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Queer Archetypal Lifespan Development Theory & The “New” Myth: Re-visioning *The Hero’s Journey* through the Practice of Terrapsychological Inquiry

C.K. Olivieri Blackmore

Queer Archetypal Development Theory is a post postmodern theoretical model of queer lifespan development and identity formation through a re-visioning of Joseph Campbell's' *The Hero's Journey*. Through deep inquiry and 'queering' of the Faustian hero construct, a vantage of "normative" adult development emerges which calls into question the role of traditional reproductive life markers as the primary catalysts of adult development. Resting on tenets of Queer Theory, Queer Spirituality, and Terrapsychology, this "new" narrative is one in which the tale's protagonist is representative of "The Queer Archetype." The Queer Archetype is a "spiritually androgynous" archetypal figure, an ageless, sexless, genderless construct that displays the ability to transcend duality by embracing their polarities. Through the lens of the traditional monomyth, the Queer Archetype is able to organize their experiences, thus creating life markers that exist independently of, and as a companion to, heteronormative developmental milestones.

Utilizing Terrapsychological Inquiry as the "how to" of developmental psycho-spiritual growth and change, this paper seeks to provide support the "new" myth as a facet of Queer Spirituality and as a container in which the Queer Archetype can be held. The function of this paper is to provide support for the use of Terrapsychological Inquiry within the context of Queer Spirituality, specifically with Queerspaces, as a tool whose use is a natural fit for the facilitation of authentic queer identity formation and developmentally normative queer life markers. It is through this support that I propose a comprehensive theory of queer lifespan development emerges, one which I am calling

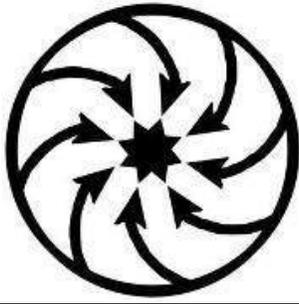
Queer Archetypal Development Theory (Agnelli, 1997; Cass, 1979; Campbell, 1949/2008; Chalquist, 2007; Chalquist, 2009; Halberstam, 2005; Jagose, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Lev, 2015; Olivieri, 2012).

According to Arlene Lev (2004) the study of human growth and development throughout the lifecycle is described as "age related changes in behavior, personality and physiological maturation" In addition, growth and development are assumed to be "embedded within the social environment and influenced by sociocultural and political phenomena"(Lev, 2004). Recently, numerous articles have been published with respect to the formation of sexual and gendered identities, usurping the discourse on queer lifespan development.

Unfortunately, queer identity development has not yet fully been integrated into mainstream theories of psychological development, nor have queer issues been studied from a developmental perspective (Lev 2004; Lev, 2015) These models are inadvertently neglecting the rapid propulsion of queer identities at much earlier chronological ages and are widely varied by geographic location. This theoretical perspective stems from a desire to understand modern adult psycho-spiritual growth and development from a mythological narrative- a theoretical perspective which looks at queer issues from a lifespan development lens. Through the use of the Queer Archetype and their journey, the developmental tasks of queer adulthood are examined, as well as practical applications for facilitation of growth.

Queer Archetypal Development Theory

Lifespan development for queer-identified people has consistently been pathologized and viewed as a 'deviation' from the heteronormative trajectory. This view places the primary tasks of adult life for queer people as individual identity formation and identification with minority communities (Historically, models of identity formation/emergence facilitate an understanding of an individual's conceptualization of personal identity and have not considered their



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development related to the evolution of consciousness or the formation/maintenance of relationships (Agnelli, 1997; Cass, 1979; Halberstam, 2005; Lev, 2004; Lev, 2015; Olivieri, 2013).

Until present day, models of lifespan development have focus on reproductive life markers to delineate developmental stages and utilize the changing nuclear family structure as the primary impetus for growth. Queer Archetypal Development Theory seeks to understand adult lifespan development as a function of psycho-spiritual growth. This growth is not dependent upon reproductive milestones or identity formation, but rather as an integration of identity, collective consciousness, and relational experiences (Agnelli, 1997; Cass, 1979; Campbell, 1949/2008; Chalquist, 2007; Chalquist, 2009; Halberstam, 2005; Jagose, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Lev, 2004; Lev, 2015; Olivieri, 2013/2015).

Developmental Psychology assumes that human beings grow and change from infancy through to adulthood. The majority of lifespan development theories place human change within a series of age-grated stages through which the individual must pass. Though all growth is change, not all change is considered though not all considered developmental. For growth and change to be considered developmental in nature, it requires the change to be permanent (or long lasting in effect), function in a sequential manner, the result of which is a type of 'maturation' (Lev, 2004).

