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25 The Strategic Uses of Identity by the Lesbian and Gay Movement

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[The organizers of the 1993 lesbian and gay march on Washington] face a dilemma: how to put forward a set of unsettling demands for unconventional people in ways that will not make enemies of potential allies. They do so by playing down their differences before the media and the country while celebrating it in private.

(Tarrow 1994, p. 10)

Sidney Tarrow's portrayal of the 1993 lesbian and gay march on Washington highlights a central irony about identity politics and the decline of the Left: Critics of identity politics decry the celebration of difference within contemporary identity movements, charging them with limiting the potential for a "politics of commonality" between oppressed peoples that could have potential for radical social change (Gitlin 1995). On the other hand, the lesbian and gay movement seems largely to have abandoned its emphasis on *difference from* the straight majority in favor of a moderate politics that highlights *similarities to* the straight majority.

Over time, "identity" movements shift their emphasis between celebrating and suppressing differences from the majority. For example, the Civil Rights movement underscored similarities to the majority in order to achieve concrete policy reforms. At other times, movements that assert radical racial identities to build communities and challenge hegemonic American culture take center stage. The American feminist movement has alternately emphasized innate gender differences between men and women and

denied that such differences exist or that they are socially relevant. Under what political conditions do activists celebrate or suppress differences from the majority? Why does the stress on difference or similarity change over time?

To answer these questions, this article draws on evidence from several campaigns for lesbian and gay rights ordinances. The lesbian and gay movement was chosen because it is considered the quintessential identity movement (Melucci 1989; Duyvendak 1995; Duyvendak and Giugni 1995). The cultural barriers to acceptance of homosexuality and the challenge of self-acceptance for lesbians and gay men require cultural struggle. However, the lesbian and gay movement has been altered from a movement for cultural transformation through sexual liberation to one that seeks achievement of political rights through a narrow, ethnic-like (Seidman 1993) interest-group politics. This well-documented transition has yet to be explained.

This research will show that celebration or suppression of differences within political campaigns depends on the structure of social movement organizations, access to the polity (Tilly 1978), and the type of opposition. By specifying the political conditions that explain variation in strategies within movements, one can better understand differences in forms of collective action across movements.

Identity and Movement Types

Attempts to classify social movements have typically centered around the distinction

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between "strategy-oriented" and "identity-oriented" movements (Touraine 1981). Abandoning this distinction, Duyvendak and Giugni argue instead that "the real difference is, however, the one between movements pursuing goals in the outside world, for which the action is instrumental for goal realization, and identity-oriented movements that realize their goals, at least partly, in their activities" (1995, pp. 277-78). Social movements, then, are classified on "their logic of action," whether they employ an identity or instrumental logic of action, and whether they are internally or externally oriented. Movements such as the lesbian and gay movement are internally oriented and follow an identity logic of action. Instrumental movements, by contrast, engage in instrumental action and are externally oriented (Duyvendak and Giugni 1995, pp. 84-85).

This mechanical bifurcation of movement types, reflected in the division between identity theory on the one hand and resource mobilization and political process theory on the other, has left the literature on contentious politics unable to explain changes in forms of collective action. First, the casual use of the term "identity" obscures fundamental distinctions in meaning (e.g., Gitlin 1995). Second, I argue that theorists must abandon the *essentialist* characterization of social movements as expressive or instrumental because it impairs the study of all social movements. This essentialist characterization stems from the conflation of goals and strategies (i.e., that instrumental strategies are irrelevant to cultural change, while expressions of identity cannot be externally directed) apparent in resource mobilization, political process, and new social movement theories. Finally, attempts to integrate these theories have been unsuccessful.

Subsumed under the rubric of new social movements, "identity movements" have been defined as much by the goals they seek, and the strategies they use, as by the fact that they are based on a shared characteristic such as ethnicity or sex. According to new social movement theorists, identity movements seek to transform dominant cul-

tural patterns, or gain recognition for new social identities, by employing expressive strategies.

New social movement theory suggests that movements choose political strategies in order to facilitate the creation of organizational forms that encourage participation and empowerment. Thus strategies that privilege the creation of democratic, non-hierarchical organizations would be chosen over strategies narrowly tailored to produce policy change.

For resource mobilization and political process theorists, identity may play a role in mobilization through solidary incentives but once the "free rider" problem is overcome all other collective action is deemed instrumental, targeted solely at achieving concrete (i.e., measurable) goals. Resource mobilization and political process theorists have neglected the study of identity movements with their seemingly "nonpolitical," cultural goals. Even when culture is recognized as an integral part of sustaining activist communities, changing or challenging mainstream culture is rarely considered a goal of activism. Strategies are seen as rationally chosen to optimize the likelihood of policy success. Outcomes are measured as a combination of policy change ("new advantages") and access to the structure of political bargaining (Jenkins and Perrow 1977; Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Gamson 1990). Such a narrow framing of social movement goals can lead to erroneous assumptions about the reasons for collective action and for strategy choice (Turner and Killian 1972; Jenkins 1983). Where goals are cultural and therefore harder to operationalize, theorists assume collective action has no external dimension but is aimed simply at reproducing the identity on which the movement is based (see Duyvendak 1995; Duyvendak and Giugni 1995). This leaves theorists unable to explain social movement action that seems to be working at cross purposes to achieving policy change. Furthermore, it relegates "prefigurative" (Polletta 1994) politics - a politics that seeks to transform observers through the

embodiment of alternative values and organizational forms – to the realm of the irrational.

