

PRAISE FOR THE FIRST EDITION

"How did private decisions on sexuality become such a controversial political issue in American politics? Craig Rimmerman's book provides a concise introduction to the development of the gay rights movement and to the related issues of HIV/AIDS policy, gays serving in the military, and same-sex marriage. Avoiding a simplification of these issues, Rimmerman provides an explanation that includes the historical development of the issues, a recap of the varying political positions, and an analysis of the political and legal processes that led to today's policies."

—BARBARA NORRANDER, UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

"Rimmerman's presentation of the evidence...provides a compelling case in support of the notion that the lesbian and gay movements are best served by intermixing liberationist and assimilationist strategies. The lessons can be applied beyond the gay and lesbian movement as well, and are especially pertinent to other movements with an identity politics emphasis."

—POLITICAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY

Throughout their relatively short history, lesbian and gay movements in the United States have endured searing conflicts over whether to embrace assimilationist or liberationist strategies. *The Lesbian and Gay Movements* explores this dilemma in both contemporary and historical contexts. Craig A. Rimmerman tackles the challenging issue of what constitutes movement "effectiveness" and how "effective" the assimilationist and liberationist strategies have been in three contentious policy arenas: the military ban, same-sex marriage, and HIV/AIDS.

Since the first edition in 2007, the landscape of lesbian and gay movements and rights has seen enormous changes. The thoroughly revised second edition includes updated discussion of LGBT movements' undertakings in, as well as the Obama administration's response to, HIV/AIDS policy, the fight to legalize same-sex marriage and overturn the Defense of Marriage Act, and the repeal of "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

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The Lesbian and Gay Movements

Assimilation or Liberation?



Craig A. Rimmerman

Introduction to the Core Dilemma

If we are to transform our state of virtual equality, evident in pervasive discrimination, ambivalent public opinion, and the persistence of the closet, we must begin with ourselves—both individually and as a movement. Coming out is the one step each gay, lesbian, or bisexual person can take to shatter virtual equality and move closer to the genuine equality with heterosexuals that is our birthright as moral human beings. Our challenge as a movement requires an examination of the strategies that have brought us to this troubling juncture.

—Urvashi Vaid, *Virtual Equality:
The Mainstreaming of Gay and Lesbian Liberation*

Trying to find common ground for political mobilization among all these identities has become one of the most difficult tasks of what has come to be called the gay rights movement.

—Robert Bailey, *Gay Politics, Urban Politics:
Identity and Economics in the Urban Setting*

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URVASHI VAID'S AND ROBERT BAILEY'S OBSERVATIONS CAPTURE THE challenges facing the contemporary lesbian and gay rights movements.¹ Vaid and Bailey point to the reality that all social movements, including the lesbian and gay movements, must constantly examine their broader political, social, and cultural approaches to change. The goal is to assess the difficulties and possibilities that have faced the movements over time with an eye toward what might be done in the future to expand the traditional notions of democracy and citizenship.

This is a particularly auspicious time to engage in this kind of critical examination, given the increasing cultural visibility of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and those who are transgendered, reflected in an array of popular television shows, including *Glee*, *Shameless*, *Mad Men*, *Downton Abbey*, *Modern Family*, *The L Word*, *Queer as Folk*, *Six Feet Under*, *Will and Grace*, *The Sopranos*, *Rescue Me*, *Nip/Tuck*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Oz*, *NYPD Blue*, and *The Shield*, to name a few. And when a moving, mainstream Hollywood film, *Brokeback Mountain*, receives considerable critical praise from reviewers and enthusiastic attention by the moviegoing public, one recognizes the sea change that has taken place since even the mid-1990s. But what does this visibility really mean for people's daily lives? In recent years we have seen increased public tolerance and support for people coming out of the closet. Indeed, Margaret Talbot has written in the *New Yorker* that "the more gay friends, family members, and co-workers straight people know they have, and the more gay celebrities they are aware of, the harder it is for society to deny rights on the basis of some specious presumption of otherness" (Talbot 2013, 21). The students I teach now are more likely to be supportive of their "out" peers than others were even ten years ago. And courses related to the lesbian and gay movements across academic disciplines are often among the most popular offerings on college campuses. This undoubtedly reflects the political organizing and education of earlier eras and the salience of these complicated and challenging issues to young people's lives.

At the same time, the lesbian and gay movements have achieved tangible accomplishments establishing open communities of lesbians and gay men in urban areas throughout the United States. In addition, openly gay men and lesbians have been successful in the electoral arena, from city councils to state legislatures to the US Congress. Indeed, Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) is the first openly lesbian or gay member of the United States Senate, elected in 2012. Community organizations and businesses target the interests of the lesbian and gay movements. And some progress has been made through the legal system, most notably in the Supreme Court's 2003 *Lawrence v. Texas* decision that ruled state sodomy laws unconstitutional. As the constitutional historian Michael Klarman has accurately pointed out, "fifty years ago, every state criminalized same-sex sodomy; today it is a constitutional right." And Klarman correctly celebrates progress that the movements have made in fighting employment discrimination as well: "Thirty years ago, not a single state barred discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment or public accommodations; today more than twenty states have enacted such laws" (Klarman 2013, 218).

College and professional sports are beginning to mirror changes in society writ large. In 2013, Robbie Rogers, an outstanding professional soccer player, publicly identified himself as gay and, within several months, signed a professional contract with the LA Galaxy, as an out, proud gay man. Britney Griner, a women's college basketball star at Baylor University, came out of the closet to little fanfare and signed a professional contract to play with the Phoenix Mercury of the WNBA. Jason Collins, a journeyman center who had played for five NBA teams and was still an active player, came out on *Sports Illustrated's* website on April 29, 2013, followed by a cover story in the May 6, 2013, issue of the magazine. Collins's coming out story was greeted with considerable fanfare as he became the first male athlete from one of the four major professional sports (baseball, basketball, football, hockey) to do so. On Sunday, February 23, 2014, Collins became the first openly gay professional player, after signing a ten-day contract with the NBA's New Jersey Nets earlier in the day. He debuted that evening when the Nets played the Lakers in Los Angeles. Neither the NFL, MLB, or NHL had ever had an openly gay athlete prior to Collins's debut. Collins's groundbreaking act and the New Jersey Nets' willingness to afford Collins the opportunity, will undoubtedly inspire other professional athletes to come out while active participants in their respective sports.

Indeed, in February 2014, in an act of tremendous courage, University of Missouri defensive lineman and graduating senior, Michael Sam, announced that he is gay in interviews with *ESPN* and the *New York Times*. Sam had previously come out to his entire college football team in August 2013 and received tremendous support from his coaches and teammates. His announcement came roughly two months before the NFL draft and led to widespread speculation that it would continue to pave the way for other gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender athletes in professional sports.

But for all of the so-called progress, lesbians and gay men remain second-class citizens in vital ways. For example, though in May 2013 the Boy Scouts of America ended its long-term policy of preventing openly gay youths from participating in any of its organizational activities, this major policy change, effective in January 2014, was passed only after considerable acrimony and internal organizational debate. Although this development was viewed as evidence of progress by some in the lesbian and gay movements, the policy was undercut by the inability of the organization to address "the even more divisive question of whether to allow openly gay adults and leaders" (Eckholm 2013, A1). In doing so, the Boy Scouts of America reinforced the worst assumptions of out adults who are in organizational leadership positions.

In addition, there is considerable societal disagreement over an array of interrelated issues, including same-sex marriage, adoption of children by same-sex couples, and ordination of lesbian and gay people into the clergy (Olson, Duje, and Cadge, 2011, 189). Out lesbians, gays, and bisexuals occupy less than one-tenth of 1 percent of all elected offices in this country (Sherrill 1996, 469); very few transgendered people have been elected to public office. In most states, lesbians and gay men are forbidden to marry, to teach in many public schools, to adopt children, and to provide foster care. If evicted from their homes, expelled from their schools, fired from their jobs, or refused public lodging, they usually are not able to seek legal redress. The topic of homosexuality is often deemed inappropriate for discussion in public schools, including in sex education courses. Many public school libraries refuse to carry some of the many books that address the issue in important ways. Lesbians and gays are often reviled by the church and barred from membership in the clergy. They are the victims of hate crimes and targets of verbal abuse, and the possibility still exists that they will be beaten, threatened, attacked, or killed for simply

loving another human being. Their parents reject them, and many gay youth have either attempted or contemplated suicide. Indeed, political scientist Mark Hertzog concludes that "no other group of persons in American society today, having been convicted of no crime, is subject to the number and severity of legally imposed disabilities as are persons of same-sex orientation" (1996, 6).

What does all of this mean for how the contemporary lesbian and gay movements conceive of their political organizing strategies, especially given the determination by the Christian Right to use lesbian and gay issues, such as same-sex marriage, as wedge issues in elections at all levels of government? Should policy and cultural change reflect a top-down model, or should it be inspired by grassroots organizing in local communities throughout the United States? And should the goal be a more assimilationist, rights-based approach to political and social change, or should movement activists embrace a more liberationist, revolutionary model, one that might embrace a full range of progressive causes? This last question is the central dilemma of this book, given how the assimilationist and liberationist approaches have been integral to the lesbian and gay movements' organizing over the past sixty years.

Throughout their relatively short history, the lesbian and gay movements in the United States have endured searing conflicts over which strategy to embrace. This book explores this dilemma in both contemporary and historical contexts within a broader social-movement theoretical setting. The assimilationist approach typically embraces a rights-based perspective, works within the broader framework of pluralist democracy—one situated within classical liberalism—and fights for a seat at the table. In doing so, the assimilationists celebrate the "work within the system," or "let us in," insider approach to political activism, rather than the "let us show you a new way of conceiving the world" strategy associated with lesbian and gay liberation. Assimilationists are more likely to accept that change will have to be incremental and to understand that slow, gradual progress is built into the very structure of the US framework of government.

A second approach, the liberationist perspective, favors more radical cultural change, change that is transformational in nature and often arises outside the formal structures of the US political system. Liberationists argue that there is a considerable gap between access and power and that it is not enough to simply have a seat at the table. For many liberationists, what is required is a shift in emphasis from a purely political strategy

FIGURE 1.1 Social and Political Movements Compared

<i>Social Movements</i>	<i>Political Movements</i>
Ideology	Lifestyle
Multiple Leaders	Single Leader Entrepreneur
Social and Political Spheres	Political Spheres Only
Have-Nots	Haves
Social Group Identity	Diverse Social Groups
Group Consciousness	Issue Positions

Source: Baer and Bositis 1993, 166. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

to one that embraces both structural political and cultural change, often through “outsider” political strategies. The notion of sexual citizenship embraced by liberationist activists and theorists is much more broadly conceived, as sociologist Steven Seidman describes: “buoyed by their gains, and pressured by liberationists, the gay movement is slowly, if unevenly, expanding its political scope to fighting for full social equality—in the state, in schools, health-care systems, businesses, churches, and families” (2002, 24). Political theorist Shane Phelan claims that liberationists often “attempt to subvert the hierarchies of the hegemonic order, pointing out the gaps and contradictions in that order, thus removing the privilege of innocence from the dominant group” (2001, 32). As I will demonstrate, the assimilationist and liberationist strategies are not mutually exclusive.

To better explicate the book’s central dilemma, I will couch my analysis within the broader context of social-movement theory. First, it is necessary to understand how social movements differ from political parties, interest groups, and protests. They have three distinguishing features: they grow out of “a mass base of individuals, groups, and organizations, linked by social interaction,” they “organize around a mix of political and cultural goals,” and they “rely on a shared collective identity that is the basis of mobilization and participation” (Wald 2000, 5). Political scientist Sidney Tarrow extends this definition, stating that social movements involve “mounting collective challenges, drawing on common purposes, building solidarity and sustaining collective action” (1994, 3). They are also decentralized and comprise an array of organizations. They are often confused with political movements, but there are key differences between them, as Figure 1.1 demonstrates.

Unlike political movements, which tend to represent middle-class interests, social movements tend to represent those at the margins of American society, as defined by class, race, gender, or sexual orientation. Political movements are often defined through a single leader and her or his organization, whereas social movements are generally much more decentralized and sometimes have no real leader *per se*. Finally, social movements develop a comprehensive ideology, whereas political movements most often focus on narrow objectives such as handgun control or the nuclear freeze. Often, social movements push for political change at the same time they seek structural change in the social, cultural, economic, and private spheres (Baer and Bositis 1993). At their core, social movements inspire participatory democracy.

[Social movements] raise expectations that people can and should be involved in the decision-making process in all aspects of public life. They convert festering social problems into social issues and put them on the political agenda. They provide a role for everyone who wants to participate in the public process of addressing critical social problems and engaging official power holders in a response to grassroots citizen demands for change. In addition, by encouraging widespread participation in the social change process, over time social movements tend to develop more creative, democratic, and appropriate solutions. (Moyer et al. 2001, 10)

The lesbian and gay movements certainly meet the criteria for an existing social movement. Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgendered people have persistently occupied a place at the margins of society.

