Identity Radicalization, Fragmentation and Re-assimilation: An Analysis of the GLBTQ Movement

Anna M. Sorensen and Cynthia Siemsen

California State University, Chico

Abstract

An examination of social movements shows that they change in structure over time, not remaining one stable and static identity politic. This is obvious within the structure of the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender movement. Each change has come with dissent from both within and without the homosexual community, and yet the end result is the inclusion of said groups. Current social movement theory's explanations of this change have centered on concepts of identity politics. We seek to answer the question of how social movements in general, and the GLBTQ movement in particular, structure and restructure themselves throughout time. To do so, we move John Kitsuse's (1980) sociological theory of tertiary deviance from the level of the individual to the collective. Using historical analysis, we apply this theory to the GLBTQ timeline and conclude that among other things, each restructuring is vital to the sustainability of the movement. We further conclude that queer theory is the natural progression of the movement.

Introduction

When people in contemporary society think of the gay rights movement, they likely think of ballot measures and constitutional amendments. They might think of their next-door neighbor, a co-worker, or Will and Jack from Will and Grace. What they probably will not consider is the contentious history of the gay rights movement. While they may understand to some extent the difficulties of homosexual people existing in a hetero-normative culture, they probably have no idea of the difficulties and divisions within the homosexual community/movement itself.

The composition of the social movement known today as the gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (GLBTQ) movement has changed since its inception during the 1950s (Seidman, 2001). Gay men and lesbian women, originally dichotomous groups, joined forces to form the gay and lesbian movement. Over the following decades, people who identified as bisexual stood apart from the collective because their needs were not being met within the larger movement.

After extensive "discussion" within the gay and lesbian community/movement, bisexuals, with their identity validated, rejoined the movement. The transgender movement during the nineties illustrates this process of a collective fragmentation from the larger movement and then eventual re-assimilation. We see the same process continuing today with the rise of the queer movement (Gamson, 1996).

It is commonsense that with the formation of the original movement, there was safety and power in numbers under the gay and lesbian "umbrella." As the gay and lesbian movement became more mainstream, people who did not identify as gay or lesbian, but not as heterosexual either, felt free, and justified, to define themselves in other ways and to demand that their identities be recognized and validated, resulting in separation from the larger movement. Eventually, however, the "splinter" group was re-integrated back into the larger movement. The gay and lesbian movement was originally (and still to a large extent is) about fighting the oppression of hetero-normative

culture and gaining the legal and economic rights automatically assumed by heterosexuals. While those rights are not universally attainable as of yet, homosexuality is becoming more normative within society.

Yet, while many within the GLBT movement were/are satisfied with the composition and goals of the movement, we see it being more and more frequently referred to as the GLBTQ movement, denoting the addition of queer-identified individuals. Queer theory suggests that no identity should become normalized (Seidman, 2001), a more radical idea even than the original concepts of equal rights and opportunity for all that were the impetus and justification of the original movement. There is considerable disquiet within the community/ movement in response to queer politics and theory – not unlike the dissention and discussion surrounding the re-assimilation of increasingly transgressive groups. We see a continual radicalization of the movement as groups of individuals identify (re-identify) themselves differently over time, even to the point of demanding no identity. Still the movement continues, sometimes more visibly active, sometimes less.

Thesis and Framework
Our research is driven by the larger question of how and why small groups fragment away from a social movement in order to establish their separate, distinct identities, and then re-assimilate back into the collective. In particular, we are interested in this process as it unfolded in the GLBTQ movement as described above. Is the process about sexual identity, the existence of social movements as an institution, or is it a combination of the two? In what follows, we will show that the GLBTQ movement, as we know it today, is the result of a combination of sexual identity politics and the necessity of continual radicalization in order to sustain social movement and change. Queer theory, is the logical next step in the radicalization of the movement, and yet we cannot discount the importance and necessity of political identity formation and sustenance. Furthermore, it is likely that in order for the movement to

continue, there must be a continuous radicalization.

In what follows, we will examine these ideas through the lens of different sociological theories including tertiary deviance, identity politics, and queer theory. Then, we will briefly historically analyze and sociologically map the formation and reformations of the GLBTQ movement through a review of literature that has already been offered on this topic. Finally, we will consider our findings within the presented theoretical frameworks and in light of the proposed research questions.