Although political opportunity or political process models share resource mobilization's assumptions about the relationship between strategies and goals, they provide a more useful starting point for understanding how political strategies are chosen. According to Tilly (1978), forms of collective action will be affected by "political coalitions and... the means of actions built into the existing political organization" (p. 167). These short- and medium-term "volatile" (Gamson and Meyer 1996) elements of "political opportunity" include the opening of access to participation, shifts in ruling alignments, the availability of influential allies, and cleavages among elites. As the political context changes, strategies should also change. Yet political opportunity models lack specificity in analyzing why or under what political conditions movements choose particular forms of collective action.

Attempts to reconcile the disjuncture between new social movement and resource mobilization or political process theory center on the relationship between forms of collective action and the movement's life cycle. The emergent "new social movements" of the 1960s and 1970s seemed so striking because they utilized innovative, direct action tactics. According to Calhoun (1995):

As Tarrow (1989) has remarked, this description confuses two senses of *new*: the characteristics of all movements when they are new, and the characteristics of a putatively new sort of movement.

It is indeed generally true that any movement of or on behalf of those excluded from conventional politics starts out with a need to attract attention; movement activity is not just an instrumental attempt to achieve movement goals, but a means of recruitment and continuing mobilization of participants. (p. 193)

In this view, a lack of historical perspective has mistakenly led new social movement theorists to label behavior "distinctive"

when it is simply behavior indicative of an emergent social movement.

This criticism of new social movement theory glosses over important empirical and theoretical distinctions. First, not every emergent social movement employs novel or dramatic tactics in order to gain new recruits. Religious right organizations that arose in the 1970s drew on the dense network of conservative churches as well as direct mail lists to mobilize; they did not employ innovative or novel tactics. Rather than misattributing certain forms of collective action to the newness of social movements, one should ask what accounts for different forms of mobilization. Furthermore, attributing certain forms of collective action to the newness of social movements precludes an understanding of why such forms of collective action may emerge at later points in a movement's protest cycle.

Second, the glib dismissal of the sorts of political action attributed to new social movements as simply expressive, or unrelated to political structure, ignores the external or instrumental dimensions of seemingly expressive action. If putatively new social movements do challenge dominant cultural patterns, then theorists must take seriously the political nature of such collective action. Social movement theory must examine the challenges all social movements present to dominant cultural patterns.

This research seeks to provide a more complete understanding of the role of identity in collective action. I build in part on political process theory, while incorporating new social movement theory's emphasis on the importance of cultural change to movement activism. I argue that the concept of "identity" has at least three distinct analytic levels, the first two of which have been developed in the social movement literature. First, a shared collective identity is necessary for mobilization of *any* social movement, including the classic labor movement (Calhoun 1995). Second, identity can be a goal of social movement activism, either gaining acceptance for a hitherto stigmatized identity or deconstructing categories of identities such as "man," "woman," "gay,"

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"straight" (Gamson 1995), "black," or "white." Finally, this research argues that expressions of identity can be deployed at the collective level as a political strategy, which can be aimed at cultural or instrumental goals.

Once the concept of identity is broken down into these three analytic dimensions, then one can explore the political conditions that produce certain identity strategies. [...]

Three Analytic Dimensions of Identity

The creation of communities and movement solidarity, which the bulk of research on collective identity examines (Williams 1995), is necessary for mobilization. I define *identity for empowerment* to mean the creation of collective identity and the feeling that political action is feasible (see table 25.1). In other words, some sort of identity is necessary to translate individual to group interests and individual to collective action. All social movements require such a "political consciousness" (Morris 1992) to create and mobilize a constituency (Taylor and Whittier 1992; Calhoun 1995).

Identity for empowerment is not necessarily a consciously chosen strategy, although it is a precursor to collective action. If a movement constituency has a shared collective identity and the institutions or social net-

works that provide a cultural space from which to act, then community building and empowerment will be forfeited to "instrumental" goals of policy attainment. In the absence of visibility or movement organizations, more work must be done to build organizations and recruit activists.

Collective identity can also have an external dimension in mobilization. Beckwith (1995) argues that an actor can use her or his identity to gain "political standing" (i.e., to legitimate participation) in a social movement in which she or he is not directly implicated. So, for example, women involved in coal mining strikes who are not miners can justify participation based on their relations to the miners, such as mother, sister, or wife. The choice of identity (e.g., wife of miner vs. working-class woman) can have implications for future activism.