The vulnerability of groups at the margins of US society permits elites to create serious obstacles to political participation and control of the political agenda (Scott 1990, 72). In response to their structural and cultural marginalization, groups outside the mainstream identify strategies that they perceive will meet their needs while challenging structures that constrain their life choices. These strategies commonly include developing alternative resources, constructing different ideological frameworks, and creating oppositional organizations and institutions. Such structures are most often “grounded in the indigenous or communal relationships of marginal groups” (C. Cohen 1999, 48). This is especially true for the lesbian and gay movements.

From the vantage point of marginalized groups, then, social movements are vehicles for organization, education, and resistance. They are often galvanized when they perceive "changes in political opportunities that give rise to new waves of movements and shape their unfolding." Successful social movements build on political opportunities by seizing and expanding them, thus turning them into collective action (Tarrow 1994, 7). I will examine how well the lesbian and gay movements have done so by studying the intersection between the assimilationist and liberationist strategies over time. We will see that social-movement politics are conflictual, messy, and complicated; they defy easy generalizations and their behavior often eludes simple explanations.

Chapter 2 places the development of the lesbian and gay movements within their proper historical context. Particular attention is devoted to the development of the assimilationist and liberationist approaches over the past sixty years by examining the creation and goals of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis in the 1950s, the rise of the homosexual movement in the 1950s and 1960s, and the connections between that movement and the movements growing out of the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969.

The assimilationist-accommodationist strategy prevailed within the broader movements until Stonewall. Despite their accomplishments, Stonewall threw mainstream homophile organizations on the defensive, as newly energized lesbian and gay activists, many of them veterans of the various movements of the 1960s, demanded a new style of political organizing and leadership. This more confrontational liberationist approach embraced militancy and the unconventional politics associated with the antiwar, women's liberation, and civil rights movements. The modern gay liberation movement was soon born, built on some of the same ideas that undergirded the original Mattachine Society envisioned by Harry Hay and his cofounders almost twenty years earlier. For those who embraced gay liberation, a rights-based strategy was far too limited. The goal should be to remake, not merely reform, society. Chapter 2 explores these conflicts within the broader movements throughout the 1970s and 1980s, which were dominated by the rise of a conservative insurgency in society at large. The response of the Christian Right to the movements' gains in the 1970s and early 1980s is also examined in considerable detail.

Chapter 3 explores the tensions between those activists who embraced an insider assimilationist strategy and those who demanded an outsider

liberationist strategy to political and social change, as reflected in broader movements' responses to public AIDS policy. As we explore this tension, we will devote considerable attention to the way AIDS activism in the 1980s, 1990s, and the early twenty-first century altered the landscape of lesbian and gay politics, mobilizing an array of newly politicized activists in the midst of a devastating global epidemic. ACT UP, Queer Nation, and the Lesbian Avengers are all organizations that developed at the height of the AIDS crisis and demanded a liberationist organizing strategy. The role of the Treatment Action Group (TAG), which typically embraced insider assimilationist political strategies, will also be explained. As one would expect, the chapter discusses the responses of Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton and Congress over time to HIV/AIDS policy and broader movements' demands, as well as how the movements have intersected with the Christian Right. Finally, the chapter examines in considerable detail the debates over the "degaying" and "regaying" of AIDS in the 1990s, debates that provide a window to the contemporary landscape of lesbian and gay politics. This will all set a context for the discussion of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies and how those administrations have addressed HIV/AIDS policy. A major goal of Chapter 3 is to assess the circumstances under which the assimilationist and liberationist strategies were effective, as well as the Christian Right response of using the threat of AIDS as a part of its successful grassroots fund-raising.

At the heart of recent social-movement theory is the belief that expanding political opportunities help determine the overall strength of a social movement. With the election of President Clinton in November 1992, many members of the lesbian and gay movements perceived, after twelve long years of Republican control of the White House, the opportunity for forceful presidential leadership that would be much more supportive of sexual minorities' interests. This is the broad context in which the military-ban issue appeared on the policy agenda soon after Clinton was elected. Chapter 4 assesses the original circumstances under which Clinton proposed to overturn the ban, how he attempted to do so once he became president, and why he fell short of his goal. It interrogates the role of the lesbian and gay movements in interacting with the Clinton administration, Congress, and the Christian Right during the 1993 debate. It explores broader movements' strategies and the debates between those who argued vigorously for overturning the ban (the assimilationist perspective) and those who argued that the movements need to transcend

narrow rights goals and instead pursue broader political, social, and economic change (the liberationist perspective). The implementation of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy is also assessed in light of the lesbian and gay movements' goals and political strategies. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the circumstances under which President Obama and Congress overturned the ban on lesbians and gays in the military and what the new policy means for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people who are or will be serving in the military.

The campaign for same-sex marriage has depended on the courts for much of its success. It was inspired not through consensus among activists but by a relatively small coterie of lawyers. Today the campaign is rooted in litigation, though it has now garnered the support of most major national lesbian and gay organizations, including the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, and Human Rights Campaign. It has clearly become one of the leading issues of the mainstream assimilationist lesbian and gay movements. Chapter 5 will discuss how the issue has developed over time, with particular attention to the June 2013 Supreme Court decisions in *United States v. Windsor* and *Hollingsworth v. Perry*.

There are, however, vocal critics of same-sex marriage within the lesbian and gay movements. The arguments associated with the liberationist critique will be outlined in detail. These conflicts within the broader lesbian and gay movements are placed within a discussion of debates over the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA; codified into law in the fall of 1996). In addition, considerable attention will be devoted to same-sex-marriage policies and political organizing on the part of supporters and opponents at the state level, with specific attention devoted to Hawaii, Vermont, and Massachusetts. The goal is to see the conflicts and tensions between the assimilationist and liberationist perspectives as played out within the context of a contentious public policy issue.

Chapter 6 explores the movements' futures. As the analysis presented in this book will reveal, the goal of equal rights is the centerpiece of the contemporary lesbian and gay rights movements' strategies. This rights-based approach has dominated mainstream movement thinking from the early years of the homophile movement to the debate over AIDS, the military ban, and same-sex marriage today. As we will see, a narrow rights-based perspective, rooted in identity politics, is largely unquestioned and unchallenged by mainstream contemporary lesbian and gay movements,

especially those that dominate politics and public policy at the national level. It has led to heightened cultural visibility but also to what Urvashi Vaid calls "virtual equality."

This final chapter assesses the limitations of embracing either an assimilationist or a liberationist strategy exclusively. Instead, it argues that both approaches have worked in important and complementary ways throughout the movements' histories and are not mutually exclusive. In addition, both the assimilationist and the liberationist strategies are necessary for the future, as the movements attempt to navigate the aftermath of the George W. Bush and Barack Obama presidencies and a still vigorous Christian Right movement at the national, state, and local levels. In the end, then, the dilemma presented throughout this book can be resolved by pursuing a dual organizing strategy, one that builds on the strengths of the assimilationist and liberationist strategies and one that recognizes the limitations of each approach to political and social change.

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The Assimilationist and Liberationist Strategies in Historical Context

Harvey Milk, the first openly gay politician to be elected to public office in the previous decade, had said, "Coming-out is the most political thing you can do." It turned out that he was right. And as more and more gay men and lesbians came out to their families and friends—not because they had to, but because they wanted to—Americans realized that they knew someone gay or lesbian. And our world irrevocably changed.

—**Gene Robinson**, *God Believes in Love:
Straight Talk about Gay Marriage*

The emergence of gay liberation would not have been possible but for the long, lonely organizing efforts of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis and, indeed, of the pioneers to whom they looked for inspiration.

—**Nicholas Edsall**, *Toward Stonewall:
Homosexuality and Society in the Western World*

1969. Indeed, as Alex Ross has aptly pointed out, public exposure in the pre-Stonewall era "required considerable courage" (Ross 2012, 47). These themes will be explored throughout this chapter by making connections between the contemporary lesbian and gay movements and the organizing that preceded them.

The tensions between the assimilationist and liberationist perspectives are also developed in historical context. Much of the work of the contemporary national lesbian and gay organizations has relied on an insider assimilationist strategy, one that strives for access to those in power and is rooted in an interest-group and legislative-lobbying approach to political change. It is an approach centered on civil rights, legal reform, political access, visibility, and legitimation that reinforces the existing political and economic framework associated with classical liberalism. For those who embrace a liberationist approach, however, the assimilationist perspective is far too narrow. As Urvashi Vaid has argued, the assimilationist perspective is far too rooted in "virtual equality—a state of conditional equality based more on the appearance of acceptance of straight America than on genuine civic parity" (1995, xvi). Liberationists challenge "virtual equality" and emphasize the goals of cultural acceptance, social transformation, understanding, and liberation (106).

David Eisenbach, a scholar of the movements, believes that all of the organizing activity over the past fifty years or so "has had remarkable political effects" that resonate in the present. What is his evidence for this claim? Looking back to the 2004 presidential election, Eisenbach notes that "the news media focused on the gay marriage controversy and the debate over the Federal marriage amendment, but the presidential candidates themselves displayed a notable consensus in favor of gay rights" (Eisenbach 2006, vi). And this was true of the candidates for the Democratic Party nomination—Wesley Clark, Howard Dean, John Edwards, Dick Gephardt, Dennis Kucinich, and Joe Lieberman—who all supported key elements of the contemporary assimilationist gay-rights agenda, including an increase in funding for HIV/AIDS research and services, the recognition of domestic partnerships, and sexual-orientation nondiscrimination laws. Three of the candidates supported same-sex marriage, but four opposed it, including John Kerry. Assimilationists would argue that all of this represents considerable progress, but liberationists would likely expect more concrete accomplishments that challenge the

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HOW HAVE THE ASSIMILATIONIST AND LIBERATIONIST STRATEGIES developed over time? That is the prevailing question underlying this chapter, which places the development of the lesbian and gay movements within their necessary historical context. Like so many of the social movements that came of age during the 1960s and 1970s, the activism of lesbians and gays in this period was rooted in the events of previous eras. Popular lore has it that the contemporary lesbian and gay movements began with the Stonewall Rebellion of 1969. Historian George Chauncey (1994) has written of the extensive gay network that developed in the streets, apartments, saloons, and cafeterias of New York City in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. When, as a part of the virulent New York City crackdown of the 1930s, lesbians and gays were legally prohibited from gathering in any state-licensed public place, they fought for their rights in courageous ways—a precursor to the organized political resistance of the Daughters of Bilitis and Mattachine Society of the 1950s. Allan Berubé's pathbreaking work (1990) on lesbians and gays in the military during World War II found that the discriminatory and unjust treatment afforded them did not lead to an organized resistance movement *per se*, but it did inspire many lesbians and gay men to develop an all-important group identity. David K. Johnson's illuminating work (2004) on federal policies during the Cold War era in response to the so-called lavender menace provides concrete examples of individual and collective courage and resistance on the part of people who later organized for full citizen rights. John D'Emilio's important historical work (1983) chronicles the early years of the Mattachine Society, and Marcia Gallo's incisive work (2006) does the same for the Daughters of Bilitis, organizations that developed at the height of the McCarthy era, in the 1950s. And Barry Adam's study (1995) of the lesbian and gay movements focuses considerable attention on the rise of the homophile movement in the United States during the 1950s and the connections between that movement and the movements growing out of the Stonewall Rebellion of

prevailing order of heteronormativity. As we will see, there are reasons for these differences in approach to political and social change and in the way they have developed over time.

One of the central goals of the early lesbian and gay movements in the United States was to improve the media depiction of homosexuality. Indeed, before the development of the modern lesbian and gay rights movement that began in the 1950s, "the media commonly depicted homosexuals as insane deviants and sexual predators." With that in mind, movement activists recognized the importance of altering the media's portrayal of homosexuality to present a more positive image, which was especially important as more people began to come out of the closet. The hope was that positive press coverage would lead to the public recognizing that homosexuality was not a threat and that this, in turn, would lead to much greater "political and legal progress" (Eisenbach 2006, vii).

The Birth of the Homophile Movement and the Foundations of Contemporary Politics

The homophile movement arose within the context of a prevailing ideology that regarded lesbians and gays "as pervers, psychopaths, deviates, and the like." Lesbians and gays internalized these negative labels, which ultimately became stereotypes. As John D'Emilio points out, "Whether seen from the vantage of religion, medicine, or the law, the homosexual or lesbian was a flawed individual, not a victim of injustice. For many, the gay world was reduced to a setting where they shared an affliction" (1983, 53).

