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reviews

The Gay & Lesbian Atlas

Gary J. Gates and Jason Ost
Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press, 2004.
Paper, 11" x 8.5", 242 pages, \$49.50
ISBN 0-87766-721-7

Reviewed by Mark Harrower
University of Wisconsin, Madison

While it may come as no surprise that San Francisco and New York are home to large gay and lesbian populations, few might guess that Albuquerque and Jersey City are among the country's "gayest" cities, nor suspect that North Dakota and Wyoming rank among states with the highest concentrations of senior gay and lesbian couples. Insights such as these can be found throughout *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* created by demographers Gary Gates and Jason Ost. The *Atlas* is the first detailed spatial account of America's gay and lesbian households and offers a unique statistical and geographic portrait of these understudied communities. Published by the Urban Institute Press, *The Gay and Lesbian Atlas* mines Census 2000 data on the characteristics of 594,391 same-sex "unmarried partner" couples, a category which appeared in the Census for the first time in 2000 allowing researchers their first nation-wide look at just exactly where same-sex couples call home.

Gates and Ost acknowledge that there is an unambiguous political dimension to this atlas, and they seek to raise awareness and dispel stereotypes. "While the words 'we are everywhere' can be heard frequently at gay at lesbian political events, Census 2000 provided the first empirical confirmation of the rallying cry. The finding that same-sex unmarried partners were present in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States was one of the most commonly reported statistics from [its] release." (p. 2). They go on to say

"Of course, the importance of understanding the location patterns of gay and lesbian couples goes beyond simply acknowledging that they exist. It goes beyond recognition of their political clout. Gay and lesbian service providers, activist organizations, and an increasing number of companies seeking to market to the gay and lesbian population can all benefit from a more precise understanding of the location patterns and demographic characteristics of this population." (p. 3)

This is a surprisingly large atlas that contains roughly 300 maps spread across 232 color pages. The atlas is uncluttered and easy to read. The layout, type, and color schemes are attractive and professional, if somewhat restrained and spare. The first 58 pages explain the data and methods used, as well as the larger socio-political context of Census 2000 and its findings. While the maps may be the main attraction, the dozens of tables, which reveal differences among same-sex couples by race, income, dependents, and neighborhood characteristics (and how they compare to opposite-sex couples), seem just as informative and interesting. Fortunately, these authors avoided the temptation to make every graphic pointlessly 3-dimensional or dressed-up with the all-too-common drop shadow and glowing edge effects, favoring instead a restrained and color-coordinated design aesthetic that should look good in the years to come.

Although the authors never stray from their basic choropleth map design, the chief strength of this atlas is that it depicts the geography of gays and lesbians at three spatial scales (the nation as a whole, the individual states, and 25 metropolitan areas) *and* at various spatial resolutions (states, counties, zip codes, and census tracts). In other words, these authors recognized that the spatial patterns of the queer experience (like so many geographic stories) change with the scale of analysis: simple patterns of the national level become ever-more fragmented and interesting as one zooms in. Seeing the same data repeatedly, but at different resolutions, pulls readers deeper into the atlas and reminds us that simplistic characterizations (e.g., cities have more gays than rural areas) don't really hold-up under scrutiny.

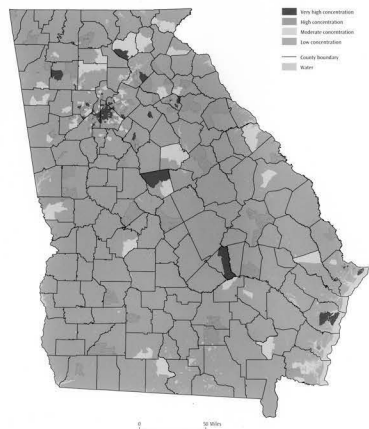
Select findings from the Atlas include:

- Vermont has the highest concentration of same-sex couple households in the country, followed by California, Washington, Massachusetts, and Oregon. Of cities with fewer than 200,000 people, Santa Fe, N.M., ranks first in the study's per-capita ranking of same-sex couples, just edging out Burlington, Vermont. The less-obvious cities that round out that list include Bloomington, Indiana, Iowa City, Iowa, and Barnstable-Yarmouth, Massachusetts on Cape Cod.
- Same-sex couples with children often reside in places not known for large gay communities. In fact, the states where same-sex couples are most likely to be raising children are (in order) Mississippi, South Dakota, Alaska, South Carolina, and Louisiana; states that have some of the most restrictive laws regarding same-sex partnering.
- Mirroring larger demographic patterns, the South dominates the rankings of states by the concentration of African-American same-sex couples among all households and among other gay and lesbian couples. Similarly, Texas finds itself at the top of list for per capita Hispanic same-sex couples.

In Figure 1 you can see the two-page layout used for each of the 50 states, this one for Georgia. The main map on the left side depicts the concentration of same-sex couples (by census tract) with two smaller maps showing only gay male and only lesbian couples. Throughout the atlas, these two additional maps reveal just how different the spatial distribution of gay men and lesbians really is. While gay male cou-

GEORGIA

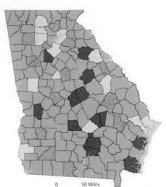
Concentration of Gay/Lesbian Couples (by tract)



Concentration of Gay Male Couples (by county)



Concentration of Lesbian Couples (by county)

