

# Un-Mapping Gay Imperialism: A Postcolonial Approach to Sexual Orientation-Based Development

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## ***Abstract:***

The International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association's (ILGA) annual report on lesbian and gays rights worldwide, first published in 2005, marked the entry of Western lesbian and gay movements into the realm of international development. By combining (anti)homophobia and human rights discourses, ILGA's subsequent reports have provided a platform from which to advocate for global lesbian and gay equality. A postcolonial critique of ILGA's 2015 report, however, suggests that these discourses are used to mask both imperial desires of domination, as well as Orientalist views characterized by racist representations of people from places considered "persecution" states. This approach to (anti)homophobia and human rights-based discourses provides an understanding of sexual orientation-based development as gay imperialism. Using Somalia (an ILGA "persecution" state) as a case study, this paper explores the complex ways in which racism and imperialist desires permeate (anti)homophobia and human rights discourses.

**Keywords:** Gay imperialism, international development, Somalia, human rights, homonationalism, (anti)homophobia

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In 1884, the colonial powers of Europe met in Berlin, Germany to carve out borders for Africa (wa Thiong'o, 1986), cutting the entire continent into pieces based on the European states that colonized it. The multiplicity of people, cultures, and languages on the continent were not taken into consideration. As Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) describes, "it seems it is the fate of Africa to have her destiny always decided around conference tables in the metropolises of the Western world" (p. 4). These forms of imperialism continue to control the economies, politics, and cultures of Africa and other former colonies. Operating under the guise of development and humanitarianism, the West and international organizations still meet in conference rooms to decide the fate of the former colonies.

Over the decades since independence, post-colonial states in Africa have dealt with imperialist projects led by Western women's movements, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and most recently, Western lesbian and gay movements. This paper explores the workings of this relatively recent addition to the realm of international development as "gay imperialism" (as cited by Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2009). Similar to the workings of its predecessors, Western sexual orientation-based movements operating internationally use human rights discourses to justify imperial impulses of intervention and domination. This paper specifically examines the workings of one of the largest sexual orientation-based organizations currently engaged in international development work – the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association, commonly known as ILGA.

On May 13<sup>th</sup> 2015, ILGA released its tenth edition of its annual report titled, *State Sponsored Homophobia: A World Survey of Laws: Criminalization, Protection, and Recognition of Same-Sex Love* (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). As the title suggests, this report is an examination of every state's laws and regulations regarding sexual orientation, with a focus on the states that criminalize same-sex sexual acts. The report, according to ILGA, demonstrates "the fact that lesbian and gay people around the world are still considered illegal, immoral and criminals, and deemed not to deserve the legal protection enjoyed by the rest" (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015, p. 6).

The report includes a world map that divides the world based on lesbian, gay and bisexual rights (see Figure 1). ILGA's mapping of the world classifies and color-codes states and regions based on three categories: protection, recognition, and persecution of lesbian, gay and bisexual identified people. The states that persecute people based on sexual orientation are colored in shades of red and yellow. These states are primarily in the Caribbean, the Middle East, South Asia, South-East Asia, and Africa. Somalia is mapped out by ILGA in two shades of red – representing the persecution of lesbian, gay and bisexual people.

Well over a hundred years after the Berlin meeting, Africa and other former colonies continue to be mapped out and negotiated around conference tables in the West; however, in this context the mapping is based on Western understandings of sexuality and human rights. This paper examines ILGA's 2015 edition of their annual report as it marks the ten year anniversary of ILGA's official documentation of lesbian and gay rights and laws globally. I draw on the tenth edition because ILGA used this edition to reflect on ten years of their work documenting sexual orientation-based laws and rights.

In this report, ILGA shows the changes in laws from 2005 to 2015. When ILGA first published their report in 2005, 92 countries criminalized same-sex sexual acts between consenting adults. By 2015, that number dropped to 76 countries (Valenza, 2015). The tenth anniversary of this report was celebrated and publicized widely as a marker of progress for lesbian and gay communities all over the world.

The tenth edition brought a more critical lens to lesbian and gay rights by including a section on intersectionality in lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) advocacy, lacking in previous reports. Although ILGA applauds its successes in its tenth edition, they also use this report as a call for action – “the situation is still unacceptable: more than one-third of the world’s States consider same-sex sexual activity illegal” (Valenza, 2015). As a result, this report is meant to work as a platform from which organizations, institutions, and governments can lobby and advocate for laws that protect lesbian and gay communities all over the world.

Using the 2015 edition of ILGA’s report, this paper deconstructs the ways in which imperial desires and racism permeate homophobia and anti-homophobia discourses as well as lesbian and gay human rights discourses. With a specific focus on Somalia, I explore the workings of gay imperialism within ILGA’s report and its cartography of the world. As a Somali person who has lived and worked in Somalia in both government and non-profit settings, I am particularly interested in how Somalia and Somali people are constructed within these discourses and where we are placed within ILGA’s depiction of the world. What are the origins of these homophobic laws listed by ILGA? How are human rights discourses used to universalize Western epistemologies on sexualities and silence Others? And what happens to sexually fluid people, whose sexuality does not fall under the confines of lesbian and gay identity categories or heterosexual/homosexual binaries? I ask these questions to situate this report within the broader history of Western colonialism and imperialism of Africa and other former colonies, as well as to point to the ways in which these dynamics continue to affect the lives of the formerly colonized.

