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yet complex in its analysis and presentation, *Seeking the Straight and Narrow* is a welcome and creative contribution to our understandings of the religious and the secular, the body and sexuality, and the centrality of varied notions of change in projects of self-making across these domains.

*Pray the Gay Away: The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays*. By Bernadette Barton. New York: New York University Press, 2012. Pp. xii+273. \$27.95.

J. Edward Sumerau  
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Although the ongoing conflict between Christian and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) cultures has been a prominent feature of the American political landscape since the late 1970s, the stories of sexual minorities living in the most religious sectors of contemporary American society all too often remain untold. By giving voice to these experiences, Bernadette Barton's *Pray the Gay Away: The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays* sheds critical light upon the ways Christianity affects the everyday lives of sexual minorities regardless of their own religious identification. Using an impressive array of ethnographic materials, such as observations gathered in multiple states and local communities, religious materials found in supermarkets and on doorsteps, and 59 interviews with lesbian women and gay men, Barton provides a thorough analysis of the cultural terrain known as the Bible Belt as well as the factors embedded within this terrain that consistently isolate and marginalize nonheterosexual desire and practice.

The primary contribution of this work lies in the conceptualization of the Bible Belt as a panopticon wherein Christian belief and practice permeate the entirety of social relations. Whereas previous studies have focused on, for example, the ways lesbian and gay Christians integrate conflicting sexual and religious identities (see Michelle Wolkowicz, *Be Not Deceived: The Sacred and Sexual Struggles of Gay and Ex-Gay Christian Men* [Rutgers University Press, 2006]), the ways Christian leaders and followers discuss sexualities (see Dawne Moon, *God, Sex, and Politics: Homosexuality and Everyday Theologies* [University of Chicago Press, 2004]), and the ways religious sexual minorities establish moral selves outside of traditional Christian settings (see Melissa M. Wilcox, *Queer Women and Religious Individualism* [Indiana University Press, 2012]), Barton expands these treatments by revealing the ways that elements of Bible Belt culture, such as flyers in the supermarket, mailed materials sent to the home, familial and neighborly interactions, billboards, and bumper stickers, continuously define sexual minorities as outcasts within their own communities whether or not they ever wish to engage in religious practice. Further, the panoptic power of the Bible Belt lies in the articulation of Christianity and heterosexuality as ever-present

assumptions, and the institutionalization of ever-present forms of surveillance conducted by the people closest to these LGBTQ people rather than some abstract authority. Rather than merely a geographic designation, the Bible Belt thus represents a cultural creation that polices and affirms heterosexual Christianity throughout the mundane operations of local Christian communities.

Alongside her conceptualization of the Bible Belt panopticon, Barton's thorough analysis also extends other important areas of sexual and religious investigation. Whereas other researchers have explored the organizational structure and patterns of interaction within ex-gay Christian groups (see Tanya Erzen, *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement* [University of California Press, 2006]), Barton reveals the deep emotional, psychological, and religious impact such organizations may have upon sexual minorities long after the fact and the ways that Bible Belt citizens make sense and use of these organizations in their personal interactions with others. In a similar fashion, Barton's analysis also extends beyond the walls of churches by providing an in-depth examination of the Creation Museum, and detailed description of her own as well as her students' reactions to the structure. Among other examples, these insights suggest there may be much about the interactional and cultural dynamics of Bible Belt communities that sociologists have yet to fully explore.

Although Barton's analyses are artfully crafted, readers should also be cautioned about two curious themes running throughout the work. First, Barton's analysis paints a rather homogenous portrait of life within the Bible Belt, which may inadvertently lead readers to lose sight of the importance of race, class, and gender in the Bible Belt (for elaboration of the importance of these dynamics among LGBTQ Christian people in Bible Belt settings see, e.g., Krista B. McQueeney, "'We Are God's Children, Y'all': Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Lesbian-and-Gay-Affirming Congregations" *Social Problems* 56 [2009]: 151–73). Second, Barton's analyses rest upon places (such as College Station, Texas, the state of Kentucky, or Atlanta, Georgia) that are arguably much more tolerant than other parts of the Bible Belt (such as rural South Carolina, many small isolated towns in Texas that lie hours away from colleges and universities, or rural Mississippi). As a result, one could argue that Barton's work only scratches the surface of the dilemmas faced by sexual minorities in the Bible Belt. What might sociologists learn if we examined racial, class, and gendered variations in the lives Bible Belt sexual minorities? Further, what might we learn if we took Barton's approach into the darkest corners of the Bible Belt?

Ultimately, Barton has constructed a substantive and instructive text for scholars and students (both graduate and undergraduate) seeking to ascertain the interrelation of sexualities and religion in contemporary society. In the case of students, for example, Barton masterfully demonstrates the usefulness, complexity, and utilization of ethnographic methods as well as the intricate dynamics that lie within and between demographic categories and scales. Similarly, scholars may find the rich description, theoretical enunciation of localized panopticons, and illustration of the importance of institu-

tional resources (or lack thereof) as adequate starting points for expanding understanding of the experiences of sexual minorities within predominantly heterosexist cultures, organizations, and regions. While Barton's work cannot foretell what insights may be gained from the combination of these student and scholarly efforts, the ultimate contribution of her work lies in its ability to generate endless questions, discussions, and possible research agendas concerning the ongoing conflict between Christian and LGBTQ cultures as well as the importance of continuing to recognize the lives taking place within these large-scale social developments.

*Learning the Hard Way: Masculinity, Place, and the Gender Gap in Education.* By Edward W. Morris. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2012. Pp. vii+212. \$26.95 (paper).

Michael Schwalbe  
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I was reading *Learning the Hard Way* around the time that Adam Lanza killed his mother, twenty children, six adults, and himself in Newtown, Connecticut. Most commentators on the shootings blamed mental illness and poor gun control laws. The cultural association of manhood with a capacity for violence was rarely mentioned as a contributing factor. Mainstream media commentary on the Newtown massacre and Edward Morris's analysis of boys' unruly behavior in school were worlds apart. While "masculinity" was largely absent from public discourse about Newtown, it was present on nearly every page of Morris's book.

*Learning the Hard Way* is Morris's ethnography-based explanation of the academic gender gap—the tendency of girls to do better in school than boys. Over a period of two years (2006–7) Morris did fieldwork in two southern Ohio high schools—one large, urban, and predominantly black, one small, rural, and predominantly white. Most students in both schools were from working-class or low-income families. Although neither school was deemed failing by state standards, many students felt that their schools were stigmatized because of race, class, or both.

Morris's argument is that many of the boys he observed did poorly in school—or far less well than they could have—because they saw submitting to teachers' demands and obeying school rules as inconsistent with signifying masculinity. "True manliness," as understood by boys in both schools, "could not be achieved by paying attention in class or burying one's nose in a book" (p. 5). Many boys thus disengaged from school, investing themselves in more manly pursuits. Girls did better academically, Morris says, because paying attention, following rules, and studying did not get them in trouble with their peers for doing gender improperly.

The black/white and rural/urban comparisons allow Morris to break things down more precisely. Working-class white boys in the rural high school saw manhood as evidenced by physical vitality, skill at manual la-