Identity can also be a goal of collective action (*identity as goal*). Activists may challenge stigmatized identities, seek recognition for new identities, or deconstruct restrictive social categories. New Left organizations of the 1960s, for example, sought not only concrete policy reform, but thought that the creation of alternative cultural forms could foster structural change. Polletta (1994) asserts that "student-organizers of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) saw their task as to mobilize and secure recognition for a new collective

Table 25.1 The three analytic dimensions of "identity"

Dimension	Description
Identity for empowerment	Activists must draw on an existing identity or construct a new collective identity in order to create and mobilize a constituency. The particular identity chosen will have implications for future activism.
Identity as goal	Activists may challenge stigmatized identities, seek recognition for new identities, or deconstruct restrictive social categories as goals of collective action.
Identity as strategy	Identities may be deployed strategically as a form of collective action. <i>Identity deployment</i> is defined as expressing identity such that the terrain of conflict becomes the individual person so that the values, categories, and practices of individuals become subject to debate. <i>Identity for critique</i> confronts the values, categories, and practice of the dominant culture. <i>Identity for education</i> challenges the dominant culture's perception of the minority or is used strategically to gain legitimacy by playing on uncontroversial themes.

identity – poor, ‘unqualified’ southern blacks – in a way that would transform national and local politics by refashioning criteria of political leadership” (p. 85). Feminists influenced American culture by challenging and altering conventional usage of sexist terms in the English language. Gamson (1995) argues that social movement theory must take seriously the goal of contemporary “queer politics” to deconstruct social categories, including “man,” “woman,” “gay,” and “straight.” Without a broader understanding of the goals of collective action and their relationship to the structural location of the actors, social movement theory cannot adequately explain strategy choices made by activists.

In addition to influencing motivations and goals of collective action, “cultural resources also have an external, strategic dimension” (Williams 1995, p. 125). I define *identity deployment* to mean expressing identity such that the terrain of conflict becomes the individual person so that the values, categories, and practices of individuals become subject to debate. What does it mean to “deploy identity” strategically? Taylor and Raeburn (1995) view identity deployment as a way to contest stigmatized social identities for the purposes of institutional change. Yet contesting stigma to change institutions is not the only reason for identity deployment. The goal of identity deployment can be to transform mainstream culture, its categories and values (and perhaps by extension its policies and structures), by providing alternative organizational forms. Identity deployment can also transform participants or simply educate legislators or the public.

Identity deployment can be examined at both the individual and collective level along a continuum from education to critique. Activists either dress and act consistently with mainstream culture or behave in a critical way. *Identity for critique* confronts the values, categories, and practices of the dominant culture. *Identity for education* challenges the dominant culture’s perception of the minority or is used strategically to gain legitimacy by playing on uncontroversial

themes. Although the goals associated with either identity strategy can be moderate or radical, identity for education generally limits the scope of conflict by not problematizing the morality or norms of the dominant culture.

Identity deployment should be understood dramaturgically as the collective portrayal of the group’s identity in the political realm, whether that be in city council hearings or at sit-ins in segregated restaurants. The strategic deployment of identity may differ from the group’s (or individuals’) private understanding of that identity. In this research, I examine identity deployment at the collective level.

It is important not to conflate the goals of identity deployment with its form (i.e., critical or educational). Both can be part of a project of cultural challenge or a strategy to achieve policy reform. Whether these strategies are associated with organizational forms that encourage participation and empowerment by privileging the creation of democratic, nonhierarchical organizations, as new social movement theory would suggest, or with narrow interest group strategies designed to achieve policy change, as resource mobilization and political process perspectives would suggest, then becomes an empirical question, not an essentialist assumption based on movement types.

Understanding identity as a tool for mobilization, as a goal, and as a strategy will lead to a more comprehensive understanding of social movements. Instead of asking whether identity plays a role in a given movement, we can ask several questions: What role does identity play in mobilization? To what extent is identity a goal of collective action? Why or under what political conditions are identities that celebrate or suppress differences deployed strategically?

General Model

I argue that identity strategies will be determined by the configuration of political access, the structure of social movement

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organizations, and the type and extent of opposition. In addition to affecting political outcomes, the characteristics of movement organizations should also influence political strategies. I define *inclusive* movement organizations to be those groups whose strategies, in practice, seek to educate and mobilize a constituency or maximize involvement in political campaigns. *Exclusive* organizations actively discourage popular participation, choosing strategies unlikely to mobilize a movement constituency. Changes in the political context should also influence political strategies. I consider that a movement has *access* to the polity if candidates respond to movement inquiries, if elected officials or state agencies support and work toward the movement's goals, or if movement leaders have access to polity members (e.g., through business affiliations, personal contacts, or official positions in political parties). Organized opposition is also an important part of the political context. Most contemporary American social movements eventually face organized opposition to their goals, and this should influence the types of identities deployed. *Routine opposition* will refer to polity insiders (Tilly 1978); that is, those who by virtue of their institutional position (such as a cardinal of the Catholic Church) have the ear of policy makers. *Opposing movements* will refer to groups outside the polity mobilized around the issues of contention.

