects of drag might run parallel to the way in which the LGBT rights movement decoupled LGBT *identity* from LGBT *sex* during the 1990s—perhaps a drag historian could speak properly to this.

ment. Harassment is broadly distributed; any attempt to reduce it must be broadly targeted as well.

5.5 Symbolic Confusion

As we've seen throughout this history, the moral panic over leather people at Pride is intensely symbolic. It allows clothing, equipment, and references to stand in for people and acts themselves. This leads to two challenges:

First, general LGBTQ audiences (not to mention the straight public) often lack the context and cultural codes to fully interpret leather symbolism. Since leather often plays with and subverts existing structures of gender and power, this allows casual readers to reinterpret leather displays in the worst possible light. Califia (1987) and Rofes (1991) both described San Francisco queers calling S/M people "Nazis." Merely wearing leather *clothing* was sufficient for monitors to call for Janus & Samois' ejection from Pride in 1978 and 1979; leather clothing was similarly a target for policing at the Michigan Womyns' Music Festival. Likewise, even the symbolism of marching with chains or whips was considered a form of violence against women. In Tala Brandeis' 1994 whip demonstration, the sight and sound of a whip cracking—even if no person was struck-was considered a public relations threat and consent violation by some leather people.

This symbolic ambiguity is exploited by conservatives both in queer circles and broader society. CBS' Gay Power, Gay Politics, the anti-porn activism of Women Against Pornography and Violence in Media, the right-wing obscenity campaigns which sought to outlaw queer and especially S/M art, and the campaign to defund the National Endowment for the Arts all relied on decontextualized images of BDSM to reframe outgroups as perverse, sick, and threatening. A similar process is at play today: Operation Pridefall deploys images of people wearing harnesses and pups in hoods kneeling next to children to portray kinky people (or all queer people) as a threat to children, family and society. A reader unfamiliar with leather and Pride marches can misconstrue a friendly social encounter-like a child and their parents asking for a selfie with a pup—as a sexually terrifying one.

Second: BDSM people at Pride are not terrorizing crowds by tying up and abducting innocent asexuals to be caged in their secret underground lairs.⁶⁸ They are not whipping children or conducting drive-by nipple piercings on paradegoers. Instead their purported harm—both historically and today—is symbolic. The mere *visibility* of acts, or even reference to them, is considered a sort of moral pollutant which sickens society, erodes necessary social norms, and damages specific individuals: those with trauma, sex-repulsed asexuals, children, etc.

It's not that symbolic harm isn't *real*—seeing images can create real emotional distress—but we should be careful not to confuse seeing a person being flogged on a float with being tied up and flogged ourselves. The two are categorically different experiences, and any analysis of their impact should treat them as such.

5.6 The Slippery Slope

Symbolic ambiguity allowed WAVPM and religious conservatives to construct a slippery slope. Unfamiliar acts and symbols like fisting, bondage, or even leather clothing were read by unfamiliar viewers as disgusting, frightening, and violent. Those feelings were then generalized to all leather people, or to queers as a whole. In this narrative, clothing stood for sex, bondage stood for rape; all variant sexualities were placed on a continuum which led to patriarchal domination (for anti-porn feminists) or child abuse and social collapse (for religious conservatives). Leather and drag became shorthand for the moral threat posed by LGBTQ people to children; decontextualized excerpts from BDSM porn stood in for consensual BDSM as practiced between actual lesbians.

In the modern slippery-slope argument, any form of sexuality where children might see can be interpreted as pedophilia; any sexuality where asexual people or people with trauma are present is a form of assault. Since public spaces contain varying forms and degrees of sexuality at essentially all times, maintaining these black-and-white categories requires careful framing. Some sexual displays, like riding a motorcycle bare-breasted, can be overlooked or recast as nonsexual by virtue of their ubiquity or normativity-this depends strongly on the viewer's cultural context. I've yet to see a queer person argue today that Dykes on Bikes are excluding ace people or kids. Another technique is the careful dissociation of LGBTQ identity from sexuality, as Warner (1999) described in The Trouble with Normal. Pride is therefore about being gay, which means stanning for mass transit, not about being gay, which means taking loads in the back alley of Powerhouse.

