12. CRISIS, COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY, AND THE GENERATION OF NEW ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS: THE TRANSFORMATION OF LESBIAN/GAY ORGANIZATIONS IN SAN FRANCISCO

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ABSTRACT

This paper argues that actors are more likely to create new organizational forms in contexts of collective creativity. Contexts of collective creativity are characterized by intense interaction, uncertainty, and a multiplicity of available cultural materials. The context of collective creativity provided by the New Left made possible the creation of new kinds of lesbian/gay organizations in San Francisco in the early 1970s. The political upheaval of the 1960s enabled the creation of a new political logic, the logic of identity politics, which, in turn, made possible the development of the gay identity politics that structured contemporary lesbian/gay organizations.

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> The organizational inventions that can be made at a particular time in history depend on the social technology available at that time (Stinchcombe, 1965, p. 153).

Recent research in organizational sociology indicates that institutional entrepreneurs draw on available cultural materials to establish new organizational forms (DiMaggio, 1988; Fligstein, 1993, 1996, 2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 1995; Rao, 1998; Rao, Morrill & Zald, 2000). While proponents of this emerging *cultural-frame institutional* [1] perspective agree on the importance of institutional entrepreneurs in the construction of new organizational forms, they conceive of the environment in fundamentally different ways.

Hayagreeva Rao, building on the work of Stinchcombe and others associated with the *constrained variation perspective*, views the environment in terms of "resource spaces" (Rao, 1998; Schumpeter, 1950; Stinchcombe, 1965). While Rao recognizes the importance of active framing efforts in the emergence of new organizational forms, he starts from the premise that the kinds of resources needed to create new organizational forms must either be available in the environment or produced by entrepreneurs. Demand for a new organizational form is conceptualized as a resource that entrepreneurs either draw upon or must create (Rao, 1998; Rao et al., 2000, p. 242).

In contrast, for Neil Fligstein, crisis, or "institution building moments," characterize environments conducive to the formation of new organizational forms. These new forms become possible when shifts in established distributions of power allow the emergence of new ways of responding to problems. The objective existence of resources does not explain how sometimes actors can see opportunities, while other times they cannot. The emergence of a resource space may not elicit new organizational forms in a context in which existing solutions are firmly institutionalized. In Fligstein's view, new organizational forms are not explained simply by the existence of actors with sufficient resources, but rather by actors with sufficient resources operating in a cultural context that facilitates organizational creativity.

In this article, I elaborate on Fligstein's insight that context shapes the likelihood that actors will be able to think creatively about how to mobilize existing resources in order to generate new organizational forms. Incorporating insights from cultural sociology, social movements, and the emerging literature on institutional change, I propose that *contexts of collective creativity* are characterized by the intersection of multiple cultural strains, dense interaction, and uncertainty of a kind that produces optimism about the possible success of alternatives.

To illustrate the analytical leverage of the concept of *contexts of collective creativity*, I use it to explain the emergence of a new organizational form:

lesbian/gay organizations in San Francisco in the early 1970s. This historical moment marks the origins of the kinds of lesbian/gay organizations that exist today. Some of these organizations focus on winning gay rights or electing pro-gay officials, such as the Alice B. Toklas Lesbian and Gay Democratic Club or the Lesbian Rights Alliance. Other organizations, such as Affirmation Gay/Lesbian Mormons, provide places for gay men and lesbians to worship. Still others focus on hobbies or socializing, such as Digital Queers or the San Francisco Tsunami Gay/Lesbian Swim Club. Organizations such GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) and the Gay Speakers Bureau of Northern California focus on changing heterosexual opinion through education and monitoring images of gays and lesbians in the media. These organizations share several defining features: they include explicit sexual identity terminology in their names; they affirm gay identity; and they employ a structure of gay plus one other function or identity.

Earlier homosexual organizations lacked the features that have come to characterize lesbian and gay organizations in the United States. Organizations founded in the 1950s and 1960s, like the Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, and the Society for Individual Rights, did not use explicit sexual identity terminology in their names. They did not even use the term "gay." They thought of themselves as "homosexual" or "homophile." These organizations did not privilege the affirmation of identity, and the organizations were quite general with respect to function. The "gay plus one" template did not exist.

Social movement scholars and historians of sexuality have interpreted the sharp change in the forms of gay organizations to be a direct consequence of the gay liberation movement. Perhaps because the connection between the political upheaval of the 1960s and new gay organizations has seemed so obvious, scholars have not fully unpacked precisely *how* the New Left gave rise to new forms of gay organization. While Mary Bernstein explains regional variation in lesbian/gay movement strategies in the post-1970 period, she takes for granted the existence of the repertoire of strategies for the political deployment of identity from which activists select (1997). My argument, by linking the emergence of a new organizational form with the transformation of the political logic informing the field, and explaining both the emergence of a new form and its associated logic, accounts for the creation of key pieces of the strategic arsenal available to post-1970 lesbian/gay activists. Insight into the transformation of organizational forms within the lesbian/gay movement greatly interests those studying sexuality and social movements, suggesting the potential payoff of a dialogue between social movement and organizational theorists (McAdam & Scott, 2001).

This article first defines *contexts of collective creativity* and shows how this concept contributes to a cultural-frame institutional perspective. After a brief discussion of the design of the research, I provide evidence that the transformation of lesbian/gay organizations in San Francisco can indeed be seen in terms of the emergence of a new organizational form. I show that the concept of resource spaces, as used in contemporary scholarship, does not fully account for the role of the environment in the formation of a new kind of lesbian/gay organizations. Historical data demonstrate that the role the New Left played provided a context of collective creativity that enabled the creation of a new logic. Gay activists both borrowed from and contributed to this new political logic. I conclude by arguing that an analysis of context can help explain the creation of other new organizational forms.

CONTEXTS OF COLLECTIVE CREATIVITY AND THE EMERGENCE OF NEW ORGANIZATIONAL FORMS

Features of the cultural milieu in which actors are embedded influence the likelihood that they will mobilize available resources to create new organizational forms. Actors are more likely to create new organizational forms in *contexts of collective creativity*, defined as situations which place actors in intense interaction with a rich variety of cultural materials to draw from and a high degree of uncertainity about the limits of what is possible.

Rao and his coauthors Calvin Morrill and Mayer Zald define "new organizational forms [as] new embodiments of goals, authority, technology, and client markets" (Rao, 1998, p. 912; Rao et al., 2000).[2] Rao, Morrill and Zald explain that "a new form dramatically differs from pre-existing forms when it is different in all four core features – goals, authority relations, technology, and served markets. Such new forms illustrate *strong speciation. . . . Weak speciation* occurs when the new form differs from existing ones only on one or two dimensions" (Rao et al., 2000, p. 242; Rao & Singh, Forthcoming).

Institutional logics are the background rules that justify organizational forms (Friedland & Alford, 1991). They provide the "formal and informal rules of action, interaction, and interpretation that guide and constrain decision makers. . . . These rules constitute a set of assumptions and values, usually implicit, about how to interpret reality, what constitutes appropriate behavior, and how to succeed" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804). While institutional logics are analytically separable from organizational forms, they evolve together (Haveman & Rao, 1997). Organizational forms are shaped by institutional logics. Organizational forms make institutional logics concrete and material. Change in organizational forms is driven by change in institutional logics, as organizations become isomorphic with dominant logics. Therefore, in order to explain organizational transformation it is necessary to trace the transformation of associated logics.

Recent research in organizational sociology on the generation of new organizational forms has focused on the elaboration of a *cultural-frame institutional approach*.[3] The emerging cultural-frame institutional approach criticizes *random variation perspectives* for neglecting to account for the content of innovation, and *constrained variation perspectives* for inadequate attention to the role of actors in building new forms (Rao, 1998, p. 913). A cultural-frame institutional perspective starts from the assumption that "the creation of all new organizational forms requires an institutionalization project wherein the theory and values underpinning the form are legitimated by institutional entrepreneurs" (Rao, 1998, p. 914). Actors create new organizational forms by combining existing cultural materials in innovative ways, through a kind of "bricolage" (Clemens, 1993; Clemens & Cook, 1999; Fligstein, 2001; Meyer & Rowan, [1977]1991; Rao, 1998, p. 917).

