

# Out of bounds: Coerced invisibility and alternate sexualities

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## Abstract

The alternate sexualities face a society and discourse which presumes a condition of *ceteris paribus* for heteronormativity. Such framework of understanding very often denies the very existence of the alternate sexualities, and thus, their concerns of justice remain out of the purview of any democratic deliberation. The idea of coerced invisibility discusses such status of the alternate sexualities, wherein they are suppressed and neglected at multifarious levels. This erosion of spatiality puts them under a situation of “out of bounds” which ensures their insulation from the issues such as justice and equality. The paper attempts to discuss how coerced invisibility is a tool through which the exclusion of the alternate sexualities is ensured. The impact of coerced invisibility extends from one's psychology to social existence. When imposed in an acute form, it often produces results like alienation and anomie, which causes serious implications for the alternate sexualities.

## KEYWORDS

alternate sexualities, coerced invisibility, heteronormativity, LGBTQI, out of bounds, queer, self-expression, sexuality

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The social discourses are understood to unfold through a dialectical progression comprising of a contestation between two ideas. One of the major concerns of the social discourses have been the issues pertaining to justice. However, the very notion of justice is contextual in nature.



Thus, what was just in the bygone era might be considered as unjust today. Such change is a part of the inexorable unfolding of the social discourse itself. However, every paradigm of understanding is necessarily based on a set of foundational premises, which in turn is based on a set of presumptions. These foundational premises set shape our perspective and understanding of what constitutes justice. This sense of justice is subject to change and adaptation. Also, important to remember is that the framework of our understanding tends to categorize the contending perspectives into a position of contradistinction. Scholars like Marx and Hegel understood the evolution of society as based upon such contestation of the mutually opposite poles (Fareld & Kuch, 2020). This implies that the place of these contending positions lies within the broader territory of interest of the discourses, and thus becomes a legitimate subject of enquiry.

However, what happens when something or someone is simply left outside the domain of contemplation of a discourse? Is it possible to imagine a situation wherein the discourses might intentionally, or unintentionally, keep a section outside the purview of social enquiry? It is not difficult to prove such situation, as there are several instances and discussions on deliberate attempts to keep a section of the populace outside the purview of politics (Brown, 1988; Carnes, 2013; Foucault, 1978; Pateman, 1988). More often than not, the exclusion of certain sections of the population have been astutely introduced within the social discourses by the so-called great thinkers and philosophers. Such instances of exclusion and subordination also remained largely visible and open, as in the case of class-based and color-based discrimination. With the unfolding of the dialectical process, those kept outside the purview of politics were gradually brought under the folds of the prevailing paradigm of understanding.

The idea of *coerced invisibility* does not relate to such instances of visible exclusion. Rather, it exemplifies an instance of injustice emanating from a foundational level, which manipulates the very nature of our discourses so as to legitimize the subordination of certain sections. This paper seeks to develop an idea of coerced invisibility as a means of subordination and suppression of the alternate sexualities. While there have been attempts to understand the process of subordination and suppression of minorities (see Brown, 1988; Butler, 1999, 2011; Fareld & Kuch, 2020; Foucault, 1978; Pateman, 1988), the case of alternate sexualities presents a unique picture, wherein subordination is exercised at a multifarious level extending from one's psyche to the very social existence. It is also unique as it throws the issue of sexuality into darkness and silence thereby rendering it as invisible (Foucault, 1978, p. 3), which then leads to the disappearing of the alternate sexualities from the social discourse itself. In this manner, the very spatiality of the alternate sexualities is eroded to such an extent that they face a crisis of positioning themselves within the existing framework of the heteronormative discourse. This not only creates an existential crisis but also alienates the members of the alternate sexualities from their true identity. I would also discuss how the vision of the discourse might be prismatic in nature, in such a way that any deliberation regarding the concerns of justice to the alternate sexualities is seen as a “no-go” area. In doing so, I hope to commence a discussion on the nature of injustice to the alternate sexualities happening at a metaphysical and philosophical level.