Theoretical Perspectives
Identity Politics/Queer Theory
Steven Seidman (2001) maps the transition from identity politics to queer theory, looking at the responses of the homosexual community to a heteronormative culture and the resultant normalization of society as well as queer politics and its influence in the movement. In essence, Seidman "argues that there is occurring in the United States something of a shift from identity to queer politics, which is paralleled by changes in the social patterns of normative heterosexuality" (p. 321).

In the 1950s, homosexuality was seen as a "deviant minority identity" (Seidman, 2001, p. 322) and governmental institutions actively oppressed homosexuals. The homosexual was excluded, publicly separated from the rest of society by being denied civil rights and political representation. Any visible homosexual presence was policed and punished. Shamed, the individual self-enforced a public invisibility. This created the "closet," the place where the individual hides his or her homosexuality in order to "project a public heterosexual" (p. 322) and can thereby exist semi-peaceably within the society. At the same time the gay identity movements responded to oppression by advocating for equal rights and civic inclusion. As people who want to be full citizens of a given nation must exhibit the values and ideology of that nation, gay identity movements reify the American ideology of individualism by asserting, "homosexuality is "irrelevant to national citizenship" (Seidman, 2001, p. 323).

"Differences between citizens based on say race or gender or sexuality are defined as private or without juridical or necessary political significance" (p. 323); the gay individual's legal rights and privileges should not be attached to his/her identity as a homosexual.

Gay identity politics has been successful. The outright oppression of the '50s no longer exists; many civic rights have been achieved; and gays and lesbians co-exist in the modern world, "indicating a blurring of the boundary between the heterosexual and the homosexual and accordingly a weakening of a repressive heteronormative logic" (Seidman, 2001, p. 323). However, as Seidman argues, normative heterosexuality is still the dominant institution socially maintained by the recognition of the gay identity as "normal," so long as the proper behaviors are exhibited in terms of heterosexual norms and practices – i.e., "normal gender, sexual, familial, work, and national practices" (p. 324). Even the normalization of the homosexual identity has become a problem because the individual so identified is still considered a second-class citizen in terms of sexual citizenship. Claiming that sexual citizenship does not matter only reinforces the hetero-normative sexual hierarchy instead of challenging it.

Normalization leaves in place the norm of binary gender identities and the ideal of a heterosexual marriage and family. Ultimately, normalization is a strategy to neutralize the critical aspects of a gay movement by rendering sexual difference a minor, superficial aspect of a self who in every other way reproduces an ideal of a national citizen. Normalizing the homosexual reinforces the norm of heterosexuality (p. 324).

In other words, Seidman (2001) maintains that homosexuality is viewed as subordinate to heterosexuality and this view has been maintained through repression, even as homosexuality has become less stigmatized. "Normalization does not indicate the end of normative heterosexuality…a hetero-normative logic of normalization produces its own distinctive oppositional response – queer

politics" (p. 321). Queer politics is not about normalizing an identity, but about releasing sexuality from normative constraints. With this ideal, sexual practices are not situated within a hierarchy and sexual citizenship would not matter.

New sexual identity movements have formed in response to normalization based on claims that group members (those who participate in certain other sexual practices) are "victims of repressive practices" (Seidman, 2001, p. 326). Their claims are made against both the heterosexual community and the mainstream gay and lesbian community. These groups include the bisexual movement and the S/M movement, who, like the original gay and lesbian movement(s), assert their rights to sexual citizenship by "claiming a distinct identity, by countering polluting with normalizing representations, and by aspiring to equal citizenship status" (p. 326). Thus queer politics and activism have formed in response to normalization. "Queer politics struggles against normalizing any identity" (Seidman, 2001, p. 326) because normalization "assigns a moral status of normal and abnormal to virtually every sexual desire and act" which creates deviant sexual selves (p. 326). "Queer" attacks the moral boundaries around sexuality, not sexuality itself.