Fligstein and Rao understand the way the environment matters in the emergence of new organizational forms in quite different ways. The term resource spaces suggests an objectivist vision of the environment, similar to the population ecology notion of "niche" (Rao et al., 2000). In his analysis of the emergence of consumer watchdog organizations, Rao sees long-term structural changes as creating a new problem in need of a solution. In this case, "rising expenditures on consumer durables, mounting complexity of product choices, changes in the pattern of advertising, and lack of product liability rules" meant that consumers were faced with increasingly difficult decisions about what to buy (Rao, 1998, p. 924). That Rao's view of the environment is similar to that of the population ecology tradition is not surprising, given that both approaches built upon the foundation established by Stinchcombe's 1965 article (Hannan & Freeman, 1977). While this perspective demonstrates the necessity of resources and actors to mobilize them, it fails to explain why actors sometimes manage to do so and other times do not.

Fligstein argues that "conditions of power and uncertainty" determine the likelihood that actors will innovate (2001, p. 5). In his view, we would expect to see new organizational forms when fields are in crisis or under formation – when institutional logics are in flux. During these windows of opportunity, which he refers to as "institution-building moments," actors are more able to recognize opportunities and mobilize resources (Fligstein, 2001). New forms emerge not in direct response to new needs or the availability of resources, but because institutional crises make it possible for actors to imagine new solutions. The existence of an opportunity and potential resources does not mean that actors will think to exploit them.

I refer to *contexts of collective creativity* instead of *institution building moments* in order to distinguish explaining the generation of new organizational forms from explaining how new forms become institutionalized.[4] The term "collective creativity" is borrowed from William H. Sewell Jr.'s work on revolutionary France in which he theorizes that there are moments in which "cultural logics are elaborated more freely and applied to new circumstances" (1996, p. 867). I also rely on Ann Swidler's insight that how culture guides action varies by context. She suggests that culture is elaborated more in "unsettled times," when established strategies of action cease to be effective (1986, 2001). Contexts of collective creativity increase the likelihood that actors will combine cultural materials in novel ways. Contexts can be situated along a continuum from those extremely likely to produce new innovations to those extremely unlikely to produce new innovations. The more characteristics of a context of collective creativity a situation has, the more likely actors are to develop new organizational forms, and the more original the innovations are likely to be.

Social movement scholarship, cultural sociology, and new scholarship on institutional change provide insights into the specific features of these moments (Clemens & Cook, 1999; DiMaggio, 1997; DiMaggio & Powell, [1983]1991; McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1988; Schmidt, Forthcoming).[5] Contexts which facilitate collective creativity by skilled institutional entrepreneurs are characterized by: (1) Multiplicity, or the presence of multiple cultural models (Clemens & Cook, 1999; DiMaggio & Powell, [1983]1991); (2) Dense patterns of interaction (McAdam et al., 1988; Sewell, 1996, pp. 867–868); (3) Environmental uncertainty, particularly of a kind which engenders optimism (Fligstein, 2001; Sewell, 1996).

New organizational forms are built out of existing cultural materials. Innovation is limited by the quality and variety of cultural materials in the environment. According to Clemens and Cook, "The presence of alternatives ... facilitat[es] innovation through recombination – hybrid forms can emerge that combine various properties of competing models" (1999, p. 448). Clemens and Cook argue that institutional change is most likely when social heterogeneity is high and "social networks are fragmented and cross important social cleavages" (1999, p. 451). Stinchcombe contends that urbanization increased organizing capacity because "socially differentiated urban populations present alternatives to each other" (1965, p. 151). This view of the role of heterogeneity in the production of new organizational forms seems to counter social movement scholarship which has found that oppositional frames tend to emerge "among homogenous people who are in intense regular contact with each other" (Ferree & Miller, 1977, p. 34; McAdam et al., 1996, p. 9). However, it is possible that homogenous groups may be particularly creative when they have at their disposal a range of cultural models. The role of multiplicity may partially explain why innovations often seem to come from the margins. Being located between multiple fields may provide actors with particularly rich cultural materials.[6]

Social movement scholars have long been aware that density of interaction or "ecological concentration" contributes to the emergence of social movements, but they have seen density as primarily contributing to ease of recruitment (McAdam, 1982; McAdam et al., 1988; Zhao, 1998). Some social movement scholars have also argued that density of interaction contributes to the generation of oppositional movement frames (Ferree & Miller, 1977; Evans, 1979). William H. Sewell Jr. saw density as contributing to the creativity of events in France in 1789. He argued that "the clamorous and multi-sited public sphere that emerged in France in 1789 was a site of remarkable collective creativity. . . . The massing of bodies in space led to emotionally-charged cultural improvisations that determined the shape of future history" (1996, pp. 867–868). A relationship between density and cultural innovation has been observed in other areas of sociology. For example, Claude Fischer's subcultural theory of urbanism argues that the concentration of people characteristic of city life produces a variety of forms of unconventional behavior (1975, 1995).

Most of the time society is constituted by an interlocking network of fields, each organized by taken-for-granted rules. The institutionalized character of individual arenas and the collective weight of fields reinforcing one another limit both what is possible to think and possible to do. Actors usually have a good idea of what is possible and what is not. These perceived limits shape what people can even imagine wanting. The more stable the interlocking set of fields, the more limited is cultural creativity. In situations of crisis the environment becomes difficult to read, making it impossible to accurately assess the limits of the possible. When people question the established limits of the possible, the horizon of the possible itself changes. Thus, situations of high environmental uncertainty can produce great cultural creativity. In such contexts, actors may borrow cultural elements from unexpected places and combine them in novel ways. Sewell argues that,

> Dislocation of structures . . . produces in actors a deep sense of insecurity, a real uncertainty about how to get on with life. I think that this uncertainty is a necessary condition for the kind of collective creativity that characterizes so many great historical events. In times of structural dislocation, ordinary routines of social life are open to doubt, the sanctions

> of existing power relations are uncertain or suspended, and new possibilities are thinkable. . . . In times of dislocation, . . . resources are up for grabs, cultural logics are elaborated more freely and applied to new circumstances, and modes of power are extended to unforeseen social fields (1996, p. 867).

The notion that uncertainty produces cultural innovation seems to contradict the claims of DiMaggio and Powell. They have argued that uncertainty heightens organizational isomorphism because risk-averse organizations rely even more heavily on established organizational models (DiMaggio & Powell, [1983]1991, p. 77). But DiMaggio and Powell also suggested that, "abrupt increases in uncertainty and ambiguity should" initially produce "brief periods of ideologically motivated experimentation," and only then produce isomorphism ([1983]1991, p. 77).[7]

The concept of contexts of collective creativity deepens our understanding of how political upheaval contributes to new organizational forms. It has been thought that political upheaval, or similar forms of crisis, stimulated the production of new organizational forms by "free[ing] resources for use in new combinations" (Romanelli, 1991, p. 92). However, political upheaval not only frees existing resources but also provides a context in which actors are able to create new cultural resources.[8] The ability of actors to create novel forms is constrained by the quality and diversity of the cultural materials on hand, by intensity of interaction, and by the solidity of related fields.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To illustrate how contexts of collective creativity make possible the creation of new organizational forms, I analyzed the role a particular context of collective creativity played in transforming organizational forms in one arena. Specifically, I show how the context of collective creativity provided by the New Left made possible the transformation of gay organizing from interest group to identity politics in San Francisco in the early 1970s. Like others who conduct in-depth analyses of particular cases (Haveman & Rao, 1997; Rao, 1998; Sewell, 1996), I treat the case as an "empirical example" which serves to "clothe my concept . . . with some detail" (Sewell, 1996, p. 844). This research follows in a tradition of historical research on the origins of institutions and organizational forms (Clemens, 1997; Haveman & Rao, 1997; Rao, 1998; Schmidt, Forthcoming). This approach starts from the premise that "social process is inherently important in the constitution of institutions" (Fligstein, 2001, p. 15).

