Using the 'Queer' to Construct the Non-West

How do racialized, gendered, and sexual perversions figure the underdeveloped as in need of development and the immigrant as in need of securitisation? How does 'queer' connect development and security through these figurations?

Introduction

This essay seeks to discuss and analyse the ways in which the Western world figures the underdeveloped as in need of development, and the immigrant (specifically the immigrant from the underdeveloped world, or the underdeveloped in motion) as in need of securitisation, in order to ensure its own promotion and preservation, and to justify the many instances in which the West has intervened and invaded the non-Western world for various self-interested motivations, be it for resources or the enforcement of liberal ideologies. Firstly, this essay will discuss the ways in which, through racialized, gendered, and sexual perversions, the underdeveloped has been portrayed as in need of development. The underdeveloped has been framed as naturally existing in a state of arrested development due to a fundamental inability to succeed linked to their lack of whiteness; and this non-whiteness renders them unable to treat their women and homosexuals in the supposedly egalitarian, liberated manner in which the West does. While as depicting the underdeveloped as oppressed victims of their own skin colour, the West portrays the figure of the underdeveloped as degenerate and over-sexed, often suggesting that rampant sexual deviance is the main causal factor for the widespread prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS (Rushing 1999). By depicting the underdeveloped as in need of development in these ways, the West is able to place itself as the saviour of the underdeveloped world, therefore ensuring justification for its frequent interventions there.

Secondly, this essay will analyse the ways in which these perversions alter in meaning when the underdeveloped physically enters the West, and becomes refigured as the immigrant. No longer a subject deemed in need of development but rather of securitisation, this essay explores the ways in which the immigrant hailing from the underdeveloped world – the underdeveloped in motion – is figured as a threat to the West, a subject of unease that requires management, and ideally exclusion, by Western states. Didier Bigo describes this enactment as the 'ban-opticon' (Bigo 2006). The ways in which the immigrant is marked out as in need of securitisation will be discussed both in relation to their non-whiteness and their lack of adherence to heteronormative understandings and ideals of the Western family, which characterises them as needing extended monitoring and exclusion along both international and domestic borders.

Finally, the ways in which 'queer' connects development and security through these figurations will be explored using the specific example of Western reactions to proposals of homophobic legislature in Uganda. When, in 2009, the Ugandan government proposed the introduction of laws by which homosexuality would be punishable by imprisonment at the least, and the death penalty at the worst, Western reactions reflected abhorrence. Obama described the proposals as 'odious' (Adams 2010). However, at the same time, countries such as the UK were attempting to deport Ugandan asylum seekers who had sought refuge on the basis that they faced persecution in their home country due to their sexuality. Their queerness was rendered invisible by their being figured as immigrants, and therefore as figures of unease (Cantu Jr et al 2005; Bigo 2006). Here, 'queer' reveals the blatant hypocrisy of the West, on the one hand urging a need for development in the non-Western world, in this instance in relation to Uganda improving its tolerance of homosexuality, and on the other displaying its own intolerance to those

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seeking asylum on that same basis, all in the name of security. This essay will conclude that, as shown through 'queer', the underdeveloped and the immigrant, development and security are figurations constructed not through any genuine desire to improve conditions for the underdeveloped or to secure its own citizens, but for the purposes of Western self-interest and the assertion of justified Western global hegemony.

Portraying the Underdeveloped as in Need of Development

The underdeveloped is a key figuration in understanding the white Western, postcolonial narratives that have shaped constructions of the non-white, illiberal world since white men first set foot outside of Europe. The Victorian assumption that although 'there might be many stages of social evolution and many seemingly bizarre customs and 'superstitions' in the world…there was only one 'civilisation', one path of 'progress'' (Brantlinger 1985) has, rather than diluting as globalisation has increased the white man's interaction with the rest of the world, instead become reiterated and reemphasised through these interactions. Through varying modes of racialized, gendered and sexual perversions, the Western liberal world has promoted itself as a beacon of modernity and temporally advanced in relation to the non-white, illiberal 'Third World'. Whilst in the colonial past, figurations of the non-European as in need of development was framed as a struggle to contain and control the savage customs of these peoples, the modern discourse of Western self-promotion takes on an assumption that the underdeveloped peoples of the Third World '*want* to live Western lives; they *seek* the freedoms of the West' (Bonnett 2008: 18), but that they are in a state of arrested development, that their innate primitive-ness and degenerate customs prevent them from developing into fully fledged liberal states (Hoad 2000), and that the white Westerner is responsible for developing these socio-cultural deviants, whilst at the same time extracting all that it can from them in terms of raw materials, cheap labour, and so on (Goudge 2003). This section of the essay seeks to understand how the 'underdeveloped', or non-Western continues to be figured as in need of development through three key narratives; race, gender, and sexuality.