LGBTQ leaders responded to the conservative moral panics of the 1970s through 1990s by narrowing their focus, attempting to exclude transvestites, drag queens, public sex, and BDSM from community representation. In the Lesbian Sex Wars, some feminists disavowed BDSM, attempting to preserve respectability. However, as Vance (1992b) warned, categories of sexual deviancy had a way of expanding to include people who formerly thought themselves morally privileged. Charges of "perversion" spread to encompass more and more feminists. By the

⁶⁸Asexuals with this fantasy: I see you. You are valid.

mid-1980s, the conceptual framework constructed by antiporn feminists in the Lesbian Sex Wars was deployed by religious conservatives against women, sex workers, and queer people.

In order to operate, sex panics mobilize fears of pollution in an attempt to draw firm boundaries between legitimate and deviant forms of sexuality and individuals. The polluting elements, drawn from the "sexual lower orders," are given enormous power: present in even small quantities, they threaten to engulf and contaminate all. In this regard, there is no such thing as "a little bit of S/M" in the current feminist discussion, no more than there could be just a little bit of homosexuality during the US State Department's purges of homosexuals during the Cold War. Moreover, those who do not immediately agree to eliminate sexual pollution, or who acquiesce in its continued existence, or who defend proponents' right to be heard are themselves assumed to be highly questionable, sexual fellow-travelers. The only method of averting attack, then is to see that polluting subjects are not discussed, never placed on the agenda.

In the face of sex panics, feminists are caught in a conservative impulse. We recognize, rightly, that sex is one of the most dangerous grounds on which to be attacked. We sometimes seek to protect ourselves by disowning "deviant" elements, wishing to seem reasonable and not extreme to critics. But critics are not satisfied until all elements of nonconformity have been eliminated or silenced. Thus, accusations of sexual deviance remain powerful: if we cede ground, the margin of what is considered acceptable shrinks daily.

Charges of sexual deviance have changed in regard to content. Within feminism, sex panics in mainstream institutions were instigated by charges of lesbianism, for example, in the late 1960s NOW purges, whereas now they are instigated by charges of sadomasochism. Sex panics create a public relations problem for those women who are concerned with protecting the public face of feminism. Feminists learned, however, that an attack on lesbians was an attack on all women, whether lesbians or heterosexual. Successful attacks diminished all women's options and posed a powerful threat to feminism, since any un-feminine behavior could be labeled "lesbian" and thus controlled. At that time, feminists discovered that the only suitable

response in the face of a sex panic was to stop denying the presence of devalued persons and acts, an endless and defensive task, and to insist, "Yes, we are everywhere." We would do well to remember this lesson now. (Vance, 1992b)

Like the Lesbian Sex Wars, today's kink-at-Pride debate relies on this slippery slope and aggressive shaming campaigns to enforce normative sexualities. When Rowello (2021) said they were fine with their kids seeing pups and a light flogging at Pride, a vigorous chorus insisted that they were a "pedophile" and "child abuser." In this sense, Anita Bryant's "Save Our Children" campaign has succeeded beyond her wildest dreams: a sizable cadre of queer people have apparently taken up the narrative that even *seeing* mild expressions of adult queer sexuality is dangerous to children.

The reaction to Rowello's article also illustrates the unstable boundary between "good" and "bad" sexualities and genders, with no shortage of commenters blaming "the trans agenda" or "autogynephilia" as sexually perverse and dangerous to children. As many trans people have noted, a significant group of conservatives—gay and straight alike—are attempting to construe being trans as a sexual fetish, which sets the stage for their exclusion from Pride as well (Bartosch, 2020). Historical attempts to ban trans and drag participation from Pride suggests we should take this threat seriously.