The role of identity in mobilization will differ across movements, but not because of some abstract essentialism of movement types. For example, identity for empowerment may play a smaller role in mobilizing movements sparked by a "moral shock" – such as the antiwar movement, the antinuclear movement, or the animal rights movement – than in mobilizing movements based on a shared characteristic or identity. But once a movement has emerged, I suggest that the same conditions that determine identity deployment should also apply to movements started by moral shocks.

In order to emerge, a social movement requires a base from which to organize and

some sort of collective identity to translate individual into group interests. Movements with access to the structure of political bargaining or strong organizational infrastructures that have fostered a shared identity will tend to seek policy change, emphasize sameness rather than difference, and will use identity for education rather than identity for critique (see figure 25.1, paths 1, 2a). However, if the movement faces organized opposition from outside the political establishment, and if the movement is led by exclusive, narrowly focused groups uninterested in movement building, the movement may split, with some groups emphasizing differences and community building, while the exclusive groups continue to emphasize sameness and narrowly focused policy change (a mixed model; see figure 25.1, path 2b). In such cases, critical identities may be deployed as much in reaction to movement leadership as to the opposition.

When an emergent movement lacks both political access and an organizational infrastructure or collective identity, then an emphasis on difference will be needed to build solidarity and mobilize a constituency (figure 25.1, path 3). Such movements will tend to focus on building community and celebrating difference, as will those sectors of a movement marginalized by exclusive groups encountering nonroutine opposition (figure 25.1, path 4b).

Once a movement has been established – with constituency and organizational actors – then movement between the cells in figure 25.1 may take place as organized opposition emerges or declines, political coalitions shift, and the structures of movement organizations change over time.

After a movement's emergence, the types of identity deployment will be related to the structure of social movement organizations, access to the polity and whether opposition is routine, deriving from polity insiders, or external, arising from organized opposing movements. Changes in short- or medium-term elements of the political context should have a determining effect on forms of collective action such that greater access

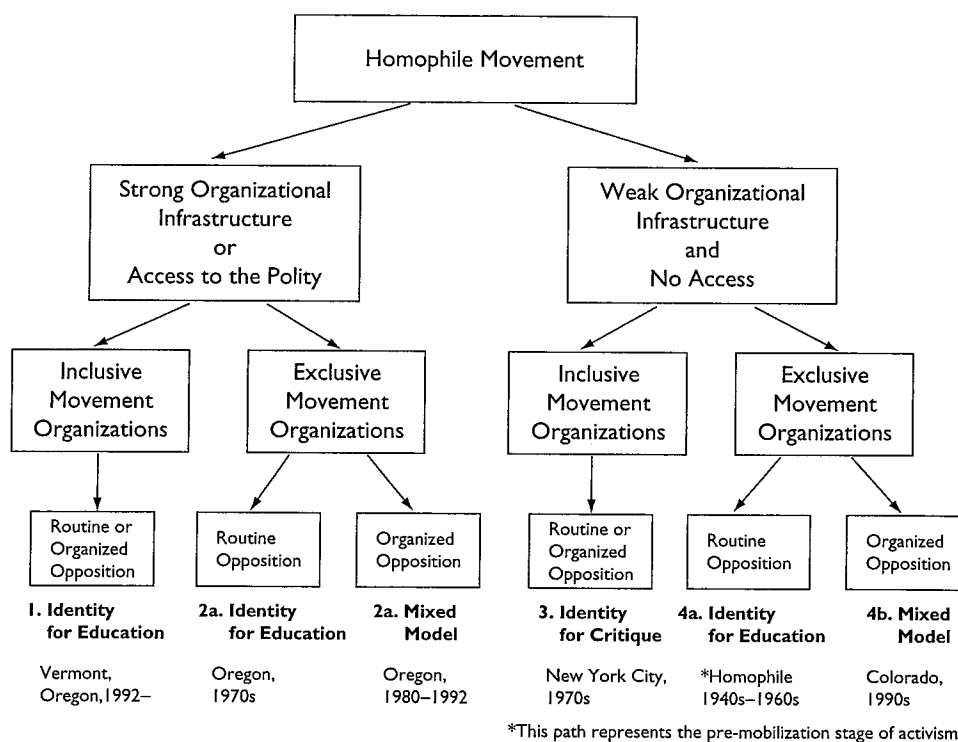


Figure 25.1 Identity deployment in the lesbian and gay movement

produces more moderate forms of collective action and identity for education strategies, while closing opportunities will lead to an emphasis on identity for critique. When the polity is relatively open and diverse segments of the activist community are represented in movement organizations or are included in political campaigns, there will be less emphasis on criticizing normative values. Because identity is deployed in the context of concrete interactions, the baseline against which activists define themselves will be influenced by opposing movements. Exclusive social movement organizations, the presence of a strong opposition, and negative interactions with the state will likely result in greater dissension within the community. That dissension will lead to factionalization and will produce moderates who will focus more on education and traditional lobbying tactics and radicals who will focus on criticizing dominant values (a "mixed model"). Radicalization in the movement can stem as much from

reaction to movement leaders as from reactions to the political context. In short, identity deployment in the political realm will depend on the structure of and relations among movement organizations, the extent of political access, and the type of opposition.