A systematic database of all the lesbian/gay organizations existing in San Francisco from the years 1950 to 1994 forms the core of the data set on which this study was based.[9] I constructed the data set from coding mentions of organizations in periodicals, resource guides, and directories for all years. This data set both provided a systematic record of the forms of organization extant at each point in the history of the field and suggested the contours of the institutional logics guiding the production of individual organizations.

After constructing the data set, I attempted to produce a description of how the whole set of organizations changed over time. Like journalist Frances FitzGerald, who described the experience of watching the San Francisco Lesbian/Gay Freedom Day Parade as akin to watching "a confusion of categories something like that of Borges's Chinese list," initially I could not grasp the underlying organizing principles ([1981]1986, p. 32). Eventually I realized that if I separated the organizations into three distinct groups, roughly associated with their year of birth, I could discern order in the chaos. This grouping allowed me to see that organizations formed in 1972 resembled those formed in 1992 more than they resembled those formed in 1968. There was a sharp shift in the logic structuring lesbian/gay organizations in the early 1970s. I was surprised to discover how abrupt and thorough the change in organizational form was.

While the organizational database provided a systematic record of change, archival and secondary sources provided the crucial contextual information that substantiated the shift in logic. My use of archival documents and secondary materials can be seen as parallel to Thornton and Ocasio's use of interviews with key people in the publishing industry (1999). Resource guides and newspapers provided crucial documentation of the way people understood their activities at particular moments in time. Successful institutionalization projects often produce a collective amnesia about their recent origins and possible alternatives (Clemens, 1997; Schmidt, Forthcoming). It is imperative to be skeptical of accounts constructed after the fact.

FROM INTEREST GROUP TO IDENTITY POLITICS

The Case

The first public homosexual organizations in the United States were formed in the 1950s (D'Emilio, 1983; Licata, 1981; Marotta, 1981; Martin & Lyon, 1991).[10] This was hardly an auspicious moment for progressive organizing in the United States. Widespread anti-Communism and the campaigns of Senator Joe McCarthy produced fear, suspicion, and isolationism among left social movements (Rupp & Taylor, 1990, p. 139). Anti-Communists assumed that homosexuals were particularly vulnerable to betraying their country and targeted them for repression (D'Emilio, 1983; Johnson, 1994–1995).

The repressive context did not change the fact that by the 1950s large-scale historical processes had created a homosexual group consciousness centered on bars, motorcycle clubs, and private social groups.[11] Further, a substantial number and variety of interest group organizations devoted to civil rights and anti-discrimination causes existed, such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the National Woman's Party, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Public homosexual organization was born out of the desire to extend the rights granted to other groups to an increasingly self-conscious constituency.[12]

After brief experimentation with secretive structures borrowed from Communist organizations, homophile organizations modeled themselves on public non-profit organizations. Homophile activists felt that adopting conventional organizational forms, particularly winning legal incorporation, would build legitimacy for their cause. Homophile activist Marvin Cutler boasted in 1956 that the Mattachine Society was "incorporated under the strict requirements of California law, to insure impeccable propriety and civic non-partisanship at all times" (p. 10). Activists hoped to improve life for homosexuals by educating the mainstream public. Bernstein explains, "homophile activists would educate professionals (particularly medical professionals) about the realities of homosexuality; those professionals would in turn advocate for changes in state policies on behalf of homosexuals" (1997, p. 543). They adopted names that conveyed little explicit information about sexual identity, such as the Society for Individual Rights, the Daughters of Bilitis, and the Mattachine Society.

Usually dated from the Stonewall riots that took place in New York in late June 1969, gay liberation had been underway in San Francisco since at least April.[13] Often treated as merely an outgrowth of the New Left, gay liberation was deeply influenced by the pre-existing homophile movement (D'Emilio, 1983; Duberman, 1993). Contemporary accounts focus on gay liberation as the source of a politics of gay pride, but at the peak of the movement gay liberation saw itself as part of a broader New Left coalition bringing about a revolutionary transformation of society (D'Emilio, 1983; Jay & Young, [1972]1992; Kissack, 1995). Building gay identity was seen as merely a step toward eliminating sexual identity categories altogether (Altman, 1993; Seidman, 1993).

Like the rest of the New Left, radical gay liberation fell into disarray in 1970 (D'Emilio, 1992; Humphreys, 1972). It was in this chaotic moment of rapidly contracting political opportunities that the gay movement crystallized in its current form. Many scholars have remarked upon the transformation of gay liberation from a radical movement into one focused on identity building and gay rights (Altman, 1982; Bernstein, 1997; Epstein, 1987; Escoffier, 1985; Gamson, [1995]1998; Seidman, 1993; Vaid, 1995). Affirming gay identity and celebrating diversity replaced societal transformation as goals, marking the origins of a *gay identity movement.* This shift in logic sparked the proliferation of diverse new gay organizations. These new organizations had more specific titles, reflecting a continuously unfolding variety of new identities, such as Gay Asian Pacific Alliance, Straights for Gay Rights, Gay American Indians, and the Bay Area Bisexual Network (*San Francisco Bay Times*, 1995). Organization names now included elaborate identity information and represented specialized subidentities. This turn toward identity building was accompanied by rapid political consolidation and the explosive growth of a commercial subculture oriented around sex. For the first time, gay organizations agreed upon a national gay rights agenda and moved aggressively to pursue common goals in the political arena.

Change in Institutional Logic and Organizational Form

Delving more deeply into the changing character of the lesbian/gay movement revealed a fundamental transformation in the organizational forms and underlying logics guiding lesbian/gay politics in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. Homosexual organizations were molded by institutional logics, or what can be seen as *theories of social change* (Haveman & Rao, 1997). Before 1969 organizations were shaped by an *interest group political logic*, while gay organizations founded after 1970 reflected an *identity political logic*. In this section, I describe the characteristics of these two logics and show how the organizations embodied them.

As a theory of social change, interest group politics presumes that society is basically just and composed of a network of competing interest groups.[14] Groups need to advocate for their own interests in order to redress discrimination and ensure adequate protection of civil rights. When a group represents its interests through forming a unified bloc, it may work to reform existing policy through such established channels of democratic society as lobbying and electoral politics. In contrast, identity politics presumes that the fundamental problem of society is aliention.[15] People are blocked from expressing themselves in an authentic manner. The goal of social change is to reduce alienation by making society more connected and meaningful. While interest group politics suggests lobbying for legislative change, identity politics suggests that creating and expressing alternative selves is the way to achieve change. The transformation of individuals and the development of authentic personal relationships are the building blocks of an authentic society.

These logics have quite different implications for organizational form, leading organizations emerging from the two perspectives to be strongly speciated (see Table 1). Interest group and identity organizations differ in terms of goals. Interest group organizations seek to redress discrimination through reform of policy, while identity organizations seek to reduce alienation in society by increasing the possible range of self-expression. Interest group and identity organizations differ in terms of technology, that is, with respect to what the organizations actually do. Interest group organizations engage in lobbying and in electoral politics. Identity organizations focus on identity preservation, elaboration, celebration, and display. Interest group and identity organizations derive authority in different ways. Interest group organizations strive to be the one organization with the mandate to represent the interests of the whole constituency, producing competition between various contenders. Identity organizations derive legitimacy by persuading others that they are authentically expressing the identity of a particular subgroup, while at the same time successfully signaling membership in the larger identity group. Interest group politics defines its constituents as those who will benefit from the extension of rights, while identity politics defines its constituents as those who will benefit from a broadening in the range of possible forms of self-expression. These differences in logic tend to produce organizations with different structures. Interest group organizations tend to be large, professional, and bureaucratic. Identity politics organizations tend to be varied in form, but are frequently smaller, more informal, and egalitarian in structure.