In its early manifestations, the homophile movement embraced liberationist principles through the Mattachine Society. In 1951 Communist Party activist Harry Hay, then working at the Los Angeles People's Education Center as a music teacher, along with his co-organizers Rudi Gernreich, Bob Hull, Dale Jennings, and Chuck Rowland, built the Mattachine Society on communist principles of organizing and social change (Adam 1995, 67-68), a model that would soon lead to considerable controversy within the organization. Mattachine's founding statement of Missions and Purposes articulated the intended purposes of the new organization:

- "To unify" those homosexuals "isolated from their own kind"
- "To educate" homosexuals and heterosexuals toward "an ethical homosexual culture . . . paralleling the emerging cultures of our fellow-minorities—the Negro, Mexican, and Jewish Peoples"
- "To lead"; the "more . . . socially conscious homosexuals provide leadership to the whole mass of social deviates"
- To assist "our people who are victimized daily as a result of our oppression" (68)

As the above principles suggest, the organizers wished to galvanize a large gay constituency, one that was cohesive and capable of militant activity (D'Emilio 1983, 63).

Mattachine emerged as the first effective gay political organization in the United States, one that in its early years devoted itself to challenging and repealing repressive legislation and altering public opinion. Out of a Mattachine discussion group emerged *One*, the first publicly distributed American homophile magazine. According to historians Lillian Faderman and Stuart Timmons, "against heavy odds in the midst of the reactionary McCarthy era, ONE made a considerable impact nationally, appearing on newsstands in several US cities and selling about 5,000 copies a month, many of which passed through multiple hands" (2006, 116). The US Post Office placed a ban on *One* in 1954 but was overruled in 1958 by the Supreme Court, which stated that the ban violated free-speech protections guaranteed by the First Amendment (Adam 1995, 68). This incident serves as a sobering reminder of the repressive nature of the times.

But the Mattachine Society was not immune to serious criticism. In 1953 the organizational structure and militant ideology of the Mattachine Society was challenged by rank-and-file members. A Los Angeles *Daily Mirror* columnist had identified the lawyer for the organization as Frank Snyder, who had been an uncooperative witness before the House Un-American Activities Committee. Given the repressive political and cultural climate associated with the McCarthy era, it is no surprise that rank-and-file Mattachine members grew increasingly concerned with the organization's possible association with communism (Hunt 1999, 129).

The ultimate split between the organization's founders and its newer members reflected serious disagreements over assimilation and liberation, conflicts that have plagued the movements over the years. The Mattachine founders envisioned a separate homosexual culture, whereas other members worried that such a strategy would only increase the hostile social climate. Instead, they called for integration into mainstream society (D'Emilio 1983, 81). In the end, Harry Hay was expelled from the Mattachine Society in 1953, at the height of the McCarthy era, because of his Communist Party background and his unwavering support for more radical principles.

Hay's successors—Hal Call, Marilyn Reiger, and David Finn—and Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, two lesbian activists who founded the Daughters of Bilitis in 1955, all embraced an assimilationist and accommodationist approach to political and social change. In practice, this meant the two groups sought to open a productive dialogue with an array of professionals or "experts" who had expressed views concerning homosexuality. Their strategy was to present themselves as reasonable, well-adjusted people, hoping that these heterosexual arbiters of public opinion would rethink their assumptions regarding homosexuality. This approach, rooted in dialogue, emphasized conformity and attempted to minimize any differences between heterosexuality and homosexuality. The activists hoped to de-emphasize sex, because the act of sex itself was the source of so much anger and fear directed at homosexuals. Ultimately, the architects of this assimilationist, accommodationist strategy hoped to reduce social hostility as a necessary precursor to the changes desired in both law and public policy (D'Emilio 1983, 109). They attempted to frame issues in ways that would accomplish this important goal.

The Daughters of Bilitis, San Francisco's second homophile organization, was founded by Lyon, Martin, and others in 1955. The organizers had no previous knowledge of the Mattachine Society. Their goal was to provide women an alternative to the bars in the form of a social club (Armstrong 2002, 37). They organized a network of local chapters beginning in 1958. Just two years later, and continuing for ten years, "they sponsored public biennial conventions on issues of importance to lesbians and gay men." Slowly, but surely, the organization began to lift "the veil of secrecy that surrounded lesbians' daily lives in mid-twentieth century America." Their newsletter played an integral role in this process. Indeed, "the first Daughters thought that their new group would provide a nice place for

lesbians to meet; soon they added a newsletter that grew into an internationally known magazine" (Gallo 2006, xxi). From the outset, the organization supported women who were trying to raise children alone or with a partner. Although the Daughters of Bilitis (DOB) eschewed much of the Mattachine Society's ideology and tactics, they agreed that publishing a newspaper was important and began distributing their own, the *Ladder*, in 1956. This paper came out regularly between 1956 and 1971 and garnered the DOB national attention. The *Ladder* addressed a number of issues over the years, but a major theme was "dealing with issues of housing, school, being out, and dealing with hostile relatives and neighbors" (Bronski 2013, ix). The Mattachine Society, the Daughters of Bilitis, and *One* and the *Ladder* were the central organized elements of the homophile movement until the 1969 Stonewall Riots. Both organizations, in their later stages, embraced public education as their primary assimilationist goal "because they believed that the source of prejudice is ignorance or a misinformed view of homosexuals as different and dangerous" (Seidman 2002, 175).

The assimilationist, accommodationist strategy prevailed within the broader movement until the 1969 Stonewall Rebellion. During that time the movement as a whole gained little ground and, in fact, experienced some significant setbacks. For example, a medical model of homosexuality gained currency in this period, one that equated homosexuality with mental illness. This made it even more difficult for lesbians and gays to come out of the closet and to enter mainstream American life. But there were challenges to the more mainstream homophile, assimilationist strategy by such activists as Barbara Gittings and Franklin Kameny. Gittings and Kameny began openly embracing unconventional politics and picketing for basic rights and human dignity. Kameny expressed the ideological foundations of the 1960s homophile movement by arguing that homosexuals did not suffer from mental illness, constituted 10 percent of the population at large, did not need medical experts to speak on their behalf, and had a right to live their lives free from discrimination (Glendinen and Nagourney 1999, 114). Several years later he commented on the appropriate use of various political tactics in light of the Stonewall Rebellion: "I don't believe in picketing until you've tried negotiation and gotten nowhere and then tried picketing and gotten nowhere, then . . . I'm perfectly willing to go along to the next step—which is probably some sort of confrontation that possibly mildly oversteps the bounds of the law. If that doesn't

serve, I'm willing to draw the line further, although I do draw the line at violence" (Teal 1995, 73-74). Kameny's endorsement of a more radical political strategy was inspired by the African American civil rights movement. And Kameny was not the only one inspired by a rise in civil rights militancy. Indeed, as early as 1966, lesbian and gay activists adopted a symbol of the civil rights movement—a black and white lapel button with an equals sign on a lavender background, signaling their desire for more daring avenues to effect change. Kameny's endorsement of a more radical political strategy reflects some of the tensions that would soon be felt within the homophile movement as it came under increased criticism and scrutiny from more radically minded lesbian and gay activists who called for liberatory change in light of Stonewall. Such tensions have continued to pervade the movements.

At the time of Stonewall, the situation for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender individuals was much different than it is today. For example, homosexual sex was illegal in all states except Illinois at the end of the 1960s. There were no laws on the book at *any* level of government that protected lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, or transgender individuals from being denied housing or being fired from their jobs. In addition, no openly lesbian or gay politicians participated in politics anywhere in the United States. No political party had a gay caucus at that time. And there were few role models for young people who were struggling with their sexual orientation, as there were no openly gay or lesbian public school teachers, lawyers, doctors, or police officers. Unlike today, there were no television shows that had any identifiable lesbian or gay characters. Hollywood painted a particularly ugly view of gay life; most often, gay characters in movies killed other people or killed themselves (Carter 2004, 1-2). Those activists who were growing increasingly uncomfortable with more traditional forms of political organizing pointed to the lack of progress as evidence that a more radical, liberationist vision needed to be articulated.

But, by the time of Stonewall, the lesbian and gay movements could also point to concrete accomplishments. The Supreme Court had affirmed the legality of lesbian and gay publications. A number of state court rulings afforded gay bars more security, and the homophile movement had won constraints on police harassment of lesbians and gays in New York and San Francisco. In employment discrimination cases, the federal court provided the first victories. A dialogue was established with members of the scientific community regarding whether homosexuality should be

classified as a mental illness. The movements had begun to shift to occasional media visibility, largely as a result of the transition to public protest. At the time of the Stonewall Riots, there were perhaps some fifty lesbian and gay organizations nationwide. Finally, and perhaps most important, the notion that lesbians and gays were a persecuted minority had infiltrated not only the lesbian and gay subculture but also the larger society (D'Emilio 1992, 238-239).

Despite these accomplishments, the mainstream homophile organizations were thrown on the defensive in the wake of Stonewall. Lesbian and gay activists, newly energized by their work in the various social and political movements of the 1960s, demanded a new style of political organizing and leadership. This more confrontational, liberationist approach embraced the unconventional politics associated with the antiwar, women's liberation, and civil rights movements. What was the connection between the latter and the lesbian and gay movements? Grant Gallup, a priest who was active in the African American civil rights movement, makes the connection well: "Many of us who went south to work with Dr. King in the sixties were gay. A lot of gay people who could not come out for their own liberation could invest the same energies in the liberation of black people" (Kaiser 1997, 136). And veteran civil rights activist John Lewis makes important connections between the Mississippi Freedom Summer of 1964 and the movements that followed:

The atmosphere of openness and breaking down barriers that we developed that summer extended far beyond issues of race. It extended into everything from sexuality to gender roles, from communal living to identification with working classes. And they live on today. I have no doubt that the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project, in the end, led to the liberating of America, the opening up of our society. The peace movement, the women's movement, the gay movement—they all have roots that can be traced back to Mississippi in the summer of '64. (Lewis and D'Orso 1998, 273)

Lewis's observation reminds us of the important legacy that the African American civil rights movement left for other rights-based movements that developed throughout the decade of the 1960s.

Yet the rights-based strategy associated with the civil rights, women's, and homophile movements came under increased scrutiny and criticism in light of Stonewall. The modern gay liberation movement

was soon born, built on some of the same ideas that undergirded the original Mattachine Society almost twenty years earlier. For those who embraced gay liberation, a rights-based strategy was far too limited. In their view, the goal should be to remake society, not merely reform it (Loughery 1998, 323).

The Stonewall Rebellion and Beyond

One way of thinking about the larger meaning of the Stonewall Rebellion is that “political movements are not born fully formed; they require numerous acts of small-scale resistance.” As we have already seen, there were many small-scale acts of organizing, courage, and resistance in various forms prior to Stonewall. Scholar David Allyn believes that “without the prior activism, Stonewall might never have occurred, or rather, it might never have been turned into a symbolic event of major importance” (2000, 155). Michael Klarman points out that “Stonewall seemed to crystallize the incipient gay activism of the 1960s. . . . Within a year, gay liberation groups had formed on college campuses and in cities throughout the country” (2013, 17). The Stonewall Rebellion not only escalated the call for a more activist posture within the lesbian and gay civil rights movement but also fractured the movement into two distinct ideological strategic camps. On June 27–28, 1969, scores of gay men, lesbians, and transvestites who frequented a bar called the Stonewall Inn in New York City found themselves in a dramatic confrontation with the police, during a raid of the establishment. The raid itself was not newsworthy, as the police routinely harassed gay men, lesbians, and transvestites wherever they gathered, but the fact that they fought back this time was. The so-called Stonewall Riot, which lasted on and off for six days, quickly threw the more mainstream organizations associated with the homophile movement on the defensive and led to the widely accepted conclusion that “these riots are widely credited with being the motivating force in the transformation of the gay political movement” (Carter 2004, 1). And Stonewall eventually led to broad policy changes as well. As historian Phil Tiemeyer accurately points out, “The fights to abolish the sickness model of homosexuality, to eradicate sodomy laws, and to eliminate the exclusion of gays and lesbians from public life—including the workplace—had more momentum after Stonewall than ever before” (Tiemeyer 2013, 82).

It is in this broad context that the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) was founded in late 1969. Soon thereafter, similarly militant organizations were created in other countries, including Australia, Belgium, Britain, Canada, France, and the Netherlands, which is a testimony to the consequences of the Stonewall Rebellion for the international lesbian and gay rights movements. Toby Marotta captures the essence of the US organization in its first few weeks of existence: “radicals and revolutionaries shared the conviction that since every dimension of the existing system was bankrupt, a total transformation of society was desirable, and that to effect change, it was necessary to unite all oppressed minorities into a broad-based movement” (Loughery 1998, 324).

As it attempted to build the coalitions necessary for this movement, the GLF championed a broad New Left program. It attacked the consumer culture, militarism, racism, sexism, and homophobia. In challenging the latter, the GLF devoted considerable energy to how lesbians and gays were represented in the larger culture through language. With this in mind, the more widespread but clinical term *homosexual* was replaced by *gay*, pride became an important feature of liberation consciousness, and coming out was a crucial element of the liberatory experience (Loughery 1998, 321).