Drawing on postcolonial critiques of international development initiatives and Western epistemologies, I argue that ILGA’s report and map are part of a project of imperialism masked under cloaks of human rights and (anti)homophobia activism. ILGA’s work on Somalia is used as a case study throughout this paper to further illuminate the workings of gay imperialism in states considered ‘homophobic’. By inciting discourses of (anti)homophobia as well as human rights paradigms, ILGA enforces a sexuality grounded in Western epistemology. As a result, all Other forms of sexuality and sexual practices are marginalized and cast as ‘pre-modern’, ‘barbaric’, ‘savage’ and ‘un-liberated’. To further explore the imperial implications of ILGA’s report, I draw on Fabian’s (1983) work on temporality to argue that ILGA’s mapping of “state sponsored homophobia” is a temporal device used to affirm difference as *distance*. As a result, the people of Somalia are cast as occupying a temporal space behind that of states that have laws recognizing and protecting lesbian and gay people. Consequently, the work of ILGA is part of a larger function of Orientalism (Said, 1978) used to distance and differentiate the progressive West/Occident or the developed states from the homophobic East/Orient or developing/Third World Other. Temporal distancing is essential for the operation and justification of ILGA’s development work. ILGA’s use of

temporality in their anti-homophobia and human rights development work is powerful because it taps into a racializing narrative upon which the history of colonization has been built.

To illuminate the relations of power in human rights and (anti)homophobia discourses within ILGA's report, I employ the method of document analysis and analytical strategy of critical discourse analysis (CDA) situated within a postcolonial theoretical framework to deconstruct ILGA's mapping of the world and to challenge colonial legacies ingrained within these discourses. This project of un-mapping is divided into six sections. The first section outlines the methodology and theoretical framework guiding this study. Following this, I provide an overview of ILGA's report, specifically focusing on how Somalia is constructed within it. In addition, this section explores the origins of the *Somali Penal Code* to demonstrate how the West is implicated in homophobic laws. I begin the third section by expanding on Puar's (2007) concept of homonationalism and the homonational subject to explore the socio-political climate in the West that gave rise to gay imperialism. I argue that the homonational subject engaging sexual orientation-based development initiatives is participating in gay imperialism. This section also examines the use of human rights-based discourses within this movement.

In the fourth section, I un-map ILGA's cartography of same-sex laws to expose the use of temporal distancing and its implication in their development initiatives. This section provides a postcolonial critique of the project of mapping and examines ILGA's report and map as a temporal device to further Other the formerly colonized. Building on this, the subsequent section examines the ways in which discourses of (anti)homophobia are used to justify gay imperialism framed as development work. This section explores the racism underpinning discourses of (anti)homophobia. Finally, the last section moves beyond deconstructing the work of ILGA to explore the complexities and multi-dimensions of sexuality as an effort to begin to find new ways to discuss and understand sexualities.

### **Framing the Study: Methodology and Theoretical Framework**

Un-mapping ILGA's report is a project of stripping what colonialism has built to deconstruct power relations and illuminate the latest frontier of imperialism, which is gay imperialism. To do this, I engage in a qualitative study of ILGA's 2015 report and its accompanying map to explore the implications of documenting lesbian and gay rights and laws. A document is a socially produced product (Prior, 2003), thus documenting, specifically in textual form, is the basis for and validation of the stories we tell ourselves, the story-telling narratives that give meaning to individuals, groups, societies, institutions and the state. According to Cook and Schwartz (2002), documents are not just the bearer of historical content and information; "they are also a reflection of the needs and desires of its creator" (p. 3). The process of documenting certain stories and information (and not others) is an act of power. These processes are about imposing control and order on transactions, events, people and societies through the legal, symbolic, structural and operational power of recorded communication. In this paper, I draw on ILGA's documenting of sexual orientation-based laws to explore who benefits from it, how (anti)homophobia and human rights discourses are invoked in the report, and its implications.

Foucault (1972) reminds us that power is performative. Power must be analyzed as something that circulates and is never achieved (Mills, 2003). As a result, documents and records must be examined for the linguistic mechanisms underpinning their production and constitution of historical or official knowledge. This paper examines the discourses behind these mechanisms. Foucault states that we should think of discourse as all utterance and statements, which have been made, have meaning and have some effects (Mills, 2003).

Utilizing the methodological framework of document analysis alongside the analytical framework of critical discourse analysis (CDA), I explore the discourses, ideologies, language, meanings, and implications of ILGA's 2015 report. Document analysis is a process of evaluating a document in such a way that empirical knowledge is produced and understanding is developed (Bowen, 2009). Documents are nestled within the discourses that produce them (Prior, 2003). They are produced and consumed in socially organized circumstances and this is every bit as important as the study of the content in documents.

This study employs document analysis and CDA as complementary frameworks because documents function as a carrier of a discourse. Foucault (1972) argues that discourse is more than just language – discourse and power go hand-in-hand. In every society the production of discourse is controlled, selected, organized and redistributed. As a result, discourses influence how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Mills, 2003). Just as discourses govern certain ways of talking about a topic, they also limit other ways of talking about or conducting ourselves in relation to the topic (Hall, 2001). Using document analysis and CDA, I explore the ways in which lesbian and gay rights, and (anti)homophobia are understood by ILGA.

As a method, document analysis requires finding, selecting, appraising or making sense of, and synthesizing the data contained in a document (Bowen, 2009). The data yielded include, excerpts, quotations or entire passages. CDA provides a linguistic analysis of the collected data. It attempts to unite and determine the relationship between text, discursive practices, social context, power enactment and discourse production (Mogashoa, 2014). Its purpose is to analyze the structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, and power and control manifested in language. Although document analysis is both a form of data collection and data analysis, this study employs CDA as an analytic strategy for data analysis and thus relies on document analysis as a method for collecting, reviewing, evaluating and organizing the data.