## 2 | CONTEMPLATING “COERCED INVISIBILITY”

A general connotation of the term “out of bounds” taken from several sports like tennis or football suggests something that goes beyond the legitimate territory of the field. Whatever remains out of bounds does not concern the materiality of the play itself. Further, the position of out of bound also disqualifies such entities from raising voices or intervening within the affairs of the

main field. A similar logic can be used to sketch the idea of *coerced invisibility*. Within the social discourse, when someone is marked as out of bounds, in terms of identity or interest, it becomes disqualified as a legitimate constituent of the discourse itself. Such act, not only erodes the very spatiality of the victim but also works to justify the subordination and suppression. As a result, the victim becomes an alien to the discourse itself, and owing to the out of bound status, the meaningful existence becomes invisible, if not inert altogether.

The seeds that lead towards a coerced invisibility are preexistent within the nature of our social discourses. The basic premise of our discourses can be found in a logic of binary,<sup>1</sup> which tends to understand everything in terms of two ends—good and bad, desirable and undesirable, and black and white. This dialectical understanding underscores most of the philosophical traditions, including Marxism and Liberalism (Abramson, 2009; Fareld & Kuch, 2020). As a result, the understanding of the democratic tradition throughout the conventional discourse appears to have been done in the context of this logic of binary. The presence of this dialectic order can also be seen in the understanding of the popular dichotomy between the public and private (Mahajan & Reifeld, 2003). This logic of the dialectic has an important role to play in the progression of the discourses as it makes sure that the two poles—though mutually opposite—are always a constitutive aspect of the discourse itself. Thus, though projected as the oppressed and subordinated sections (Fareld & Kuch, 2020; Pateman, 1988), the *have-nots* as well the women necessarily constitute an integral part of the logic of the social discourse. This acknowledgement of existence gives the moral right to the subordinated groups for raising their voice against the systemic injustice. The prevailing discourse, in this sense, is open to the possibility of dissent and protest happening within the boundaries of acceptance (read toleration) and visibility.

Interestingly, the protests against the state or the ruling elite does not become a victim of coerced invisibility on account of its preserved space—though as a suppressed group—within the discourse. The prime target of the idea of coerced invisibility is to be found in areas lying outside the normative frontiers of the discourses. It works on those aspects of the society which transcend the understanding of the existing normative structures, and thus escapes the logic of the existing paradigms itself. Such line of argument can also be seen in the works of Butler (1999, 2011), Foucault (1978) and Freud (2003) where they appear to argue that transcending the performative rules of the society could create problems of identity and assimilation. This problem gives rise to two aspects of coercion and injustice—the coerced invisibility and an existential crisis.

## 2.1 | Logic of coerced invisibility

The peace of the discourses become problematized when we introduce the existence of the *unknown*, which stands in contradistinction to the existing poles of our paradigm and thus poses a challenge to the normative framework of the society itself. In an interesting description, Butler (2011) refer to such foundational contradiction as “founding violence” which creates “sad necessities of signification” (pp. 25). Given the inherent nature and logic of the existing discourse, it appears to fail to understand the claim and position of this so-called invisible identity. This causes deadlocks and confusions. Faced with such circumstances and the seemingly impossible task of reconciliation of the unknown entity, the best recourse available to the discourse is to refute the very existence of such unknown variable. The process of enforcing such refutation in actuality becomes an instance of coerced invisibility. An example of such refutation has been discussed by Foucault (1978) through his study of suppression of sex as a means

to assert power. Stressing upon the irreconcilable relation between the heteronormative discourse and sexuality, he claimed that “your existence will be maintained only at the cost of your nullification” (p. 84).

Because the normative premise of the hitherto unknown group/identity is out of bounds for the prevailing discourse, the prudent option available to the prevailing order is to prove the new variable as pathogenic and harmful to the society. By doing this, the prevailing order is able to defend its structures and prevent any breakdown of the normative order. Thus, the logic of “out of bounds” helps to reinforce the normative integrity of the discourse, while suppressing the spurt of any disruptive alternate set of normative frameworks. The banishment of the alternate order also saves the prevailing discourse the additional effort and burden of justifying the prevailing arrangements. Thus, the logic of the prevailing discourse tends to promote a tendency of *ceteris paribus* at the cost of *mutatis mutandis*.<sup>2</sup> This inhibition towards the possibility of change in the normative structure might be because of the centrality of the role of normative structures in keeping the discourses intact. Such centrality of the normative order has also been underlined by scholars like Butler (1999, 2011) and Foucault (1978) who viewed the whole framework of normative structures as being performative and self-aggrandizing in nature. Altman (2013) also underline the hegemony of the heteronormativity which marks homosexuality as a deviant behavior and perpetuates this belief through “popular culture, from fairy stories to grand opera ...” (pp. 37–38).