That homophile activists attempted to engage in interest group politics is evident in the goals and structure of the organizations they built. Homophile organizations endorsed the notion that reform would come through the gradual change of existing institutions. Working from the interest group view that change comes from the top, they were particularly interested in the education of elite heterosexual groups, such as psychologists and lawmakers. The names and goals of these organizations suggest that homophile organizations were primarily interested in seeking rights and improving public opinion (i.e. Society for Individual Rights). Homophile organizations rarely included sexual identity terminology in their names. The most well known of homophile organizations founded in the 1950s and 1960s (such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis) used names with special meaning to insiders, but that did not reveal the sexual

Table 1. Interest Group and Identity Political Logics.

	Interest Group	Identity
View of Society	Composed of interest groups	Alienated
Nature of the Problem	Discrimination	Authentic expression is blocked
Goal	Eliminate discrimination, reform policy, extend rights	Broaden range of expression, build positive identity and group culture
Strategy	Lobbying, electoral politics, political pressure	Prefigurative politics, identity display, cultural zaps
Source of Legitimacy	Claim to represent interests of whole constituency (producing organizational competition)	Claim to authentic expression of identity (producing cooperation)
Constituency	Group benefiting from expansion of rights	Groups and individuals benefiting from broadened possibilities for self-expression
Organizational Structure	Professional, bureaucratic, large	Varied, but typically small, informal, and egalitarian

identity of the organization to outsiders. If a reference to sexual identity did appear in an organizational name, as it did in one or two instances, it was "homophile" or "homosexual." While homophile activists saw the psychological costs of the oppression of homosexuals every day, they did not conceive of the problem or the solution in psychological or cultural terms. The homogenous and competitive nature of homophile organizations was also typical of interest group politics, as each new organization attempted to present itself as the one organization that could best represent the interests of all homosexuals.

The homophile movement had limited success in applying an interest group model. Given that in the 1950s and 1960s homosexuals barely constituted a group that could be said to have interests, this is not surprising. Interest group politics is most successful when an organization can claim to represent a large, unified, powerful constituency. Interest group politics provided homosexuals with a template for how to organize, but their constituency was not visible enough to produce interest group organizations able to impact policy. While Mattachine wanted to engage in "political action to erase from our law books the discriminatory and oppressive legislation presently directed against the homosexual minority," it spent most of its energies trying "to provide a consensus of principle around which all of our people can rally and from which they can derive a feeling of 'belonging'" (Cutler, 1956, p. 13). Homophiles could not simply represent an established constituency; they needed to first create one. Both the Mattachine Society and the Society for Individual Rights devoted themselves to unifying homosexuals and creating a community characterized by "dignity" and "self-respect" (*Vector*, 1964, December). They made more progress toward unifying the group than they did toward changing public policy. But these "unifying" and "educational" activities were limited as means to create public identity. Interest group politics did not provide a rationale for massive numbers of homosexuals to become visible to the mainstream of society, which was what was needed to create homosexuals as a large, visible constituency that could produce powerful interest group organizations.

The success of homophile interest group politics was further complicated by homosexual ambivalence about building a public identity (D'Emilio, 1983). Some activists were fully supportive of interest group politics and creating a public homosexual identity, while others, such as San Francisco Mattachine activist Hal Call, thought the idea of challenging laws and writing legislators was "absolutely futile" (Marcus, 1992, p. 65). Others wanted to improve the status of homosexuals through public organizing without creating homosexuals as an identifiable minority group. And still others felt that the well being of homosexuals would be protected by avoiding all public exposure and expanding spaces for homosexual socializing.

Just as interest group politics shaped homophile organizations, identity politics shaped organizations founded after 1970. The prevalence of an identity logic in the post-1970 gay movement is revealed by the founding of organizations whose central goal was the elaboration or display of identity; the use of explicit sexual identity in organization names; the proliferation of small, informal organizations connected to each other in an articulated fashion; and the functional and identity diversification of those organizations.

Centered on the gay liberation innovation of "coming out," gay identity organizations highlighted identity building, pride, and visibility. Many of the organizations formed after 1970 defined their missions around the elaboration, protection, and cultivation of gay identity. Such organizations included libraries, archives and history projects; newspapers, resource guides, and other periodicals; and committees that sponsored parades, street fairs, and film festivals. GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) (1989–) and GLBTHS (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Historical Society of Northern California) (1985–) were typical organizations of this kind. The GLBTHS described itself as an "independent, nonprofit, educational organization whose purpose was to collect and preserve historically significant materials that document the lives of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transsexuals." A gay/lesbian archive assumes that a group exists, that it has a history, and that the history is worth saving.

The notion that the goal of change was to broaden the range of lesbian and gay self-expression opened the door to organizational diversification in terms of both *function* and *identity*. New organizations began to define themselves in terms of the specific tasks they intended to accomplish, rather than as multipurpose organizations. This functional elaboration happened rapidly on many dimensions. Cultural, hobby, political, professional, relational, religious, sexual, social, and service organizations all proliferated wildly. Table 2 lists organizations representative of each of these types.

The names of these organizations followed a pattern. The explicit use of "gay," "lesbian," or other sexual identity label signaled that gay visibility was positive and that building gay identity was a desired end goal. The second dimension referred to the specific purpose of the organization. This second dimension could be either banal (i.e. gay postal workers) or rather transgressive (i.e. lesbians into S/M). The vast majority of this functional diversification was banal. While there were some organizations like the Safe Sex Leather Sluts, most organizations more closely resembled Federal Lesbians and Gays (FLAG), an organization of lesbian/gay Federal employees (1984–1994), or the San Francisco Hiking Club, an organization of lesbian/gay hikers (1984–). Banal functional diversification suggested that gay identity was, like a traditional ethnic identity, not just about sex, but also about work, family, worship, hobbies, and service.[16] The process of functional diversification generated an internal momentum. The creation of Dignity (1973–), an organization of lesbian/gay Catholics, suggested the need for a gay religious organization for every denomination. By 1994, 63 different lesbian/gay religious organizations had been formed in San Francisco, including organizations for Catholics, Episcopalians, Jews, Lutherans, Quakers, and Mormons.

Functional diversification was only one aspect of organizational diversification. Gay/lesbian organizations also diversified along the dimension of identity.

Table 2. Diversification of Gay Identity Organizations.

Functional Area	Representative Organization
Cultural	Bay Area Gay and Lesbian Bands
Hobby	San Francisco Tsunami Gay/Lesbian Swim Club
Political	Libertarians For Gay and Lesbian Concerns
Profession	Lesbians in Law (LIL), Hastings College of Law
Relational	Lesbians Planning to Parent
Religious	Presbyterians for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (PLGC)
Sex	Safe Sex Leather Sluts
Social	MAX (Men's Associated Exchange)
Service – General	Gay Medical and Dental Referral Service
Service – Specific	Alanon for Black Gay and Lesbian Adult Children of Alcoholics

Organizations exhibited increasingly elaborated and specific identities. Valuing authenticity created the expectation that organizational participation should involve feelings of comfort, affirmation, and recognition. When an organization failed to provide these feelings, people created organizations whose membership more closely reflected their identities.

The proliferation and diversification of gay organizations made sense within a political logic that defined expanding the gay world as the central goal of politics. A logic of interest group politics would have produced fewer, larger organizations. The gay movement understood the broadening of freedom of expression to apply to variation among gays, even if exposing this diversity reduced the plausibility that there existed enough shared gay experience to define a meaningful identity.

The presence of interest group organizations advocating for gay rights in the post-1970 era is consistent with the claim that the movement was structured around a politics of identity. While some individual organizations subordinated identity politics to interest group politics, their efforts were read within the larger frame of an identity movement. The pursuit of gay rights was treated as one legitimate way of expressing gay identity. Advocating a gay rights agenda helped bind together the group around a lowest common denominator set of shared political beliefs. Successfully achieving policy change was seen as highly desirable, but organizing for rights was seen as an end in itself because the process of organizing built and displayed gay identity.

The overall size of the field, and the kind of organizations dominating, changed dramatically over time (see Fig. 1). Before 1969 homophile organizations were the only kind of public homosexual organization. In 1971 and 1972 gay identity organizations began to outnumber homophile organizations. Gay identity organizations dominated after 1972 while other kinds of organizations fell by the wayside. Between 1969 and 1973 gay activists also produced gay liberation organizations. Gay liberation organizations sought radical social change and included explicit sexual identity information and proudly displayed gay identity. They signaled commitment to radical politics through the inclusion of "liberation" or "freedom" in their names.[17] The proliferation of gay identity organizations and the demise of homophile and gay liberation organizations meant that gay identity organizations rapidly came to define the field.