2.1 Racialized Perversions

Since the popularisation of craniology and eugenics in colonial Europe, through the instances of brutal ethnic cleansing regimes of the twentieth century and more recently through the narratives of humanitarian aid from the West to the Third World (Goudge 2003), the classification of peoples according to their race has been paramount in defining relations between the white, liberal world and the 'underdeveloped.' State failure has been racialized since the colonial era: states are underdeveloped because their people do not adhere to the rational, developed attitudes and actions of the white West, and therefore need to be shown the correct path by their white, developed counterparts (Gregory 2004). In her study of US imperialism in Puerto Rico, Laura Briggs notes that US neoconservatives suggest that there is 'something about the members of racialized minority groups themselves-particularly in how they form families and raise their children- that produces their lack of political and economic success as groups' (Briggs 2002: 3). In other words, some groups are inherently doomed to 'fail' due to their racial makeup.

Through unending peace operations and interventions, the Western world has classified the non-white, underdeveloped as in need of development, of being 'saved'. Statebuilding missions such as the UN intervention in East Timor (UNTAET) at the turn of the twenty-first century display the Western assumption that the non-Western world cannot liberate itself. In the wake of East Timor's independence, its government, juridical systems and infrastructure were established by the UN without the consultation of the East Timorese people; it was assumed that the native lack of experience in statebuilding practices would lead to East Timor descending into violence once more (Richmond and Franks 2009). When violence did erupt after UNTAET's departure from the island in 2006, it was attributed not to the failures of the UN to establish strong-standing governmental structures that adhered to local needs, but rather to the inability of the East Timorese themselves to withhold from violent and corrupt behaviour (*ibid*). Therefore, through narratives of racial perversion and racialized failure, the non-white, underdeveloped is figured as struggling along behind white liberal culture, and that it is the duty of the Western world to develop them.

2.2 Gendered Perversions

The figuration of the underdeveloped/non-white/non-Western as being trapped in a state of arrested development,

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needing to be rescued by the white Westerner, is further exemplified when addressing how the underdeveloped/non-white/non-Western is also figured in relation to their gendered perversions. Despite white Western feminist literature promoting notions of a 'global sisterhood' – that is, women, regardless of race or colonial context, live a shared experience simply because they are women (Goudge 2004) – the reality remains that the non-white/non-Western woman is characterised as a helpless, oppressed creature who, with the help of her white Western 'sisters' must break the shackles of her cultural imprisonment in order to become a developed liberal feminist and join the 'correct' path towards developed civilisation (Parpart 1995; Brantlinger 1985). Rather than accounting for racial, colonial and historical contexts surrounding gender inequalities in the non-white world, and how they might differ from gender inequalities experienced by Euro-American women, Western feminists instead appear to have adapted Spivak's 1988 observation of the Western world's relationship with the underdeveloped: from 'white men saving brown women from brown men'[1] (Spivak 1988: 93), to 'white women saving their brown sisters from brown men.' Despite assertions of a global sisterhood and shared experience, women living in the developing world are figured as gendered, as well as racial, failures. This is often seen in relation to the underdeveloped woman as, on the one hand, the subject of sexual oppression, their sexual life controlled and dictated by (brown) men (Reid 1997), and on the other, as inherently over-sexed and sexually perverse in nature. For example, in nineteenth century Britain, prostitutes 'were treated as involved in a criminal act, whereas Indian women were understood as belonging to a class, of being (ontologically and essentially) prostitutes' (Briggs 2002: 24). Unlike the white, British prostitute, who was deemed criminal and out of the ordinary, sex work was accepted as an innate part of the underdeveloped Indian woman's being. In many ways such paradoxical figurations of the underdeveloped woman feed into the Western constructed narrative of the underdeveloped as in need of guidance away from the degeneracy of their cultural lives and towards the Western pinnacles of liberalism and whiteness (or failing that, pseudo-whiteness).