Though human development in internal and individual, it is also considered interpersonal and transactional. Human growth and development is varied by the impact of environment, socio-cultural factors and major life events. There is a long-standing pattern of the "nature vs. nurture" paradigm and the implications of ecological, spiritual, moral, political and biological variables. Research into developmental theories attempts to look at the varying effects of education, nutrition, race, class, sex and gender on the sequential change process.

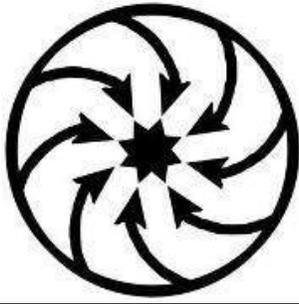
Re-visioning the Hero's Journey Using Terrapsychological Inquiry

When asking a queer elder the story of their life, it almost always – 9 out of 10 times- begin with their move to the big city. This is seen the beginning of their REAL lives (Kukla, personal communication, April 10, 2013).

As a psychotherapist, I ask people to tell me about themselves day in and day out. I ask them their personal and family histories, both biological and chosen. I ask them about their childhood, their substance use, sexual behavior, and their spiritual practices. For queer-identified clients, this routinely leads to the identification of a perceived oppressive religious system in which their natural human qualities were demonized, rendering them "outsiders" to their own lives.

Psychological professions put a great deal of emphasis on families of origin, the proverbial absent father, neurotic mother, or traumatic childhood. While all of these constructs are widely understood facets of experiences that shape social, emotional and spiritual developments, for my queer-identified individuals, *where* they grew up is often as influential as *with whom* they grew up. For queer people, place making practices take on an additional, often deeply complex, level of meaning (Cole, 2004; Wilcox, 2010).

In my experience, the most common story of a queer life journey begins with a place history, often originating in Middle America, where living under the convention of literal interpretations of old mythologies provides the impetus for an existential crisis. The growing dissatisfaction with one's geographic space, coupled with an increasingly inadequate spiritual container for which to hold an evolving consciousness, sends many queer people on a quest to find their personal Utopia. Many set out, often with few role models, and almost non-existent examples of normative, healthy, and societally valued queer life experiences. Many times the utopian Queerspace migration leads individuals to entrepreneurial cities such as New York or San



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Francisco, in search of a place in which they can be “insiders;” inside their skin, their soul, and their environment.

It is my belief they are seeking what Johnson (2000) calls the ‘new’ myth- a new paradigm in which place, space, psyche, and Spirit are entwined with the evolution of ecological consciousness, sexual fluidity, and non binary genderdness in a way that provides queer-identified individuals a means to understand themselves in the world they way choose to live in it. This “new’ myth calls for a re-visioned “Hero”- a revised narrative with a new set of normative experiences and developmental milestones that exist outside of traditional reproductive life markers. I am calling the “Hero” of this new narrative a “Queer Archetype”.

Key Terms and Ideas

Terrapsychological Inquiry

Terrapsychological Inquiry (TI) or the “psychoanalysis of place” is a young research methodology, academic discipline, and psycho-spiritual practice that puts a Western Psychological lens to a conceptual framework for viewing place, space, psyche, and Spirit that has been historically referenced and intuitively understood. When functioning as a psycho-spiritual practice TI facilitates a “*listening into*” of the “soul of place” and by doing so deepens the connection to both the physical and energetic body of the earth and its inhabitants (Chalquist, 2007 p. 53). When being utilized as a research method, the purpose is to “explore how the patterns, shapes, features, and motifs in the nonhuman world sculpt our ideas, habits, relationships, culture, and sense of self” through the study of the “deep and largely unconscious” multileveled multidimensional relationships to the planet and its inhabitants (Chalquist, 2010, p.6).

TI is an exercise in creating research poetically. Part of the beauty of TI is found in the language and form in which it is constructed. Often reading like a story, TI weaves in myth, synchronicities,

geographic, geologic, sociological and historical elements, and dreams and incorporates them as data.. It is a deep psychological process that requires the researcher go on the journey with the research itself (Chalquist, 2007). It is a psycho-spiritual process in which academics mingle with psyche and Spirit, creating not only the study of the aliveness that is the Earth, but also the aliveness that is the study itself.