RESOURCE SPACES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF GAY ORGANIZATIONS

Work on the emergence of lesbian and gay identities has convincingly shown that long-term historical processes such as the rise of capitalism and increasing

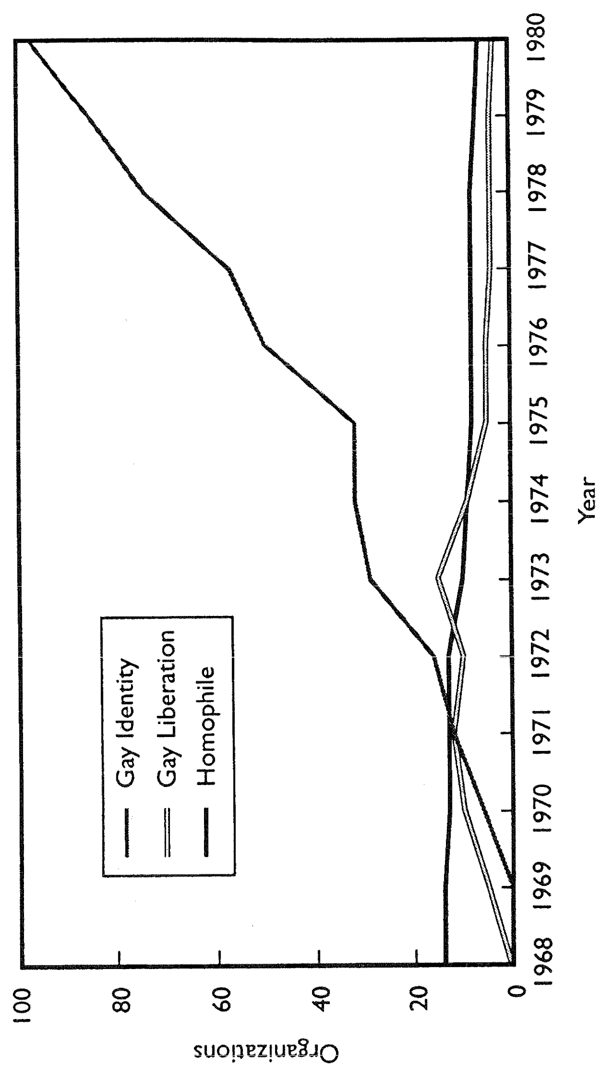

Fig. 1. Homophile, Gay Liberation, and Gay Identity Organizations in San Francisco, 1968–1980.

urbanization, and particular historical events such as World War II provided the conditions that made possible the development of homosexual social consciousness. Homosexual consciousness was a precondition for the emergence of public homosexual organizations (D'Emilio, 1983). However, new forms of gay organization cannot be fully accounted for by tracing the development of new resource spaces.

Such an approach cannot explain why homosexual activists initially attempted to organize using an interest group politics model and why they later adopted an identity politics model. Above we saw that the interest group model was of limited effectiveness for homosexuals in the 1950s and 1960s. Without a visible, powerful public constituency, they lacked the leverage needed to use this approach to achieve changes in policy. Why did they pursue policy change instead of concentrating on engaging in efforts to build the visibility of their constituency? Their situation begged for the identity politics that they adopted later. Had political logic and associated organizational form emerged as a direct response to an emerging problem, we would have expected homosexuals to employ identity politics earlier.

There are several possible explanations for why homosexual activists were slow to adopt the approach best suited to their problem. Mary Bernstein discusses these explanations in an important article on lesbian/gay movement strategy (1997). She argued that early homophile organizations did not adopt the culturally confrontational identity building strategies later adopted by New York City's Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) because of differences in organizational form. She describes early homophile organizations as "exclusive" and gay liberation organizations as "inclusive," and argues that these differences shaped movement strategy. This argument assumes that decisions about organizational form are made prior to decisions about strategy. In contrast, I argue that organizational form and strategy are deeply connected, and both flow from political logic. Whether or not organizations have an inclusive or exclusive structure is a strategic decision. Homophile activists formed exclusive organizations at least partially *because* their orientation to influencing elite groups led them to be leery about mass membership. Similarly, the inclusive organizations of gay liberation flowed from an approach focusing on identity transformation. Appealing to differences in organizational form does not convincingly account for why homophile activists did not engage in confrontational identity politics. Further complicating the story is that SIR San Francisco's dominant homophile organization, was not an exclusive organization, but was a large participatory organization. This organization simultaneously attempted to engage in interest group politics and to build a mass membership through providing fun and meaningful activities for homosexuals.

Bernstein presented another possible explanation for the difference between homophile and gay liberation movements: the widely accepted argument that the nature of the movement changed and "became more public" as "social strictures against homosexuality loosened" (1997, p. 543). This argument assumes that the environment blocked the expression of a politics of identity until *precisely* the moment that it erupted and that the demand for a public politics of gay visibility existed *prior* to the moment when it emerged. Homophile organizations did not employ a politics of public visibility because a repressive environment made such a politics far too risky. Interest group politics provided a less risky strategy in a hostile environment.

This is also not a satisfying explanation for why homophile activists did not engage in identity politics. Bernstein herself undermines this explanation. She suggests that a confrontational identity politics is what one would expect in a hostile, repressive environment, while one would expect to see interest group politics emerge in more open political environments where the likelihood of effective policy change is higher. She sees the radical identity politics of New York's Gay Activists' Alliance as a direct response to the "closed polity" activists faced, with an "antisodomy statute . . . [which was] used to justify police entrapment and bar raids" (Bernstein, 1997, p. 546). According to Bernstein, "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" (1997, p. 547). Bernstein argues that when groups lack institutional support and political consciousness, they will concentrate on identity for empowerment and community growth. Thus, if political strategy was indeed elicited by the immediate political environment, we would have expected to see identity politics emerge earlier in New York.

Embedded in Bernstein's analysis is the hint of a third explanation for why homophile activists did not engage in confrontational identity politics. In her discussion of the use of identity politics by the New York Gay Activists' Alliance in 1971, Bernstein argues that "activists borrowed freely from the tactics of other movements" and that gay activists were "influenced as well by other contemporary movements" (1997, pp. 545, 547). These suggestive comments hint at the answer to the puzzle: homosexual activists did not engage in identity politics before 1969 because such an approach was not in their organizational repertoire. Homophile activists attempted to use interest group politics because it was the most viable approach available. When a politcial model better suited to address their problem became available, activists appropriatied it and refined it to meet their specific needs. Because identity politics addressed the problem of creating a visible, public constituency, its impact was immediate and dramatic.

Thus, explaining the transformation of lesbian/gay organizations means explaining the construction of a new political logic. To explain the sudden expansion of the repertoire of organizational forms available to homosexual organization builders, we need to delve into the New Left and explore how it allowed activists, including homosexual activists, to create new organizational resources.

CONTEXT AND THE CREATION OF IDENTITY POLITICS

The New Left as a Context of Collective Creativity

The 1960s were a time of great cultural and political upheaval in the United States. The events of the 1960s threw multiple fields into crisis simultaneously. The generalized nature of the cultural crisis called into question the rules of multiple arenas. Debra Minkoff describes, "an open environment for social action that was (and is) unmatched in U.S. history" (1999, p. 1669). Todd Gitlin, who was deeply involved in the New Left, and who has spent a substantial amount of effort delving into the meaning and significance of the movement, describes "the hallucinatory giddiness of the late Sixties . . . whose sheer wildness, even now, seems the stuff of another century . . . people were living with a supercharged density: lives were bound up with one another, making claims on one another, drawing one another into the common project" (1987, p. 7). He describes how the feeling of possibility expanded the boundaries of the thinkable, producing "unraveling, rethinking, refusing to take for granted, thinking without limits . . ." (Gitlin, 1987, p. 7). Wini Breines, also an activist, echoes Gitlin's description of the moment: "we believed that we were going to make a revolution. We were convinced that we could transform America through our political activity and insights. . . . A deep enthusiasm characterized our faith in our own political and social power. . . . The new left opened everything to scrutiny" (1989, pp. xxi–xxi).