[...]

When lesbians and gay men deploy their identity strategically, debates may center around whether sexual orientation is immutable, what constitutes "homosexual practices," or whether pedophilia is the same as homosexuality. Lesbian and gay lives become the subject of conflict. Nothing about the lesbian and gay movement dictates the strategic use of identity at the collective level. For example, activists could draw attention to discriminatory employment practices, with a universal appeal to everyone's right to a job based on their skills. That is different than disclosing one's sexual orientation to legislators or neighbors, saying "Here I am, know me."

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In the case of the lesbian and gay movement, identity for education challenges negative stereotypes about lesbians and gay men, such as having hundreds of sexual partners a year or struggling with uncontrollable sexual urges, while identity for critique challenges dominant cultural assumptions about the religious or biological "naturalness" of gender roles and the heterosexual nuclear family. Arguably the greatest success of the women's movement has been to break down the division between public and private through challenging traditional notions of gender. Both identity for critique and identity for education can be part of broader projects seeking cultural change or policy reform.

Although many have looked at the relationship between lesbian and gay culture and individual-level identity strategies, few have examined this phenomena empirically, as a collective, consciously chosen political strategy. The rest of this article explores identity strategies along the continuum from critique to education at the collective level. As Seidman (1993, pp. 135–36) argues, we must "relate the politics of representation to institutional dynamics" rather than reducing cultural codes to textual practices abstracted from institutional contexts. The lesbian and gay movement has challenged a variety of institutions in American society, but I will restrict my analysis to interactions with the state because, with the onslaught by the Religious Right, the state has become one of the central loci of identity deployment. Future research will have to determine the ways diverse institutional dynamics (e.g., the church or psychiatry) influence the creation and deployment of identities.

The Homophile Movement

A collective identity among lesbians and gay men emerged prior to the strategic recruitment of a constituency by organizational actors, as long-term structural changes brought increasing numbers of gay men and lesbians together in urban settings. The

secretive nature of the early homophile organizations, however, precluded mass mobilization. The only public meeting places for lesbians and gay men – cruising places and Mafia-run bars – were ill-suited for mobilization. Cherry Grove, Fire Island, a visible lesbian and gay summer community, may have provided a more hospitable avenue for mobilization but was not linked to a broader organizational infrastructure.

The predominantly underground homophile movement of the 1940s and 1950s has been well documented. Groups such as the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society had exclusive organizational structures, lacked access to the polity, and faced routine opposition from the state (see figure 25.1, path 4a). The goals of the homophile movement varied over the years as some sought assimilation while others thought homosexuality was a distinctive and positive trait that should not be subsumed by mainstream culture. Yet both sides agreed on strategies: homophile activists would educate professionals (in particular medical professionals) about the realities of homosexuality; those professionals would in turn advocate for changes in state policies on behalf of homosexuals.

As the social strictures against homosexuality loosened, the lesbian and gay movement became more public through the 1960s. Much of the emergent movement's activism appeared to be "expressive," aimed for and at lesbians and gay men. In part, that perception was strengthened by the connection of many activists in post-Stonewall organizations to the New Left (e.g., RadicaLesbians, the Furies, and the Gay Liberation Front)¹ who felt that alternative cultural forms would lead to a revolutionary restructuring of society. The visible and outspoken nature of 1960s and 1970s activists accounts for the perception by scholars that the lesbian and gay movement was fundamentally different from other social movements.

But this perception is misguided because it ignores the diversity within the lesbian and gay movement, even around the time of

Stonewall. The development of these local movements and the strategies they chose depended on their access to the polity, on their organizational structure, and on the type of opposition they faced. For example, where movement leaders had access to the polity, usually in smaller cities where gay white businessmen had contacts in government or where earlier movement activities had created political access, as in Washington, D.C., expressive action was minimal. In most cases, local movements lacked access to the polity and had to create a constituency. To do so, they had to locate others like themselves. The lack of lesbian and gay institutions, such as churches or bookstores, forced leaders to construct those spaces as well as to launch political campaigns.

When groups lack their own institutions and a political consciousness, they will concentrate on identity for empowerment and community growth. Over time, as institutions and opportunities to act develop, what was once seen as an expressive movement will come to be seen as instrumental as political representation increases and the emphasis on empowerment decreases. Once a movement has been established, forms of collective action will depend on access to decision makers, the extent of opposition, and the degree of inclusiveness of movement organizations.