Within one year of the group’s founding in New York, GLF organizations were born throughout the United States, including in Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Iowa City, Los Angeles, Milwaukee, Portland, San Francisco, Seattle, and Washington, DC. College students organized many local groups on their campuses (Loughery 1998, 325). Meetings were run according to participatory principles, and hierarchy was eschewed as much as possible. Thanks to the courage and hard work of lesbian and gay activists around the country, an impressive amount of organizing was done in a short period of time, confirming the liberationist message about the importance of coalition building and historical context.

The euphoria and sense of unity that accompanied the birth of the GLF were short lived, as the post-Stonewall lesbian and gay movements faced the internal conflicts that beset many political and social movements in the late 1960s and early 1970s. There was considerable disagreement within the broader organization over its purpose (should it focus only on gay liberation, or should it be part of a larger political movement for progressive change?), its organizational structure, and the role of women and minorities. Disagreements over the treatment of women led to searing

conflicts over sexism within the organization itself. In her memoir, *Tales of the Lavender Menace*, Karla Jay reveals the sexism she faced:

Despite the push toward a gynandrous center, the sexism of some of the men was—for me, at least—the biggest obstacle toward immediately and completely immersing myself in GLF. A number of the men were more oppressive to women than any heterosexual guy I had known. A few of the men looked at me with such unveiled contempt that I started to give credence to the old adage that some men were gay because they hated or feared women. I'm sure that these guys would have preferred for the women to leave so that the GLF would become an all-men's group, sort of like a political bathhouse, where they could get naked with one another. If we were going to be there, however, a few men thought we might as well make ourselves useful by baking some cookies and making coffee. Some of the other women and I were constantly correcting men who called us "girls." "I'm a woman, not a 'girl.' How would [you] like me to call you 'boy'?" we'd remind them over and over. (1999, 82)

These disagreements undermined the overall effectiveness of the GLF and ultimately led to its destruction. But the lesbian and gay rights movements as a whole did not die out; they merely moved in a more assimilationist direction. As we have already seen, both before and after Stonewall, the movements were always much broader than one group. When the GLF fractured, another, less radical organization called the Gay Activists Alliance (GAA) became more prominent in shaping the larger movements' strategies.

Formed by Jim Owles and Marty Robinson in New York City in December 1969, the GAA attempted to focus on the single issue of gay rights, without the issue fragmentation and anarchic organizational style that had characterized the GLF. After initially joining the GLF, Owles and Robinson increasingly became disenchanted with the organization's inability to plan effectively and to temper revolutionary New Left doctrine in an effort to address the daily discrimination faced by lesbians and gays (Adam 1995, 86). They were particularly concerned with the GLF's affiliation with other elements of the political Left, including the Black Panthers and the antiwar movement. To the critics of the GLF, such affiliations "drained energy from the homosexual rights cause," and some of the affiliated groups were also clearly antigay (Hunt 1999, 81).

The GAA membership thought that meaningful reform would occur only if lesbians and gays organized politically and exercised their political muscle to force positive change. Their involvement in electoral politics set the stage for a strategy that has come to dominate the contemporary mainstream lesbian and gay movements. Candidates for election were questioned extensively concerning their views regarding issues of interest to lesbians and gays.

The GAA also embraced direct action in the form of "zaps," that is, carefully orchestrated disruptions of public meetings, on city streets, and in offices. Protesters often use satirical humor as a way to capture attention (Cruikshank 1992, 77). Arthur Evans, a veteran gay activist, remembers zaps as "little theatrical productions. The other side came across as looking really oafish, stupid, and boring and people on our side were exciting and wonderful and theatrical and inspiring and sexy and energetic" (Hirshman 2012, 120). Such nonviolent civil disobedience captured occasional media attention, disrupted the normal patterns of people's lives, and set the stage for the kind of political organizing associated with the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) in the late 1980s (as we will see in Chapter 3). In this way, the GAA's tactics were much closer to the GLF's than the Matchine Society and Daughters of Bilitis pickets at the White House in the 1960s. Five demands were at the heart of GAA politics:

1. The repeal of New York State's sodomy and solicitation laws
2. An end to police entrapment of gay men
3. An end to police harassment of gay bars and an investigation into corruption in the New York State Liquor Authority
4. A law protecting gays and lesbians against discrimination in employment
5. An end to the bonding company practice of denying bonds to gays and lesbians (which excluded them from jobs requiring bonding) (Hunt 1999, 82)

The early GAA statement "What Is GAA?" stressed the organization's commitment "to a militant but nonviolent civil rights struggle and

a membership open to all who share this approach and objective." Bob Kohler, a veteran GLF organizer, responded to the more assimilationist GAA approach by calling it "well-mannered conformist shit." In contrast, Kay Tobin, one of just a handful of women involved in the early years of the GAA's existence, claimed that it was "an exciting place for a range of us who weren't out-and-out revolutionaries" (Loughery 1998, 329). Most acknowledge that the GAA was even less responsive to women and people of color than the GLF had been. GAA members were charged with tokenism when it came to dealing with issues of race and feminism (331). Michael Schiavi, a historian of this period, accurately points out that "recurring fights indicated the deeper chasms in communication between GAA's men and women. Men had little interest in abortion or child care, while women resented organizational time spent on police harassment in public-sex forums like the piers and trucks along the Hudson" (2011, 101).

One major accomplishment of the GAA is that it established institutional structures that proved to be more long lasting than those created by the GLF. Indeed, many of these institutional structures have been embraced by an array of lesbian and gay organizations operating at the national level today (see Appendix 3). Indeed, "GAA's single-issue politic had a much greater impact than GLF on mainstream gay political organizing" (Bronski 2011, 212). The GAA ceased formal operations in 1974, soon after its community center suffered a catastrophic fire, but many of the organization's activists founded the National Gay Task Force, which today is the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force (Hunt 1999, 82).

William Eskridge describes the long-term effects of the Stonewall Rebellion: "literally overnight, the Stonewall riots transformed the *homophile reform movement* of several dozen homosexuals into a *gay liberation movement* populated by thousands of lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals who formed hundreds of organizations demanding radical changes in the way people were treated by the state" (1999, 99; emphasis in the original). The movement introduced four key ideas into the existing homophile movement that remain relevant even now. First, the crucial personal and political statement of coming out is integral to movement politics today. Second, a more visible lesbian and gay presence challenges traditional notions of the family, gender roles, and sexism. Third, Stonewall and its aftermath created a lesbian and gay counterculture (one that included bisexuals and transgender individuals), which helped to establish lesbian

and gay identity, thus providing a foundation for the identity-politics strain in the movements today. (This counterculture has been assailed by conservatives, and the progressive Left has taken issue with identity politics.) Finally, the politics of the late 1960s and early 1970s emphasized that the lesbian and gay movements could not be divorced from movements addressing broader economic concerns, gender, and race. A mere rights-based agenda was far too narrow. The principle remains as controversial now as it was when the GLF introduced it to the existing homophile movement almost thirty years ago. Should the movements embrace a single-issue politics or attempt to build coalitions with other aggrieved groups to foster more progressive social change? This issue continues to tear at the fabric of the movements and is an important question underlying the assimilationist and liberationist perspectives critically.

The 1970s and the Challenge of the Christian Right

Perhaps the greatest policy success of the early 1970s was the 1973–1974 decision of the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, its official list of mental disorders. This decision did not come about because a group of doctors suddenly changed their views; it followed an aggressive and sustained campaign by lesbian and gay activists (Loughery 1998, 345). To bring about this important policy change, the movements used a combination of insider and outsider strategies with considerable skill and effectiveness. These involved a "louder watchdog presence at psychiatric conferences, behind-the-scenes lobbying, alliances with friendly and influential members of the APA, contact with regional psychiatric societies, the presentation of alternative papers, and a parade of 'healthy homosexuals.'" Most important, in the words of Ronald Gold, activists had learned to recognize "when to scream and when not to. It's an art. It's the art of politics" (346). Urvashi Vaid correctly emphasizes the importance of the APA's major policy change: "the American Psychiatric Association's removal of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders paved the way for legal and social attitudes to change" (2012, 180). Some ten years later, in the midst of the AIDS crisis, the ability to understand when insider and outsider politics might be most effective proved crucial to the maturing lesbian and gay movements. The "grassroots politics of knowledge" that the movements developed in their struggle with the APA had

consequences for later challenges to the federal government's policies on AIDS research (Escoffier 1980, 139), as we will see in Chapter 3.

But the movements' accomplishments in the arena of psychiatry and beyond were viewed with increasing concern by those who feared any challenge to the primacy of heterosexuality in all institutions of American society. The Christian Right and other antigay conservatives consistently identified homosexuality as evidence of moral degeneracy in society as a whole. Therefore, they reacted to movement gains with hostility and a commitment to organizing their own grassroots constituency to undo these victories. Indeed, the constitutional historian Michael Klarman believes that "resistance to gay rights activism played an important role in the mobilization of the religious right in the late 1970s" (Klarman 2013, 26). During the 1970s, largely as a result of the Christian Right's effective mobilization, the lesbian and gay movements suffered major setbacks both locally and nationally. Six antigay referenda appeared in 1977 and 1978 alone.

One of the most effective spokespersons for the Christian Right position was Anita Bryant, a celebrity singer and the second runner-up in the 1959 Miss America contest who helped to galvanize conservative opposition to lesbian and gay rights in 1977 with her Save Our Children campaign based in Dade County, Florida. The goal of this campaign was "to convince voters that tolerance of homosexuality threatened society" (Eisenbach 2006, 279). In her first public statement endorsing the Save Our Children campaign, Bryant proclaimed:

I don't hate homosexuals! But as a mother I must protect my children from their evil influence. Defending the rights of my children and yours. Militant homosexuals want their sexual behavior and preference to be considered respectable and accepted by society. They want to recruit your children and teach them the virtue of becoming a homosexual. . . . I don't hate homosexuals. I love them enough to tell them the truth. . . . [We] must not give them the legal right to destroy the moral fiber of our families and our nation. (280)

As an evangelist singer, national promoter of Florida orange juice, and the mother of two children, Bryant was a perfect spokesperson for the Christian Right. Her successful fight to persuade voters to rescind a six-month-old Dade County civil rights ordinance garnered considerable

national attention in the mainstream press (Alwood 1996, 167). In challenging the Dade County ordinance, Bryant made two arguments. First, she insisted that the new law "discriminates against my children's rights to grow up in a healthy, decent atmosphere" (Loughery 1998, 373). Second, she claimed that God had called her to fight against "preferential legislation" that endorsed a degraded "lifestyle" (127). Both of these arguments have been invoked by opponents of lesbian and gay rights over the years, but the latter was particularly important. One activist astutely concluded that "gay rights was in trouble, the day 'special rights' was born" (374).

The reactionary climate of the late 1970s was ripe for Bryant's campaign. The Save Our Children organization, which led the Dade County fight, represented a profile of anti-lesbian and gay forces, forces that would galvanize in response to AIDS, the integration of the military, and same-sex marriage, as we will see later in this book. It galvanized conservative religious leaders and politicians; the campaign itself was founded on fundamentalist church networks, and Bryant obtained active support from the National Association of Evangelicals, which represented "more than three million people from 60 denominations." The association's television programs, the *PTL Club*, *700 Club*, and *The Old-Time Gospel Hour*, afforded Bryant a national platform and raised funds on her behalf. Moral Majority founder Jerry Falwell campaigned against the Dade County ordinance in person, and the direct-mail political lobby Christian Cause extended its organizing efforts into Jewish and Roman Catholic hierarchies. Opposition to the Dade County ordinance arose at the local level as well. For example, Miami's archbishop distributed a pastoral letter to local Roman Catholic churches, exhorting their congregations to vote against lesbian and gay civil rights. The president of the Miami Beach B'nai B'rith and twenty-eight rabbis publicly lent their support to Bryant's cause (Adam 1995, 110).

The civil rights ordinance resurfaced in 1998, when the Miami-Dade County commissioners voted seven to six to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation. Even the narrow margin of the victory could not detract later from the importance of this victory for the lesbian and gay movements. The 1977 repeal had attracted considerable press attention, and Anita Bryant was now a national figure. She capitalized on her victory by launching an anti-gay rights campaign throughout the United States. By June 1978 voters in Eugene, Oregon; St. Paul, Minnesota; and Wichita, Kansas, had also rescinded local ordinances that had protected the basic

rights of lesbians and gays. Fundamentalist churches, with the financial support of the business community, constituted the foundation of the antigay movement. By 1978, then, the conservative opposition against lesbian and gay rights had solidified and gained momentum. But this did not mean that the opposition was invincible. The lesbian and gay movements proved that they could organize an effective response (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997, 69). One of their most successful organizing campaigns came in California in response to the Briggs initiative.