Once the alternate identity is tagged as pathogenic and against the “order of nature,” it automatically becomes invisible to the eye of public discourse. Any residual traces of such identities or groups are then subject to legitimate suppression, if not an eradication altogether. Also, when such groups—having an alternate perspective—are viewed through the prism of justice and morality of the prevailing order, they become invisible owing to the lack of established paradigm on the alternate normative order itself. The main problem that emerges from such incongruity with the alternate lifestyles is that their concerns are never attended in the same way as the concerns of the norms-abiding members of society. Foucault (1978) used a similar argument to underline the impact of coerced invisibility on the sexuality of the individuals. He attributed repression as a multifarious scheme to deny the very existence of the “undesirable”. Such act ensures an absolute silence over the out of bound areas of the discourses, and ensures that such areas remain under “taboo, nonexistence and silence” (pp. 4–5).

In this sense, the idea of coerced invisibility comes into play. Here the very existence of the groups practicing alternate lifestyle is made non-existent to the prevailing normative order as well as the formal structures. Such invisibility is coerced because it is a byproduct of social outcaste and stereotype. The coercion may or may not be directly exercised, but it flows constantly through the structures of morality, religion, laws and social norms. Foucault (1978) has discussed the genesis of such targeted coercion wherein the suppression of certain sexualities was done through covert, yet conscious, actions leading to the stereotyping of such alternate sexualities as a disorder. Such invisibility does not emerge out of volition but forceful response from the normative order.

Also, important to discuss about the nature of coerced invisibility is its conditional and amenable character, which allows for the formal (read conditional) participation of the alternate sexualities in the political processes on conditions that does not require the expression of any specific identity, and thus without trespassing upon the formal political rights of such groups and individuals. Thus, there remains an illusion of rights and entitlements, which creates something similar to a “veil of ignorance” (see Rawls, 1971) which establishes an impression of a just order. However, the aspect of coerced invisibility comes to play when the expression of such

alternate sexualities is denied in the society. Their existence, for Foucault (1978), “is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself” (p. 86). Having ripped off the right to self-identity, such coerced individuals and groups then become nothing but an “unencumbered self” (Sandel, 1984) existing only to perform the role of a counting head in a democracy. Thus, the idea of coerced invisibility becomes a covert ammunition in the hands of the prevailing normative structures to suppress the mounting challenge from an alternate order. It remains in the interest of the dominant sexuality and discourse to maintain the invisibility of the alternate sexualities. Foucault (1978) describes it as “an injunction of nonexistence, non-manifestation and silence” which is imposed upon the alternate sexualities.

## 2.2 | Existential issues

An immediate and substantive impact of coerced invisibility falls on the very self-identity of the individual and groups. Suppression of identity has also been compared to concepts of alienation (Carver, 1991) and hegemony (Schwarzmantel, 2015). In the modern times, the invisibility of the true identity of an individual is, however, contrasted with the idea of an existential crisis, which becomes manifest at multifarious levels. Butler (2011) highlights the fact that the tacit prohibition on homosexuality “works through the pain of guilt” (pp. 35) and ensures that the victim itself is afflicting punishment on oneself for having an alternate sexuality. Scholars like Freud (2003) have conducted elaborate research in the field of psychoanalysis to deduce the dehumanizing impact of existential crisis on the psyche of the individual. Similarly, Durkheim has identified the causes of suicide and individual alienation in his concept of *anomie*, a part of which relates to the cultural incompatibility of an individual (Acevedo, 2005).

The issue of existential crisis poses a greater threat than any direct and visible onslaught because it does not follow the logic of forceful obedience. Instead, under the influence of coerced invisibility, the alternate sexualities are often put in a dilemma where the only prudent option to ensure survival and respect is to give up on the right to self-expression and adhere to the normative structures of the prevailing heterosexist order. Thus, this becomes an instance of an existential crisis where the right to choose is given as an appendage of coerced invisibility, which in turn is meant to ensure the adherence to the democratic principles of equality (of numbers) and freedom (to make choice).