Queering Time, Space, and Spirit

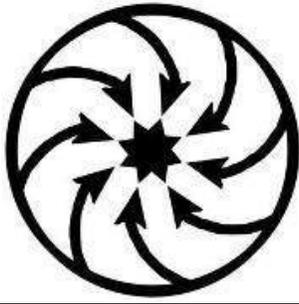
Queer subcultures produce alternative temporalities by allowing their participants to believe their futures can be imagined according to the logics that lie outside of those paradigmatic markers of life experience-namely, birth, marriage, reproduction and death. A ‘queer adjustment of the way we think about time, in fact, requires and produces new conceptions of space (Halberstam, 2005,p.2).

Halberstam (2005) defines “queer” as “ non normative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time” that specifically emerge within postmodernism and transcend “bourgeois reproduction and family, longevity, risk/safety and inheritance”(p.6).

Halberstam (2005) indicates that queer time and space are critical to the understanding of queer subcultures on a whole, in that queer life modes offer an alternative to living within the parameters of child rearing practices.

The term “queer” itself can be envisioned as “an umbrella term for a coalition of culturally marginal sexual self-identifications and at times a “nascent theoretical model that has developed out of traditional gay and lesbian studies” (Jagose, 1996, p.1). It is of note that the term “queer” refers to “nothing in particular,” resulting in the notion that the “fundamental indeterminacy makes queer a difficult object of study; always ambiguous, always relational” (Jagose, 1996, p.96).

In light of this, the term “queer” in reference to a fluid construct that incorporates all facets of life



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including time, systemic structures, attitudes, and ideas that are not associated with heteronormativity. This includes sexuality, sexual expression, and gender identification but is not limited to it.

Queerspace

The concept of Queerspace refers to “the place-making practices in which queer people engage” as well as “new understandings of space enabled by the production of queer counterpublics” (Halberstam, 2005, p.6). It stems from the assumption that “everyday space is presumed to be authentically heterosexual unless known to be otherwise” (Holt & Griffin, 2003, p. 409).

Queerspace is defined as any geographic place, space, region, or terrain, on both the conscious and unconscious level that does **not** fall under the presumption of heteronormativity. Specifically, the psychological, sociological, political, biological, geological, geographic and mythic elements associated with spaces that have been in some form linked with the presence of non heteronormative populations. This can include but is not limited to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, questioning, genderqueer, polyamorous and androgynous identities, but may include identities that have been ‘fringe’ historically.

Queer Spirituality

Queer Spirituality, is a conceptual framework for holding modern consciousness that utilizes “psychological and spiritual wisdom,” to create a “New Myth” in which sex, sexuality and ecology can be held (Johnson, 2000, p.63).

The definition of Queer Spirituality will be based upon Johnson (2000) conceptualization in book *Gay Spirituality: Gay Identity and the Transformation of Human Consciousness* and elaborated upon by my own interpretation. Johnson indicates that the term “gay” and “queer” can be used interchangeably. He states that “the modern gay man is an archetypal figure that can be used as a projection for queer identification” and as a

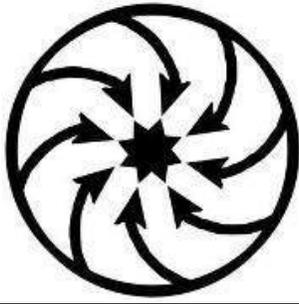
construct for all sexual minorities to “apply a socially constructed image that helps explain themselves”(p.10). In light of his intention, I will continue to refer to the concept as Queer Spirituality.

Therefore, the definition of Queer Spirituality is:

1. Experienced as an “outside perspective” in early and developmental years
2. Experienced as an “insider” or an “outsider” as queer-identity forms into an authentic identity
3. Affected by differing relationships the patriarchal world
4. “Non-Dualistic”
5. Incorporates differing values of relationship, sex, intimacy and expression between all identifications on the gender-sexuality spectrum and views these expressions as spiritual practices
6. “Incarnational” (sex-positive)
7. Fosters a relationship with the soul of place (an inside vantage) and promotes a connection to wholeness and the Earth
8. “Evolutionary” (not static, relies on no specific doctrine)
9. “Insight-Provoking”
10. “Transformational”
11. “Adaptively virtuous” (Johnson, 2004, p. xvi).

The Call for a Queer Paradigm: Creating the “New” Myth

Human beings are able to look at history from a broader perspective than ever before. We are able



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to observe the dynamics of consciousness. This is symbolized by the image of the Earth from the moon- Earthrise. For the first time human beings were able to look at the planet from over and above. Consciousness stepped outside and saw itself (Johnson, 2000, p.6).

Earthrise

The call for a “new” myth or queer paradigm is one that transcends any specific tradition or particular religious doctrine. It is a new paradigm rooted in “human psychology,” coexists harmoniously with scientific empiricism and is symbolized by the image of Earthrise; the visual representation of the Earth from outside and above (Johnson, 2000, p.6).