To analyze the data using CDA, this study drew on Fairclough's (1989) three-dimensional guideline for critically studying discourse: micro, meso, and macro-levels. I first explored the micro-level, which is concerned with report's syntax and rhetorical devices. Then I moved into studying the meso-level, which comprised of studying the report's production and consumption to examine how power relations are enacted. At the macro-level, my analysis considered the socio-political climate that influenced the production of ILGA's report. Utilizing these three levels of CDA provides an examination of ILGA's report that considered context, content, ideology, the surface of the text, and rhetoric. In addition, it offers an analysis that exposes the links between

the text and the masked power relations operating by means of discursive practices based on which the report is produced. However, it is important to note that CDA does not provide answers to specific problems (Mogashoa, 2014). Instead, it enables us to understand the conditions behind a specific problem as well as realize the core of the problem and its solution lies in its assumptions that enable that problem to exist.

To help understand the production and consumption of knowledge in documenting lesbian and gay rights, I employ a postcolonial theoretical framework to further filter and interpret the data from this report. Conducting document analysis and CDA using a postcolonial lens provided an understanding of contemporary relations of domination and power that are rooted in colonial history. A postcolonial approach challenges colonial legacies ingrained within practices of international development, such as discourses of human rights and (anti)homophobia. As a result, it allows for an unraveling of colonial and Eurocentric discourses.

Postcolonial theory starts from the recognition that global power structures have not materially shifted since the end of the imperial era (Young, 2001). This approach is concerned with the colonial history and the extent that that history has determined the configurations of power structures of the present. I utilize postcolonial theory to attend to discourses, structures, and relations of colonialism and imperialism in temporal contexts within and across geographies of metropolises.

In this paper, I situate ILGA's report in the socio-political climate in which it was produced. In addition, I lay out the implications of this report on people and states labeled as "persecution" states. Using document analysis and CDA with postcolonial theory, this paper makes asymmetrical relations of power in the report transparent by revealing the textual techniques by which ILGA attempts to produce, position, locate, and define epistemologies of sexuality and human rights. I explore the production of knowledge through discourses of human rights and (anti)homophobia and make connections to broader relations of power within development discourses.

Structural relations of dominance, power and control are manifested in ILGA's discourses of (anti)homophobia and human rights. As a result, this study engages with ILGA's report to linguistically deconstruct the dominant discourses alongside the context, production and implications of the report. Using methodological and analytical frameworks laid out above along with a postcolonial theoretical lens, this paper detects the linguistic means and imagery used by ILGA to (re)produce, sustain and circulate human rights and (anti)homophobia discourses situated in Western epistemologies, Orientalist discourses and international development paradigms. Lesbian and gay development work cannot be separated from other international development initiatives that mask imperial impulses, and the racism ingrained in discourses of human rights, equality and progress.

Part of postcolonial concern is the Orientalist binary categorization – master/slave, occident/orient, colonizer/colonized, civilized/uncivilized, white/black – into which the Other is invariably incorporated (Kapoor, 2008). The notion of 'Self' is discursively constructed in and through the Other, through the system of similarities and differences (Hall, 1996). According to Hall (1996), the Other is not a term fixed in place and time

external to the system of identification, but instead is “a symbolically marked ‘constitutive outside’ a positionality of differential marking within a discursive chain” (p. 252). In other words, identity is largely constituted through this process of Othering. Said (1978) refers to the discourse of Orientalism and the Orient to emphasize the production of the Other. Said argues that there is no Other behind or beyond the invention of knowledge in the Other’s name. Like the Orient, the Other is culturally and historically invented in relation to Self or the Occident. Postcolonial theory obliges us to re-read these colonial binaries to understand how these relationships are (re)produced. In addition, postcolonial critique works to destabilize the simple polarization of the world into Self and Other to examine the complexities and nuances within people, communities, and nation-states. Thus a postcolonial approach within document analysis and CDA engages, deconstructs, and complicates ILGA’s conception and polarization of the world as anti-homophobic/homophobic and progressive/regressive. I utilize these frameworks to provide a critique of sexual orientation-based development as gay imperialism.

Although deconstructing ILGA’s report is significant to understanding the power dynamics and colonial legacies ingrained within its development work, it is also important to move beyond interrupting hegemonic discourses to explore Indigenous and local knowledges on sexualities that are left out of dominant and mainstream discourse. To merely deconstruct ILGA’s work keeps us entangled in dominant discourse and thus preventing us from embracing epistemologies outside Western hegemony (Tauqir et al., 2011). The last section of this paper moves from deconstructing ILGA to a discussion on sexualities and epistemologies outside ILGA’s understanding of sexualities. Sarah Bracke (Tauqir et al., 2011) reminds us that we must generate language and speech from other points of departure to move beyond hegemonic epistemologies. Many groups around the world have their own language and understanding of sexualities that cannot be understood within the work of ILGA. This paper concludes with an exploration of the multi-dimensions of sexualities and sexual practices.

### **ILGA and Somalia: Tracing Colonial Laws**

ILGA is a worldwide federation of 1100 member organizations from 110 countries working on issues of LGBTI rights (International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association [ILGA], 2013). This umbrella organization was formed in 1978 and is currently funded by the governments of Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, and Norway, as well as private foundations (ILGA, 2013). The organization is dedicated to achieving equal rights for all LGBTI people worldwide. ILGA specifically focuses public and government attention on cases of discrimination against LGBTI people by supporting programs and protest actions, asserting diplomatic pressure, providing information and working with international organizations and media (ILGA, 2013).