The day after the 1977 Miami vote, California state senator John Briggs, from conservative Orange County, announced his plans to introduce legislation that would prevent lesbians and gays from teaching in California's public schools. When it became obvious that the legislation had little chance of passing, Briggs altered his tactics and organized a campaign to have his proposal placed on the ballot as a statewide initiative (D'Emilio 1992, 89). Within eleven months of Bryant's victory, Briggs filed the half million signatures that he needed to introduce a voter referendum. In May 1978, Briggs had hoped that his teachers' initiative, his support for a second initiative that would expand the use of the death penalty in California, and his public association with Anita Bryant would help make him a strong candidate for governor (Clendinen and Nagourney 1999, 376). Briggs attempted to build on some of Bryant's organizing strategies. Although he lacked her connections to the Christian Right, he tried to appeal to the same forces in California—and nationally, with the help of Bryant's contributor list. But Briggs miscalculated severely. In the end, the voters in California overwhelmingly defeated his Proposition 6 by a margin of 58 to 42 percent. Lesbian and gay activists worked together in a display of solidarity that overcame gender divides to help defeat the amendment. On the same night, Seattle voters defeated an initiative that would have repealed its gay rights law by a margin of 63 to 37 percent (389). The decade of the 1970s approached its final year with two important and highly visible victories for the lesbian and gay rights movements.

The 1970s also witnessed an increase in anti-lesbian and gay violence, as "fag bashings" became more commonplace throughout the United States. Antigay violence attracted considerable public attention in 1978 when Dan White, a member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors, climbed into an open city hall window and then shot and killed openly gay board member Harvey Milk and Mayor George Moscone, who had

supported Milk and lesbian and gay rights more generally. This broader societal hostility that developed in the 1970s helped set the context for how many would react to gay men with the onset of AIDS in the summer of 1981 (and beyond) during conservative president Ronald Reagan's first year in office.

Conclusion

This chapter began by asking how the assimilationist and liberationist strategies have developed over time. In answering this question, we have placed the development of the lesbian and gay movements within their proper historical context. We have seen how tensions between the assimilationist and liberationist strategies have manifested themselves in the pre- and post-Stonewall eras. The 1969 Stonewall Rebellion was an important moment in the development of the lesbian and gay movements because mainstream homophile organizations were thrown on the defensive. The rights-based strategy associated with the civil rights, women's, and homophile movements came under increased scrutiny and criticism in light of the Stonewall uprising. What has come to be known as the modern gay liberation movement was born in the face of Stonewall, built on some of the same ideas that undergirded the original Mattachine Society almost twenty years earlier. But we cannot refer to the complicated forces that constitute lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender organizing as a single movement, given the complicated array of identities involved, as later chapters will make clear.

The lesbian and gay movements achieved a number of victories by the mid-1970s; among the most prominent was the APA's 1973–1974 decision to remove homosexuality from its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual list of mental disorders. This victory, as well as others, was the result of consistent and persistent political organizing. The Christian Right responded to these perceived gains by linking homosexuality with moral degeneracy in society writ large. This theme manifested itself in Anita Bryant's *Save Our Children* campaign and John Briggs's proposed amendment to prevent lesbian and gay teachers from teaching in California's public schools. The Christian Right's organizing efforts were an augury of the shape of things to come—in the 1980s in response to the onset of HIV/AIDS, in the 1990s in response to military integration, and in the early twenty-first century in response to same-sex marriage.

All of the organizing activity over the past fifty years or so on the part of the lesbian and gay movements and their opponents has had consequences for contemporary politics and policy surrounding sexual-diversity issues today. We examine this argument in the development of HIV/AIDS activism and policy in the next chapter.

3

The Conflict over HIV/AIDS Policy

We will never know how my generation of gay men would have evolved without AIDS.

—Andrew Hollernan

What is there left to say about this gruesome, senseless killer AIDS? Except that the wrong people are dying, those who gave themselves incautiously to experience, to life; the risk-takers, the inventive ones. The fearful ones who literally sat on their asses still sit.

—Martin Duberman, *Waiting to Land: A (Mostly) Political Memoir, 1985–2008*

Perhaps the greatest of gay people's many accomplishments in addressing AIDS has been the creation of a diverse community that nurtures its members to see themselves as distinctive for many reasons besides their sexuality alone.

—John-Manuel Andriote, *Victory Deferred: How AIDS Changed Gay Life in America*

6

The Movements' Futures

Every successful social movement eventually moves from the unthinkable to the impossible to the inevitable.

—Laura Liswood, founder of Women World Leaders

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

—Martin Luther King Jr.

Difference unites us. While each of these experiences can isolate those who are affected, together they compose an aggregate of millions whose struggles connect them profoundly. The exceptional is ubiquitous; to be entirely typical is the rare and only state.

—Andrew Solomon, *Far from the Tree: Parents, Children, and the Search for Identity*

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ON THE NIGHT OF OCTOBER 6, 1998, A TWENTY-ONE-YEAR-OLD GAY University of Wyoming senior stopped in downtown Laramie for a drink at the Fireside Bar. One day later, he was found by a mountain biker "lashed to a fence on the outskirts of town, beaten, pistol-whipped, unconscious, and barely breathing" (Loffreda 2000, ix). The young man never regained consciousness and died five days later, on October 12. His name was Matthew Shepard. His murder, funeral, and the subsequent trials of his killers—Russell Henderson and Aaron McKinney, also from Laramie, also in their early twenties—received international attention.

Why did his murder happen? One explanation offered in the aftermath is that Matthew made a pass at his killers in a space that had become known as a "hospitable" place for lesbians and gays to gather, to share a drink, and to find the kind of community and solace that bars have often provided in the face of a hostile world. But another more important explanation is that we live in a country that fails to teach its children the importance of respecting and understanding racial, gender, and sexual-orientation differences. As one of my colleagues said to me in the wake of the murder, "This underscores the crucial importance of education." Had Henderson and McKinney been given the opportunity to confront their anxieties regarding their own sexualities and their views of those who fall outside the "heterosexual norm" in an educational setting many years before, perhaps the murder would not have happened. And had we had national hate-crimes legislation on the books at the time that applied to sexual orientation, perhaps the crime might not have occurred, but at least we would have had a clear policy regarding how to punish the perpetrators. But as we have seen in this book, we also live in a country where people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender are reviled and targeted by many. For example, soon after Matthew Shepard's death, Fred Phelps, a defrocked minister from Kansas and creator of the Internet

site GodHatesFags.com, "faxed reporters images of the signs he and his followers intended to carry at the funeral: 'Fag Matt in Hell,' 'God Hates Fags,' 'No Tears for Queers'" (Loffreda 2000, 18). The media's coverage of Phelps's attacks publicized his hatred and vitriol, thus giving them more attention than they deserved. Not to be outdone, in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the late Reverend Jerry Falwell, founder of the Moral Majority, said on the Reverend Pat Robertson's *700 Club*, "I really believe that the pagans and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians who are actually trying to make that an alternative lifestyle, the ACLU, People for the American Way, all of them who have tried to secularize America, I point the finger in their face and say 'you helped this happen'" (Duggan 2003, 43). His remarks were publicized and denounced by many, though once again the media saw fit to highlight them at a particularly difficult time for the country and the world. The revulsion expressed by Phelps and Falwell is reflected in the public debates that we have had about sex education, HIV/AIDS, military integration, and same-sex marriage (to name just a few of the most contentious issues) and in our laws. We are a country that forbids openly lesbian and gay people to get married, to serve in the military, to teach in our schools in many places, and, in most states, to adopt children as well.¹ It is no surprise, then, that the laws that we have crafted as a nation reflect a country that is and has been retrograde in its ability to have open, honest, mature, and dignified discussions of many of the issues underlying this book.

In light of these realities, what political organizing strategy is the most viable for addressing the policy issues discussed here? To what extent can we imagine a strategy that combines the best of what the assimilationist and liberationist perspectives have to offer? How much progress have we made in advancing the various issues of importance to the larger lesbian and gay movements? And why is educational curricular reform needed to help prevent the kind of vicious hate crimes that have been and are perpetrated against lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people? Before we can answer these questions, we must first review the strengths and weaknesses of the assimilationist and liberationist strategies in light of the analysis presented throughout this book. In doing so, we recognize that it is important for the members of any social movement to reflect critically upon strategies, tactics, accomplishments, and failures.

The Assimilationist and Liberationist Strategies Revisited

As we have already seen, much of the work of contemporary national and lesbian and gay organizations has relied on an insider assimilationist strategy that strives for access to those in power and is rooted in an interest-group and legislative-lobbying approach to change. The strategy is largely based on civil rights, legal reform, legitimization, political access, and visibility. It is an approach that works within the political and economic framework associated with classical liberal ideology. And it highlights the importance of allowing lesbians, gays, and bisexuals (but rarely those who are transgender) access to power and a seat at the table. This strategy often emphasizes national policymaking as opposed to organizing at the grassroots level, though in recent years the mainstream lesbian and gay movements have increasingly recognized the importance of organizing and educating at the local level.

The assimilationist approach recognizes that the American political system and the policy process growing out of that system are characterized by slow, gradual, incremental change. One way of thinking of political, policy, and cultural change is in terms of cycles of change. Incremental change means "creeping along" the path to reform, whereas more radical change means "leaping" toward more radical goals. The period of "creeping" is often associated with "strategic incoherence" on the part of social movements (D'Emilio 2000, 50). Assimilationists are typically more patient with creeping toward long-term movement goals, whereas liberationists are more likely to try to mount more radical and ambitious structural challenges to the system at large. The lesbian and gay movements have witnessed both, with three key moments of "leaping change" punctuating their history. The first leap forward occurred in the 1950s with the founding of the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, organizations that engaged in acts of courage and resistance, especially given the context of the times. By the time of the 1969 Stonewall Riot, the second great leaping moment, the rights-based strategy these groups called for seemed too assimilationist in the face of greater liberationist calls for change. The third major leap forward was framed "by the 1987 March on Washington and the debate over the military exclusion policy in 1993. Like gay liberation of the Stonewall era, activists in these years frequently used militant direct action tactics. But unlike the two earlier

periods of leaping ahead, this one witnessed movement and community organizations sinking secure roots in every region of the country" (43).

We are now clearly in a period of creeping political, social, and policy change. Lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender individuals continue to be "outnumbered and despised." Political scientist Kenneth Sherrill has argued that "their quest for political power is disadvantaged by barriers to the formation of political community as well as by lack of access to significant power resources. The relative political powerlessness of gay people stands in contradistinction to their depiction by advocates of 'traditional values' as a powerful movement advancing a 'gay agenda' in American politics." Indeed, "the attention paid to the occasional electoral victories of openly lesbian and gay candidates distorts the reality that fewer than one tenth of 1% of all elected officials in the United States are openly lesbian, gay, or bisexual" (1996, 469). These numbers have not improved significantly since 1996. How can we expect creeping (or leaping) political and policy change when the larger political process is most often associated with the values and assumptions underlying heteronormativity? It is no surprise, then, that the lack of formal political power within the American policy process has yielded disappointing policy outcomes at all levels of government.

The quest for equal rights is at the core of the contemporary lesbian and gay rights movements' strategy. As we have seen throughout this book, this rights-based approach has dominated mainstream-movement thinking from the early years of the homophile movement to today's debates over the military-service ban and same-sex marriage. Over time, this rights-based strategy has pivoted on the state's relationship to lesbians and gay men. Lesbians and gay men have fought for the right to live their personal lives as fully and freely as possible from negative state intervention. At the same time, they have asked the state to intervene more positively to protect their ability to meet basic daily needs.

How have these issues manifested themselves politically? The movements have organized to abolish laws that restrict the right of individuals to engage in private, consensual sexual relations. In addition, they have fought against discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation and for equal legal protection. This claim of equal legal rights has led to the further demands that lesbians and gays should be entitled to have their intimate relationships recognized as marriages and

to serve openly in the US military. These demands, if transformed by the State into rights, would enable lesbians and gays to enjoy the same privileges that are currently the province of heterosexuals. Finally, in light of the AIDS crisis, the movements have demanded that the State provide lesbians and gays with "distributive justice" in their right to pursue their sexual health, free from stigma and discrimination. These are the central elements of the rights-based assimilationist strategy, which have largely been unquestioned and unchallenged by the contemporary lesbian and gay movements.