Seidman's (2001) discussion of the shift from identity politics to queer politics due to the normalization of the identities provides a starting point in the larger discussion of the connection between identity politics and the need for continual radicalization of social movements. Joshua Gamson (1996) discusses near recent sociological thought on collective identity movements and turns it on its head through a discussion of queer theory. As such, we will see that queer theory and activism, with the formation of new identity movements asserting their rights in such a way, actually benefit the overall GLBT movement.

Collective Identity Construction/ Queer Theory

Gamson (1996) argues that the gay and lesbian movement is built on principles of essential identity, which is a necessary element for a civil rights movement. The queer movement

challenges identity politics movements – indicating the "impulse to take apart that identity from within" (p. 397). "Gays and lesbians have made themselves an effective force in this country over the past several decades largely by giving themselves what civil-rights movements had: a public collective identity" (p. 396). However, the queer movement, in particular, and the sociology of sexuality, in general, rests on social constructionist theories, which hold "that sexual identities are historical and social products, not natural or intraphysic ones" (p. 396). This creates a problem in that "fixed identity categories are both basis of oppression and the basis for political power" (p. 396). In other words, current sociological thought contests the idea that an individual's sexual identity is biological and essential; as such, a movement based on that assumption is inherently flawed.

Gamson (1996) writes that collective identity construction is simply assumed as inherent in social movement theory; identities are understood as formed prior to the movement. An alternative approach is new social movement theory (NSM) which suggests that "collective identity is not only necessary for successful collective action, but that it is often an end in itself …a continual process of recomposition rather than a given" (p. 398).

> [T]he debate between assimilationists and separatists, with a long history in American homophile, homosexual, lesbian, and gay politics. Internal political struggle over agendas of assimilation (emphasizing sameness) and separation (emphasizing difference) have been present since the inception of these movements, as they are in other movements. Queer marks a contemporary anti-assimilationist stance, in opposition to the mainstream inclusionary goals of the dominant gay-rights movement. (Gamson, 1996, p. 401)

Gamson contends that while arguments over identities are not new, pointing to lesbian and gay dichotomies as examples, the queer position questions not just the "content of collective identities, but the questioning of the unity, stability, viability and political utility of sexual identities – even as they are used and assumed" (p. 404). An identity politics movement does not attack the dominant structure itself, but seeks to fit within. This leads to disputes over the boundaries of the categories within that structure and the fact that there will always be an "other" excluded by those boundaries. We see this most clearly by observing bisexual and transgender identities attempt to fit themselves within the gay and lesbian movement.

Gamson (1996) suggests, that queer theory has demonstrated that "the destabilization of collective identity is itself a goal and accomplishment of collective action" (p. 412). He poses new questions: "For whom, when, and how are stable collective identities necessary for social action and social change?" (p. 412). To answer this question, and to address the larger question of this paper, we need to examine the theory of tertiary deviance as expounded by John Kitsuse (1980) which explains the process of radicalization of the deviant. An application of Kitsuse's theory presented by Rose Weitz (1984) will demonstrate relevance to the larger GLBTQ movement.

Tertiary Deviance

Kitsuse (1980) theorizes that individuals who are considered deviant (stigmatized) "produce" social problems by openly claiming citizenship rights. He draws from Lemert's (1951) theory of "labeling" which says that when society categorizes someone's behavior as deviant, the deviant will internalize the stigmatization and actually form the identity of deviant, perpetuating the behavior and thus taking part in "secondary deviance." Kitsuse proposes that when the deviant confronts, assesses, and rejects the negative connotations assigned to the behavior or identity, then he/she "transforms that identity into positive and viable self-conception" (p.9). This is "tertiary deviance," what enables "the stigmatized… to confront their own complicity in the maintenance of their degraded status… and to transform… victim into activist" (Kitsuse, 1980, p. 9).

This transformation creates outrage and anger. For example, Stonewall, which will be

elaborated on below, was an explosion. The 1969 riots transformed the self-identity of homosexual individuals and their perceived identity from negative to positive (Kitsuse 1980). Stonewall "transformed the imagery of the homosexual for self and society…by affirming and claiming it [the identity] as a valued identity deserving of the rights accorded any member of society" (p. 8). By accepting and claiming the role of deviant/transgressor, the homosexual, individually and collectively, affirmed his/her rights to citizenship within the boundaries of "normal" society.