2.3 Sexual Perversions

These somewhat contradictory figurations of the underdeveloped as both sexually oppressed and sexually degenerate can also be noted in relation to Western perceptions of the (homo)sexuality of the underdeveloped, where the underdeveloped is figured as sexually perverse, both in terms of sexual deviance and in terms of lacking sexual enlightenment. In the first instance homosexuality, when applied to the figure of the underdeveloped, is associated with sexual deviance, decadence and degeneracy. As Neville Hoad observes, 'decadence and degeneracy…are both developmental tropes…what the decadent/degenerate shares with the primitive is a position on the fringes of the normative evolutionary narrative' (Hoad 2000: 137). Homosexuality is consistently linked to the underdeveloped; once again we return to this notion of arrested development in which 'the homosexual is the figure of arrested development of the heterosexual, as the primitive is the figure of arrested development of the civilised' (*ibid:* 144). For example, the academic William A. Rushing explains high HIV prevalence rates in sub-Saharan Africa as the consequence of a 'hidden homosexuality.' Despite overwhelming evidence that suggest that it is heterosexual sex that is the main cause of HIV transmission in the region, for Rushing the only accountable explanation for such high instances of the disease on the African continent lay in degenerate homosexual activity (Rushing 1995; Oppong and Kalipeni 2004).

Yet, at the same time, the underdeveloped is portrayed in need of development through this narrative of their lacking sexual enlightenment and tolerance. In contrast to the 'gay-friendly' West, the developing world is inherently homophobic, yet another sign in Western eyes that the Third World is in need of development. The West has adopted attitudes to homosexuality as a marker of how developed a nation is; 'the logic goes something like this: you are less developed than us because you treat your gays badly. Thus the western state becomes guarantor of lesbian and gay rights versus the threat constituted by the savage brutal other' (Binnie 2004: 76). This narrative of the West as protector of the homosexual, and the non-West as underdeveloped due to their inability to treat their homosexuals with tolerance is exemplified in Western reactions to the regular re-emergence of homophobic legislature in Uganda (to be discussed in more detail in a later section of this essay). Whilst abhorrence at such homophobic legislature may be genuine, Western nations conveniently ignore issues of homophobia that still rage within their own borders, as well as the fact that the homophobia of the underdeveloped world has its roots in colonialism and the spread of traditional Christian moralities in the Third World and that homophobia may have been exported through colonialism (Binnie 2004). The Western world expresses its whiteness as a 'badge of superiority' (Goudge 2004: 8), in which their supposed tolerance of homosexuality elevates them to the position of the 'developed world', and the non-

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Western world is in need of development because they apply no such tolerance. These figurations of the underdeveloped as both homophobic and sexually deviant emphasise the ongoing project of the Western world to fortify its hegemonic position as 'developed', and the non-Western/non-white world as 'underdeveloped', regardless of the often contradictory and hypocritical nature of the ways in which the underdeveloped is figured as in need of development.

Figuring the Immigrant as in Need of Securitization

Through racialized, gendered and sexual perversions the non-white, non-Western figure is constructed as helpless in their degeneracy, as in need of saviour and liberation. However, this image of the Western liberal world as protector and guide of the underdeveloped is quickly distorted once the figure of the non-white/non-Western becomes mobilised and begins to infiltrate Western borders. No longer is the underdeveloped the infantilized, primitive creature of Western pity. Once refigured as in motion, as the immigrant, the underdeveloped is deemed a threat in need of securitization. He is no longer a site of Western self-promotion as 'saviour', as in the case of the underdeveloped, but rather a site of Western concern and unease (Bigo 2006). Developing Foucault's panopticon[2], the academic Didier Bigo introduced the notion of the *ban-opticon.* The ban-opticon moves beyond the notions of society under surveillance, dealing instead with the notion of exception and exclusion. There may indeed be surveillance of all under the panopticon, but that only certain figures, i.e. (non-white, non-Western) immigrants, are seen as objects of unease that need to be managed and controlled by the state under the ban-opticon (Bigo 2006; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007). In the ban-opticon, state borders are crucial in acting both as a tool of exclusion from the nation, and as a tool of protection for a 'community and a society against a phantasmic threat of otherness that tends to become flesh in the demonized and abject figure of a migrant or refugee' (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007: x). Through racialized, gendered and sexual perversions, the immigrant, specifically the Third World-to-Western World immigrant (the underdeveloped in motion), is figured as in need of securitization. They can only be refigured as citizens if they do not subscribe to such perversions, as the following sections of this essay will discuss.