For over ten years ILGA has produced a report examining the rights of all lesbian and gay people. According to ILGA, “The State Sponsored Homophobia report originated from the need to present a concise overview of the legal situation of lesbian and gay people around the world” (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015, p. 6). The report is a comprehensive survey of laws that criminalize consenting adult same-sex sexual acts.

The report provides a global overview of laws based on some of the following categories: recognition of same-sex marriage; civil partnerships; constitutional prohibition of discrimination based on sexual orientation; anti-homosexuality propaganda laws; age of consent for same and different sexual acts; joint adoption by same-sex couples; and death penalties (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). Through this overview, the report paints a picture of the experiences and day-to-day lives of lesbian and gay people and communities around the world. In the press release for this report, ILGA emphasized that the number of criminalizing countries has dropped by 16 countries from 2005 to 2015. The organization praises themselves for the work they have done over the past few decades and argue that their reports have provided a solid platform from which to understand, discuss, lobby, and advocate for lesbian and gay equality (Valenza, 2015).

According to ILGA, this report is meant to be an eye-opener to illustrate “the fact that lesbian and gay people around the world are still considered illegal, immoral and criminals, and deemed not to deserve the legal protections enjoyed by the rest” (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015, p. 6). Over 75 countries criminalize same-sex sexual acts and homosexuality, subjecting individuals to dangers, risks, abuses, harassment and violations on the basis of their gender and sexuality (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). As a result, this tenth edition of the report serves as a reminder of the importance of anti-homophobia advocacy and that ILGA’s work is essential to the global efforts that aim to influence and change institutional attitudes towards lesbian and gay people.

In ILGA’s examination of Africa, they highlight that same-sex sexual acts are legal in 19 states and illegal in 34 states within the continent (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). Somalia is categorized as one of the 34 African states that criminalize and persecute lesbian and gay identified people. ILGA makes a reference to that fact that enforcement of laws within Somalia has been made complicated since the fall of centralized authority in 1991. In their overview of Somalia, they quote the *Somali Penal Code*, Article 409 (Homosexuality):

Whoever has carnal intercourse with a person of the same sex shall be punished, where the act does not constitute a more serious crime, with imprisonment from three months to three years. Where the act committed is an act of lust different from carnal intercourse, the punishment imposed shall be reduced by one-third. (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015, p. 63)

Although the parts of Somalia are no longer unified as the Federal Republic of Somalia, the 1962 Penal Code is still applied in Somaliland, Puntland, as well as central and south Somalia (Somaliland Law, 2006).

The laws on homosexuality in Somalia have roots in its colonial history. After the 1960 union of parts of British Somaliland and Italian Somaliland, the *Somali Penal Code* was established. This Penal Code replaced the *Italian Penal Code* of 1930 and the *Indian Penal Code of 1860*, which was applied to British Somaliland. The *Somali Penal Code* was largely based on and influenced by both the *Italian Penal Code* and *Indian Penal Code of 1860* (Somaliland Law, 2006). The 1930 *Italian Penal Code*, commonly referred to as the Rocco Code, named after the Minister of Justice Alfredo Rocco, was established under the Benito Mussolini regime. The Rocco Code did not make any mention of homosexuality; however, the broader attitude of the regime was to not speak of or



mention acts that were regarded as immoral or disturbing (Ozzano & Giorgi, 2016). The *Indian Penal Code of 1860* was originally formed in India by British authorities; however, the Code was adapted to other British colonies during the colonial era (Ganguli, 2014). This Code classified homosexuality as an unnatural offence (Ganguli, 2014). Section 377 (Unnatural Offences) of the Code states:

Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment of either description for term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine. (Ganguli, 2014, p. 2)

Section 377 remains in the constitution of many former British colonies. It is no coincidence that Article 409 of the *Somali Penal Code* is worded similarly to this British colonial law – this article reflects and is influenced by the *Indian Penal Code*. However, this is neglected in ILGA’s case study of Somalia, and Article 409 is seen as law created by the Somali people without any influence of colonization. Within ILGA’s mapping of the world, Somalia is understood as a homophobic state that actively persecutes lesbian and gay identified people. Britain and Italy, on the other hand, are seen as ‘gay-friendly’ anti-homophobic states. The report neglects any discussion as to how the *Somali Penal Code* was formed and who influenced it. According to ILGA “we can no longer blame bad laws on colonialism alone” (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015, p. 101); however, without historical context and an examination of the colonial legacy of laws in Somalia, Article 409 as well as the *Somali Penal Code* as whole is considered devoid of colonial influence and thus homophobia is constructed as inherently part of Somali culture.

It is important to note that this paper is by no means arguing that there never was or is no discrimination against people engaging in same-sex sexual practices within Somalia. Discrimination based on sexuality is a global phenomenon. Instead, this paper is concerned with deconstructing and complicating ILGA’s conception of Somalia. What does ILGA gain from neglecting the colonial origins and historical context of Article 409? What is the purpose of providing an overview of laws regarding lesbian and gay identified people? What is missed in this documentation? The following sections of this paper engages with these questions through a postcolonial lens to first deconstruct international development practices and then explore the use of temporal distancing as well as human rights and (anti)homophobia discourses in this sexual orientation-based development project laid out by ILGA.