Tertiary Deviance in Practice: Lesbian Feminism

Taking her ideas from Lemert (1951) and Kitsuse (1980), Weitz (1984) lays out how tertiary deviance developed among lesbians as they moved from accomodationists in tactics to radical lesbians. In the '50s, the Daughters of Bilitis, essentially the lesbian component of the homophile movement, "emphasized conformity as the route to social tolerance" (Weitz, 1994, p. 147). By the 1960s, accommodationist strategies were no longer actively suggested and with Stonewall and the birth of the gay liberation movement, ideology began to move towards the idea of "acceptance rather than tolerance, and liberation rather than assimilation…." (p. 150). According to Weitz, the lesbian movement had shifted closer to the feminist movement than the gay liberation movement and the political lesbian emerged. The politicization of lesbianism within the feminist movement "leads to a radical redefinition of lesbianism. Lesbian relationships are extolled because of their potential for equality and personal growth, while heterosexual relationships, mainstream society, and male homosexual society are condemned as sexist and oppressive" (p. 153).

Weitz (1984) contends that Kitsuse "underestimates the potential of tertiary deviance as a base for radical social movements" (p. 155) and identifies radical deviants as those who actively work for change outside the social structure. In order for an individual to become a "radical" deviant, he/she must see their behavior as a choice. Lesbians, using the ideology and terminology of the feminist movement, saw their

deviance as resistance to the dominant structure. An overarching political theory developed to "promote and glorify lesbianism as resistance" (p. 156). Weitz also states that such radical deviance can exist only within a "community of like individuals" who can "share experiences, discover common themes, and hence redefine personal troubles as social problems" (p. 157).

Weitz (1984) discusses the parallels and differences between the deviant and minority groups. Tertiary deviants are stigmatized by society for individual actions, but then form a collective that identifies as an "oppressed group … whose oppression is a social problem" (Weitz, 1984, p. 157). Their group is just as worthy of citizenship, "social worth and civil rights," as the dominant group (p. 157). Weitz concludes, "Deviants actively create definitions of their own behavior and political strategies based on those definitions" (p. 160). Thus, by examining the process of tertiary deviance as it applies to a small group, we see a process through which individuals form collective identity movements for the purpose of asserting citizenship within society.

Historical Mapping

The above discussion of theory lays a foundation for an understanding of identity politics, queer politics, and tertiary deviance within social movements. In order to find the applicability of these ideas to the GLBTQ movement, our focus now shifts to discussions on the history of the movement. By combining the historical descriptions given by Adam (1995), Epstein (1999), and Schroedel & Fiber (2000), we briefly observe the timeline of the movement glimpsing its formations and re-formations.

Before WWII, gay society was suppressed by the "establishment of medicine as the only approved dogma on homosexuality" (Adam, 1995, p. 42). In Chicago, in 1924, a German-American named Henry Gerber who had experienced the German gay movement before immigrating to America established the first formally organized gay movement, the Society for Human Rights. The organization managed to print two journal issues before being taken to court and prosecuted for being "a strange sex

cult" (p. 46). After WWII, homosexuality was "mixed into the anticommunist furor of postwar America… psycho-symbolic connections between gender and power assigned a place to homosexuality" (p. 61). Homosexuals were labeled as "sex murderers" in a 1949 Newsweek article titled, Queer People (Adam, 1995). Adam chronicles the government and political "investigations" that were held; they determined that homosexuals were security risks, sex offenders, emotionally unstable, etc. In what could be compared to the Salem witch-hunts, communities of all sizes across the nation raided their bars and combed their beaches and parks in search of homosexuals, pressuring "citizens" to turn in homosexual neighbors to the police. Thousands of homosexuals lost their jobs and were even imprisoned because of their sexual orientation.