3.1 Racialized Perversions

The immigrant as a figure of unease and in need of securitization is a notion that has become implicit in our everyday lives. This rings particularly true when the immigrant is non-white and therefore instantly visible at the border as exceptional. The unease concerning the non-white figure has been exacerbated extensively since the September 11 attacks and the subsequent 'War on Terror,' in which white fear of attack from non-white, particularly Middle Eastern, terrorists has become entrenched in the everyday life of the Westerner (Gregory 2004; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007). The figuration of the non-white as in need of securitisation is clearly depicted in television shows such as *Border Security: Australia's Front Line.* The docu-soap follows the day-to-day working lives of border security staff at Sydney and Melbourne airports and fulfils Bigo's depiction of the ban-opticon, continually depicting the border crossings of non-white subjects as movements to be treated with suspicion and intervention. In one episode, a Mongolian woman attempting to enter the country on a tourist visa was stopped at the airport on the basis that her wishing to enter Australia for holiday purposes seemed unlikely given her country of origin, a poor, non-white state. Despite her visa being valid, the woman was deemed in need of securitisation, her movements needed to be controlled, and her whereabouts needed management. Her non-whiteness/non-Westernness marked her out as a figure of unease, as in need of observation and control (Bigo 2006).

The entrenched nature of the Western assumption that the non-white figure should be treated with suspicion and caution moves beyond the realm of the immigrant at the state border. Domestic borders and points of security are also home to the same approach that the non-white moving subject must not only be surveilled, but controlled and managed by security systems, and thus they are treated as foreign and alien figures, even if their documentation states otherwise. For example, an Anglo-Indian friend once told me a story that when arriving at Brighton train station, he was prevented from leaving the station by security staff on the grounds that members of the public were being selected to be searched at random as part of anti-terrorism procedures. His belongings were searched by security staff, his British identification greeted with suspicion. When my friend scanned the scene around him, he noted that every person who had been stopped and searched by security were of Asian or Arabic descent. Clearly, we see Bigo's ban-opticon at work in this scene. Evidently, those being treated with suspicion had not been selected

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'at random', as my friend had been told, but rather the security staff at the station had been taught to treat certain (non-white) subjects with suspicion; brown-skinned passengers were deemed a threat to the security of others, and thus were treated as exception, as in need of monitoring and management (Bigo 2006). In both examples discussed here, the non-white subject in motion is viewed with unease and deemed necessary of surveillance, control and management by states. The non-white figured in this way is so deeply entrenched in the white, Western mind-set that even away from the state border, and even when the non-white subject is in fact a Western citizen, they are still treated as figures of unease, in need of securitisation.

3.2 Gendered and Sexual Perversions: Heteronormativity and the Family

The immigrant is also an object of securitisation through gendered and sexual narratives, primarily in relation to family and familial ties. Indeed, 'approximately 75 per cent of all current legal immigrants enter the United States on the basis of family ties' (Luibheid 2007: 293). Certainly, not all immigrants fall under the wary gaze of Bigo's ban-opticon; alongside this narrative is the figure of the 'good immigrant', the white, capital-producing and, of course, legally migrated male, whose ability to contribute to liberal and capitalist notions of success enables their cultural and social belonging (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007).

Women, too, are able to embody the figuration of the 'good immigrant' on the condition that they exist within a traditional familial system. Whiteness is still essential in this instance, as the non-white family is usually assumed to be overpopulated and economically draining, a cause of unease for Western states, rather than of desire (Briggs 2002). If the immigrant possesses such heteronormative[3] attributes, then migration is likely to end in assimilation into the host country and it is possible for the immigrant to prove their cultural and social belonging (Luibheid 2007; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007). The immigrant only causes unease and securitisation when he does not adhere to these characteristics and is removed from the desired family ties and economic capital, becoming 'parasitic rather than productive or reproductive members of the national body' (Hoad 2007: 81).