The new paradigm functions under the assumption that previous containing myths are no longer adequate to ‘hold’ modern day society. It argues that the advancements in science and technology has rapidly shifted our consciousness so that that we, as a species, no longer have an organizing system from which to make meaning (Campbell, 1988; Johnson, 2000; Chalquist, 2007).

Constructing the Queer Archetype

Androgyny manifests the ability of consciousness to incorporate and therefore overcome opposites... Queer people demonstrate what can be called as spiritual androgyny, the ability to see the world from both a woman’s perspective and a man perspective, to be good at both traditional male activities and traditional female activities...a potent blend of male strength and competence and female sensitivity and feeling makes a more complex and fascinating human being (Johnson, 2000, pp 123-124).

The call for a new paradigm can be imagined as a re-visioning of the classic mythological hetero-normative Hero’s Journey, and by the ‘queering’ the Faustian hero construct through the creation of a new narrative (Johnson, 2000; Campbell, 1949/2008; Chalquist, 2013). Resting on tenets of Queer Theory, Queer Spirituality, and Terrapsychology, the new narrative is one in which the protagonist is representative of, what I am

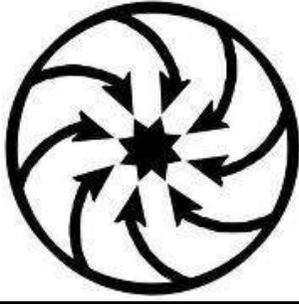
calling, the “Queer Archetype” (Jagose, 1996; Johnson, 2000; Chalquist, 2007). The Queer Archetype is a “spiritually androgynous” archetypal Abraxas figure, an ageless, sexless, genderless construct that transcends duality through embracing polarities. It is through the tale of the Queer Archetypes that I propose queer identified individuals will be able to recognize and organize their experiences, thus normalizing life choices that exist outside traditional heteronormative reproductive markers (Halberstam, 2005).

Non-duality, Non-binary Genderness, and Same-Sex Attraction

Attraction-nonsexual and sexual-between two men or two women are witnesses to the ultimate unity of the world beyond duality. Beneath the apparent swirl of polarities, ever growing, ever changing, clashing in conflict and cooperating in love, lies a deeper stratum in which all is at rest and the opposite s are illusory. The attraction between same-sex individuals manifests the unity that precedes and transcends the duality (Johnson, 2000, p.19).

Non-duality can be understood, at a very basic level, as a conceptualization of being and consciousness whereby the illusory nature of the separation between self and world dissolves, creating individuality that is differentiated, but not split (Welwood, 1993). The Queer Archetype, being situated within the container of Queer Spirituality, embodies the principles of Non-duality through the spiritual, psychological and physical elements of queer sexual expression, practice, and gender identifications (Mains, 1987, Thompson, 1987; Halberstam, 2005).

Non-duality and non-binary genderness are complementary cross-cultural constructs within the Queer Archetypal figure: Named *bote* by the Crow Indians of Montana, *nadle*, by the Navajo, and *Ihamana* by the Zuni’s of New Mexico, these “two-spirited” individuals have been revered as for their capacity to embrace characteristics of their non-biological sex (Thompson, 1987). Within indigenous



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cultures native to the Americas “crossdressing often meant entering a magical state involving taking on a persona or spirit of a God” as well as assuming a variety of roles such as healers, leaders, and mediators of spiritual life (Thompson, 1987).

While it is important to note the variety and fluidity of identifications and practices along the gender-sexuality spectrum that is referential to the Queer Archetype, is equally important to note the heterosexual components of ‘queer.’ The Queer paradigm is concerned with perspective, and the vantage of a heterosexual individual who, for example, does not desire children or to “settle down” exists as an outsider to hetero-normative life trajectory. That being said, the experiences of LGBTQ population are rooted in deep systemic oppression and discrimination. This fosters complicated networks of outsider perspectives and relationships. It is not my intention to diminish the experience of LGBTQ individuals, however the distinction between heterosexual and heteronormative is a crucial construct in the advent of a new narrative.

The Queer Hero’s Journey

The Hero’s Journey, also known as the monomyth, is a basic pattern of narrative in world mythologies. First described by Campbell (1949/2008) in the book *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the Hero’s Journey is the story of an archetypal hero who goes through a 17-stage adventure of a lifetime (Doherty, 2001; Cole, 2004; Campbell, 2008).

