

CHAPTER 8

QUEERING SOCIALITY

Friends, Family, and Kinship

Words like *family* and *kinship* can be both frustrating and healing for queer people, sometimes evoking tensions and even rejections on the one hand and developing new and rewarding connections on the other. In recent years, there has been increased scholarly attention to the area of queer sociality — the ways in which queer people form and sustain attachments to each other, and the structures in which they do this. Joshua J. Weiner and Damon Young, in their introduction to an issue of *GLQ* devoted to “queer bonds,” point to the need to address eroticism as an important and central defining element of such bonds; they ask, “In what ways do our erotic lives contribute to legible sociality? And how is sexuality both driven and riven by [our] sexual being?” (223). The anthropologist Elizabeth Povinelli points to sexual pleasure as a fundamental form of such bonding, what she calls the “social bond of shared enjoyment” (288). For trans people, social bonding may be grounded in other forms of pleasure and enjoyment than the erotic (though they may include the erotic), such as shared gender identities and other experiences, as well as the general human desire for friendship and connection.

Scholars in other disciplines point to various ways in which queer people may create bonds. The art historian Whitney Davis suggests that, in ways not unlike the currently popular “scrapbooking,” “family resemblances among objects in a queer collection of art and visual or material culture might sometimes serve as a way to create an *actual alternate family*” (2011, 310) What Davis is suggesting is that the kinds of items found in queer material culture can represent the kinds of bonds that scrapbooks also represent in more traditional families: they may tell a story of connections and kinship that reflect family dynamics. Scholars of race provide critical perspectives on the tendency to generalize analyses of sociality, kinship, and bonding in terms of whiteness, as when Juana María Rodríguez, a Latina feminist, asserts, “The inability to recognize the alternative sexual practices, intimacies, logics, and politics that exist outside the sightlines of cosmopolitan gay white male urban culture is never benign” (334). Similarly, the queer black male scholar Roderick Ferguson has developed, in his book

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING AND VIEWING

Beginners. Directed by Mike Mills. Olympus, 2011.

Galvin, Sarah. *The Best Party of Our Lives: Stories of Gay Weddings and True Love to Inspire Us All*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2015.

Moore, Mignon. *Invisible Families: Gay Identities, Relationships, and Motherhood among Black Women*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011.

Peck, Richard. *The Best Man*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers, 2016.

Rosswood, Eric, and Greg Berlanti. *The Ultimate Guide for Gay Dads: Everything You Need to Know about LGBTQ Parenting but Are (Mostly) Afraid to Ask*. Coral Gables, FL: Mango, 2017.

Transparent. Amazon, 2014–2019.

The Wedding Banquet. Directed by Ang Lee. Ang Lee Productions, 1993.