In what is termed the "homophile" movement, gay men and lesbians began to cautiously band together in the 1950s to demand the democratic "ideals of life, liberty, equality, and the pursuit of happiness" (Adam, 1995, p. 65). Lesbians and gay men saw sexual identity as fixed and stable (not a mental condition), and homosexuals as a "distinct minority group" (Epstein, 1999, p. 36). After WWII, new hope of establishing a more gay-friendly society arose as the war "culture" provided opportunities for gay men and lesbians to meet other gay men and lesbians (Adam, 1995; Epstein, 1999). And yet, the "state and economic elites moved decisively to reestablish their version of the 'American way of life'" (Adam, 1995, p. 66). The oppression of homosexuals revived.

In the midst of this cultural atmosphere, the Mattachine Society formed in 1951 in Los Angeles by a group of homosexual Communists led by Harry Hay (Adam, 1995; Epstein, 1999). Communist ideology (along with the Communists) was expelled from the group in 1953, and the organization's purpose was defined as "the integration of the homosexual into mainstream U.S. society" (Epstein, 1995, p. 35). The Mattachine Society had some success – winning acquittal on sex charges laid against one of its members, getting the Supreme Court to lift a U.S. Postal Service ban on the mailing of homosexual material, and gaining the right to serve gay customers in a San Francisco bar (Adam, 1995). In 1955, the first lesbian group, the previously mentioned Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), was formed with a similar assimilationist agenda by four lesbian couples in San Francisco. It is important to note that although the Mattachine Society and the DOB worked closely together, the divide between gay men and lesbians was noticeable (Adam, 1995; Epstein, 1999; Schroedel & Fiber, 2000). According to Schroedel and Fiber, lesbians and gay men thought of themselves as part of the same community and yet also part of distinct gender specific communities. Lesbians found themselves at odds with the gay men's agenda and the DOB strongly advocated a separatist community for women.

By the mid-1960s, gays and lesbians radicalized. The movement no longer presented an assimilationist front; instead they acted with a confrontational style that painted sexuality "as a subversive and revolutionary force" (Epstein, 1999, p.39). In coalition with other social groups, most especially feminists (Adam, 1995), these groups became what Epstein (1999) calls "liberationist," the very essence of "the personal is political" (p. 40).

The Stonewall Riots of 1969 are commonly defined as the catalyst that propelled the homophile movement into the liberationist movement (Adam, 1995; Epstein, 1999). On July 28, 1969, the patrons of the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, New York City, decided that they would no longer put up with the regular police raids on their bar and the jailing of customers. The crowd physically quarreled with the police for several nights outside the Stonewall Inn. By the next day, the Mattachine Society was circulating a flier "calling for organized resistance" (Adam, 1995, p. 81). Often in coalition with other social movement groups of the era (e.g., anti-war, feminist, and hippie), confrontational style resistance spread around the country with groups performing sit-ins, gay power demonstrations, and so on (Epstein, 1999).

"Feminists and gay liberationists often thought of themselves as revolutionaries rejecting a fundamentally unequal and corrupt power establishment in favor of participatory democracy whereby all the voiceless and suppressed could gain a measure of control over their own lives. …. The goal that radical women and gay men shared with the counter culture was 'to construct community institutions based on democratic participation'" (Adam, 1995, p. 82).

But by the 1970s, the liberationist groups faded away, due in part to the increasing diversification of homosexual groups, but also because of the failure of the liberationist movement to address gender issues and the needs of ethnic minorities (Epstein, 1999).

In the 1970s, the lesbian movement and the feminist movement became inter-mingled amid much angst amongst the feminist movement. In the '60s, the leaders of the feminist movement wanted nothing to do with lesbians or homosexual issues. Betty Friedan, one of the co-founders of the feminist movement, openly denounced lesbians as "threatening the credibility of feminism" and lesbians were often barred from feminist groups (Adam, 1995). But by the 1970s, activists from both women's and lesbian groups joined together in New York where they coined the term, "Woman-identified Woman," and determined that "lesbianism was independence from men, freedom from male approval, a matrix of women's solidarity: as such it was at the heart of feminism" (Adam, 1995, p. 97). The DOB, which had held to the cautious, non-reactionary position of the homophile movement, became more radical. Del Martin, one of the co-founders of DOB, joined the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other lesbians were actively engaged within the feminist movement. "The redefinition of lesbianism as a form of feminist 'nationalism' also spelled the end of the Daughters of Bilitis and secession from the gay movement" (Epstein, 1999, p. 98). Gay men had always outnumbered lesbians within the movement (Adam, 1995) and "lesbians influenced by the women's liberation movement increasingly came to feel alienated by the political, sexual, and personal styles of gay men"

(Epstein, 1999, p. 41) and found more affinity within the feminist movement. However, when lesbians attempted to build an alternative culture, separate from men and heterosexual women, they also were unable to deal with the diversity within their own ranks, discriminating against lesbians of color and unable to satisfactorily include or exclude transgendered individuals.