In a monomyth, the hero begins in the ordinary world, and receives a call to enter an unknown world of strange powers and events. The hero who accepts the call to enter this strange world must face tasks and trials, either alone or with assistance. In the most intense versions of the narrative, the hero must survive a severe challenge, often with help. If the hero survives, he may achieve a great gift or “boon.” The hero must then decide whether to return to the ordinary world with this boon. If the hero does decide to return, he or she often faces challenges on the return journey. If the hero returns

successfully, the boon or gift may be used to improve the world (Cole, 2004, p.10).

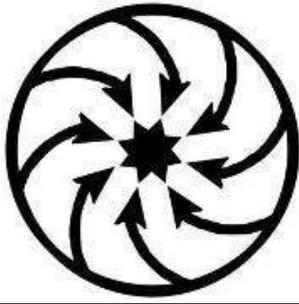
While all Hero’s Journeys do not incorporate each element, they do follow the same general structure. The hero, beginning in the “ordinary world” experiences a “call to adventure.” The call is accepted and often with some form of supernatural aid, the hero sets out on the “road of trials,” encountering those along the way who seek to aid or hinder the process. These ordeals culminate in a “supreme ordeal,” a literal or metaphoric death and rebirth. As a result of the ordeal, the hero returns to the ordinary world seeking to integrate the fruits and insights gained during the experience (Campbell, 1949/2008).

The Queer Hero’s Journey takes the monomyth and makes the fabled hero representative of the Queer Archetype, as well as queers the journey’s phases themselves. For example, the “ordinary world” in the Queer Hero’s Journey is a place in which the hero (the Queer Archetype) exists consistently as the outsider to the “ordinary world.” What is “ordinary” is his frame of reference, his vantage, not the world itself. By contrast, the Faustian hero in the traditional Hero’s Journey experiences life as an insider, which by its very definition makes the world he lives in “ordinary.”

The Call to Adventure or “Coming Out”

Every story of “coming out” represents a call to adventure, a profound discovery that many of the important things one was taught were patently wrong. Every story represents a dramatic incident of accepting things as they really are, without resistance and disapproval, a heroic effort at transforming negative into positive. Metaphorically, every proud homosexual is an alchemist transforming dross into precious metal, a fairy tale maiden spinning straw into gold, or an aboriginal medicine man divining the pollen path laid out by the way of nature (Johnson, 2000, p. 7).

The call to adventure, first stage of the mythological



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journey, the hero receives “the call” through the acquisition of information, in some form or context, prompting him to abandon existence in mundane reality. This abandonment propels the hero into a world that is foreign, distant, and “a place of strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds and impossible delights”(Campbell, 1949/2008, p. 154).

From a queer vantage, the call to adventure can be viewed as analogous to the call to “come out of the closet;” the call to reveal to oneself and others the true nature of their being, most often through sexual orientation and/or gender identification. When the call is rejected, as it often is, it converts the adventure into the negative, forcing the hero into the role of the victim (Campbell, 1949/2008). This is of particular significance with “coming out,” since refusal of the call can lead to increased risk of substance abuse, depression, and suicide (Coleman, 2010).

Get Thee to the Big City!

When manifesting Terrapsychologically, the call to “Come Out” can begin with an existential crisis that results in the migration to Queerspaces. Since the information that ordinarily prompts the hero to embark on the journey is already known to the queer hero (his own nature), the impetus to the call in the new narrative is in relation to the inadequacies of the previous containing myth. Questions such as “who am I,” “why was I made this way” and “does my body match my soul” can play a crucial role in the decision to answer the call and embark on a physical migration (Kukla, 2010).

TI at Work: The First Encounter

One has only to know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear. Having responded to his own call, and continuing to follow courageously as the consequences unfold, the hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at his side. Mother Nature herself supports the mighty task (Campbell, 1949/2008, p.209).

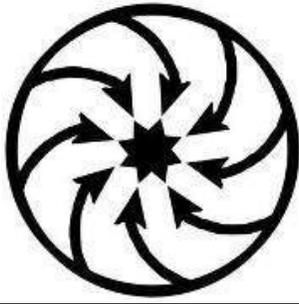
The first encounter of the Hero’s Journey is with a

protective figure, often supernatural, which provides the adventurer with “amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass”(Campbell, 1949/2008, p.162) This figure can be understood, through a Terrapsychological lens, as the soul of Queerspace, the supernatural force of Utopia.

The Helpers and Hinderers AKA Queer Developmental Milestones

Once having traversed the threshold, the hero moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials. This is a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals. The advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region covertly aid the hero. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage. The original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed — again, again, and again. Meanwhile there will be a multitude of preliminary victories, retainable ecstasies and momentary glimpses of the wonderful land. (Campbell, 1949/2008, p.326).