### ***White Queers Saving Brown/Black Queers from Brown/Black Culture: From Homonationalism to Gay Imperialism***

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s (1988) infamous statement “white men saving brown women from brown men” (p. 297) has been re-worked and re-used to exemplify the racism and imperialism of Western feminist international development initiatives – “white women saving brown women from brown men” (Abu-Lughod, 1998, p. 14) and now I use it in this section to demonstrate and critique development initiatives led by Western lesbian and gay movements – ‘white queers saving brown/black queers from brown/black culture’. This rhetoric of the ‘white savior’ goes back to colonial times and has historically served to conceal the real reasons behind the colonization of the East or Third World. This rhetoric is still utilized in development discourses to mask imperial desires in Western-based international social movements.

Imperialism has taken many forms in the recent decades. The latest addition of gay imperialism further demonstrates the strength and scope of imperialism. In the past, lesbian and gay people were criminalized and pathologized as promiscuous perverts and a threat to the heterosexual family of the Western state. However, in recent years, (some) Western lesbian and gay subjects have been declared part of an Occidental tradition of feminism and gay friendliness (Haritaworn, 2008). Puar (2007) argues that Western states produce narratives of exception through the war on terror, and as a result suspend the heteronormative imagined community to consolidate national sentiment and incorporate (some) homosexual subjects. Puar calls this homonationalism – the national inclusion of homosexuality and homosexual bodies.

In this section, I draw on Puar's concept of homonationalism to explore lesbian and gay international development work. Homonationalism is the emergence of a national homosexuality. This kind of homosexuality operates as a regulatory script for normative gayness or homonormativity, and the racial and national norms that reinforce this (homo)national subject (Puar, 2007). That being said, I argue that the extension of homonationalism from the Western state into international development initiatives becomes gay imperialism. As a result, ILGA's report produces an understanding of the world comprised of 'enlightened' homonational subjects and Others.

Participating in international development initiatives focused on lesbian and gay rights is merely the next step in gaining complete legitimacy and inclusion into the Western and Occident imaginary. In other words, the homonational subject gains its power through participating in imperialism and sexual Othering of people from states considered developing or Third World. Like Western feminist development movements, sexual orientation-based development is more about Western lesbian and gay subjects knowing themselves as members of the Occident community than improving the lives of people globally.

The lesbian and/or gay subject engaging in international development wants to produce a world in its own image, one wherein its sexual categories and desires are safe from being questioned or dismissed. This is evident in ILGA's insistence on enforcing a sexuality grounded in Western ways of understanding sexuality, sexual practices, gender, and identity. In addition, ILGA's report and objectives reflect the goals, struggles, and desires of the homonational subject rather than addressing the needs of all the diverse communities. Instead, sexualities that fall outside of ILGA's lesbian and gay categories or homosexual/heterosexual binary are cast as 'barbaric' and dismissed as 'un-liberated'. This casting out of Other forms of sexuality will be further explored in the later parts of this paper; however, for now, the remainder of this section examines how (some) Western lesbian and/or gay subjects gain power and recognition through documenting and mapping of the world.

The homonational subject is committed to the global dominance of whiteness deeply implicated and tied to the propagation of Western states (Puar, 2007). In fact, in times of crisis, white dominance accommodates certain subjects previously marginalized and marked as 'sexual deviants' in order to preserve and maintain the social, political,

historical, structural and instructional domination of whiteness and white supremacy. To remain dominant, “whiteness has to seduce allies, convince them of advantages of such alliance, and sometimes be able to forsake immediate advantages for long-term goals of domination” (Leonardo, 2002, p. 41). In the case of homonationalism, white dominance brought (some) lesbian and gay subjects into the Western national imaginary and citizenry to further participate in neoliberalism and imperial projects framed as development initiatives. These subjects, mostly white and able-bodied, have the social mobility to move further away from marginalized groups and gain legitimacy within Western states. Similar to Western feminist movements, in order to gain legitimacy these lesbian and gay movements had to participate in the imperial projects framed as development and humanitarianism to separate themselves from the Other.

As a product of homonationalism, ILGA works to ‘save’ Third World lesbian and gay people from themselves, their culture and their states. By representing and defending Third World lesbians and gays, the homonational subjects get into this “old boys” club of mainstream politics (Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2008). Petzen (Tauqir et al., 2011) argues that the white middle-class gender-conforming lesbian woman and/or gay man has no emancipatory currency left in local Western politics, and “that is why they need to move on and find ‘others’ to emancipate” (p. 177).

The work of ILGA is dedicated to equal rights for lesbian and gay people around the world (ILGA, 2013). ILGA invokes human rights discourses to conceive of their work as advocacy and humanitarianism. Spivak reminds us that the idea of human rights is that “the fittest must shoulder the burden of righting the wrongs of the unfit” (as cited by Massad, 2007, p. 38). International human rights discourses work to tell the unfit, which for ILGA are mostly former colonies, what lesbian and gay rights are and how laws regarding same-sex sexual acts should operate. Underpinning ILGA’s report is the assumption that the former colonies cannot make laws protecting same-sex sexual practices without the help and guidance of the West.

Echoing Spivak, Massad (2007) states that human rights discourses are coupled with notions of ‘civilized’ and ‘uncivilized’. In recent decades, lesbian and gay rights have become a marker of modernity. They have become the new yardstick to measure democracy and progress (Haritaworn, Tauqir, & Erdem, 2008). In fact, the very title of the report *State Sponsored Homophobia* (2015) blatantly describes many states as complicit in the hate and repression of human rights. ILGA’s construction of the Third World Other as ‘homophobic’ and ‘regressive’ empowers the previously victimized identity of the Western lesbian and/or gay subject. The following sections further explore the ways in which racism permeates ILGA’s mapping of the world and (anti)homophobia discourses.