This period was composed of countless smaller contexts, varying by geography and by the temporal development of interrelated movements. In the late 1950s and early 1960s most of the action was associated with the Civil Rights Movement in the south. After Freedom Summer, the movement headed northward. The Free Speech Movement dominated the Berkeley campus in the fall of 1964 (McAdam, 1988). The energy and dynamism of the movement became more generalized between 1964 and 1967. SNCC turned to Black Power in June of 1966 (D'Emilio, 1983, p. 224). Between 1968 and 1970, the white student movement "grew exponentially" (Breines, 1989, p. xvi). Gitlin tells us that "by July 1969 the Los Angeles *Free Press* sold 95,000 copies a week, the *Berkeley Barb* 85,000, the *East Village Other* 65,000 – all up from 5,000 or fewer in 1965" (1987, p. 343). But then the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) "burned up and out in a spectacular fashion" in 1969 and 1970 (Echols, 1992, p. 22). Scholars point to events such as the "February 1970 Greenwich Village townhouse explosion" and the Kent State killings later that year to mark the end of the moment (Echols, 1992, p. 23; Gitlin, 1987; Humphreys, 1972).

While the quest for personal authenticity has been a recurring preoccupation within American culture, this concern was particularly evident within the New Left (Rossinow, 1998). Young people were interested in achieving personal fulfillment, and critical of a society that they saw as alienating. New Left documents suggest the centrality of this search for authenticity. The *Port Huron Statement*, a foundational document of the New Left, proposed in 1962 that the "goal of man and society should be . . . finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic" (Miller, 1987, p. 332).

Young people identified the bureaucratic organization of society as core to this alienation. This theme was central to the Berkeley Free Speech Movement in the fall of 1964. Students saw the university as "a faceless and inhumane bureaucracy" (Breines, 1989, p. 24). Activists generalized this critique of large bureaucratic organizations to all organizations, even their own. Breines explains that: "the fear that bureaucracy and centralized organization took on lives of their own and subverted original goals was responsible for the movement's wariness of even its own political organization" (1989, p. 25).

In a more ordinary moment people might have simply agreed that a certain amount of individual repression was acceptable in order to achieve collective goals. But this was no ordinary moment. In this moment repression of the individual seemed both unacceptable and unnecessary. It seemed possible to achieve collective goals without suppressing individuality. The notion that social change could occur without conventional organization was made plausible by the fact that for a brief moment it was. Collective action seemed to happen with relatively little intentional organization. Wini Breines describes how this was possible in her discussion of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement: "No central political organization was responsible for popular mobilization. People participated because the issues struck a chord, because many students believed in FSM's principles, and because they were generally both dissatisfied and hopeful" (1989, p. 29).

In this case, "a political movement [was] created by thousands of individuals who [said] 'no' to the structures and politics of the dominant society" (Breines, 1989, p. 23). Individuals acted directly instead of achieving goals through building a representative organization. Thus, the notion that large-scale structural changes could be achieved through the spontaneous expression of shared sentiment became plausible.

The combination of placing a high value on authentic connection and believing that strategies that allowed individual expression could be effective led to creative experimentation with ways of doing politics. This experimentation produced a form of politics that Breines refers to as "prefigurative politics" (1989). By this she meant that social relationships within the movement "prefigured," or served as a model for, the just and authentic society envisioned. Creating the conditions for individuals to express themselves, and to form authentic connections became both a means to an end and an end in itself. Activists felt that movement participation should be personally fulfilling, not simply altruistic. They envisioned a model of social change in which there was a synergistic relationship between the meeting of the needs of individuals and the pursuit of collective goals.

Flirtation with the New Left, 1964–1968

In spite of the growing energy of the New Left, homosexual activism remained "curiously detached" from it until the very end of the 1960s (D'Emilio, 1983, p. 224; Duberman, 1993, p. 170). Homosexual politics was not easily seduced by the energy of the New Left. John D'Emilio points to the resistance of homophile leadership (1983, pp. 227–231). This resistance may have been the other side of the stubborn, passionate devotion to the homosexual cause that enabled homophile activists to sustain a movement in the difficult 1950s and early 1960s. Because the costs of involvement had been so high, homophile activists tended to be those unlikely to be distracted from their exclusive commitment to advancing the cause of homosexuals.[18] In addition, the New Left was predominately a youth movement, with centers on college campuses, while the homophile movement had discouraged the participation of young people in order avoid accusations of pedophilia. Also, particularly before the emergence of women's liberation, but even afterwards, a macho, heterosexist, and homophobic culture characterized the New Left (Echols, 1989, 1992; Evans, 1979; Gitlin, 1987).

Even so, the new movements fascinated homophile activists in the years between 1964 and 1968. The New Left concern with authenticity resonated with the situation of homosexuals. Activists were particularly interested in the Black Power movement and its focus on issues of pride, individual self-esteem, and authenticity. L.A. Kauffman explained, "Black Power's primary thrust was to place the redefinition and affirmation of the black self at the core of its politics" (1990, p. 70). In June 1968, homophile activist Frank Kameny described his reaction to Stokely Carmichael's position and what he thought this meant for homosexuals:

> The other day, on television, I saw Stokely Carmichael before a group of Negroes chanting: "Black is Beautiful." To a Negro, living in a society in which "white," "snow," "purity," and "good" are all equated together, and "black," "evil," "darkness," "dirt," and "ugliness" are all equated together, Carmichael's tactic is understandable, necessary, and desirable. Within our somewhat different framework, we need the same kind of thing (Marotta, 1981, p. 62).

This new concern with the psychological well being of individual homosexuals provoked a reassessment of the costs and benefits of privacy about sexual identity. During the homophile period, a few individuals publicly identified as homosexual in order to demonstrate to heterosexual society the positive qualities of homosexual people. These individuals defined themselves and were defined by others as courageous martyrs, sacrificing their reputations to the cause (D'Emilio, 1983, p. 235). They were not seen as gaining any particular psychological benefit from their public revelation.

The emphasis on self-esteem and pride, however, suggested the possibility that public revelation of sexual identity might have personal psychological rewards. Homophile activists began to worry about the psychological toll of privacy, began to define it as "lying," and to claim that it contributed to internalized self-hatred, as this 1966 *Vector* article reveals:

> We lie so that we may live. Whether it is to our boss, or the draft board, or the civil service, we rarely can afford to divulge the simple truth of our homosexuality. But this is merely the beginning. Lying begets lying: we have to cover up for so many of our activities and doings that we find ourselves in a mire of untruths. . . . (The rare homosexual who volunteers the fact that he is gay learns fast enough the toll straight society can exact for telling the truth) (*Vector*, 1966, January, p. 1).

Concealing sexual identity became seen as a barrier to the development of self-acceptance and dignity that homophile activists saw blacks acquiring. That the definition of privacy as lying was immediately followed in this 1966 article by a reminder of the high stakes of public revelation was typical of the ambivalence of the late homophile period.

Concealment was viewed as lying and a source of low self-esteem, but disclosure was viewed as too risky. A statement by Don Collins in 1969 captures the fundamental ambivalence and contradictions that plagued the homophile movement:

> It is not necessary to carry a banner proclaiming one's sexual orientation.. . . However, there is no reason to subvert one's life style or create elaborate facades attempting to disguise an individual life style (*Vector*, 1969, October).

Of course, carrying banners proclaiming sexual identity was *precisely* what gay liberationists would proclaim to be absolutely imperative.

Collision: 1969

Homosexual politics was swept up into the New Left in 1969. As the student movement grew exponentially in the late 1960s the gap between homophile and student politics narrowed, making it possible for nimble activists to move between these movements. Gay liberation was the result of the encounter between two distinct cultural and political traditions. While the homophile movement had observed the 1960s from a distance, a new cohort of activists saw gay liberation as a piece of a larger political agenda (Kissack, 1995).