Here, a valid question might arise as why is there a need to practice coerced invisibility when there is a clear dominance of a certain normative order in society? And what stops the society from practicing an outright suppression of such dissent? An astute reply could be found in the argument made by some scholars who argue that the contemporary world is an age of democracy (Fraser, 1997; Fukuyama, 2012; Tocqueville, 1998), where it is difficult to violate the formal aspects of a democratic order in a visible manner. Nevertheless, the underlying logic of binary alters our vision in such a manner that the democratic ideals are manipulated through a prismatic interpretation of what is right and wrong. Thus, instead of attempting a direct assault against the alternate sexualities, the dominant normative order tries to impose a coerced invisibility which works to delegitimize the very foundation of the alternate perspective and thereby reinforce the legitimacy of the prevailing order. Thus, the discourse tries to create a “veil of ignorance” (Rawls, 1971) with an aim to manipulate the very consciousness of the individuals and groups so as to force them to think in terms of and adhere to the heteronormative order. An evidence to such outcaste of the issues of alternate sexualities becomes evident from the fact that the history of social movements and crusades against discrimination rarely acknowledged



the concerns of the alternate sexualities, as it was not recognized as an instance of injustice itself (Altman, 2013, p. 81).

The veil of ignorance works at several levels to create an impression of “truth.” Foucault (1978) has argued that the discourse on sexuality plays with the fear of the people to create a debilitating picture of the alternate sexualities and groups that are considered as out of bounds (p. 53–54). Such manipulation of the discourses is done in the guise of “a true discourse” (p. 69). The existence of the alternate identities, under such social framework, becomes a conditional affair. While the problematic identity is kept out of bounds, the members are given access to the resources of the society on conditions of adherence to the heteronormative order. Thus, an individual, in order to stay connected with the social world, is left with no choice but to impose upon oneself a normative framework which is in contradiction to the actual identity. This, not only leads to self-alienation but also creates a suffocating experience for the individual as the public life becomes more of a performative act to be carried on daily basis. The extent of this self-alienation reaches to the stage that an individual begins to judge oneself in terms of heteronormative standards and thus creates a sense of self-guilt and humiliation (Altman, 2013, p. 39).

The problem further aggravates when the boundaries of the public and private are blurred. In such scenario, the role-play of a contrary set of norms becomes the dominant factor guiding the private life (AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan, 1991). Thus, the individual is left with absolutely no space for self-expression and self-realization. This, at times, aggravates into severe mental and psychological disorders, which are then attributed to the presence of pathological non-heterosexist elements (Butler, 2011; Foucault, 1978; Hall, 2003). Instead of raising questions of existentiality, the acts of “conversion therapy” becomes a transformative exercise which is justified in terms of the prevailing norms (Altman, 2013; ILGA, 2020a).

The logic of the coerced invisibility, thus, raises questions for the discourses, states as well as the individuals. It raises questions of justice that are often hidden from the common sight due to outcaste of the differences. A similar exercise was practiced by the Nazi leaders in persecuting the Jews (Lewy, 1999). For the Nazis, the rights of the Jews did not matter as it was “out of bound” from their paradigm of understanding. Thus, unjust activities and atrocities were justified in the name of “curative” actions. The same situation is faced by the alternate sexualities who experience a systemic outcaste and neglect from the prevailing discourses.

### 3 | ALTERNATE SEXUALITIES AS “OUT OF BOUNDS”

The alternate sexualities have always been a part of the society. The very premise of the alternate sexuality is located in a sphere defined by one's emotive choice and preference. In this sense the choice of an alternate lifestyle becomes an expression of the self-identity which is cardinal to the idea of an autonomous self. The foundation of the discourse on alternate sexualities seems to be emerging from those *personal* aspects of life,<sup>3</sup> where the state and society are debarred from intrusion. Such sphere of personal preferences is a realm of autonomy and atomism because no one is legitimately qualified to dictate others choice of affectionate liking and preference (see Bromwich & Kateb, 2003). Yet, the society as well as the social discourse, in the name of public morality and tradition, attempts to suppress and transform the innate individuality of individuals (Butler, 1999; Foucault, 1978). Through the channel of coerced invisibility, the self-identity of the alternate sexualities is suppressed to the extent of creating self-alienation (Carver, 1991) and anomie (Acevedo, 2005).