### **Mapping the World Through Temporal Distancing**

The project of mapping has played a significant role in the colonization of land and people. As McClintock (1996) reminds us, the knowledge constituted by the map both preceded and legitimized the conquest of land. The map, McClintock argues, is a technology of knowing that claims to capture the “truth” about a place in scientific form. As such, the project of mapping is a technology of possession, “promising that those

with the capacity to make such perfect representations must also have the right of territorial control” (p. 28). Those who create the map become the expert on the territory and have a form of ownership of the land. The map presented by ILGA claims a level of ownership over states constructed as homophobic. In mapping lesbian and gay rights internationally, ILGA claims to be an expert on sexuality in most of the world, specifically the countries colored in shades of red and yellow (the persecution states).

Maps are considered an exemplary icon of imperial “truth”, meant to reveal the unknown to the colonizer (McClintock, 1996). The map is the colonizer’s way of negotiating a world filled with terrifying ambiguities. Creating narratives of the people and land is both a method of domination and a way for the Western subject to know itself. ILGA’s map along with the report follows this Orientalist logic of polarizing the world into two categories – anti-homophobic and progressive states and homophobic and backwards states. This form of documentation and mapping utilizes a comparative framework that establishes the states colored in shades of dark green as the norm or normative model for all states to measure against. The dark green represents the Occident, the ideal states that the Orient (states colored in shades of red) must emulate in order to develop and modernize. In documenting *Somali Penal Code Article 409* and comparing it to the laws of states colored shades of green, ILGA acts as the expert on sexuality and sexual orientation-based laws and rights. It is this epistemological superiority that allows ILGA to construct with authority the Somali Other as inferior and backwards. It is important to keep in mind that these Orientalist views are characterized by racist, exotic and inferior essentialist representations of people as culturally frozen in time.

Fabian, in *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (1983), argues that anthropology works to construct relations with its Other by the use of temporal devices, which imply affirmations of difference as *distance*. I use Fabian’s postcolonial critique of anthropology to understand the workings of sexual orientation-based development and international development initiatives broadly. Within ILGA’s work, temporal distancing is used to differentiate the West and the Western lesbian and gay subject from the Third World and its Other. The West and its people are constructed as ‘enlightened’, ‘modern’, and ‘progressive’, thus setting Somalia and Somali people as operating in a temporal space behind that of the West. Fabian (1983) calls this the denial of coevalness. Denial of coevalness is “a persistent and systemic tendency to place the referent(s) of anthropology in a Time other than the present of the producer of anthropological discourse” (p. 31). In other words, the object of knowledge is not allowed the ability to occupy the same temporal space as the observing subject of knowledge. As a result, Fabian argues that the role of anthropology is to provide a temporal distance between those observed and the observer.

Similar to anthropology, the function of international development work is to provide a temporal distance between those that are ‘developed’ and those that are ‘developing’. This is insinuated in the terms ‘developed’ and ‘developing’ – those that are ‘developing’ are attempting to catch up to or inhabit the temporal space of the ‘developed’. In this context, the ‘developed’ are the states with laws that recognize and protect lesbian and gay rights and those that *need* to develop are the states that have homophobic laws or no laws protecting lesbian and gay people. ILGA’s map of state sponsored homophobia is

thus a temporal device used to affirm difference as *distance*. The people of Somalia are cast as frozen in time, occupying a temporal space behind that of states considered to have recognition and protection of lesbian and gay rights. This denial of coevalness is part of the racist narrative used in ‘white savior’ rhetoric to justify past colonization and current interventions in states considered ‘too weak’ and ‘too far’ behind to help themselves.

### **(Anti)Homophobia and Racist Discourses**

ILGA’s mapping of the world physically lays out a project of imperialism through labeling and color-coding countries based on laws that lack any consideration of historical contexts. Somalia is mapped out and labeled as a “persecution” state. The people and the communities are denied coevalness and thus constructed as both backwards and homophobic; however, no historical context or examination of the legacy of colonialism is given with regard to the laws in the *Somali Penal Code*. When historical context is neglected, erased, or dismissed in examinations of former colonies, all issues within these communities are blamed on the people and their innate character, rather than systems of power that are responsible for or influence these issues. Blame or casting people of the former colonies as regressive is essential to development initiatives and the construction of the ‘enlightened’ Western lesbian and/or gay subject.

Colonial culture is shaped by polarities, such as adult versus child, scientific versus irrational, or historical versus ahistorical. These polarizations are based on hierarchies that give legitimacy to oppression as well as define the West and its subjects. This way the West knows itself as a ‘progressive’ and ‘egalitarian’ society against the ‘homophobic’ East. The work of ILGA reinforces binaries of anti-homophobic/homophobic, progressive/regressive, civilized/uncivilized, as well as the homosexual/heterosexual binary. These binaries are central to Western imperial projects.

ILGA’s marking of people and states as ‘homophobic’ is a denial of coevalness necessary to production of the modern Western lesbian and/or gay subject. In fact, this modern subject can only exist if the racialized Other is trapped in ‘unenlightened’ cultures. Smith’s (2010) work on queer theory found that LGBT studies and queer studies often construct racialized people as “trapped within primitive and pathological communities that must give way to modern queer subjects” (p. 49). Smith argues that Indigenous nationhood is imagined as simply heteronormative. Similarly, ILGA’s report and map construct states that criminalize homosexuality or have no legislation protecting lesbian and gay people as strictly heteronormative and heterosexual. According to Hoad (2007), African traditions and cultures are primarily configured by the West as homophobic and thus heteronormative. This configuration is used by the West to conceive of itself as ‘modern’ and a champion of human rights.