5.7 Balancing Consent

Consent as a guiding principle for BDSM dates back to at least the mid-1960s, and was frequently emphasized by S/M organizations in the early 1980s. In the late 1980s, "Safe, Sane, Consensual" became a key community slogan and filtered into mainstream culture. In the first half of the 1990s, leather people began generalizing consent to more complex social contexts, like secondhand smoke or seeing Nazi iconography. By the mid-1990s the concept of bystander consent was well established in leather culture, and used to critique public displays like Tala Brandeis' whip demo at the 1994 March on Washington—where even though no bottom was being struck by the whip, *seeing* the whip-cracking could have an impact on observers.

Today, observer consent forms a common critique of public BDSM, and is often deployed by those outside the community (Spindrift, 2021). Bystanders "did not consent to taking part in the scene"—therefore the scene is a priori unethical. This analysis flattens various types of scenes—from a formal dinner at a fancy restaurant to a fisting marathon—into a single category. It also collapses the distance between *seeing* an activity and *taking part* in that activity. While it's true that onlookers participate in a scene to some degree, they play a very different role and have a vastly different level of involvement than the players themselves. Nobody accuses a ballet audience of dancing!

This hints that consent cannot be the end-all-be-all moral principle for determining public norms. For starters, universal consent is impossible: our preferences are simply too diverse for any single norm of expression to satisfy all people. At some point or another, we all have to do or see things we don't like. Some degree of compromise is a healthy and natural part of public life.

All of us accept this compromise to some degree. In particular, normative expressions of sexuality—straight people kissing, wearing wedding rings in the office, thongs at the beach, and underwear ads on the subway—are generally exempt from demands for observer consent. Beyoncé can wear a studded leather leotard at the Superbowl, and teens can wear collars on the bus. For LGBTQ people, different norms apply: drag queens, twinks in rainbow outfits, and women baring their bosoms are widely condoned as acceptable forms of sex and gender expression.

Nevertheless, these norms remain highly subjective and contentious among the general public. Mainstream US society did not (and despite huge gains, *still* does not) universally consent to the public visibility of queer people. By forcing a non-consenting public to see LGBTQ people, Pride itself asserts that visibility, community, and sexual expression can take precedence over the desires of cisgender, heterosexual people to retain their comfort and cultural hegemony.

As minorities within a minority, drag, trans, and leather people have similarly insisted that their right to be visible supercedes the desire for bystander consent. This has generated no shortage of backlash from straight conservatives and stigmaphobic LGBTQ people, but I think it's eminently valid: we can and should allow these communities to express themselves, even when it makes some people uncomfortable.

5.8 Where Do We Go From Here?

If "kink at Pride" is a moral panic—one which positions leather people as a threat to children and asexual people, which overgeneralizes consent, identifies bystanders with participants and signifiers with signified, and which establishes an ever-expanding slippery slope to moral collapse—should we reject all calls for public norms? Shall chaos reign?

Of *course* not. Pride's norms are very different from typical US street life: public nudity, sex, and BDSM have all been on proud display. And yet Pride's norms come nowhere

close to those of a leather run or Dore Alley. Leather contingents have historically moderated their displays for a broader audience, and it's reasonable to expect them to do so in the future. But what exactly ought those norms to be?

We can use our historical experience of Pride's purpose and varied expressions, especially as a queer counterpublic and a space for riotous sexual and gender expression; the knowledge that kids and leather have been marching together for fifty years; our grasp of moral panic, the slippery slope, and the mutability of "deviant" sexual categories; our recognition of how subjective and contextual the line is between acceptable and unacceptable displays; a nuanced analysis of educational and defiant visibility, and the accounts of those who were shocked and frightened by the experience of Pride, then came to appreciate and join in those displays themselves, to guide us in shaping Pride as a celebration of diversity, an expression of personal and political identity, and a generator of collective effervescence.

