I. Gay and lesbian politics by Ronald Hunt

Discussion questions: Where and when did the first broad based lesbian/gay organization start?

a. Social movement history:

1. Germany 1864 – Many intellectuals (i.e., Karl Heinrich) challenged the view that homosexuals were deviants. 1897 - Scientific Humanitarian Committee - First broad based political movement for the emancipation of lesbians and gays from repressive laws and social intolerance.


4. Stonewall riots 1969, hundreds or thousands rioted for several nights.

Discussion questions: What are the objectives of the gay and lesbian movement in the U.S?

National movement - objectives:
1. definitions of sexuality
2. deletion of homosexuality as a mental illness
3. discussion
4. dialogue
5. recognition (college courses)
6. Anti-discrimination
7. equal rights
II. The political power of lesbians, gays and bisexuals (1996) by Kenneth Sherrill

Discussion questions:

According to Kenneth Sherrill - What are the political barriers facing the gay and lesbian movement in the US?

a. political barriers?

-despised (thermometer & violent crime)
-large opposition movement
-small number
-widely dispersed (a minority even in their own family)
-few representatives
-not homogeneous (demographics; issues)

b. Assets? Wealth? Average annual household income of $55,430 compared to national average of $32,144. Sample based on readers of a gay magazine (the Advocate)?

Author suggest they may make less. Using data from voter exit polls. But this is biased data to. Perhaps only the younger, more urban gays and lesbians will respond to the question of whether they are gay or not.

III. Celebration and Suppression: Strategic Uses of Identity by the lesbian and gay movement by Mary Bernstein

a. Research question: Under what political conditions do activists celebrate or suppress differences from the majority

b. Why is Identity politics considered problematic by some:
1. Critics argue that a celebration of differences prevents a more radical and effective social movement (i.e., socialist, etc).
2. Identity strategies prevent or hinder more instrumental goals (i.e. policy change)

c. 3 strategic uses of identity:
   • identity for empowerment - help mobilization
   • identity as a goal - help redefine the majorities identity
   • identity as strategy:
     o deployment (discuss the personal)
     o critique (confront the values of the dominant majority)
     o education (downplay differences to gain legitimacy)

d. Hypothesis: differences in social movement behavior/strategies depends:
   1. on the structure of the social movement (organized/disorganized)
   2. access to politics, and
   3. type of opposition

e. Methodology:
   • case studies: Lesbian gay movements - New York City; Oregon; Vermont
   • field research: interviews
   • secondary research: newspapers, organization documents

f. Findings:
   1. New York - radical tactics, broad cultural and societal goals. Refused to assimilate (dress mainstream), emphasized differently. Used the "identity for critique" strategy. Why? Started differently - Stonewall
(opposition was more hostile) - less homogeneous group. Express the idea the being gay was good.


Failed even though they had more resources than New York example, why? Narrow focus on legal protection (policy goal) didn't allow for mobilization of gays and other groups.

3. Vermont - conservative tactics, narrow goals, why - political access - governor, liberal interest groups. Successful, why? Lack of organized opposition. There was a religious opposition, but those leaders relied on emotional outbursts and religious appeals. In contrast, the gay and lesbian group was conservative and professional in appearance and demeanor.

g. Conclusion:

1. identity politics is not just expressive, but can be useful in obtaining instrumental (policy goals).

2. Perception of scholars that the lesbian and gay movement was fundamentally different from other social movements. Author disagrees. His model can be applied to gay and lesbian activities as well as civil rights or women's movement.