This emphasis on familial ties has led to the privileging of male-female heterosexual relationships in the immigration process; those not adhering to the heteronormative framework defined by the West, such as same-sex couples, or single non-white women are side-lined. At the border, sexualities that lie outside the scope of the heteronormative family are rendered invisible. As Chandan Reddy noted when interviewing queer immigrants to the US, 'many…spoke about the impossibility of 'being gay' in a context in which one's dependence on 'family'…is definitional to living as an immigrant' (Reddy 2005: 110). In order to make the transition from Bigo's figure, an immigrant subject to securitisation, to the non-threatening 'good immigrant,' queer migrants must reshape their sexuality to fit with heteronormative ideals, mirroring heterosexual family relationships, and asserting their ability to contribute to Western neoliberal structures, a reaction termed 'homonormativity' by the academic Lisa Duggan (Duggan 2002). It is therefore a particular figuration of the immigrant that is deemed in need of securitisation while hose that adhere to heteronormative (or, failing that, homonormative) structures are armed with the opportunity to become assimilated into the host country. Those that are non-white, and those who do not belong to traditional heteronormative familial ties are placed instead under the wary gaze of the ban-opticon (Bigo 2006).

Using 'Queer' to Connect Development and Securitization

Through racialised, gendered and sexual perversions, the white Western world has figured the underdeveloped as in need of development: a primitive, degenerate creature in need of rescue and guidance. This figuration becomes understood differently once the underdeveloped becomes the underdeveloped in motion, and is refigured as the immigrant. No longer a liberal project of development, the underdeveloped that crosses the border from the non-white, illiberal world into the West becomes reformulated in the Euro-American imagination as a figure in need not of development, but of securitisation; Bigo's figure of unease (Bigo 2006). The connections between the underdeveloped and the immigrant, and the connections between development and security formulated as a result, can be examined through understandings of 'queer', and the contradictory nature of the white, Western world's relationship with it. On the one hand, it promotes itself as an ambassador of sexual tolerance, whilst on the other placing heavy emphasis on the structures of liberal, white, hetero family life as the path of 'correctness', exemplified in the previous section's discussion (Luibheid 2007). Through narratives of 'queer', development and security

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connect to highlight the contradictory, and often hypocritical nature of the white, Western world's relationship with and treatment of its non-white, illiberal counterpart, as will be discussed in the following section of this essay using the example of Western attitudes to Ugandan homophobic legislature and the subsequent contradicting reaction of a Western state, in this instance the UK, towards Ugandan migrants seeking asylum in the West on the basis of their sexuality.

Between a Homophobic Rock and a Securitised Hard Place: the Case of Uganda

As noted previously in this essay, the recurrence in recent years of proposals to pass laws in Uganda that would deem homosexual acts punishable by death (although it's most recent resurrection in early 2012 has abandoned the death penalty, instead recommending imprisonment), has expectedly been met with disapproval and denouncement by Western governments, led by Obama's comment that the proposed laws were 'odious' (Rice 2009; Chonghaile 2012). Through this denouncement of Ugandan homophobia and its assertion of its own tolerance of the 'queer', the Western, liberal world is clearly asserting its position as the developed, and Uganda as in a state of arrested development. However, these proclamations of tolerance towards and desired liberation of the homosexual rapidly begin to unravel once the underdeveloped begins to migrate away from the dark, homophobic lands of the undeveloped world, and dares to seek asylum in the West on the grounds that they will be persecuted because of their sexuality should they remain in these underdeveloped states. This is especially seen in the UK Border Agency's (UKBA) treatment of gay Ugandan asylum seekers. In 2011, Robert Segwayani, a Ugandan refugee who had sought asylum in the UK on the basis that he was being persecuted for his sexual orientation in Uganda, was found by the Home Office 'not to have a genuine claim' (BBC 2011), his deportation being deferred (although not revoked) only minutes before he was due to board a flight back to Uganda. Despite the Ugandan government's proposals for the severe punishment of known homosexuals, and the public abhorrence the UK had shown at the prospect (The Guardian 2009), Segwayani's claim for asylum was dismissed due to the fact that the UKBA does not include sexuality in its definition of who is vulnerable when taking into account requests for asylum (Bell and Hansen 2009). Due to his being figured as 'the immigrant', Segwayani's queerness was rendered invisible, his non-whiteness and his inability to fall neatly into a heteronormative framework rendering him a security threat to be removed by the British Home Office (Cantu Jr et al 2005; Luibheid 2007). The approach of the Home Office to the case, when compared the UK's 'concern' (Guardian 2009) over the proposal of homophobic laws in Uganda, show a stark hypocrisy in how the Western world frames itself in relation to the underdeveloped, when compared with how it behaves in reality when faced with the underdeveloped migrating to Western shores. Through the Ugandan case study, 'queer' demonstrates the hypocrisy of Western ideals (Rice 2009). For the West, the underdeveloped world is a convenient means to enhance its profile as an ambassador of development, liberation and tolerance, detracting from the harsh realities of the security orientated immigration policies that are administered upon those the West supposedly desires to help.