Moral panics displace fears onto a symbolic population. We need to ask whether those fears are well-founded. For instance, I think it is eminently reasonable and good that we banned NAMBLA from participating in Pride. There are serious power imbalances which make relationships between adults and minors problematic at best, and rife with the potential for abuse. But do adult leatherfolk or trans people pose a disproportionate threat to children? To asexual people? I very much doubt it.

Knowing that moral panics operate on symbols which are prone to exaggeration and misinterpretation, we should try to ground our norms in concrete impacts on real people rather than abstract symbols, like the sex-repulsed asexual or the pure and vulnerable child. Since individual responses to sexual displays vary wildly, we should avoid placing too much weight in individual narratives, and look for a representative range of experiences. This means going outside and talking to people.

The slippery slope pushes us towards black-and-white thinking in which any display or reference to variant sexual behavior is grounds for harsh reproval. This analysis often fails to account for the intensity and valence of BDSM displays: wearing a collar or pup hood is a very different sort of scene than blood flying off a bottom's back during a singletail whipping. Terms like "sexual" or "kink" include a broad range of expressions: some milquetoast, some unspeakably (or delightfully) filthy. When discussing Pride norms we should strive for specificity and proportionality.

For example, I think it is good that we are not running raceplay scenes on floats down Market Street. The potential for emotional harm is obvious, widespread, and likely outweighs any potential artistic or political value. But what do we gain from barring, say, a leash and collar? Is a leather harness appropriate? What about someone bound up in rope, wearing clothes? Marching nude?

We should remember that expressions of variant sexuality are not only a form of individual expression, but also a public good. Many asexual people and families *enjoy* seeing leather in Pride. Leather contingents demystify the community, reduce social stigma, create opportunities to meet and talk with kinksters, and help people discover new desires. Public floggings can balance misconceptions that impact is "just about pain," and illustrate the possibility for emotional connection. Public bondage can be an art installation. In my personal experience marching and performing scenes in public, people on the street are far more curious, supportive, and delighted to see pups in hoods and men in rope than the present discourse would have us believe.

Finally: as several of the accounts in this history demonstrate, one's own feelings about sexual displays can change dramatically over time. What was frightening or disgusting one year can be freeing, erotic, or beautiful the next. This points to the *possibility* of Pride as more than a space where we impose the standard norms of an imagined unitary public. As a polyvocal celebration, Pride offers us the chance not only to express ourselves, but also to see others' expressions of a broad range of queer identities. With a little patience we can rejoice in others' kaleidoscopic queerness—and sometimes, if we're lucky, discover new aspects of our selves.

6 Further Reading

For a general-purpose overview of the gay and lesbian rights movement (with some coverage of bi and trans people), you might begin with *The Ashgate Research Companion to Lesbian and Gay Activism* (Paternotte & Tremblay, 2016). This compendium offers excellent summaries and jumping-off points for more detailed research from queer historians, sociologists, and theorists like Julian Jackson (J. Jackson, 2016), Jeffrey Weeks (Weeks, 2016), Mary Bernstein (Bernstein, 2016), Gavin Brown (Brown, 2016), and Gayle Rubin (Rubin, 2015).

If you're looking to understand Pride in general, I'd start with either Katherine McFarland Bruce's 2012 thesis (Mc-Farland, 2012) or 2016 book *Pride Parades: How a Parade Changed the World* (Bruce, 2016): both are an excellent ethnographic introduction to the historical origins and modern phenomenon of Pride as a participant-driven political celebration. I would complement this with Elizabeth Amstrong and Suzanna M. Crage's *Movements and* *Memory: The Making of the Stonewall Myth* (Armstrong & Crage, 2006), which traces the roots of queer resistance to police oppression from earlier riots to Stonewall itself. It's a short, accessible paper full of surprising insights, and is well worth your time. To better understand Stonewall itself, I'd start with Marc Stein's *The Stonewall Riots: A Documentary History* (M. Stein, 2019), which collates numerous contemporary sources.