Foucault (1978) has argued that the social discourse has followed a utilitarian logic in setting restrictions and boundaries to the sexuality of the individuals. As a result of this utilitarian logic, the purpose of sexuality has been linked to procreation. Thus, the image of the heterosexual family becomes the ideal-type framework for the discourses. The centrality of the logic of procreation makes any discussion on alternate sexualities a forbidden pursuit. In this way, the sexuality of the individuals become a public affair and an apt subject of the public morality (p. 3). Highlighting the rigidity of the normative order and proscription over the possibility of alternate sexualities, Foucault further argues that “Not only did it not exist, it had no right to exist and would be made to disappear upon its least manifestation—whether in acts or in words ...” (pp. 3–5). Foucault referred to this framework of understanding as “repressive hypothesis” and used it to demonstrate how the sexuality is manipulated and controlled by the society. For him, “Sex was not something one simply judged; it was a thing one administered” (p. 24). A similar argument could be found when Butler (1999) explains gender as performative and norm-laden identity.

With the arrival of the age of science characterized by the ever-growing power of rationality and logic, the suppression of the alternate sexualities took place through an alliance of the discourse on sexuality with the medical science. Foucault (1978) has explained this reinforcing relation between discourse and medical science as: “sexual irregularity was annexed to mental illness... pedagogical controls and medical treatments were organized... in short, [it was attempted] to constitute a sexuality that is economically useful and political conservative” (p. 36). With such steps, the existence of alternate sexualities became illegitimate and pathological from a social as well as scientific perspective. This also explains why homosexual acts were categorized among the carnal acts and associated with rape, adultery, and debauchery (p. 38). Another aspect of such understanding of the role of sexuality relates to the parochial view taken on the role of sexuality in human affairs. By linking sexuality with procreation alone, the discourses have made obsolete the diverse ends served by sexuality in human life. Such instrumental perspective of sexuality only narrows down the scope of social discourses and treat humans as nothing more than subjects of eugenics.

The fear of being cut off from the society forces an individual to coerce upon oneself the gender norms of the society. This creates severe identity crisis, which in turn is attributed as a causal effect of the presence of homosexual attributes in a person. Faced with such identity crisis, an individual is left with only two possible choices—either to break away from the immediate social space and find solace in a ghetto of like-minded persons (The Humsafar Trust, 2015) or live in a self-suffocating condition with a struggle to find one's self-identity. Butler (1999) has discussed the views of psychoanalysts like Freud who viewed every individual as having both—homosexual and heterosexual tendencies. Freud also believed that the homosexual tendency in an individual is suppressed under the dominant heteronormative framework. In an attempt to fulfill the expectations of the phallogentric society, an individual often suppresses the homosexual inclinations. This has serious implications over the development of individual ego. He warned that the imposition of heteronormativity on individuals could erect a set of hyper-moral ideals for the ego which, if taken to extreme, could motivate suicide. The ideals set by the society, for the individual ego, serves as an internal agency of sanction and taboo which works to consolidate gender identity (Butler, 1999, pp. 73–79).

This normative structure of the society, which is primarily based upon the phallogentric norms (Butler, 1999), creates conditions for the manipulation and conditioning of the members of alternate sexualities, who then become artificially produced beings who remain otherwise invisible especially when it comes to expression of self-identity. A study conducted by the AIDS



Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) under the title “Less than gay—A citizen’s report on the status of homosexuality in India” (1991) underscored the numerous instances where the members of alternate sexualities are forced to live a life of disguise and perform the role-play of a heterosexual person. Altman (2013) has also observed the compulsion to adhere to the performative rules as responsible for a “lifelong guilt, anxiety and fear of exposure” (p. 21). Failure to comply to the performative rituals of the society often leads to backlash from the normative structures as well as a stereotyping by the social discourses. Due to this fear of the social backlash, several members of the alternate sexualities live a life of disguise and refute their queer identity (Altman, 2013, p. 30).