How has this approach worked in the policy arenas that we have discussed? Same-sex marriage is the issue that has dwarfed nearly all others on the lesbian and gay movements' policy agenda in recent years. For a positive interpretation of the progress made in the fight for same-sex marriage and how that progress connects to larger movements' accomplishments, political scientist David Rayside claims:

The United States is an unusual case, in part because of the extraordinary range of legal and political outcomes across states and localities. It is also unusual in several characteristics that impede the march to equity. But it is not as exceptional as is widely believed. A great majority of Americans now believe in extending recognition to lesbian and gay couples, if only a minority favor marriage. Most large corporations extend their family benefits coverage to the same-sex partners of employees. A steadily growing number of U.S. states and municipalities extend some form of recognition to such partners of their own employees. Openly lesbian and gay characters make regular appearances on American television dramas, even if their portrayals have limitations. In everyday life, sexual diversity is as visible in American society as in any. And across a wide range of regions and localities in the United States, countless lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and the transgendered are asserting their right to be visible. (2007, 361)

However, Rayside's positive assessment must be viewed in light of the Christian Right's success at mobilizing to fight same-sex marriage at the state and national levels in recent years. John D'Emilio is certainly right to remind us that the legal-rights strategy pursued by the lesbian and gay movements on this issue has largely been a failure thus far. Indeed, "the battle to win marriage equality through the courts has done something that no other campaign or issue in our movement has done: it has created

a vast body of *new* antigay law" (2006, 10). Given this failure, should same-sex marriage occupy such an exalted position on the movements' organizing agenda? That is the question that should generate considerable discussion among the movements' activists.

The struggle to allow lesbians and gays to serve openly in the military finally reached fruition when President Obama overturned the ban in December 2010 with the support of Congress and the outstanding organizing efforts of the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and other lesbian and gay rights organizations over the years. The campaign faced stiff opposition in light of the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy passed by Congress and signed into law by a so-called friend, Bill Clinton. Integration of the military has also been an important hallmark of the assimilationist rights-based strategy. And as we know, much work still needs to be done so that people who serve in the United States military can serve openly and honestly free from discrimination and sexual harassment.

In the area of HIV/AIDS policy, we have seen attention shift in recent years. During the Bush years, a more conservative Congress and a president whose "compassionate conservatism" extended only as far as the global AIDS crisis put adequate funding for the Ryan White CARE Act in dispute. As a result, the many policy challenges growing out of the domestic HIV/AIDS crisis receded from the spotlight. These challenges included funding for community-based and local AIDS initiatives, recruiting committed and qualified people to the AIDS service-delivery communities at the local level given the paucity of resources available to pay them proper wages, and a sense that the AIDS crisis is not as immediate, since the advent of protease inhibitors has allowed people to live longer, "healthier," and more productive lives with HIV. But the Obama administration has done much better in focusing attention on the domestic HIV/AIDS crisis, as reflected in significant policy reforms at the federal level, most notably his December 2009 spending bill that eliminated federal funding for abstinence-only programs for the first time in nearly thirty years. At the same time, however, HIV/AIDS has not received the kind of urgent attention from the LGBT movements' national organizations that we have a right to expect, given the ongoing HIV/AIDS health-care policy and service-delivery challenges faced at all levels of government and in communities throughout the United States. And as we have seen, the primacy of same-sex marriage on the movements' policy agenda has displaced the urgency of fighting for a thoughtful and well-funded HIV/AIDS policy

at the national level that would provide adequate resources to communities, health-care professionals, and community organizations battling the AIDS crisis on a daily basis.

But if the rights-based assimilationist strategy has provided us merely with the "virtual equality" that Urvashi Vaid and other liberationists desire, do the movements stand to gain more by embracing a more fully developed liberationist strategy and policy agenda? And what would such a strategy and agenda look like in practice? Scholar and activist Liz Highleyman offers an insightful overview of the challenges facing those who embrace a liberationist approach:

Queer radicals today face a dilemma. Should we try to steer the mainstream GLBT movement in a more progressive direction or work with other progressive activists in groups that are not queer-focused? Can—and should—a movement focused on gay and lesbian identity expand to encompass a full range of progressive causes? And how can a movement organized around sexual identity embrace the intersecting identities of gay men and lesbians (and bisexuals? and transgendered people?) who are also women, people of color, disabled, youth, or working class? (2002, 110)

These theoretical and practical considerations challenge the larger lesbian and gay movements in compelling ways, and, as we have seen, they have been the source of considerable disagreement and tension among the movements over time. These are questions that the Gay Liberation Front was forced to confront coming out of Stonewall in the early 1970s. Activist-scholar Michael Bronski provides an excellent rationale for embracing a broader coalition-based, progressive organizing strategy:

We need to reassess what kind of a movement we want it to be. Will it be a movement that continues arguing, with diminishing success, for the rights of its own people—and even at that, only for those who want to formalize a relationship? Or will we argue for a broader vision of justice and fairness that includes all Americans? If the movement does not choose the latter course, we risk becoming not just irrelevant, but a political stumbling block to progressive social change in general. (2006, 18)

Bronski's vision will require the movements to develop a broad coalition-building strategy, which is no easy task, especially given the disagree-

ments among lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender individuals over what the movements' central issues should be and how they should be addressed. It is to that coalition-building strategy that we now turn.

Coalition Politics

If our goal is to move beyond a narrow rights-based assimilationist strategy, one that is often focused on identity politics, we have two options. The first is what Vaid calls "the coalition-around-an-issue strategy," which involves working with people who share interests in the same issues. The second option is much more ambitious because it requires people to create a "common movement." The coalition-around-an-issue strategy could lead to the recognition of common ground, which is the precursor to a common movement, whereby individuals come together to talk about issues of interest and strategies for working toward common goals that have been identified through participatory democratic processes. Vaid poses three important questions organizers should ask at the outset of any campaign or political project: "How does this issue affect different populations within the gay and lesbian community? Can we build coalitions within the non-gay community around this issue? How can we educate the different segments of our community on the direct way this project or campaign affects them?" (1995, 303).

Beyond these questions, the movements need to identify the kinds of issues that will foster the building of short- and long-term alliances rooted in a radical democratic politics. Coalitions have surely been the catalyst behind virtually all of the movements' legislative victories, including the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Hate Crimes Statistics Act, the Ryan White CARE Act, the pro-gay local laws that have been passed and the antigay referenda that have been defeated throughout the United States (Vaid 1997, 7). Indeed, perhaps the best recent example of the positive policy results of coalition building is when President Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act into law on October 28, 2009. Antigay "violence rose to the national agenda with the murder of Matthew Shepard" on October 6, 1998 (Vaid 2012, 188). And racial violence had received considerable attention earlier that year when James Byrd, an African American man, was tied to the back of a pick-up truck and dragged to his death by three white men (two had ties to white supremacy organizations) in Jasper, Texas. The Byrd and

Shepard families (and their many supporters) came together to lobby national government officials over the course of a decade on behalf of federal hate crimes legislation. Their organizing work fell on deaf ears in the George W. Bush White House but received a positive and enthusiastic reception once Barack Obama assumed the presidency.

The importance of coalition building certainly has not been lost on those who are concerned with policy making at the national level. Tom Sheridan, a former high-ranking official at the AIDS Action Council, explains, "Coalition politics is effective because it's the hardest to get people to do. The Hill really respects its speaker because they figure that if you can get up here with a coalition that big and that diverse and have everyone agreeing on something, you must have hit something" (Andriote 1999, 230). A central goal of radical democratic politics is to build permanent coalitions around political strategies and concrete public policies that cut across race, class, and gender divides, coalitions that will be ready to respond to the Christian Right's distortions in all political arenas. Vaid believes that this important class-based organizing work will require a consolidation of "the presently fractured infrastructure of progressive queer institutions. We need a new federation that unites groups working for racial, economic, sexual and gender justice under a meaningful, common rubric." Vaid believes that such a "seriously organized and funded federation would enable the groups to actually have a greater influence on the national movement agenda" (2012, 98–99). The goal is to organize around issues that provide "a comprehensive system of social and economic protections for all families and household groupings" (Bronski 2006, 19). But Vaid also recognizes the challenges to this important goal: "as social movements that have come before the LGBT struggle have clearly shown, formal equality—and even progress towards greater cultural recognition of one's humanity—can be achieved while leaving larger structural manifestations of inequality and deeper cultural prejudice intact" (2012, 8). What issues might inspire individuals to work together to build a common movement?

Comprehensive Medical Care

"Comprehensive medical care will never happen in the United States. As a result, we need to be much more pragmatic about how we approach health care" (personal interview, February 5, 1997). That is the view of one member of the national movement's elite class. The pragmatism to which

this person refers characterized the Clinton White House's health-care reform efforts in the administration's first term. When Bill Clinton took office in January 1993, some thirty-nine million Americans lacked adequate medical insurance. As I write this in the late summer of 2013, that number has ballooned to forty-six million, with many more Americans close to the edge of financial disaster because of escalating health care costs. It is in the interest of the lesbian and gay movements to support major health-care policy reform that moves toward comprehensive medical care in light of HIV/AIDS and the exorbitant costs of the medicines that people depend on to survive.

The Affordable Care Act, President Obama's signature domestic policy initiative, is certainly a step in the right direction. Indeed one commentator has accurately pointed out that "most of the changes happening under ACA benefit the general population, but because of the many disparities that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their families face—in employment, societal misunderstanding or discrimination, and health—the changes will greatly benefit LGBT lives." Here are some of the concrete benefits associated with the ACA: the state insurance exchanges that prevent discrimination against LGBT people and their families; insurance coverage for young people under twenty-six; insurance for people who have pre-existing conditions; federal assistance for individuals and families who qualify as low income; increased medical care coverage by community health-care centers; insuring that insurance premiums are targeted to health care and not to bonuses and salaries; and dissemination of "information on domestic partner insurance benefits." All of these reforms represent significant progress even as they stop far short of comprehensive medical care. And as Brad Jacklin correctly argues, "the Affordable Care Act does much to increase the rates at which LGBT people and their families, indeed all Americans, are covered for the basics of health care to the catastrophes. There's more work to be done, especially for transgender people, who still find their needs excluded from most insurance plans" (2012). We also need to finance further research and support for women's health issues, including breast, cervical, and ovarian cancers. And that work should include an organizing strategy that embraces comprehensive medical care.

How might we pay for comprehensive health care? Coalitions of citizens' groups can challenge the federal government to reduce spending for costly and unneeded weapons systems and to cut military spending on

reckless military incursions of the kind that we witnessed in Iraq. These moneys could then be used to develop a comprehensive national health insurance program over time. This will not be easy, given the realities of the well-entrenched military-industrial complex. Such a plan would likely also require a substantial, progressive tax increase that would place the financial burden on those who can best afford it, no easy task given the power the wealthy exercise in the American policy process.

Comprehensive Government Responses to HIV/AIDS

As we saw in Chapter 3, AIDS has had devastating consequences on many communities in the United States, not to mention countries throughout the world. With this in mind, we need support for a new AIDS movement that recognizes AIDS as a global problem and also takes into account the specific needs of lesbians, gay men, African Americans, poor people, and others who are marginalized in American society.

This new AIDS movement envisions a society that refuses to stigmatize sex but instead provides accessible information about safer sex practices. We need a new AIDS movement that organizes on behalf of legalizing and financing the distribution of clean needles in inner cities throughout the United States. If these public policy goals are to be achieved, they will need the support of coalitions of diverse individuals committed to humane AIDS policies. But they will also need the support of the mainstream lesbian and gay movements, which appear to have lost interest in AIDS in recent years, as same-sex marriage has dominated their agenda. ACT UP / Philadelphia provides us with a model of how community-based organizing can link funding for programs in the United States with funding for programs on a global scale. The following appeared on the organization's website, as an announcement for a political rally to take place on November 29, 2006, that featured the following policy demands:

- \$2.6 billion for the Ryan White CARE Act, the life-line for people living with AIDS in the U.S. The Care Act has been largely flat-funded since President Bush came into office, even as the number of HIV infections has continued to climb.
- \$8 billion to train, retain and sustain enough healthcare workers in Africa to achieve universal access. Without significant new investments in the health workforce in Africa, current investments

such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief will not succeed. (<http://www.critpath.org/actup>, n.p.)

ACT UP / Philadelphia has been on the cutting edge of linking community-based organizing with global concerns. In recent years, it has protested the Obama administration's flatlining of funding for global AIDS initiatives. Its work is an excellent model for organizations at all levels associated with the American policy process.

In addition, the movements need to support those community institutions that were created in the midst of the epidemic's major infection wave in the 1980s. The movements need to continue to distribute information about HIV/AIDS prevention; organize to challenge discrimination; pressure federal, state, and local governments around AIDS-related issues; and provide the changing social services and support systems that become necessary as people who are HIV positive live longer. As they build coalitions with others (outside the lesbian and gay movements) around HIV/AIDS, they must work to ensure that more people have access to the information and drugs associated with these medical advances. This is challenging but crucial work, especially because some younger gays coming of age perceive AIDS as not nearly the threat that it was during the 1980s and 1990s, given the development of drugs that have allowed some to live "normal" lives.