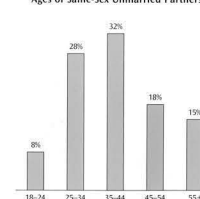


Indices			
Gay/Lesbian Index			1.14
Gay Male Index			1.20
Lesbian Index			1.08
Comparative Statistics			
	All	GL couples	GL rank
Presence of children, among households	50%	28%	28
Seniors (55+), among adults	24%	15%	48
Nonwhite, among adults	37%	31%	13
Females, among adults	52%	47%	47
Rural, among households	28%	22%	29
Top Georgia Metro Areas			
(among 311 metro areas nationwide)			
	GL rank	Gay male rank	Lesbian rank
Atlanta MSA	15	11	37
Savannah MSA	57	41	89
Athens MSA	64	38	114
Augusta-Aiken MSA*	149	128	170
Chattanooga MSA*	171	132	211
Top Georgia Communities			
(among 1,360 communities nationwide with 50 or more GL couples)			
	GL rank	Gay male rank	Lesbian rank
Decatur	7	17	4
North Druid Hills	10	8	36
Druid Hills	15	16	17
Scottdale	21	24	10
North Decatur	24	31	12

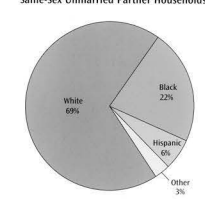
Gay/Lesbian Index Rank: 12

Gay Male Index Rank: 5 Lesbian Index Rank: 15 Gay/Lesbian-Supportive Laws Rank: 32

Ages of Same-Sex Unmarried Partners



Race/Ethnicity of Householder in Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Households



Presence of Children under Age 18 in Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Households



* Metropolitan area spans more than one state.

Figure 1. Reproduction of two page spread from The Gay and Lesbian Atlas. Used by permission of the Urban Institute Press.

ples often flock to well-defined urban gay ghettos in major cities (e.g., New York and Los Angeles), lesbian couples are less spatially concentrated and often favor smaller towns. Authors Gates and Ost suspect lesbians are attracted to mid-sized cities that have a reputation for being politically active and are seen as a good place to raise a family (e.g., Madison, WI).

As seen in Figure 1, the right hand side of the atlas layout presents additional demographic data including how that state compares to others, the age structure of the state's same-sex couples, race/ethnic percentages of those couples, and how many have children. Lastly, it shows how the top five metro areas in each state rank nationally (e.g., Atlanta ranks 15th in the nation). While one wonders if these few graphics needed an entire 8.5" x 11" page—resulting in low data density more typically seen with run-of-the-mill powerpoint—they nonetheless add interesting information not shown on the maps.

Throughout the atlas the data are standardized and presented using the same 4-class scheme: *very high*, *high*, *moderate*, and *low concentration*. This was a wise decision because it takes little time to memorize the scheme and it allows readers to compare any map to any other. The one frustration I had, however, was that the meaning of those classes (in the real world) is vague, and it wasn't clear how meaningful the break points between those classes are. The data are standardized in a logical and thoughtful way by using an index which is a ratio of the proportion of same-sex couples living in a region to the number of households in that region.

While the atlas is well executed, there are a number of important limitations that should be mentioned. First, these data are far from perfect. This is no fault of the atlas or the authors, but it is an unavoidable fact that many same-sex couples will not self-report even with the anonymity of the Census. Fortunately, Gates and Ost are keenly aware of this and include a small chapter on undercounting and ways to deal with it. Second, this is not an atlas of all gays and lesbians, it only maps the location of same-sex couples who co-habit. While the number of couples is a reasonable data proxy for the queer population as a whole, it will no doubt have a different geographic pattern, and these maps (I suspect) under-represent urban concentrations of single gay men in particular. There is, however, no other nation-wide dataset available today and the stories these data tell are still fascinating. Overall this is a well done and original atlas.

The Commerce of Cartography: Making and Marketing Maps in Eighteenth-Century France and England

Mary Sponberg Pedley

Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

345 pp., 41 b&w illustrations, 8 color plates, 7 appendices, notes, bibliography, index. \$40.00, Hardbound ISBN 0-226-6531-2

Reviewed by Judith A. Tyner, Ph.D.

California State University, Long Beach

"Of singular importance in understanding the meaning of maps and their influence is the work of placing maps in their political, cultural, intellectual, and social context." (p. 10)

Mary Pedley's *Commerce of Cartography* is an important addition to the literature of the map trade. Her stated purpose is "to study the commercial factors affecting the production and consumption of printed maps in the eighteenth-century France and England," but in doing so she provides a context for the maps of the period that should be required reading for all who want to read hidden meanings maps. That is not to say that maps are without such meanings and bias, but rather, that to truly understand what a map says, it is necessary to understand the processes that went into its making. This work is not a study of maps of the period, but of map *making* and map *selling*. The book is organized in three parts and five chapters plus introduction and conclusions, which together follow the process of mapmaking from survey to consumer. Thus, the first section is "Making Maps," including survey, compilation, and production costs. Part Two is "Selling Maps," which includes funding through subscriptions and partnerships, plagiarism (which was a way of cutting costs), and protection of intellectual property. This section presents a case study of the dissemination of maps of Narragansett Bay. The final section, "Evaluating Maps", describes what cartographers and consumers considered good maps, and the *mémoires* produced by cartographers to describe the accuracy and value of a map.

The process of cartography (and the book) begins with survey and compilation; "Getting to Market," discusses the costs of surveys and the costs and methods of compilation. These were the greatest expenses in the map making process, and this fact is important in later chapters that detail the cost of atlases and the reasons for plagiarism.

Working cartographers will find Chapter Two, "The Cost of Map Production" especially interesting in that it details the nitty-gritty of the steps in making a map three hundred years ago and the costs of each step. The sections on engraving, for example, focus not on