A report by the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA, 2020a) titled “Curbing deception: A world survey on legal regulation of so-called ‘conversion therapies’” discusses the strategies adopted by the medical sciences to prove the presence of pathogenic nature of the alternate sexualities. By linking the expression of alternate sexualities with deviant behavior and psychological problems, the discourses have allied with the natural sciences to suppress any visible expression of the alternate sexualities. Thus, the whole discourse on ‘conversion therapy’ becomes a tool of cultural cleansing of the heterosexist order.

Faced with such outcaste and stereotype, the alternate sexualities face a severe case of coerced invisibility. Their out of bounds position in the democratic order does allow them a political equality of counting heads, but when it comes to the substantive aspects of equality (see Gutmann & Thomson, 2004), the discourses find the alternate sexualities placed outside the purview of democratic ideals. Thus, the very spatiality of the alternate sexualities is arrested and put under a conditional bail. The logic of the coerced invisibility ensures that such ouster is done without disturbing the democratic tradition of our understanding.

#### **4 | RESPONDING TO THE IMPACT OF COERCED INVISIBILITY**

The idea of a community and identity can be both an empowering as well as a restrictive term (Altman, 2013, p. 16). But a question can be raised relating to the basis on which such consciousness of identity is raised. An identity becomes a mobilizing parameter when it is seen as the basis of “difference.” However, the focal point of such difference is subject to change and adaptability. While it is possible to witness a positive or negative change in the way an identity is perceived by the society, such change is possible only when the identity falls within the boundary of normative understanding of the conventional normative order. An identity, lying outside the normative framework of the society, finds it difficult to have a say in the way our discourses are interpreted, let alone make a positive impact. Due to its eroded spatiality, such identity struggles to find the right platform to raise its concerns.

While it might be difficult to charter a plan through which such outcaste of alternate sexualities might be done away with, the activism of the queer movements across the world has certainly put the invisibility of the alternate sexualities to test. Altman (2013) has observed the tendency towards a simultaneous crystallization as well as disintegration of the sexual identities in the contemporary society (p. 24). In an interesting discussion, Altman also discusses the idea of the “end of homosexual” as a possibility of ending the stereotype of the alternate sexualities. Since the basis of the alternate sexualities is more related to personal choice, it might be prudent to believe in a withering away of the category of sexuality as a focal point of our discourses.



While it might appear to be a difficult task, a change in the perspective towards the sexual identity of an individual might lead to the disintegration of the parameter of sexuality as a criterion of identity itself (p. 26). Such change in outlook towards the questions of one's sexuality would make it as irrelevant for the discourse as one's choice of taste and color.<sup>4</sup>

This strategy of deconstruction, however, is countered by another view which advocates the crystallization of the identity of alternate sexualities as a means of securing justice. However, such crystallization of identity might create far greater challenges to the normative structures. The issues of identity related to the alternate sexualities does involve the concerns of justice—both distributive and recognitive (Fraser, 1997). However, the foundational issue innate within the concerns of the alternate sexualities goes against the notion of crystallization of the identity. Since the primary focal point of the case of alternate sexualities lies in the sphere of personal choice—having an emotive aspect—it cannot be pursued too far before involving a thorough intermeshing with the public sphere. Such intermingling of spaces might prove to be disruptive for the foundational aspects of our discourses.

A rather prudent strategy to counter the coerced invisibility of the alternate sexualities would be based on a two-phased approach. The first aim of the queer activism should be to do away with coerced invisibility, through socio-political activism. The goal of such activism should be to bring the concerns of alternate sexualities within the sphere of reasoning of the prevailing discourses. This activism appears to be happening already and evident through several queer movements across the world. It is only an impact of such activism that the democratic orders, across the world, is now moving towards a formal, and to some extent substantive, recognition of the concerns of the alternate sexualities (Altman, 2013; ILGA, 2020b; The Humsafar Trust, 2015). Altman (2013) also holds the view that with growing commercialization and consumerism of the society, the concerns of the normative order are changing. As a result, it is now easier to disintegrate the normative rigidity which is responsible for the ouster of the alternate sexualities (p. 90).