The result was that "by the late 1980s, as the unitary identity of lesbian feminism was challenged in these multiple ways, there was no longer a working consensus on how to frame debates about identity, sexuality, and the relation between public and private" (Epstein, 1999, p. 51). Radical lesbians solidified the boundaries of the lesbian category by defining what a "real" lesbian is, thereby excluding those who do not meet the criteria. In response, those who did not identify as "real" lesbians found identification with the sex category of "bisexual" (Epstein, 1999). Smaller groups emerged, each with their own focus and purpose. The gay and lesbian movement became very diverse, differentiating based on cultural heritage, ethnic identity, and age.

At the same time that individuals in other categories of sexual identity collectively began fighting for a place within the movement, gay men and lesbian groups reunited. "Probably the biggest single impetus for reuniting lesbians and gay men into a common movement was the discovery of AIDS in the early 1980s" (Schroedel & Fiber, 2000, p. 100). The political climate during the Reagan era was fervently anti-gay and with the AIDS epidemic, members of the gay community infected with the HIV virus faced eviction from their domiciles, being fired from their jobs, and being denied adequate health care and social support (Epstein, 1999). As the gay and lesbian movement was already mobilized, organizations quickly formed around the country to "confront the multiple threats of the disease" (Epstein, p. 53). The stigmatization of AIDS as being the "gay disease" and the unwillingness of the government and other organizations to fund research and healthcare brought the largely unaffected lesbian

population to the aid of their gay men friends and brothers.

Additionally, the AIDS crisis further propelled gay men and lesbians into civil action. An organization, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power - ACT UP, formed using the confrontational activist style of the liberationist movement of the 1960s in order to deal with the biomedical sector's discrimination of gays. After some success in a short amount of time, the group disbanded. But in its wake, ACT UP "provided the spark for more enduring, if more mainstream, organizational forms" (Epstein, 1999). The AIDS crisis and the response of the gay and lesbian community intensified the fight against anti-gay legislation and the fight for gay rights (Epstein, 1999), which in turn solidified the relationships between gay men and lesbians (Schroedel & Fiber, 2000). In the late '80s and early '90s, organizations such as Parents, Family and Friends of Gays and Lesbians (PFLAG) and the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) organized nationally. While challenging repressive laws in high courts, gay and lesbian groups also worked within political parties and campaigns, further unifying the gay and lesbian movement (Epstein, 1999).

With the emphasis on gay civil rights legislation and the formation of national political organizations (Epstein 1999), gay men and lesbian group activism reinforced the dichotomy between the heterosexual and homosexual categories. The rise of the activist organization called "Queer Nation" in the 1990s challenged that dichotomy (Epstein, 1999). "Gay and lesbian" no longer adequately expressed the sexual beings of everyone who identified as other than heterosexual. The "other" groups that had fragmented away from the mainstream gay and lesbian movement (particularly the lesbian feminist movement) found an outlet in Queer Nation. The concept of "queer" came alive, "reasserting a dissident social space and transform[ing] existing ideas bequeathed to same-sex desire" (Adam, 1995, p. 146). Being queer then, meant that one did not "fit into" the dominant culture (heterosexual) or the mainstream gay and lesbian culture. "They

sought their place within the gay and lesbian movements; even as they challenged the binary divide between gay/lesbian and straight that these earlier movements had reinforced" (Epstein, 1999, p. 62). Bisexual and transgendered individuals found the freedom to assert their identities as valid and began to organize politically. Queer Nation "challenged the now 'respectable' integrated gay/lesbian in favor of a radical coalition of the sexually excluded, including bisexuals, transgendered people, and presumably some heterosexuals as well" (Duggan as cited in Adam, 1995, p.163). With a confrontational style similar to the gay liberation movement and the activism of ACT UP in the '80s, Queer Nation challenged heterosexism on all levels.