If you're at all interested in the intersection of society, gender, and sexuality, you owe it to yourself to read Gayle Rubin's essay *Thinking Sex* as well as its two retrospective postscripts in her anthology *Deviations* (Rubin, 1982a). When I read her analysis of state and social oppression of variant sexualities, I can't help but think about how much of her framework formed the foundation for how LGBTQ people understand our own sexual and political identities today. I'd pair this with *The Leather Menace* (Rubin, 1982b), which details cultural hostility towards S/M in particular, and follow with Michael Warner's *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* (Warner, 1999), which offers a queer critique of stigmaphobia and the disidentification of sexuality from LGBTQ identity.

In thinking about queer identity and public sexuality, it's difficult not to cite Patrick Califia: leather activist, trans man, erotic author, polemicist, and historian. In particular, try two anthologies: *Public Sex* (Califia, 1994a) and *Speaking Sex to Power: The Politics of Queer Sex* (Califia, 2002). These essays discuss moral panic, the Lesbian Sex Wars, censorship, oppression and expression of queer, leather, and other variant sexualities, sex as art, trans and disabled experiences, and perspectives on family. Although Califia revised his positions later, readers will likely find Califia's early essays in support of cross-generational sex problematic—I certainly do. I recommend his work because his analyses of adult sexuality remain uniquely cogent, vigorous, and illuminating.

Both Califia and Rubin discuss the Lesbian Sex Wars and the right-wing push to ban various forms of queer sex and art. To complement these perspectives, I suggest Carol Vance's contemporary and retrospective chapters in *Pleasure and Danger: Exploring Female Sexuality* (Vance, 1992b). This anthology is also a good place to get acquainted with a broad range of feminist perspectives on sexuality in the early 1980s.

To get acquainted with leather from an ethnographic and political perspective, I'd start with the anthology *Leatherfolk: Radical Sex, People, Politics, and Practice* (Thompson, 1991), and possibly follow up with Geoff Mains' *Urban Aboriginals* (Mains, 1984). There are shortcomings here: both are products of their era. Mains in particular construes leather as "tribe" and draws parallels to other cultures which I suspect might be interpreted as disrespectful by modern readers. That said, *Urban Aboriginals* is a striking work which aims to make a misunderstood subculture accessible for outsiders, and its biochemical, cultural, and spiritual threads remain provocative today.

If you're trying to understand leather, consent, and the dynamics of a scene more deeply, you might begin with Joseph W. Bean's *Leathersex* (Bean, 1994) or *Flogging* (Bean, 2000). They are partly "how-to" manuals (and these parts you can skip if you like) but I love these books because they offer a nuanced, radical, and deeply considered perspective on consent, scene structure, the exchange of energy, and the trust and love expressed through S/M. Consider pairing either with Anton Fulmen's *The Heart of Dominance*, which offers a modern, empathetic, and deeply consent-oriented analysis of dominance and submission (Fulmen, 2016).

For a more academic overview of leather history and political activism, I'd start with Gayle Rubin's chapter *SM Politics, SM Communities in the United States* (Rubin, 2015), which is also a part of the *Ashgate Companion*. For a more comprehensive history of US leather, your best bet might be Stephen K. Stein's just-released *Sadomasochism and the BDSM Community in the United States* (S. K. Stein, 2021). I'm very glad that this work exists: there is nothing like it to my knowledge. I do suggest cross-referencing: there are a few places in which I found it difficult to corroborate Stein's claims. This only to be expected in a history as contentious and poorly documented as leather! Finally: if you can find a copy of Samois' *Coming to Power*, Califia's firsthand history of SM activism in San Francisco is a captivating read (Califia, 1987).

7 Thanks

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Several people have asked how they can purchase or donate to support this work. You can donate to the Leather Archives & Museum: one of the only institutions in the world devoted to preserving and interpreting our culture. If you are ever in Chicago, please give them a visit!

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