The second phase of the strategy concerns itself with the dismantling of the logic of identities based on sexuality itself. Since the premise of the sexual identity is located within the realm of personal space of the individual, its disintegration would not have any major disruptive effect on the social discourse. It is also important to note that the very conception of gender and sexuality is fluid, and it cannot be crystallized for long. The inherent nature of the sexual identity makes it a subject of constructivism which disallows crystallization of identities (Altman, 2013, pp. 133–134). An ILGA (2020b) report presents a comparative picture of different states changing perspective towards the alternate sexualities and how such change at the lego-political level is helping the alternate sexualities to establish their spatiality within the conventional discourse. It is suggestive of the argument that legal initiatives and deliberation could address the concern of the alternate sexualities and also initiate a curative process to redress the out of bounds position.

However, such effort remains a distant goal as it would require the breaking of the logic of coerced invisibility first. But what is clear from the above discussion is that it is not possible to view our discourses as rigid frameworks that define our understanding of the society. The nature of discourse should be understood more “as a series of discontinuous segments whose tactical function is neither uniform nor stable” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). The nature of contemporary discourses relies more on lines of “plurality of public sphere” (Fraser, 1997), or as a “multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies” (Foucault, 1978, p. 100). These discourses have power to shape the trajectory of our evolution and progress, and thus, it is important that our discourses are protected from purging of

different perspectives, while allowing the opportunity to redefine and reinterpret them as per the changing needs of times. This task of adaptation could be pursued under the democratic model. However, the very conception of the democracy needs to be introspected in order to maintain the primacy of the foundational ideals (liberty and equality) before any conventional norm. It is only through deliberation and participation that our political imagery would be able to break the prismatic vision which narrows the possibility of democratic inclusion and imagery.

Sexuality constitutes an indispensable aspect of one's identity. Any policing over one's sexuality accounts for transgression over one's personal sphere, which cannot be justified in the name of social interest. There is no doubt a relationship between the personal aspects of an individual's life and the public sphere. However, this interrelationship does not imply that the scope of self-expression and individuality could be compromised. Only an unhindered and self-motivated participation could lead towards a culture of participatory democracy. For this to happen, it is necessary that individual be given an autonomous sphere of individuality, where the norms of public morality and conventions might be put to rest. As Butler (2011) argues, while sex could be understood as carrying normativity, such normativity should not be allowed to decide about one's choice in personal sphere.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am thankful to Professor Lajwanti Chatani for her guidance and motivation which ultimately led to this paper. The final draft of the paper would not have taken shape without the insightful comments of the two reviewers, to whom I express my gratitude.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> In fact, Foucault also described the understanding of sexuality as affected by this logic of binary under the system of Western rationality (See Foucault, 1978, p. 78).
- <sup>2</sup> Latin: *ceteris paribus* is a Latin term that means “other things being equal.” This phrase is generally used in economics to refer to hypothetical conditions of studying any variable under controlled conditions. *Mutatis mutandis*, on the other hand, means “making necessary alterations while not affecting the main point at issue”.
- <sup>3</sup> The *Personal* aspects represents a significant aspect of individual life, and have been viewed in contradistinction to the conventional view of public and private spheres. The personal aspects of the individual life, though influenced and shaped by the conditions of the private and public sphere, represent the concerns of individuality and self-expression. The personal is an inherently political space and often a sphere of manipulation. However, such interrelationship between the personal and public does not mean that the scope for self-expression and individuality is robbed all at once. The reason for carving out a sphere of the personal sphere from that of the private and public sphere is to dedicate a especial significance to the aspects of individuality and self-expression which are of prime importance for breaking the tradition of coerced invisibility. Unless the right to self-express and self-realization are realized within the contemplation of our discourses, the democratic unfolding remains an incomplete task.
- <sup>4</sup> The choice of food and color are considered as a subject of personal choice. While it might be argued that even such decisions are taken within the ambit of social norms, the decisions of personal like and dislike are largely based upon the individual volition. The comparison between the choice of one's sexuality and choice of food and color intends to show a sphere of individual autonomy, which exists beyond the reach of the state and societal norms.

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**How to cite this article:** Gupta, N. K. (2021). Out of bounds: Coerced invisibility and alternate sexualities. *Sexuality, Gender & Policy*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.1002/sgp2.12039>