On the road of trials in the Queer Hero’s Journey, the helpers and hinderers of the tale can be viewed as personifications of queer developmental milestones and non-heteronormative life markers. Though there are many stage theories with respect to the “coming out” process, LGBTQ identity formation, and minority group identification, I was unable to locate any single comprehensive theory of normative queer lifespan development (Cass, 1977; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989; Rosenborough, 2003; Bockting and Coleman, 2007; Coleman, 1982/2010; Wilcox, 2012). While reasons for this span the biomedical model, the most commonly referenced rationale places queer lifestyles, until recently, as deviant manifestations of “normal” adult



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development, thus not requiring its own model (Rosenborough, 2003).

Though it is beyond the scope of this paper to do into depth with respect to the specifics the various stage models Rosenborough (2003) attempts to create queer examples within pre-existing developmental stages.

Rosenborough (2003) applied Erikson's Psychosocial Stage Theory to gay men noting that during the Generativity vs. Stagnation phase of adult development (age 36-60), participants in repeatedly indicated they felt as if their "family" contribution were in the form of contributions to society. Through alternative "family time" activities such as volunteering, teaching, art-making and political action, the participants of Rosenborough study indicated a sense of lifetime achievement and legacy (Halberstam, 2005; Kukla, 2010).

Potential Problems

Within the most commonly accepted existing stage models (Cass, 1977; Coleman, 1982; Troiden, 1989; Bockting and Coleman, 2007), problems arise with respect to the linear nature of the model, limited cross-cultural applicability, and their assumption of a "real" sexuality or gender. These models assume that authentic gay identity stems from the acceptance of minority identification first and foremost, with acceptance and integration of that identification as the end goal. These linear (and homosexual specific) progressive stages lack specific methodological information on *how* to progress from one stage to the next, or the experiential qualities of the stage and movement. It assumes that individuals will gain insight and understand with respect to their own identity, yet does not provide tools for doing so.

Queer Life: Out and Now What?

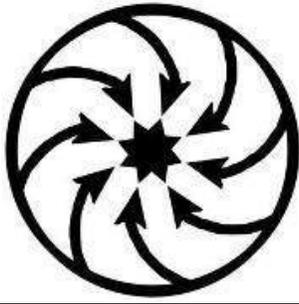
Thanks to mainstream media and television shows such as "Brothers and Sisters," "Will and Grace," and "The New Normal" society has been given, for better or for worse, an image of queer lives that fit the heteronormative mold; Two moms

or dads with a well decorated house in suburbia, children acquired through creative and expensive means, a nine to five job, and Saturday barbecues with liberal heterosexual friends and neighbors.

These images, while making strides in LGBTQ visibility, and providing a strong case for normalcy (thus, an arguably misguided justification for equality) for individuals and families, these images do little to provide examples of queer normative lives for queer peoples (Barnhurst, 2012). Television shows created by queer individuals; such as "The L Word" and "Queer as Folk" have done a more nuanced, though still controversial, job of portraying the complexity and diversity of queer lives. These hyper-sexualized examples of the queer culture have been created with the intention of being 'consumable' by heterosexual culture, as well as identifiable by queer culture. In these media representations, the main characters are often cast with either the stereotypical examples of gay men and lesbians or, conversely, those who would be perceived as sexually desirable to the heterosexual population (Farr and Degroult, 2008; Barnhurst, 2012)

In the context of "The L Word" the main character, Bette, a "consumable lesbian" is a biracial female who easily "passes" as a white heterosexual. She is slender, embodies traditional female characteristics (long hair, dresses, makeup), as well as portrays a sophisticated and highly professional woman. She can be simultaneously objectified by heterosexual men, and looked up to by heterosexual women (Farr and Degroult, 2008). These models, while contributing to conceptualizations of queer life markers, are still commercialized Hollywood fantasy and do not provide an accurate understanding of what I am calling "queer-normative" experiences.

Anecdotally, as a therapist I see queer-normative themes or experiences in my clients all the time. Mixed with my own experience and that of my friends and partners over the years I have developed list of early adult "normative" experiences. For example, often between 18-30



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chronological years of age (or first 10 years post “coming out”) queer individual’s experiences:

1. Coming Out
2. At least one major migration to a Queerspace
3. Prolonged adolescence (Halberstam, 2005)
4. First romantic/sexual relationships and the break ups (often with their same-sex best friend from college adding a layer of loss and complication)
5. Experimentation with gender variance, expression and roles (top/bottom/butch/femme, “passing”, sex toys)
6. Experimentation with types of love and relationships (polyamorous, BDSM)
7. Hyper-sexualized relationships with “chosen” family (why am I sleeping with all my fiends?)
8. Changing relationships to the institution of marriage
9. Experience of biological reproductive urges (or the lack thereof) and its meaning.