With this brief historical sketch, we see the development of the homosexual movement from the homophile movement post WWII to the current gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and queer (GLBTQ) movement.

Discussion

The gay and lesbian movement as referred to today is actually a collection of smaller movements, each with its own political goal and strategy. According to Epstein (1999), "the modern social identities known as 'lesbian,' 'gay,' 'bisexual,' 'transgender,' 'queer,' and so on carry with them no single or obvious political agenda" (p. 30). The process of politicization began with the formation of the homosexual identity. Adam (1995) writes that homosexuality is a social construct; it became an identity when a set of behaviors was categorized as "being homosexual." The norms of society hold that some sexual practices (specifically those that are purposively procreative) are more valuable to society than other acts (see Rubin, 1998). The dominant sexual discourse held within the United States was, and continues to be, that of heterosexual male privilege. "Regimes of heteronormativity not only regulate the homosexual but control heterosexual practices by creating a moral hierarchy of good and bad sexual citizens" (Seidman, 2001, p. 322). Participatory behavior in less valued sexual practices leads to stigmatization and identification of the individual associated with

those "deviant" practices. Such individuals face the oppression of the heteronormative society in which they exist.

An application of Lemert's (1951) labeling theory mentioned above shows that the oppressed individual internalizes the oppressive dominant discourse, and accepts the stigmatized identity for him or herself. A social movement based on identity politics, or the discourse and social activism focused on the deviant identity, forms as the result of the collective action of the oppressed individuals' participation in "tertiary deviance" (Kitsuse, 1980). That is, individuals collectively not only accept the identity of deviant, but also then proclaim that identity to be of value and worthy of acceptance within the larger society.

The homophile movement of the 1950s, was a banding together of homosexuals to form social institutions, such as the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, to cautiously provide an underground community to help "integrate" the homosexual back into the dominant culture. This was the period of formation of the collective gay identity politic – and the move from secondary to tertiary deviance. The liberationist movement can be conceived as a period of active tertiary deviance that ultimately led to an increased normalization of homosexuality within society. Throughout the decades, some periods are more radical and some more assimilationist. This is necessary in order to normalize an identity because society at large will assimilate others before dealing with radicals. However, as pointed out by Seidman (2001), normalization of homosexuality does not mean a change in the fundamental hetero-normative ideology that frames society. Furthermore, establishment of an identity draws boundaries; there will always be an "other" that does not fit within those boundaries and that will be stigmatized so as not to belong.

Barbara Ryan (1997) tells us, "Identity politics is a social construct, just as social movements are socially constructed. Likewise, group identities and a collective consciousness are socially derived. This means they can be reformulated" (p. 75). Furthermore, while identity is imposed for many reasons, we do not

have only one identity, but multiple identities. Ryan continues, "If we are to recognize that we have many identities to choose from, all of which impact on our life, then we have to acknowledge that identity politics is the process of privileging one over others" (p. 75). Thus, once an identity has been normalized, there is no lesser privilege associated with that identity. A movement on behalf of that identity need no longer exist. But through the very process undertaken to normalize that identity, others were excluded. Here, then, we see the fragmentation of others from within the movement itself. As the gay and lesbian communities came together in the 1980s and fought for social and legal rights, those who practiced other non-normative (e.g., bisexual or transsexual) sexual behaviors were stigmatized. Becoming tertiary deviants (most obviously in the 1990s), they stepped outside of the movement, proclaiming their identity as legitimate and worth acceptance from society.

If a collective identity movement is useful for collective action, but is also a continual process of reconstructing itself (Gamson, 1996), then queer is the latest reconstruction. Queer politics attempts to avoid formation of an identity as such. Yet, by defining themselves as having the collective purpose of not forming identity, an identity as "queer" is formed. In what seems to be an ultimate act of tertiary deviance, many individuals have stepped outside the normalized boundaries, not to contest their identity, but to contest the boundaries themselves. The most radical addition to the gay and lesbian movement (and for many, they are not yet truly an addition), the queer community serves to continue the movement by attacking the very structure of the hetero-normative society that repressed all other identities to begin with.