New York City and Oregon

In 1971, New York City's Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) launched a campaign to add "sexual orientation" to the list of protected categories in the city's human rights ordinance. Although GAA engaged political authorities in the public realm, it emphasized identity for critique, seeking to increase publicity and refusing to compromise for the sake of policy change (figure 25.1, path 3). Activists borrowed freely from the tactics of other contemporary movements, turning sit-ins into "kiss-ins" at straight bars to protest bans on same-sex displays of affection. They held peaceful demonstrations protesting

police brutality and infiltrated local political clubs to "zap" public officials with questions about police raids on gay bars, entrapment, and support for antidiscrimination policies. Activists consistently refused to dress in accordance with mainstream culture, using their identity to criticize gender roles and heterosexual norms. In short, they used theatrical tactics that increased the scope of the conflict, demanding publicity, regardless of its potentially dilatory effect on achieving policy change. For example, Eleanor Holmes Norton, chair of New York City's Commission on Human Rights, offered GAA members the option of holding private hearings on the ordinance. GAA refused, declaring that it would only participate in open hearings, although that was less likely to achieve policy change. GAA finally secured public hearings after a demonstration – intended to be peaceful – outside General Welfare Committee chair Saul Sharison's apartment building turned bloody when Tactical Police Force officers taunted and then beat demonstrators with their clubs. Despite dissension within GAA, drag queens were ultimately allowed to participate in the hearings. City council members would subsequently exploit the confusion between transvestism and homosexuality to defeat the ordinance.

The fight for antidiscrimination legislation in Oregon contrasted sharply with the battle in New York City. Activists in Portland and Eugene in the 1970s – primarily gay white men – had easy access to the polity because of their status as business persons. The Portland Town Council (PTC), an informal coalition of gay-oriented businesses and organizations, was founded in 1970. Due largely to the lack of opposition and the semi-insider status of its members, the PTC won a series of incremental victories culminating in Portland's passage of a law to prohibit discrimination against city employees on the basis of sexual orientation. In Eugene, activists also capitalized on their insider status by choosing strategies that discouraged mass participation, including secret meetings with council members. In

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1977, Eugene passed a lesbian and gay rights ordinance.

The PTC also spearheaded efforts to add sexual orientation to the state's human rights statute. Despite agonizingly narrow defeats of statewide antidiscrimination bills (by one vote in 1975), activists continued to work with state officials. In 1976, at the PTC's request, Oregon Governor Straub created the Ad Hoc Task Force on Sexual Preference to conduct factual research and to make policy recommendations to the Oregon legislature. The PTC served as an advisory board, recommended areas for research, and facilitated interactions between lesbian and gay communities and the task force.

The strategies employed in New York City and Oregon contrasted sharply. When given the choice, New York City activists consistently privileged strategies that challenged dominant cultural values over those that would maximize the likelihood of policy success. By refusing to hold private hearings with the Human Rights Commission, activists increased the scope of conflict. Rather than allaying the fears of legislators and the public by reassuring them of the incremental nature of the policy reform, activists exacerbated those fears by having transvestites testify at public hearings. In Oregon, activists were content to hold secret meetings with lawmakers in order to gain legal change.

What accounts for these diverse approaches to political change? The early stage of New York City's lesbian and gay liberation movement appears to be consistent with a new social movement interpretation. At the time, movement theorists stated explicitly that the battle was over ending oppressive gender roles and the restrictive categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality that inhibited everyone's true bisexual nature. Thus activists chose strategies that highlighted differences from the straight majority, seeing themselves as the embodiment of the liberation potential. Uncompromising strategies that reproduced the identity on which the movement was based and created participatory organizations took priority over goals of achieving

policy reform. Creating a sense that gay was good and should be expressed publicly, with pride, would not come through secretive meetings with city officials or concealing drag queens.

In Oregon, on the other hand, little emphasis was placed on creating democratic organizations. The goals in Eugene, Portland, and at the state level were to obtain narrow legal protections. Rather than focus on mobilization, the PTC hired a lobbyist to advocate for the new antidiscrimination legislation. The comparison of Oregon to New York City suggests that newly emerging social movements will only emphasize differences through expressive tactics to the extent that they lack access to the polity and a strong organizational infrastructure.

Political access and differing resources explain in part the different orientations of the Oregon and New York City activists to cultural and legal change. In New York City, activists faced a closed polity. New York State retained an antisodomy statute, which effectively criminalized the status of being lesbian or gay and was used to justify police entrapment and bar raids. The New York City police routinely used violence to quell peaceful lesbian and gay demonstrations and were unresponsive to lesbians and gay men who were the victims of violence.

Lesbians and gay men needed to become a political minority. To do so, they had to increase visibility at the expense of losing short-term policy battles. Influenced as well by other contemporary movements (e.g., the Civil Rights, New Left, and feminist movements) activists had little to lose and much to gain by radical political action. Although deploying identity for critique may have had long-term political benefits, many saw the goal of a political battle in terms of empowering the lesbian and gay communities. In short, the political battle was an opportunity to create a cultural shift in sensibilities among lesbians and gay men (Marotta 1981).