In San Francisco, the individual most responsible for closing the gap between the movements was Leo Laurence, a reporter for San Francisco's KGO radio station and a young Bay Area homosexual who was sent to Chicago to cover the 1968 Democratic convention (D'Emilio, 1983; Duberman, 1993, p. 171). He returned to San Francisco with ambitions to radicalize homosexual organizing. He began his campaign by publishing a piece in the newsletter of the Society for Individual Rights (SIR) in January 1969 entitled "My Boss Knows." He asserted pride in an open gay identity: "at work, they now know that I'm a homosexual, and frankly, I feel more like a man than ever before because of it" (*Vector*, 1969, January). Laurence had clearly departed from homophile waffling about public revelation.

In March 1969 the *Berkeley Barb* published a photo displaying a bare-chested Gayle Whittington embraced by his lover Leo Laurence, accompanied by a story about their relationship (Teal, 1995, p. 30). The photograph and article got Whittington fired from his position as a file clerk with States Steamship Lines (Teal, 1995, p. 30). Unsuccessful at radicalizing SIR, and with a grievance to protest, Laurence and Whittington formed the Committee for Homosexual Freedom. On April 9, 1969, the Committee for Homosexual Freedom, "made up of hippie-radical young gays, some of them also SIR members," began picketing the States Steamship Lines's headquarters (Stryker & Van Buskirk, 1996, p. 53; Teal, 1995, p. 30).

Creativity: Authenticity, Organization, and Coming Out

Skirting on the borders of the New Left provided homophile activists with the materials needed to rethink the meaning of privacy about sexual identity. Full participation in the New Left intensified this emerging interest in authenticity and made activists think that individual political action could be highly efficacious. The context facilitated the application of the various ideas of the New Left to the homosexual situation, giving rise to the most important contribution of gay liberation – the political strategy of "coming out." Coming out does not simply refer to the public revelation of sexuality. It depended upon the assumptions of an identity politics theory of social change. The strategy assumes that personal authenticity is of the utmost importance. Privacy about sexual identity is seen as unhealthy and dishonest, and exposure of sexual identity as therapeutic. Collective visibility becomes a primary goal of gay liberation. Individual revelation of sexual identity contributes to collective visibility and is an important, effective, political act (D'Emilio, 1983, p. 235). Gay men and lesbians should come out not only for their own mental health, but because they owe it to their gay brothers and sisters. Staying "closeted" indicates not only poor mental health but political betrayal.

Above we saw that late in the homophile period activists began to see privacy about sexual identity as lying, but they still considered the consequences of revelation to be worse than the psychological harm from lying. Full immersion in the New Left suddenly and dramatically reversed this calculus. Gay liberationists used dramatic language to highlight their assessment of the costs of secrecy and the benefits of revelation. Gay lib activist Gayle Whittington explained the price of concealing sexual identity: "Liberation will come when total honesty is no longer repressed. Anything less than total honesty is slavery" (*Vector*, 1970, April, 27). That he equated secrecy with "slavery" reveals the high value placed on personal authenticity. In 1972, gay liberationist Martha Shelley argued that poor self-esteem resulting from secrecy was worse than the repression that exposure sometimes provoked:

> Understand this – that the worst part of being a homosexual is having to keep it *secret*. Not the occasional murders by police or teenage queer-beaters, not the loss of jobs or expulsion from schools or dishonorable discharge – but the daily knowledge that what you are is so awful that it cannot be revealed (Shelley, [1972]1992, p. 32).

That Shelley defined secrecy as "the worst part" of homosexual oppression reveals the dramatic way involvement in the New Left changed the meaning of secrecy. Just a few years before activists had been more concerned with the consequences of exposure, such as harassment by police and loss of employment, than by the psychological toll of secrecy.

Gay liberation tightened that connection between honesty and psychological health by describing the euphoria associated with public revelation. Activist Lois Hart described her personal experience in the first issue of *Come Out!*:

> There is no question that you will feel more whole and happier when you can be who you are all of the time. This is no easy thing, I know. It took me until age 32 to finally give

> in to myself and though it felt at the time that I was losing everything (the good opinion and sanction of this society from my family right on up to any career dreams I have had), I have in truth gained the whole world. I feel at a loss to convey to you right now what that means. I can just say that I have never felt better in my life. I know now in retrospect that I only began to be really alive when I was able to take that step (*Come Out!* November 15, 1969, p. 2, quoted in Marotta, 1981, p. 102).

In similar fashion, another gay liberation leader explained:

> There came a point when I just stopped running. I wasn't going to flee from my tormenters anymore. I turned and faced them - stood my ground - and told them to go fuck themselves! Man, that was like breathing for the first time! (Humphreys, 1972, p. 142).

The intensity of the energy around the notion of authenticity, when applied to the situation of homosexuals, led to a reconceptualization of the goals of homosexual politics from achieving individual rights "toward creating a society and a world in which we will all be free to be ourselves" (*Gay Activist*, 1971, quoted in Humphreys, 1972, pp. 126–127).

It was through full participation in the New Left that activists came into contact with the idea that individual revelation of gay identity could contribute to political change in and of itself. The notion of individual political efficacy led naturally to politicizing individual acts of revelation of sexual identity. Every person who came out improved life for all other gay people. Remaining "closeted," then, logically indicated not only poor mental health but also a cowardly betrayal of one's gay brothers and sisters. This perspective is evident in this passage from Carl Wittman's "Gay Manifesto":

> To pretend to be straight sexually, or to pretend to be straight socially, is probably the most harmful pattern of behavior in the ghetto. If we are liberated we are open with our sexuality. Closet queenery must end. Come out (Wittman, [1972]1992, p. 334).

Coming out was the result of the encounter between the homophile movement and the new theory of social change created within the New Left. The creativity of this moment of political upheaval made it possible for activists within the New Left to develop this new political logic. The characteristics of this moment were also responsible for drawing homophile politics into the mix, and for providing a context in which the extension of these ideas to the homosexual situation was a natural connection.

Gay Liberation's Contributions to Identity Politics

"Coming out" is the signature contribution of American gay liberation. This innovation has been diffused throughout American culture and the world. But coming out was not the only contribution of gay liberation. Once the gay movement became part of the New Left, it also contributed to the creativity of that moment. While not the sole author of structureless organizations or consciousness-raising groups, gay liberationists were there at ground zero experimenting with these alternative forms of organization (Teal, 1995, p. 145). Further, gay liberation was one of the key sources of the strategy of the "cultural zap."

Zaps were carefully staged, often highly theatrical, political confrontations. They "combined consciousness-raising tactics with politicizing and pressuring tactics" (Marotta, 1981, p. 185). They were particularly useful in targeting the media, which was seen as a crucial player in shaping gay identity, but difficult to attack politically. The goals were to vividly reveal the antigay attitudes of individual politicians or corporations and to insert a positive gay perspective into public view. While policy change was desirable, visibility was the primary goal. For example, in response to antigay remarks made on "The Dick Cavett Show," activists demanded equal time on the show. Activists forced the issue by threatening to disrupt taping of the program. When it became evident that GAA activists would do just that, Cavett agreed to let two GAA members appear on the show (Marotta, 1981, p. 186).

Another example of an early zap was organized by the Gay Activists Alliance in New York in response to an offensive September 1970 *Harper's* article by Joseph Epstein (Marotta, 1981, pp. 181–185). The goal of Pete Fisher, and the other GAA activists organizing the zap, was "to make an impression not only on *Harper's* but on the whole literary establishment, and to win the support of homosexuals, liberals, and others sensitive about freedom of the press" (Marotta, 1981, p. 182). After *Harper's* refused to publish an article rebutting the article, the GAA organized a sit-in of *Harper's* on October 27. The activists set up a table serving coffee and doughnuts in the reception area, leafleted every desk, and introduced themselves to *Harper's* employees saying: "Good morning, I'm a homosexual. We're here to protest the Epstein article. Would you like some coffee?" (Marotta, 1981, pp. 183–184) The "zap" as a political strategy was made thinkable by an identity political logic – it required activists to be able to see broadening of the range of cultural expression as a political goal.

