

The lesbian and Gay Movements

ASSIMILATION OR LIBERATION?
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Resources

- ▶ Della Porta, D. and Diani, M. (2006) *Social Movements: An Introduction*. (2nd ed.) Oxford: Blackwell.
- ▶ Tremblay, M., Paternotte, D. and Johnson, C. (eds.) *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*. Ashgate, Farnham.
- ▶ Rimmerman, C. A. (2007) *The Lesbian and Gay Movements: Assimilation or Liberation (Dilemmas in American Politics)*. Westview Press.
- ▶ Tarrow, S. (2011) *Power in Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics (Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics)* (3rd ed.) New York: Cambridge University Press.
- ▶ Wolf, Sherry, (2009) *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation*.

Question

- ▶ Should policy and cultural change reflect a top-down model, or should it be inspired by organic grassroots organizing in local communities ...?
- ▶ Implying two possible outcomes :
- ▶ Assimilationist
- ▶ Should the goal be a more assimilationist, rights-based approach to political and social change?
- ▶ Liberationist
- ▶ Should movement activists embrace a more liberationist, revolutionary model, one that might embrace a full range of progressive causes?

Assimilationist Approach.

- ▶ A rights-based perspective
- ▶ Within a pluralist democracy, within classical liberalism
- ▶ Works within the system to affect change – an insider approach
- ▶ Change slow and incremental, gradual process of changing government policy and state laws, and ultimately social structures

Liberationist Perspective

- ▶ Works for more radical social change
- ▶ Is transformative in nature
- ▶ Rises outside the formal structures of power
- ▶ Seek structural and political change but not from an insider position - outsider political strategies.

Liberationists

- ▶ 'attempt to subvert the hierarchies of the hegemonic order, pointing out the gaps and contradictions in that order, ... (Shane Phelan, 2001, p.32 in Rimmerman, 2008, p.5)

Social movement

- ▶ Rimmerman argues that the 'gay' movement is a social movement rather than a political party, interest group and protest group.
- ▶ Characteristic:
 - ❑ 1. they grow out of a mass base of individuals, groups, and organisations, linked by social interaction
 - ❑ 2. they grow out of a mix of political and cultural goals
 - ❑ 3. they rely on a shared collective identity that is the basis of mobilization and participation (Wald, 2000, p.5 in Rimmerman, 2008, p.6)
- ▶ Decentralized and comprise an array of organisations
- ▶ Often confused with political movements, but there are differences.

LGBT groups at the margins of society

- ▶ 'At their core, social movements inspire participatory democracy' (p.6)
- ▶ In response to marginalization will identify strategies that will meet their needs – whilst challenging structures that constrain their life choices.
- ▶ Will include:
 - ▶ Developing alternative resources
 - ▶ Constructing different ideological frameworks
 - ▶ Creating oppositional organizations and institutions

Rimmerman p.7

- ▶ 'Such structures are most often "grounded in the indigenous or communal relationships of marginal groups". This is especially true for the lesbian and gay movements' (Cohen, 1999, p.48).
- ▶ What has been the communal relationship between lesbians.

So, social movements

- ▶ From a perspective of marginalized groups are potential arenas for organisation, education, and resistance.
- ▶ Often arising when there are:
- ▶ "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, p.7 in Rimmerman, 2008, p.7)

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- ▶ His intentions
- ▶ To "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 generalization and often even explanations for various behaviours."

He dev't his argument thus

- ▶ 1. places dev't of the lesbian and gay movements within their proper historical context and how assimilation /liberation developed over the last 60 years.
- ▶ 2. tensions between ass/fib/insider/outsider Act Up, Queer Nation, Lesbian Avengers from AIDS crisis v Treatment Action Group.
- ▶ 3. Gays in the military
- ▶ 4. Gay marriage
- ▶ 5. Future of the social movement
- ▶ "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" (p.10)

Resources

- ▶ Conrad, R. (ed.) (2014) *Against Equality: Queer Revolution, Not Mere Inclusion*. Edinburgh: AK Press.
- ▶ Kuhar, R. & Paternotte, D. (2017) *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing against Equality*. London: Rowman and Littlefield. Chp.1
- ▶ Kolman, K. and Wales, M. (2011) United Kingdom: changing political opportunity structures, policy success and continuing challenges for lesbian, gay and bisexual movements. In: Tremblay, M., Paternotte, D. and Johnson, C. (eds.) *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparative Insights into a Transformed Relationship*. Ashgate, Farnham, pp. 181-196. PDF available from:
<http://eprints.gla.ac.uk/44250/1/44250.pdf>
- ▶ Rimmerman, C.R. (2002) *From Identity to Politics: The lesbian and Gay Movements in the United States*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press. Chp1. PDF available from:
http://www.temple.edu/tempress/chapters_11000/1331_ch1.pdf

- ▶ Tremblay, M. Paternotte, D. & Johnson, C. (eds.) (2011) *The Lesbian and Gay Movement and the State: Comparison Insights into a Transformed Relationship*. London: Routledge. Chp.1