Despite the importance of the political context, it was in interactions with the state that identities were formed and

deployed. Although activists' analysis of the relationship between political and cultural change – either that political campaigns served the purpose of empowering activists or that political reforms would enable cultural change – produced and reinforced critical identities, negative interactions with the state entrenched an oppositional dynamic. The New York City Council's initial refusal to hold public hearings, in addition to the police repression that included the attack on demonstrators outside Sharison's building, cemented the antagonistic relationship between activists and the state. Because organizations were inclusive and the lesbian and gay social movement sector was relatively undifferentiated, a cultural critique could only be expressed in the political realm. There was nothing about the movement per se that dictated the deployment of critical identities. Activists' interpretations of the relationship between culture and politics and the types of identities deployed were contingent on interactions with the state.

A second part of the formation of a critical identity was the absence of an organized opposition. Because opposition was routine, lesbians and gay men had only to define themselves against mainstream cultural views in order to criticize the dominant culture. Identities were constructed through interactions with the state, in the absence of organized third parties. In short, inclusive movement organizations, lack of access to the polity, negative interactions with the state, and routine opposition produced critical identities.

Activists in Oregon had greater resources than did activists in New York City, due in part to class and gender differences. The unique access to government officials facilitated by business connections enabled quick passage of local legislation and almost won passage of statewide legislation. Unlike GAA, the PTC had had mostly positive relations with state authorities in Portland, Eugene, and the state capitol. So after narrow losses in the state legislature, rather than respond in a critical way through dra-

matic demonstrations, the PTC approached Governor Robert Straub for redress. Had Governor Straub not been responsive to lesbian and gay demands, or, similarly, had the Eugene City Council initially rebuffed the gay activists, critical identities would have been deployed, as much in reaction to the elite gay leadership as to the state (which is what happened in Oregon more than a decade later).

Critical identities, however, were not deployed in Eugene, and success came easily as a result of political access and the low-key tactics of the gay activists. The elitist attitude and nonparticipatory stance of the gay leadership, however, created antagonisms between different lesbian and gay communities. But because interactions with the state had been positive, as shown by the bill's relatively quick passage, these tensions lay dormant. When newly organized religious right groups placed a referendum to repeal Eugene's lesbian and gay rights ordinance on the ballot, the dissension within the lesbian and gay communities made it difficult for them to present a united front, and the anti-lesbian and antigay referendum ultimately passed.

By the end of the 1970s, the lesbian and gay movement had undergone profound internal change. Activists no longer placed the same emphasis on challenging gender roles and the construction of heterosexuality in state-oriented lesbian and gay rights campaigns. As many have observed, an ethnic- or interest-group model that sought achievement of rights replaced the liberation model that sought freedom from constraining gender roles and sexual categories. Institutionalized, professionally led organizations often supplanted the grassroots groups of the early 1970s in leading campaigns directed at the state. The gay liberation fronts and the gay activists' alliances had all but disappeared. In addition to internal changes within the lesbian and gay movement, by the end of the 1970s the religious right emerged and worked to oppose all of the changes sought by lesbian and gay activists.

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The next section explains why these changes within the lesbian and gay movement occurred and what accounts for the continued variation in forms of collective action across the United States. Access to political decision makers produced identity for education, as in Vermont (figure 25.1, path 1). However, where exclusive groups faced organized opposition, as in Colorado, a mixed model of identity deployment was produced as marginalized groups within the lesbian and gay movement reacted to the lesbian and gay leadership and to the opposition (path 4b). In Oregon, exclusive leadership and intense opposition would later produce a mixed model (path 2b). But as activists realized that sustaining a prolonged campaign against the religious opposition required cooperation among diverse lesbian and gay communities, organizations became more inclusive and an educational model prevailed (path 1).

[...]

Implications

This approach to understanding the strategic deployment of identity has potential applications to other movements based on a shared characteristic. For example, the Southern Civil Rights movement that emerged in the 1950s followed path 1 as shown in figure 25.2. The complex organizational infrastructure of the South, which included black colleges, black churches, and even beauty parlors, provided a locus from which to organize (Morris 1984). Thus when federal policies began to change, leaders were able to mobilize from an existing base. Emergent, inclusive civil rights organizations underscored sameness rather than difference and sought concrete policy goals.

Over time, the focus on identity for education often gave way to identity for critique as the black power movement gained momentum (figure 25.2, path 3). According to Robert Scheer (1970, p. 202), black power, or "black *revolution* [is] the statement of an alternative system of values, the move to

acquire power to assert those values, and the express willingness to respond with revolutionary violence to the violence inherent in established power." By fostering an identity based on differences from the majority, black nationalism was a way to challenge dominant cultural values, to build communities, and to create revolutionary change. Leaders hoped that deploying critical identities based on perceived cultural differences would be a crucial step toward economic independence and political power.

I suggest that local variations in political access and organizational infrastructures, as well as the degree of exclusivity of African-American leadership would also account, in part, for the relative stress placed on deploying critical or educational identities. In short, local conditions (political access and the type of opposition) as well as the relationships among African-American political organizations should help explain the vicissitudes in the deployment of radical racial identities on the one hand and educational identities on the other.