Instead of examining where these homophobic laws come from and if they are actually enforced, ILGA represents Western states as shining examples of lesbian and gay equality. The states mapped out in dark green are represented as the ideal state because same-sex marriages are legalized. Puar (2007) notes that gay marriages distinguish Europeans from Muslims and Others. Gay marriage, which is less about gay rights and

more about codifying a European value (Puar, 2007), is another marker that distances civilization from barbarism. Thus, the countries colored in dark green symbolize modernity in terms of gay rights. By virtue of having laws protecting lesbian and gay people, these states are constructed as devoid of homophobia and homophobic violence, consequently leaving homophobia to only operate in all Other parts of the world without similar laws. ILGA's denial of coevalness between states based on de-historized laws is used as a marker of difference and distance that are based on racializing narratives that make up the foundation upon which colonization and imperialism has been built and sustained.

ILGA legitimizes its work with not only (anti)homophobia and rights-based discourses, but also through co-opting the language and work of feminist anti-racist scholars and activists. Within the report, there is a section devoted to understanding intersectional oppressions entitled "Intersectionality in LGBTI Advocacy" (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). This section starts with an epigraph from Audre Lorde – "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we don't live single-issue lives" (p. 18). Audre Lorde, a self-described black, lesbian, mother, and feminist dedicated her life to challenging racism, imperialism, sexism and homophobia (Hammond, 1980). She wrote for the marginalized and challenged racist and oppressive discourses. Her words and work are appropriated by ILGA to legitimize their development agenda. In addition, ILGA's use of the term "intersectionality" borrows from black feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw. Intersectionality was coined by Crenshaw to highlight and demonstrate that women experience oppression in varying configurations and degrees of intensity and those oppressions are interrelated and bound together (1989). Although it is important to examine and differentiate the experiences of lesbian and gay people based on class, gender, culture, (dis)ability, race, and other forms of oppression, ILGA uses this chapter in their report to negate the imperial implications of their work.

By citing Audre Lorde and drawing on the concept of intersectionality, ILGA's development work appears progressive and inclusive of the diverse communities globally. However, intersectionality is not merely a terminology – it is both a theoretical and practical framework to interpret the complexities of lived experiences. ILGA devotes 5 pages of a 129-page report to discuss intersectionality as a concept. The rest of the report does not discuss or contain an intersectional analysis. The report utilizes the laws and experiences of lesbian and gay people from the West and does not accurately reflect the complexities and influences of laws in former colonies and the experiences of people living under "persecution" laws or no laws regarding same-sex sexual practices. An analysis that examines laws and rights in isolation from historical context and colonial influences as well as in isolation of languages, cultures, and the lived experiences cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which people experience homophobia from their state and/or community.

Crenshaw's (1989) examination of the absence intersectional analysis in feminist and anti-racist discourses found that in order for these discourses to embrace the experiences and concerns of Black women, "the entire framework that has been used as a basis for translating "women's experience" or "the Black experience" into concrete policy demands must be rethought and recast" (p. 140). Similarly, for ILGA to understand the historical context of laws and their affect on people's lives, the report's

framework and objectives must be rethought and recast to explore the multi-dimensions and intricacies of sexuality and gender and the actual impact of same-sex laws on people lives.

The following section delves into moving beyond Western epistemologies on sexualities and explores sexualities and sexual practices dismissed and disregarded by ILGA.

### **Sexualities in the Margins: Moving Beyond ILGA**

ILGA's report operates under a regulatory script of sexuality that is not applicable to every community around the world. As previously discussed, mapping sexuality rights based on lesbian and gay identity classifications as well as the homosexual/heterosexual binary leaves out sexualities that do not fit into these categories. Men having sex with men, and women having sex with women are not newly invented sexual practices or ideas; nor were they founded and developed by the West. Sexuality and gender are multi-dimensional; however, this understanding of sexuality is not palatable to the work of ILGA. Instead, ILGA constructs the Western lesbian and/or gay subject as 'enlightened' and those in the states that criminalize homosexuality as faceless victims without agency.

Gosine (2009) argues that LGBT development does not shift the terrain of power because it requires the adoption of Euro-American forms of sexual regulation. In other words, internationalizing the homosexual/heterosexual binary is a hegemonic means of organizing peoples' sexual practices. This model of sexuality cannot account for forms of sexual identity, practices, and desires that are not reducible to this binary. Internationalizing this model limits sexuality and banishes Other forms of sexuality. In fact, the classification and labeling of same-sex sexual practices as lesbian and/or gay forces people to turn their sexuality into an identity category. These categories may not exist in other languages. As wa Thiong'o states, "a language carries and sustains people's worldview" (as cited by Abdi, 2012, p. 137). Thus, "lesbian" and "gay" are not merely words, but rather identity categories that have a history within the English language and carries with it connotations that are not universal to all cultures, languages and histories. Manalansan (2003) makes it clear that words, such as "homophobia", "gay", and "lesbian" are embedded with Western assumptions and contexts, but are used as if they are natural and can be applied to all people globally. People who refuse to assimilate into the Western understanding of sexuality enforced by ILGA are relegated to the margins. ILGA's work dismisses as well as represses same-sex desires and practices that are not identity-based.