Support for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Issues

One of the most serious issues facing the lesbian and gay movements is the problem of teen suicide. One Canadian study "claims to provide the most compelling proof to date of a link between homosexuality and youth suicide, concluding that gay and bisexual males are nearly 14 times more at risk than their heterosexual contemporaries of making a serious attempt on their own lives" (King 1996, 41). A more recent study of Oregon youth found that "gay, lesbian and bisexual teens are five times more likely than their heterosexual counterparts to commit suicide but a supportive environment in their schools and communities can make a difference, new research suggests. Suicide is the leading cause of death among young adults from ages 15-24, and lesbian, gay, and bisexual teens are more likely to attempt suicide." In support of the study's conclusions, the lead researcher, Columbia University's Mark Hatzenbuehler, concluded that "the results

of this study are pretty compelling. When communities support their gay young people, and schools adopt anti-bullying and anti-discrimination policies that specifically protect lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, the risk of attempted suicide by all young people drops, especially for lgb youth" (Welsh 2011). The suicide of Rutgers University freshman Tyler Clementi, who jumped off the George Washington Bridge in New York City in September 2010, garnered tremendous publicity in light of the fact that his Rutgers freshman roommate, Dharun Ravi, posted a video on the internet of him having sex with another man. This tragic case raises many questions about cyberbullying, homophobia, and outing, and the resources that educational institutions (including high schools and junior high schools) have in place that might prevent such tragedies. The suicide of 14-year-old Jamie Rodemeyer in western New York in September 2011 is another tragic case of a boy who was consistently tormented by his classmates because he was gay. His case is particularly noteworthy because "it is a classic case of bullying: he was aggressively and repeatedly victimized" (Boyd and Marwick, 2011). And in February 2008, a 15-year-old out gay student, Lawrence King, was fatally shot by a classmate in Oxnard, California, after King had been repeatedly harassed in school. This case received considerable national publicity and is the subject of a documentary film, *Valentine Road*, released in October 2013. These sad stories are a reminder of the internal pressures that young people face as they struggle with sexual identity concerns and wrestle with all of the challenges of coming out of the closet. UCLA researcher Ilan H. Meyer explains it well: "there's a stress that's involved with concealing" (Schwartz 2012, 56). And Robert Kim has concluded, based on his research, that "bullying of [LGBT students and those perceived as LGBT] stems largely from discomfort with students who do not conform to traditional gender roles in their appearance or behavior, i.e., who are gender-nonconforming" (Biegel 2010, 117-118). Sociologist C. J. Pascoe thinks that we need to focus our research and attention on masculinity and in the schools: "What does not seem to be happening at the level of legislation, in online environments, or in academic research, is a discussion of the role of masculinity (apart from football perhaps) in homophobic harassment and heteronormative behavior. . . . Researchers and those who care about and work with youth need to begin to ask about the role of masculinity in all of these tragedies. This is what the conversation needs to be about, not some generic discussion about bullying or homophobia" (Pascoe 2012, xiv). And as Jason

Cianciotto and Sean Cahill point out accurately, as LGBT youth come out at a much earlier age, school administrators and policymakers face a number of interrelated public policy challenges relating to "school safety, curricular, and other education policy issues at the intersection of sexual orientation, gender identity, and public education. Self-identification at an earlier age can expose LGBT youth to rejection, harassment, and violence at home and at school, creating a greater need for appropriate advice, comprehensive and age-appropriate sex education, and referrals to available resources from supportive adults" (2012, 3).

Fortunately, there are organizations that provide support for those contemplating suicide around sexual identity concerns, organizations whose work is invaluable in the absence of a supportive environment for youth at home and in schools. The Trevor Project, which "is the leading national organization providing crisis intervention and suicide prevention services to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth" (www.thetrevorproject.org), has deservedly received considerable national attention. Another project aimed at supporting young people struggling with sexual identity concerns is Dan Savage's YouTube campaign, *It Gets Better.org*. The campaign features an array of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender adults discussing their experiences with harassment when they were enduring their challenging teenage years. A subsequent book associated with the project, *It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living*, offers a collection of essays and testimonials targeted for teens and written by celebrities, everyday people, and political leaders. The book features an introductory essay by President Obama and offers essays by the transgender author and academic Jennifer Finney Boylan; the first out bishop in the Episcopal Church, Gene Robinson; lesbian activist and movements' analyst Urvashi Vaid; novelist Michael Cunningham; former US secretary of state Hillary Rodham Clinton; fashion designer Tim Gunn; lesbian author and graphic designer Alison Bechdel; and Senator Al Franken (D-MN), among others. Savage's campaign has understandably received considerable positive publicity, but it has also garnered criticism, primarily that the message itself is too passive. Kids need to know, so the critics understandably argue, that things do not just "get better," on their own and that it takes considerable organizing and educational work for structural conditions to improve for young people who are wrestling with sexual and gender identity concerns. Critics understandably worry that the message of the campaign is a passive

call for accepting the status quo. But Savage's campaign has helped to inspire conversations about how to better support young people (and others) struggling with sexual identity and gender identity challenges in their daily lives. The resulting publicity has made a vital contribution to the broader conversations about suicide prevention that simply must be had.

While there may be disagreements about how to best support students who are coming out and who do not conform to what society deems to be "normal," there is little disagreement over this unfortunate reality: lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth are often subjected to considerable harassment in school. A significant number report having been physically assaulted as well.² One organization that is doing pioneering work in this area reports that "eight out of ten students are still harassed at school" (glsen.org). There is a connection between the harassment faced by lesbian and gay youth in their schools and suicide. Once again, these issues need a committed coalition of groups to come together to protect and promote the well-being of all our youth, but especially that of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth, who, although they are particularly at risk, are often ignored in social policy. An organization that has done invaluable outreach work in this area is the Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN), which was established in 1990. GLSEN's goal is to make America's schools safe for all youth: "We believe that a quality k-12 education is a fundamental right of every American. To that end, we work with elected officials and other policy makers at the local, state, and federal levels to ensure that the best and most inclusive safe schools policies are considered, passed, and implemented" (glsen.org). They have focused on four major fronts: (1) a fight for new laws that would extend equal protection to all students regardless of sexual orientation; (2) efforts to change the attitudes of all those who influence daily life in schools—"from public policy leaders in Washington, DC to state superintendents to local school board members"; (3) providing materials that can help train teachers about lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in ways that help stop harassment and violence; and (4) organizing for change by strengthening grassroots activism (*GLSEN Fundraising and Information Newsletter* 2000, 3). GLSEN's national organization is located in New York City; it has eighty-five chapters nationwide. It plays a vital role in establishing a registry of Gay-Straight Alliances (www.gsanetwork.org) throughout the United States, "student clubs that, as of 2008, have been

established in 4,000 schools around the country. The first such alliance was proposed by a straight student who wanted to curb bullying and harassment of fellow students who were gay" (Brody, 2011).

A number of other organizations already represent the interests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth. At the national level, there is the National Youth Advocacy Coalition (NYAC), which was formally established in 1994. It attempts to educate members of Congress and other decision makers on youth-related issues. NYAC also pushes other organizations to "develop the capacity to represent the concerns of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered people." All too often the national organizations discussed in this book largely ignore youth. Since its creation in 1994, NYAC has worked on a number of youth-related issues: supporting student groups in high school and even on some college campuses, supporting students who have been harassed in schools, fighting against federal funding cuts in programs that benefit youth, working on suicide issues in the context of mental health services, addressing youth substance abuse, supporting youth-related HIV education and treatment programs, and addressing youth homelessness (personal interview with NYAC staff member, March 4, 1997).

All of these important issues deserve a much higher profile in the contemporary lesbian and gay movements. Stuart Biegel, who is an expert on the interrelated issues of harassment and bullying of young people in the schools, believes that "not only has bullying by fellow students in a school setting consistently been found to have a negative impact on everyone's ability to learn, but recent research has also shown that bullying is more common and more potentially damaging to children than was previously thought" (Biegel 2010, 118). He warns that "studies continue to show that LGBTs feel disproportionately unsafe in school and that the mistreatment they face interferes with their ability to succeed. Gay and gender-nonconforming students often stop attending classes regularly and many drop out, run away from home, or attempt suicide" (xvii). Though hundreds of local and regional organizations provide social and educational services to lesbian and gay youth at the grassroots level, many lack the resources to provide services to the extent they are needed. In addition, in many small towns and rural communities throughout the United States, these crucial resources are nonexistent. This set of issues poses a unique opportunity for the lesbian and gay movements to build coalitions with others around

providing basic services and support for all of our youth. It also opens the door to discussions about what can be done in the schools, where young people spend so much time in the formative years of their lives.

Education for Understanding of and Respect for Difference

Given that schools have long been regarded as having important responsibilities for the moral development of youth, it is no surprise that the Christian Right has organized in communities throughout the United States to prevent the discussion of sexual orientation in school curricula. These efforts have been generally effective, thus reinforcing the antilebian and antigay climate in virtually all American educational institutions. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender students are the targets of daily verbal harassment, and some are physically abused as well. Educational institutions reinforce the larger society's heterosexism by tolerating antigay jokes and harassment and by promoting heterosexual coupling (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997, 139). As we have already seen, suicide and the threat of suicide are serious problems for adolescents who are struggling with how society treats their homosexuality.

In the 1990s, schools became an arena for the politics of lesbian and gay rights, as activists targeted school boards in an effort to persuade them to adopt curricula that promote nonjudgmental discussions of homosexuality and safe-sex education within the context of AIDS. Educator Karen Harbeck believes that when homosexuality and education come together for public discussion, they provoke "one of the most publicly volatile and personally threatening debates in our national history" (Button, Rienzo, and Wald 1997, 148). In 1992 New York City emerged as a battleground between the Christian Right and the lesbian and gay grassroots movements when Joseph Fernandez, then chancellor of the city's school system, attempted to implement his Children of the Rainbow multicultural curriculum. This curriculum was the "first-grade portion of the multicultural Rainbow Curriculum, which dealt with, among other issues, gay and lesbian families" (Bronski 1998, 133). Sexual orientation occupied a minor, but important, part of the entire plan; the curriculum was rooted in the assumption that the potential for homosexuality exists in students. Children of the Rainbow articulated this assumption in the following way: "Teachers of first graders have an opportunity to give children a healthy sense of identity at an early age. Classes should include references to

lesbians and gays in curricular areas and should avoid exclusionary practices by presuming a person's sexual orientation, reinforcing stereotypes, or speaking of lesbians and gays as 'they' or 'other.'" Two related books chosen for classroom use were *Heather Has Two Mommies* and *Daddy's Roommate*. Children of the Rainbow and the broader multicultural Rainbow Curriculum received the support of former mayor David Dinkins in addition to Chancellor Fernandez.

The Christian Right responded to this curricular initiative with disdain and aggressive political organizing. New York's Roman Catholic archdiocese and a coalition of right-wing community groups organized against the curriculum while it was still being developed and considered for adoption. The conservative Family Defense Council distributed a flyer that said, "We will not accept two people of the same sex engaged in sex practices as 'family.' . . . In the fourth grade the Chancellor would demonstrate to pupils how to use condoms. . . . He would teach our kids that sodomy is acceptable but virginity is something weird" (Bronski 1998, 133). Ultimately, Fernandez lost his job as a result of the controversy generated by the Rainbow Curriculum, giving the Christian and antigay Right a major victory.

The highly visible curriculum battle in New York City is just one of many battles that have occurred in communities across the country with respect to teaching about issues relating to homosexuality and difference. The Christian Right is well ahead of the movements in challenging education-for-difference efforts in communities throughout the United States. They often attack local antibullying campaigns and "charge that liberals and gay rights groups are using the antibullying banner to pursue a hidden 'homosexual agenda,' implicitly endorsing, for example, same-sex marriage" (Eckholm 2010). Local school boards in some communities have been stacked with candidates supported by the Christian Right, making them morally and culturally conservative. This is the reality that the movements must face if they hope to reach out and build coalitions with others who have been the targets of hate and discrimination. The importance of education cannot be overestimated. In institutions where difficult issues are supposed to be examined with understanding and respect for difference, lesbian and gay teachers often remain closeted for fear of harassment, ridicule, and, even more seriously, loss of their jobs. Stuart Biegel identifies the challenges that the lesbian and gay movements face in this crucial area well:

There's been so much focus on LGBT youth and rightly so, but not as much focus on educators. In many parts of the country, sizable numbers of parents and particularly sizeable numbers of folks in conservative religious communities are not comfortable with the idea of a gay or lesbian or transgendered person teaching their kids. Even though in the public sector educators do have the right to be out, there is great pressure on them to remain closeted and keep their identities to themselves. Instead of seeing LGBT educators as a valuable resource who can help LGBT youth, too many school districts are trying to keep them under wraps, so to speak. (Rogers 2010)

To the extent that the Christian and antigay Right continues to create a context for these sorts of attitudes, it challenges the fundamental tenets of the lesbian and gay liberation movements that are at the core of this book. Although winning the passage of assimilationist civil rights, antidiscrimination, or hate-crime laws may provide some tangible benefits for lesbians and gays, these measures will not challenge prejudices and fears that are deeply rooted. Properly trained and committed educators at all levels of education are in the best position to do so.