Conclusion

This essay has explored the varying ways in which racialized, gendered and sexual perversions have at once figured the non-white, non-Western as in need of development, as degenerate and sexually deviant, whilst at the same time as oppressed, sexually unenlightened peoples, who can only achieve liberation through the intervention of the West (Richmond and Franks 2009). Alongside this run equally entrenched understandings of the underdeveloped in motion, refigured as the immigrant. Rather than the subject of pity urged to develop by the West, the underdeveloped that crosses the border from the non-white world into the West is transformed instead into a subject of unease, in need of surveillance, management, and ultimately exclusion by white Western states (Bigo 2006). Through altering the racialized, gendered and sexual perversions of the underdeveloped so that they are adapted to the desired figuration of the immigrant, the underdeveloped in motion is identified through their lack of whiteness, and their inability to assimilate into heteronormative understandings of familial and economic success.

But why have the underdeveloped and the immigrant been framed in these ways? This essay believes that the figurations of the underdeveloped as in need of development and the immigrant as in need of securitisation are no more than self-serving tools of Western self-promotion and self-preservation. Development and security narratives are used by the West to promote themselves as at once the saviours of the underdeveloped, as the only hope the non-

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Western world has to develop, whilst at the same time refiguring the underdeveloped when in motion as the immigrant, a figure of unease, an issue of security rather than of development, in order to ensure that the underdeveloped is kept at a distance when possible. The ways in which the West both promises to aid the underdeveloped, whilst at the same time ensuring their exclusion from the Western world, reveals the West to be hypocritical and failing to adhere to its own principals, as exemplified by the UK's horrified reaction to Ugandan homophobic laws occurring at the same time as their rejection of cases of Ugandan asylum on the basis that fleeing the country on the basis of one's sexuality was 'not genuine' (BBC 2011).

These self-figurations, as both global saviour and domestic protector, allows the justification of seemingly endless instances of Western intervention in, and exploitation of the resources and labour of, the underdeveloped world; be it through bloody offensives in Iraq, or sweatshops in Saipan. Through the figurations of the underdeveloped and the immigrant, and as exemplified in the way by which 'queer' connects development and security through these figurations, typified in the Uganda case, power relations between the Western and non-Western, or First and Third, worlds are reinstated and underwritten. Ultimately, the world is a regime of white Westernness, and the West can conduct itself in whatever manner it wishes, even at the expense of the very principles it promotes.

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[1] Spivak's quote refers to the 1829 British colonial abolishment of the Hindu rite of sati in India (Spivak 1988)

[2] Originally conceived by the philosopher and social theorist Jeremy Bentham in the late eighteenth century, and developed by Michel Foucault in his 1975 work *Discipline and Punish,* the panopticon is a prison system designed in order that the prisoner feels as if they are under constant surveillance, and therefore behave as if they are being observed, even when they are not (Foucault 1979; Crampton and Elden 2007)

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[3] 'Heteronormativity refers to a range of normalizing discourses and practices that seek to cultivate and privilege a heterosexual population while nonetheless insisting that heterosexuality is 'natural' and timeless rather than a product of economy, society, culture, and political struggle' (Luibheid 2007: 296)

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