The Supreme Ordeal: The Fork in the Family Road

I don’t want to have kids.... I used to, but I also didn’t used to think it was a choice...Just something you did- or you were supposed to do really. I was so into being, you know, equal- not letting being gay stop me from having kids...or getting married .I didn’t stop to think- do I really wanted them... now, I live in San Francisco, and everyone’s all poly- I feel so vanilla! I don’t really want them.. kids. I’ve never really FELT like I wanted to have them, you know, from my body Now it’s like a Chinese baby is the equivalent of a Louis Vuitton handbag ... IVF twins

are some kind of status symbol... Sometimes I think I should have kids because, like, what else am I going to do with my life? Go to the bar? I guess you have to grow up sometime right? Is that a good enough reason? (personal communication, May 6, 2013)

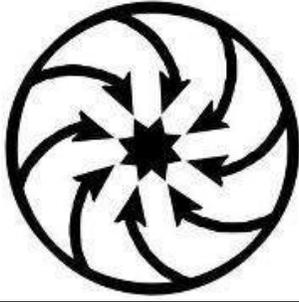
Continuing forward on the road of trials, the Queer Hero arrives at the “supreme ordeal,” the most significant rite of passage, initiatory activity, or meaningful conflict on the journey (Campbell, 1949/2008). This ordeal can be thought of as analogous to the fork in the queer family road, the place in one’s adult life where the choices they make radically alter the trajectory of their reality; where they create what will become their legacy (Kukla, 2010).

For many LGBTQ individuals, the choice to marry and have children is significantly more complicated than their heterosexual counterparts, a complication that exists outside of discrimination they may face as queer parents. In addition to the numerous complications surrounding legality and finances are equally complex. The cost of having children for any couple is extraordinary, but for queer couples it may entail the additional cost of donor sperm, egg donors, surrogate mothers, fertility treatments, or the astounding monetary requirements of private and international adoptions.

For many queer individuals, the legal and financial concerns are only the beginning. Parenting brings out a spectrum of issues for queer individuals.

For example:

A transgender man, a gay man, and lesbian are involved in a polyamorous relationship. The trans man and lesbian decide they would like to become parents. The gay man, not wanting the full responsibility of being a parent, agrees to be the biological father of the child. When the child is in utero, the lesbian is consistently perceived to be heterosexual when alone and when with her trans-identified boyfriend. This identity feels uncomfortable, since she identifies as a lesbian.



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The transgender man is viewed as the father and they are perceived to be a heterosexual couple by the outside world. This results in his uneasiness since he identifies as queer. While the lesbian is pregnant, the transgender man and gay man continue to go out together to the gay bars, staying out late, having wild sex, and drinking heavily. The lesbian feels left out of the queer community, her relationships, and is concerned that she has more in common with her heterosexual "mom friends" than she does her partners. Her heterosexual "mom friends," while supportive of her sexual orientation, continually try to get her to "just be gay with one person" and encourage her to find a woman to marry and settle down with.

This story, while just a snapshot, illustrates the multifaceted multidimensionality of queer parenting and the choices at hand. Many times individuals have fought long and hard to "come out," to live in urban Utopian environments, to break free of the restraints of reproductive markers and feel that children will symbolize a return to normativity that they are not willing to accept.

Return with the Elixir: Legacy

If the hero in his triumph wins the blessing of the goddess or the god and is then explicitly commissioned to return to the world with some elixir for the restoration of society, the final stage of his adventure is supported by all the powers of his supernatural patron. On the other hand, if the trophy has been attained against the opposition of its guardian, or if the hero's wish to return to the world has been resented by the gods or demons, then the last stage of the mythological round becomes a lively, often comical, pursuit. This flight may be complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion (Campbell, 1949, 2008, p. 386).

Returning with the elixir, the Queer Hero, having "come out" and experimented and adventures through the road of trials, made decisions regarding his life path, and returns home, content with his choices, secure in his identity, at peace with his life and life styles. The elixir is, and is representative of,

his legacy.