The gay and lesbian movement is a collection of smaller identity politics. Both society and the movement stigmatize each of these other groups by group identity assertion and boundary marking (the formation of an identity politic). As an identity becomes more normalized, the others around respond by demanding the same for themselves. Or, in the case of queer, the others are demanding to be anti-normalized;

queer does not want to be integrated into the hegemonic, hetero-normative society. We suggest that "queer" is the next obvious step in terms of radicalizing the gay movement. A dual purpose is served: both the smaller identity group has politicized, and the larger movement has been radicalized in order to continue the general attack on the repressive hetero-normative ideology that maintains power over all other groups.

Conclusion

We believe that the findings support our original hypothesis. Social movements, in particular the GLBTQ movement, are constructed and reconstructed through time based on the shifts in collective identity. These shifts continuously radicalize a movement that would otherwise cease to exist, and would certainly be of little effective force, if and when the original identity was normalized into society. We conclude that the process of tertiary deviance forms collective identity groups and movements.

These identity groups are absolutely necessary to politicize the cause, that being the identity's rightful placement in society. We further conclude that the identity group will create boundaries that will exclude another. Individual others will eventually become tertiary deviants to combat normalization or the lack thereof from within and without the larger collective. These new identity groups assure by their very existence, that normalization into larger society is not complete (due to the overall hetero-normative structure/ideology), and will be re-integrated into the larger movement, serving the purpose of radicalizing the movement.

Other studies of social movements using these concepts need to be undertaken to decide on the capacity to generalize to the whole of social movement theory. We believe that tertiary deviance becomes an explanatory theory for use in the study of social movements that are based on identity. Through its explanation, Gamson's (1996) question, "For whom, when, and how are stable collective identities necessary for social action and social change?" (p. 412) begins to be answered. We also find a way of knowing for whom, when, and how collective identities must destabilize and reconstruct.

References

Adam, B. D. (1995). The rise of a gay and lesbian movement. New York: Twayne Publishers.

Epstein, S. (1999). Gay and lesbian movements in the United States: Dilemmas of identity, diversity, and political strategy. In B. Adam, J. Duyvendak, A. Krouwel (Eds.), The global emergence of gay and lesbian politics: National imprints of a worldwide movement, pp. 30-90. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

Gamson, J., & Seidman, S. (1996). Must identity movements self-destruct?: A queer dilemma. In S. Seidman (Ed.), Queer theory/sociology, pp. 395-420. Oxford: Blackwell.

Kitsuse, J. (1980). Coming out all over: Deviants and the politics of social problems. Social Problems, 28, 1-13.

Rubin, G. (1998). Thinking sex: Notes for a radical theory of the politics of sexuality. In R. Parker, P. Aggleton (Eds.), Culture, society & sexuality, pp. 143-178. New York: Routledge.

Ryan, B. (1997). How much can I divide the, let me count the ways; Identity politics in the women's movement. Humanity & Society, 21(1), 67-83.

Seidman, S. (2001). From identity to queer politics: Shifts in normative heterosexuality and the meaning of citizenship. Citizenship Studies, 5, 321-328.

Schroedel, J. R., & Fiber, P. (2000). Lesbian and gay policy priorities: Commonality and difference. In C. A. Rimmerman, K. D. Wald, C. Wilcox (Eds.), The politics of gay rights, pp. 97-120. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Weitz, R. (1985). From accommodation to rebellion: Tertiary deviance and the radical redefinition of lesbianism." In J. Kitsuse and J. Schneider (Eds.), Studies in the sociology of social problems, pp. 140-161. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Author Information

Anna M. Sorensen, Sociology Senior
Department of Sociology
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0445

Cynthia Siemsen, Ph.D.*
Department of Sociology
California State University, Chico
Chico, CA 95929-0445
Ph.: 530-898-6200
E-Mail: csiemsen@csuchico.edu

* corresponding author