Wekker's book, *The Politics of Passion* (2006), tells the story of Wekker's trip to back home to Suriname. Suriname is considered a "recognition" state by ILGA because lesbians and gay communities have protection under the law; however, same-sex marriages have yet to be legalized (Carroll & Itaborahy, 2015). Wekker found that Afro-Surinamese women considered their sexuality as a verb rather than a noun – *Mati* work. *Mati* work is an action, rather than an identity. *Mati* work is practiced by women who have sex with men and women, either simultaneously or consecutively (Wekker, 2006). Wekker avoids comparing these women's sexualities to Western understandings of

sexuality, by keeping away from signifiers, such as “lesbian”, “female homosexuality”, and “heterosexuality” because of their “Euro-American situatedness and their unwanted baggage” (p. 69). Although lesbian and gay communities have legal recognition in Suriname, *Mati* work would not fit into the boundaries of sexuality defined by ILGA. *Mati* work does not reinforce the heterosexual/homosexual binary; nor does it fit into the identity-based sexuality of gay or lesbian. As a result, the gay imperialist project works to cast out *Mati* work.

Similar to Wekker, Manalansan’s (2003) work in the Philippines demonstrates these intricacies of sexuality and gender lacking in ILGAs report. Manalansan argues that the *bakla*, which is a Tagalog term used to describe men who engage in practices that encompass effeminacy, trans-sexuality, and sexual fluidity, cannot be put into the same category as gay or homosexual as these terms are embedded in a Western history and context that is not applicable to all *bakla*. As a result of this inapplicability, Manalansan (2003) points out that the *bakla* are thus constructed as ‘feudal’ and ‘underdeveloped’ by groups like ILGA, while Western gay identity is seen as ‘modern’ and ‘liberated’. Sexualities that do not conform to the Western understanding of sexuality are not only dismissed, but also represented as homophobic.

Within the Somali language men who have sex with men are understood as *khaniis* and women who have sex with women are considered *khaniisad*. The word *makhnood* is also used in understanding same-sex sexual acts. These words do not necessarily reflect the identity categories of lesbian or gay, nor do they carry the same history as these Western ways of knowing sexuality. Attempting to classify them under Western identity categories erases the history and meaning of these words. As previously stated, words carry history, culture, and connotations that cannot always be translatable. Although *khaniis*, *khaniisad*, and *makhnood* are currently used in the Somali language, these words are originally derived from Arabic. The Somali language has no specific word to characterize same-sex sexual acts and/or same-sex intimate relationships. This is not because Somali people never partook in same-sex sexual acts – in fact, many Somali folklore and stories allude to these practices – this is the result of Somali sexualities not having a specific label within the original Somali language. In this case, acts of same-sex sexuality may not have been put into simplistic categories. This would be unfathomable to ILGA as Western colonization and imperialism relies on categorizing, labeling, and carving out regions, people, and cultures as part of mechanisms of control.

The *bakla*, *khaniis*, *khaniisad*, *makhnood*, *mati* work, and label-less sexualities exist outside Western identity-based categories and may not rely on the homosexual/heterosexual binary. These understandings of sexuality complicate the ‘liberated’ sexuality presented by ILGA. In addition, they trouble dominant discourses that marginalize Indigenous knowledges and sexualities.

### Conclusion

Documenting and mapping lesbian and gay rights is a reflection of ILGA’s desires to negotiate a world filled with ambiguities on sexualities. It is used as a tool to construct narratives of people and land that are unknown to ILGA. The project of mapping is a



mechanism of control and domination that has been used for centuries by colonizers to know themselves as ‘civilized’, ‘enlightened’ and ‘modern’ – the opposite of the colonized Other.

Analyzing ILGA’s tenth edition of *State Sponsored Homophobia* through a postcolonial lens provides an understanding of sexual orientation-based development as gay imperialism. ILGA’s work constructs Western states as the embodiment of development and progress for all Other states to measure themselves against. Development relies on this comparative framework to sustain its Orientalist divisions and boundaries of the world. ILGA’s documentation of lesbian and gay rights utilizes human rights and (anti)homophobia discourses as markers of modernity, democracy, and progress. These markers rely on a racializing narrative of people and states, such as Somalia and the Other states colored in shades of red, as existing behind the temporal space of the West. As a result, ILGA’s report is more than just an overview of laws; it is an influential document that has the educational capacity to influence how people think of themselves, as well as their relationships to other people, communities, and states.

Power and relations of power are central to my analysis of ILGA and international development work broadly. Utilizing ILGA’s report, I outlined the imperialism underpinning sexual orientation-based development as well as all other forms of international development. ILGA’s denial of coevalness for Somalia and the Other “persecution” states points to the impossibility of engaging in development work that is fair, equitable, or social justice-oriented because this work is always imbued in the same power dynamics that formed the foundation of colonization and its justification.

In un-mapping the asymmetrical power relations and Orientalist logic permeating ILGA’s report, I also highlighted the complexities and intricacies of sexualities outside identity-based categories and Western understandings of sexuality. All forms of sexuality and sexual practices cannot be understood through ILGA’s work. Their attempt to document and map out lesbian and gay lives and experiences through a Western legal lens relegates sexualities that are not identity-based and non-Western sexualities to the margins. In order to move beyond ILGA and hegemonic epistemologies and discourses on sexuality, gender and sexuality must be decolonized and embraced as complex, ambiguous, and multi-dimensional.

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Figure 1. The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Map of World Laws (ILGA, 2015).