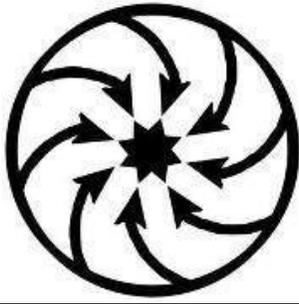
How? How did the Queer Hero move through the supreme ordeal? A great deal of literature has been written about queer individuals use of spirituality as a key component of their identity formation, and while it is not the only answer, it is my contention that it may be the crucial element to healthy integration. (Sullivan- Blum, 2004; Bradley, 2005; Kukla, 2010; Wilcox, 2010; Kochet and Curry, 2011)

Using TI as Spiritual Practice: Wonderment, Sex, and Queerspace

The spiritual practices of Queer Spirituality, often referred to as "wonder practices," are spiritual practices that foster the child-like sense of awe (Johnson, 2000). In addition to tools such as meditation, TI facilitates this sense of wonder by deepening the connection to the physical and energetic space and its inhabitants (Johnson, 2000; Chalquist, 2007; Chalquist, 2010). Since place-making practices have an additional layer of meaning for queer identified individuals, the use TI is of particular relevance for use in the Queer Spirituality context (Cole, 2004).

Chalquist (2007) indicates methods for the use of TI as spiritual practice. He writes:

1. Ask for dreams from the locale
2. Study the history and ecology
3. Learn one's personal mythology and the myths associated with the locale
4. Compare one's personal biography to those of the places inhabitants
5. Chart or map the mood experienced in locations, spots and sacred sites
6. Conduct ceremonial or ritual practices (p. 53).



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Sex as Method

Ritualistic sexual practices involving the Queerspaces can be used to facilitate the development of one's queer identity can be seen in first hand accounts of gay men's sexual activities in bathhouses. For example:

Sex in the bathhouse for me became a ritual. I went religiously every week as if I was going to church. The baths were full of ritual, the way you entered, what you did, how you stood... The baths for me were a devout place, an experience of conscious involvement- it wasn't episodic- it was part of my ongoing and coherent approach to life, a consciously pursued and ongoing enterprise, a life project in pursuit of transcendence (Prior and Cusack, 2010, p.77).

Similar to the sexual ritual of the bathhouses, leather play is a tool that can foster be used as a ritualized sexual experience in safe Queerspaces. Trance, catharsis, and "cosmic erotic awareness" provide personal and tribal spiritual rewards and foster an increased sense of connection to people and place (Mains, 1987; Thompson, 1987).

Mains (1987) indicate that leather scenes correlate to other intense religious practices conducted throughout history such as self-whippings by Christian monks. He writes:

There is something holy about the leather scene- consider the preferred conditions... There is darkness and isolation. The many, complex, and often shifting sensations if the outside world are excluded and there is little room for distraction... There is a disruption in the ordinary state of consciousness. Hooding, bondage, periods of confinement and other forms of sensory deprivation are followed with episodes of overload... The interaction is ritualistic, full of overtones of the socially forbidden... activities alter pain/pleasure barriers and may increase opioid levels in the brain... Outside reality almost totally ceases to exist. This is transcendence (Mains, 1987, pp 110-112).

Summation and Conclusion

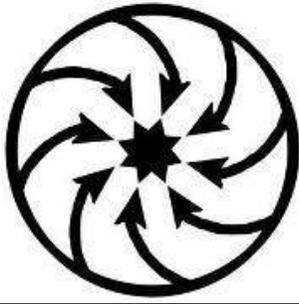
The "new" myth, as called for by Johnson (2000), assumes that current myths and symbol, in their present context are insufficient to hold the post-Earthrise world. The "new" myth situated in the context of Queer Spirituality, requires a new narrative, a queer paradigm in which to situate ourselves that takes into account the evolution of consciousness, complex planetary needs, scientific empiricism, and fluid constructs of sexuality and gender.

This new tale, envisioned as the Queer Hero's Journey, utilizes an androgynous protagonist that utilizes Terrapsychological Inquiry as spiritual practice to move through the initiatory phases of the monomyth. The Queer Hero, embodying the tension of opposites, engages in TI to facilitate his connection to Queerspace and to highlight normative experiences in queer life.

Current models of stage identification provide a foundation from which to re-vision queer lifespan development. By addressing the potential pitfalls in linear stage progression to a "real" sexuality and gender identifications a point of departure for further research. By viewing the initial "call to adventure" as "coming out of the closet," and helpers and hinderers as activities as queer developmental milestones, a theory of lifespan development begins to take shape. This theory, titled Queer Archetypal Development Theory, is a jumping off point for future research.

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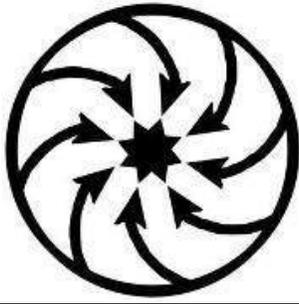
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