Hate Crimes

As we have already seen, the brutal murders of Matthew Shepard and James Byrd prompted a national debate over the merits of federal hate-crimes legislation that affords federal agencies jurisdiction over bias incidents. Shepard's and Byrd's deaths and the murder of Billy Jack Gaither, who in February 1999 was beaten to death and whose body was burned in Sylacauga, Alabama, galvanized the lesbian and gay movements and their straight allies around the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, signed into law by President Obama on October 28, 2009, but the reality is that hundreds of lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transgender people (as well as people suspected of falling into these categories) have been the targets of bias-related crimes over the years, often with little response from the police, government officials, schoolteachers, principals, and community leaders.

The movements can build a number of natural coalitions around hate-related violence, such as with advocates for battered women and civil rights groups. If these groups fail to work together and instead organize themselves according to their separate identities, there will be no long-lasting coalition to address the sources of hate crimes. Hate-crimes legislation at the federal, state, and local levels is an important symbolic

gesture, but most forms of the legislation address the issue *after* a crime has been committed. What is desperately needed is a long-term coalition to explore how the sources of hate crimes can be targeted before they occur. Many of these conversations are already occurring in communities throughout the United States, but the problem also needs the formal involvement of educators. Their research-based insights into the roots of bias crimes can help communities devise appropriate interventions, and they can also push for curricular innovations in schools that emphasize respect for and understanding of diversity.

Support for Transpeople

The lesbian and gay movements have struggled over time with integrating the day-to-day challenges facing transpeople into broader movement goals. Scholar Stuart Biegel has accurately pointed out that "the right to be out for transgender persons can prove to be quite different—both in its conception and in its application—from the right to be out on the basis of sexual orientation" (2010, 176). Andrew Solomon reminds us that "gay and trans are separate categories" and that "trans children are not manifesting sexuality; they are manifesting gender" (2012, 600). How are these differences manifested within the transgender community?

Many gender nonconforming people, for example, may want to be out only as male or female. This is who they are, and this is how they want to be seen. Transgender, for at least some of these folks, is not necessarily the equivalent of an identity at all but may be the description of a process that they went through and have now completed. For others, transgender may be seen as primarily or perhaps even critically as the equivalent of a medical condition. Still others, of course, view transgender as central to their very persona, and it is highly important for these persons to be able to identify openly." (Biegel 2010, 176)

Another problem is that "many middle-class gay people don't truly know what transgender means, and when they do, some feel that transpeople are splitting the movement" (Beam 2007, 106), thus undermining the more mainstream, assimilationist goals of the lesbian and gay movements. Indeed, a further problem is that the "successes" of the lesbian and gay movements as described throughout this book and celebrated among mainstream lesbian and gay rights organizations—overturning

the military ban, progress on same-sex marriage and adoption, for example—do not resonate as positively in the trans activist community. The trans community is understandably much more concerned with “economic marginalization, vulnerability to imprisonment, and other forms of state violence” (Spade 2011, 68). Transpeople face bias on a day-to-day basis, bias that can sometimes erupt into physical violence. A September 2010 survey of 6,450 transgender people released by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force “found that 97% of respondents experienced on-the-job harassment, ranging from colleagues repeatedly using the incorrect pronoun as a means of mocking to outright physical assaults” (Harmon 2009/2010, 50). In addition, a “web of inconsistent administrative rules governing gender—that produce ‘significant vulnerability’ must also be addressed by the larger lesbian and gay movements. These ‘legal and administrative systems of domination’ include prisons, welfare programs, foster care, drug treatment centers, homeless shelters, [and] job training centers that employ rigid gender binaries” (Spade 2011, 12). The good news is that there has been more mainstream media attention devoted to trans issues over the last twenty years or so. In addition, a new “critical trans politics” is emerging from membership-based organizations, including Southerners on New Ground, the Audre Lorde Project, Fabulous Educated Radicals for Community Empowerment, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, and Communities United Against Violence (Spade 2011, 188). The challenge for the larger lesbian and gay movements is to build this new critical trans politics into the movements’ strategies that have become much more aligned with assimilationist goals.

The Employment Non-Discrimination Act

The vast majority of lesbians and gay men can be fired for their sexual orientation, despite the fact that more than ten states and many cities now outlaw such job discrimination. There is a need for federal legislation, such as the proposed Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA), that would ban discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Support and publicity for this legislation serve an important symbolic purpose as well, because they highlight the reality of employment discrimination. Despite the fact that the legislation was defeated by the US Senate in 1996 by the narrowest of margins, ENDA will probably not pass in the short term unless a decidedly more liberal Congress is

elected with a Democrat in the White House. President George W. Bush consistently opposed ENDA because he believed, erroneously, that it would constitute “special treatment.” While President Obama supports ENDA, he has received considerable criticism from some within the lesbian and gay movements for refusing “to issue an executive order barring discrimination by federal contractors based on sexual orientation or gender identity, while ENDA remains stuck in Congress.” GeEQUAL, an organization devoted to achieving “full legal and social equality” for lesbians, gays, bisexuals, those who are transgender, and those who identify as queer, organized a protest interruption of a June 2013 speech by Michelle Obama, in protest of the president’s failure to be more aggressive in fighting for legal equality for all in the workplace. In addition, Get Equal activists were arrested in June 2013 during a protest in the Washington, DC, office of Speaker John Boehner (R-OH) (Terkel 2013).

ENDA has been introduced in every congressional term except one since 1994, but it still has not passed the Congress. The version introduced in 2007 was the first to include gender identity in proposed ENDA protections, which was controversial within the gay and lesbian movements. Democrats controlled both houses of Congress at that time, so transgender activists and their supporters believed that it was a propitious time to expand ENDA protections. “But when a preliminary vote in the House of Representatives reportedly failed to muster adequate support, Massachusetts representative Barney Frank split ENDA into two separate bills, one with gender identity protections, one without. The former died in committee; the latter passed the House, only to die in the Senate.” Many movements’ organizations criticized Frank’s strategic move as undermining basic human rights for transpeople. Human Rights Campaign, which supported the bill without protection for transpeople in an effort to gather the necessary political support for lesbians and gays, was targeted by transgender activists and their allies, who protested their fund-raising dinners being held throughout the United States. All of this raised the important human rights and strategic question: “Are transgender individuals really part of the ‘gay community’?” (Harmon 2009/2010, 51). In recent years, the proposed ENDA legislation has continued to include gender identity.

Employment rights are a set of issues where lesbians and gays can build an effective coalition with other civil rights groups, while recognizing that how the issue is framed will determine the American public’s support.

Gregory B. Lewis and Marc A. Rogers have studied both demographic and attitudinal sources of support for lesbian and gay employment rights. They conclude:

Americans support the concept of equal rights more than they favor laws to enforce them, especially when they are asked to expand legal coverage rather than just to support existing laws. If the debate over gay employment protections can be framed as simply preventing employment discrimination, gay rights supporters should garner majority support, but opponents have frequently been able to reframe the issue around morality or to focus attention on the occupations where public distrust is greatest, especially elementary school teachers. Defusing fears of gay teachers will be a key issue in winning employment protections for gay and lesbian people in all occupations. (1999, 130)

These findings suggest that passage of ENDA will require a broad-based coalition of civil rights activists to come together to educate the public about the importance of this legislation and to rally support around a basic civil rights issue. In the meantime, the lesbian and gay movements will need to work with coalitions of civil rights supporters at the state and local levels to combat job discrimination based on sexual orientation.

Barriers to Building Coalitions

Perhaps the most important barrier to building coalitions is that a narrow assimilationist rights-based organizing strategy is the political, cultural, and economic ethos of American society, as enshrined in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution, which uphold the importance of protecting *individual* rights. We are socialized to think in terms of protecting the individual's right to life, liberty, and happiness—often defined in ways that emphasize the acquisition of private wealth. An identity politics that embraces narrow civil rights goals, such as same-sex marriage or overturning the ban on lesbians and gays in the military, reinforces the primacy of the individual. And, in fact, there are practical advantages to a narrowly circumscribed identity-based organizing strategy, as writer and activist Suzanne Pharr suggests. These include “clarity of focus in tactics and strategies, self-examination and education apart from the dominant culture” and the ‘development of solidarity and group bonding. Creating

organizations based on identity allows us to have visibility and collective power, to advance concerns that otherwise would never be recognized because of our marginalization within the dominant society” (Vaid 1995, 286). Pharr’s analysis goes a long way toward explaining why narrow identity politics will continue to dominate the mainstream lesbian and gay movements’ strategic thinking, despite the setbacks of the Clinton and Bush eras and even disappointment with the Obama presidency. And Vaid reminds us that a narrowly focused identity politics that emphasizes traditional notions of families may “reproduce the isolation and abandonment many LGBT people experienced from their families of origin. Not everyone is in a couple or will be or wants to be; not everyone has children or wants to have them. Identities are at once individual and multiple, but interest group politics requires them to be homogenous” (2012, 19).

The other major barrier is one that we have seen repeatedly throughout this book, that is, the fact that the lesbian and gay movements are highly fragmented across identities and subject to conflicting and multiple cross-pressures. Given this reality, how can they build a coherent agenda that reflects agreement on a political and cultural strategy? And if the movements cannot agree on a coherent agenda, how can we expect them to build the coalitions needed to address the issues we have discussed? As Sherrill points out, “To the degree that there is any agenda in the United States, it is for equality and freedom from discrimination and violence. A more sophisticated agenda would require a level of collective identity among gay people not found anywhere in the world” (1996, 473).

And what does all of this mean for the central dilemma of this book—the tensions between the assimilationist and liberationist approaches to political and social change that has characterized the lesbian and gay movements over the years? One clear answer is that the movements should pursue a dual organizing strategy that builds on the best of the assimilationist perspective but that also always considers the possibilities for more radical, liberationist, structural, social, and policy change. We have seen in our discussion of the three major policy areas of this book—HIV/AIDS, the military ban, and same-sex marriage—that the assimilationist strategy has much to offer the movements, but in and of itself, it is far too limiting. We have also seen in this book that any social movement needs a variety of political organizing strategies that can be applied at different times in response to the Christian Right and at all levels of the political system. This chapter began with a quotation from Laura Liswood, the

founder of Women World Leaders: "every successful social movement eventually moves from the unthinkable to the impossible to the inevitable" (Wilcox et al. 2007, 241). There are moments in any social movement's history when it seems as if very little progress can be achieved toward larger goals. The 1990s and the early twenty-first century have provided plenty of evidence that the larger lesbian and gay movements, working with others, have much work to do to make continued progress, so that the unthinkable and impossible can be turned into the inevitable. And to ensure that this happens, we rely on the courage and resistance of ordinary people who come together out of shared necessity and commitment across sexual-orientation, gender, race, and class divides. This is not easy work, but it is the necessary and messy work of social movements. And it is work that awaits, inspires, and challenges us all.

Conclusion

This chapter began with this key question: What political organizing strategy is the most viable for addressing the policy issues discussed in this book? The answer is that we need to build on the best of what the assimilationist and liberationist strategies have to offer. The assimilationist strategy, in and of itself, is far too limiting. And in the words of the late civil rights activist Bayard Rustin, those who embrace radical, outsider, unconventional, liberationist politics must eventually recognize the importance of moving "from protest to politics" (D'Emilio 2002, 5). All social movements recognize over time the importance of building coalitions with others across issues of common interest that will help bridge sexual-orientation, gender, race, and class divides. We have discussed the barriers to doing so throughout this book, but these barriers are not insurmountable. Indeed, much of the hope for the future resides in the attitudes and values of young people today, many of whom have indicated to pollsters and in classrooms across the country that those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender deserve to live in a world free from prejudice, discrimination, and harassment, and they deserve, at a bare minimum, the rights afforded to those in the heterosexual majority. What we must ultimately do is reconceptualize what it is to be an American, challenge what Audre Lorde has called the American norm: someone who is "white, thin, male, young, heterosexual, christian, and financially secure." It is important to do so because "this mythical American norm" is socially constructed

and is the locus of considerable power and privilege in American society (1984, 116). No single political strategy can begin to accomplish this goal; multiple strategies for political, social, cultural, and economic transformation are at the core of this radical democratic conception of politics. As we approach our task, we are challenging what it means to be a citizen in the United States and a citizen of the world. This book has been written with these goals in mind.

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To those teachers, scholars, and activists who paved the way.

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