Once cultural tools are invented, they no longer depend on the conditions of their founding. Identity politics became thinkable as a result of the context of collective creativity created by the New Left. The assumptions of identity politics are reflected in a variety of features of post-1970 gay organizations. The notion that the problem was alienation and the solution visibility supported inclusion of sexual identity in names. Creating organizations whose major goal is the building of gay identity is motivated by an identity political logic which views the solution to homosexual oppression in terms of cultural visibility and the creation of infrastructure for gay life. Organizational diversification makes sense within the identity logic notion that organizing broadens the range of possible forms of expression.

This moment of collective creativity was over by 1970. Explaining what happened when this moment ended and the processes through which some innovations survived, while others did not, is beyond the scope of this paper.[19]

CONCLUSION

This study builds on the insight that new organizational forms are built by institutional entrepreneurs out of available cultural materials. The ability of actors to become institutional entrepreneurs is conditioned by the degree to which the context facilitate collective creativity. Contexts characterized by dense interaction, uncertainty, and the intersection of multiple cultural strains are particularly productive of new forms.

The transformation of lesbian/gay organizations in San Francisco in the early 1970s illustrates how contexts of collective creativity make new kinds of organizations thinkable. The political hopes of an increasingly self-conscious homosexual minority were limited in the 1950s and 1960s by the lack of a visible public identity on which they could build interest group politics. But a logic of identity politics was not available in the 1950s and 1960s, and homosexual need for such a politics did not produce it.

Identity politics first had to be created before becoming a possible solution to the homosexual problem of invisibility. The political upheaval of the 1960s provided a context in which it was possible for actors to re-envision both the goals and means of political change. The 1960s heightened a long-standing American concern with alienation, so much so that authentic self-expression became a goal of political change. Political upheaval expanded the sense of political possibility and allowed New Left activists to envision social change as occurring through the aggregation of individual actions, instead of only through top-down policy change.

This theory of political change was not immediately available to homosexual activists. As both the New Left and the homophile movement grew in the 1960s, the likelihood of these two cultural streams intersecting increased. The homophile movement had its eye on the new movements, as early as 1964, musing about what these new ideas might mean if applied to the situation of homosexuals.

But it was not until 1969 that activists with exposure to both homophile and New Left politics drew homosexual politics into the New Left. Engagement with the New Left provided homosexual activists with access to identity politics, which provided a creative solution to the problem of homosexual invisibility. The sudden availability of a logic that more effectively addressed the problems facing homosexuals produced explosive movement growth, including the dramatic proliferation of organizations drawing on the new logic.

Gay liberation activists not only borrowed identity politics from the New Left, but also participated in refining it. In addition to inventing "coming out," gay liberation activists contributed to the development of the "zap," structureless organizations, and consciousness-raising groups.

The notion that context facilitates collective creativity should also help explain the more modest forms of innovation that occur within established fields. Everyday situations vary in terms of how much or little they facilitate collective creativity. Innovation occurs within established organizations and fields, but some ordinary spaces generate more innovation than others.

Within established fields, we would expect innovation to come from actors whose structural position embeds them in particularly dense patterns of interaction, provides them with more access than other actors to information about alternative ways of doing things, and leads them to feel optimistic that their innovative efforts will bear fruit. Burton, Sørensen and Beckman show (in this volume), that these conditions often occur at high prestige locations within established fields. Burton, Sørensen, and Beckman point out that those who form innovative technology companies are usually not "college drop-outs," but individuals who are highly fortuitously situated within successful firms. These individuals enjoy advantages of information and reputation that allow them to successfully innovate. While Burton, Sørensen and Beckman see entrepreneurial success flowing from the "opportunities and resources" associated with structural position, my argument suggests that advantageous structural position may also provide less tangible benefits. Location may also provide access to contexts that facilitate creative thinking about how to take advantage of opportunities and resources.

NOTES

1. Neil Fligstein refers to his approach either as a political-cultural approach or as field theory (2001; Fligstein & McAdam, 1995).
2. On the concept of organizational form see also Aldrich and Mueller (1982); Hannan and Freeman (1989); McKelvey (1982); Romanelli (1991); Rothschild-Whitt (1979); Scott (1992, 1995).
3. See Rao (1998) and Romanelli (1991) for overviews of various approaches to the emergence of new organizational forms.

4. Andrew Spicer (this volume) argues that explaining the emergence of revolutionary situations is distinct from accounting for the resolution of such situations (2002). The distinction I am making is similar. Explaining an expansion in the range of available forms is analytically different from explaining why one option is ultimately successful.

5. Other literatures that could be mined for insights include the management literature on entrepreneurship (i.e. Kilduff, Angelmar & Mehra, 2000; Shane, 2000) and a vast literature in educational psychology on situated cognition (i.e. Resnick et al., 1991).

6. See also Powell (1991, p. 199); Swidler (2001).

7. See also Clemens and Cook (1999); Powell (1991, pp. 197–198); Swidler (2001).

8. Stinchcombe saw revolutions as creating new resources, but this insight seems to have fallen out of work by others (1965, p. 152).

9. See Armstrong (1998), Armstrong (Forthcoming) for more details on the construction of the data set.

10. See also Adam (1987); Blasius and Phelan (1997); FitzGerald ([1981]1986); Stein (2000).

11. Historians of sexuality have written extensively about how homosexual identity developed to the point where I begin the story. Some of this scholarship identifies the late nineteenth century as when "the homosexual" became a kind of person. Before that, homosexuality had been viewed as a practice in which any individual might engage. See Foucault (1978); Weeks (1977). Other scholarship traces the impact of capitalism, wage labor, and World War II on developing group consciousness. See Berube (1990); Chauncey (1994); D'Emilio (1983); Faderman (1991); Kennedy and Davis (1993).

12. Explaining the emergence of these early homophile organizations is beyond the scope of this paper. It is treated in more depth in Armstrong (Forthcoming).

13. While Stonewall looms large in contemporary lesbian and gay culture, it was not the trigger of gay liberation in San Francisco, which was underway earlier. The events surrounding the Stonewall Inn raid were barely acknowledged in San Francisco's homosexual press in 1969. As the Stonewall story has been "repeated and cherished," the complexity of the forces generating gay liberation has been forgotten. See Kissack (1995) for a nuanced account. In an effort to counter a New York-centric view of gay liberation, some historians date the origins of gay liberation in San Francisco back to 1965–1966, because of the New Year's Ball and because an event occurring in August of 1966 that paralleled the Stonewall Inn riots. In August of 1966, "angry young queer people broke out the windows, began throwing dishes and trays at the police, and burned down a nearby newsstand" at Compton's Cafeteria, after a police officer harassed a young queen (Murray, 1996, p. 59; Stryker & Van Buskirk, 1996, p. 49).

14. See Clemens (1997); McAdam (1982) on interest group politics.

15. See Allen (1970, p. 14); Breines (1989); Kauffman (1990); Rossinow (1998) on identity politics.

16. Functional diversification also strengthened an ethnic-like identity by showing the self-sufficiency of the lesbian/gay community. Sociologists have referred to the ability of a community to "perform all the services required by its members" as evidence of "institutional completeness" (Breton, 1964; Murray, 1996, p. 73). See also Fischer (1995); Olzak and West (1991); Stinchcombe (1965); Venturelli (1982).

17. Gay liberation organizations constituted an important bridge between the interest group organizations of the homophile period and the identity organizations of the 1970s

and beyond. They were shaped by a third political logic not discussed here, a redistributive political logic. Relationships between interest group, identity, and redistributive politics are discussed in detail in Armstrong (Forthcoming).

18. For example, the biographies of homophile activists Harry Hay, Del Martin, Phyllis Lyon, Franklin Kameny, Hal Call, and Jim Kepner exhibit a sustained devotion to homosexual issues (Marcus, 1992; Martin & Lyon, 1991; Timmons, 1990).

19. See Armstrong (Forthcoming).

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