When the feminist movement began to emerge in the 1960s, two activist factions were identified. Older professional women were appointed to state governmental commissions on the status of women created formal organizations and began to lobby (Evans 1979; Freeman 1984). What came to be known as the liberal wing of feminism stressed similarities to the majority, deployed identity for education (i.e., that there were no socially significant differences between men and women), and focused attention on gaining formal policy reforms (figure 25.2, path 1). Because of their political access, older feminists stressed similarities to men.

The other wing of the emergent feminist movement was dominated by college-age women. Lacking the political access of the older wing, and of course influenced by the New Left, these women stressed identity for critique and their activism followed a dramatically different path from that of the older wing (figure 25.2, path 3). The younger wing, which eventually became

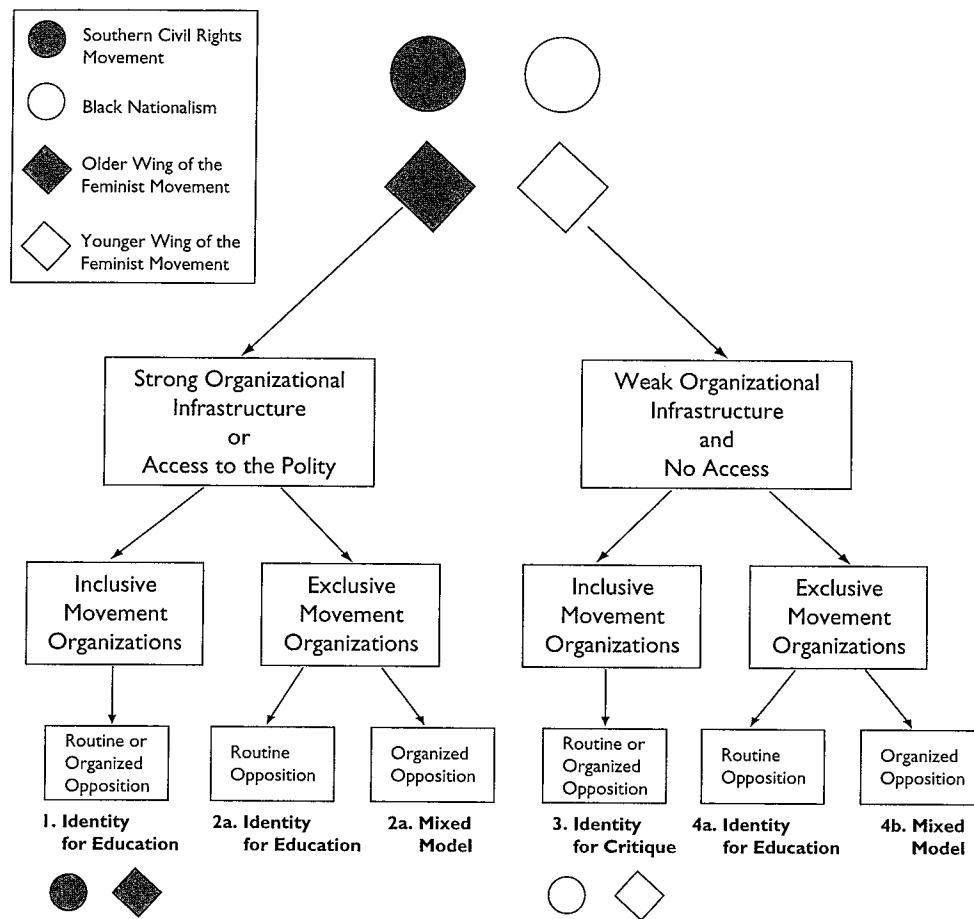


Figure 25.2 General model of identity deployment

identified with radical feminism, drew attention to "women's values" deriving from motherhood as a positive and distinct characteristic that set women apart from men in socially meaningful ways. Rather than devaluing these traits, critical female identities were deployed to criticize problematic manifestations of male dominance (such as violence and nuclear arms).

Reforming policy and challenging culture was a goal of both strategies. Suppressing differences to denaturalize categories such as "family" challenged the cultural underpinnings of existing policies based on an allegedly natural, gender-based public/private distinction. Stressing differences

was also a part of a broader project of normative challenge. Over time, the relative emphasis on stressing similarities or differences changed as local conditions varied.

This brief overview of the feminist and Civil Rights movements broadly suggests how the differing structural locations of the actors, the extent of political access, and the strength of the organizational base from which these movements could mobilize influenced the types of identities deployed. This cursory overview of the movements cannot (and is not meant to) capture their complexity, but only to suggest the importance of understanding identity deployment

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and *why* certain movements *appear to be* internally or externally directed, and why they seem to seek "instrumental" or "identity" goals.

[...]

Note

- 1 "Stonewall" refers to the 1969 riots that took place in New York City when patrons of the gay afterhours club, the Stonewall Inn, fought back during a police raid. The weekend of rioting that ensued sparked national publicity for the movement, and dozens of new gay liberationist organizations formed, accelerating the trend toward radicalism that had begun earlier in the 1960s.

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