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Emily Kazyak

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How Places Make Us: Novel LBQ Identities in Four Small Cities. By Japonica Brown-Saracino. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018. Pp. 352. \$105.00 (cloth); \$35.00 (paper).

Emily Kazyak
University of Nebraska–Lincoln

Japonica Brown-Saracino's *How Places Make Us* is an engaging book that illustrates the centrality of cities in shaping understandings of sexuality. She analyzes the identities and lives of lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) women in four cities: Ithaca, New York; San Luis Obispo, California; Portland, Maine; and Greenfield, Massachusetts. Despite the fact that these cities are home to a high number of female same-sex couples and are imagined as sites of acceptance for LGBTQ people, Brown-Saracino discovers, through her ethnographic fieldwork and interviews, something surprising: the LBQ women in each city offered radically different narratives about sexuality. The book is devoted to exploring the distinct "sexual identity culture" in each city and also to providing a more general analysis about how cities influence the creation of sexual identity cultures.

Brown-Saracino devotes a chapter to each city and creates a rich account of people's narratives about their sexuality and their city, their experiences being out and socializing with other LBQ women and heterosexuals, their sense of safety as a LBQ person, and their attitudes about LGBTQ politics. I found these rich accounts for each city a real strength of the book, as they showcase the best of what an ethnography can do: provide a vivid portrait of a world the reader may not otherwise know. In addition to learning the meanings women make about sexuality, we see the women at potlucks, pride events, coffee shops, and farmer's markets. We meet LBQ women in Ithaca who reject the notion that sexuality is a central feature of their identity or socializing. Yet, even though they adopt a "postidentity politics" and feel embraced by heterosexual people in the city, they still narrate a sense of wistfulness for the lack of a "lesbian community" in Ithaca. In stark contrast, the women in San Luis Obispo think about their sexuality as a defining, singular, and static characteristic of themselves. Sexuality likewise organizes their socializing, and there are a number of groups and events that cater to LBQ women. In Portland, yet a different articulation of sexuality emerges. Here, we see an embrace of sexuality as a central component of identity and socializing, similar to San Luis Obispo. However, LBQ women stress that sexuality can change and adopt "hybrid" sexual identities, which include multiple labels, such as "queer-friendly poly/punk" or "femme dyke." Brown-Saracino

discovers that the sexual identity culture in Greenfield is twofold and differs for newcomers compared to longtime residents. Those who have lived in Greenfield for a long time articulate an identity-driven understanding that highlights the importance of lesbianism (and particularly lesbian feminism). Newcomers, however, downplay sexuality and articulate sexuality as ancillary to other aspects of themselves and of their socializing.

So why are the ways that LBQ women make sense of sexuality so distinct across these four cities? How does place make us? After providing an in-depth analysis of the sexual identity culture in each city, Brown-Saracino devotes a chapter to answering these questions. Brown-Saracino argues that these differences cannot be adequately explained by characteristics that sociologists typically point to, such as age and generation or race, given that the people she interviewed were pretty similar on these characteristics. Rather, she identifies three components that influence the creation of sexual identity cultures: abundance and acceptance (whether LBQ women experience their city as being full of other LBQ women and whether they experience their city as a safe place to be a LBQ woman), place narratives (the stories told about each city in general as well as narratives about other places), and socioscape (the meanings people make about the other residents in their city). For instance, Brown-Saracino nicely demonstrates how general narratives about place resonate with narratives about sexuality. She argues that the fact that San Luis Obispo prides itself as “the happiest city in America” and, as a coastal retreat and place to simply be, influences LBQ women’s narratives about sexuality as static and as something that simply is (rather than something that might be transformed, for instance). In contrast, because Portland prides itself as an innovative and up and coming city, LBQ women likewise articulate their sexuality as something they can create and shape.

A question remains about the role of class and education, no doubt lived out in place-specific ways, in shaping the different accounts of sexuality. Although the cities share similar characteristics in terms of median family income and presence of institutions of higher education, there seem to be important differences among the informants. The LBQ women in San Luis Obispo reported the lowest household income (\$39K), and it was quite a bit lower than the household income reported by the women in Ithaca (\$107K)—two sites with distinct sexual identity cultures. The education levels of San Luis Obispo informants as well as the prestige of their undergraduate institutions (for those who completed college) were also lower. I wondered how these dimensions of class and education mattered to their narratives, particularly how a fluid, performative approach to sexuality was “off the table” for LBQ women in San Luis Obispo (p. 234). Yet given that the move away from identity-politics is associated with younger generations of LGBQ people, her illustration of varying accounts of sexuality by women of similar ages is important. Additionally, *How Places Make Us* extends scholarship on sexuality and place by moving beyond categorical comparisons (like urban and rural) in analyses of LGBQ identities insofar as she demonstrates variation among cities. Brown-Saracino also speaks to commu-

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nity and urban studies scholars. Her illustration of how people can articulate the unique qualities of their cities, oftentimes doing so by comparing to other places, underscores that cities are, in fact, not losing their distinctness in an era of globalization. Rather her book highlights how place-based differences and city-based differences exist and continue to matter.