

sense of community. Consciousness of kind is not innate, but emerges. This is true of ethnic consciousness as much as of gay consciousness. Stigmas inhibit identification, but when a critical mass develops to challenge the stigma, either by proclaiming "We are not like that," or "The ways we are different are fine, or even valuable," societal stigmas become badges of honor and stimuli to collective organization and action challenging discrimination and affirming the value of the group's stigmatized characteristics. For lesbians and for gay men, challenging societal valuations may be more difficult than it is for some ethnic communities to affirm the value of their lifeways. However, there is also considerable ambivalence to the lifeways of previous generations within ethnic communities. In a pluralistic society, ethnic identification is an achieved status, not automatically and irrevocably established at birth or in primary socialization.

Expectations of others "that you are like us" and should therefore behave in certain ways, and societal definitions used by opportunistic politicians either to advance minorities or to organize against them, help to crystallize identification with a group, so that people defined categorically come to see themselves as having a common history and destiny distinct from others. Advocates and adversaries both foster collective identification, which is a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite to collective action. Gay leaders have pressed economic boycotts, political coordination, and mass demonstrations. Anti-gay leaders have promoted legal discrimination and harassment, as well as criminalization of homosexual behavior. In response to police raids and the legal acceptance of assassinating one gay leader (Harvey Milk), there have also been gay riots. Nonetheless, it bears stressing that even those who have the feeling of being part of a group may still not join in collective action. Collective action is rarely—if ever—characteristic of any population.

Sporadic action by a self-selected vanguard is more common for class-based or ethnic-based groups, as well as for lesbians or gays.

See also Geography, Social; Subculture, Gay.

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Stephen O. Murray

CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

This expression gained wide circulation in the 1970s to designate the practice of forming small groups of persons (usually from five to ten) to work collectively to increase their members' awareness of the political and ideological significance of their actions. The consciousness-raising (CR) trend, often accompanied by the slogan "The personal is the political," seems to have first emerged in the Women's Movement in the late 1960s, whence it migrated (with much else) to gay liberation circles.

The expression, which has been traced to Chinese Communist (Maoist) usage in the 1930s, reflects the Marxist contrast between true consciousness of one's situation and powers versus "false consciousness," a set of obfuscatory beliefs fostered among oppressed groups in order to preserve ruling-class interests. Only when the oppressed discard the blinkers of false consciousness, the theory goes, will they be in a position to wage a successful struggle for their rights. This discarding, and the complementary advance to higher levels of group awareness, constitute the "work" of consciousness raising.

In the gay movement, the formation of consciousness-raising groups was often promoted as a means to an end: a phase of strengthening and toughening in a supportive atmosphere of comradeship in preparation for more active interven-

tion in the struggle. Yet under the influence of pop-psychology trends, such as "sensitivity training," gay groups of this kind often became an end in themselves, to all intents and purposes serving as harbingers of the self-absorption of the "me generation." In the self-improving middle classes, the period saw a shift in fashion from individual therapy to group therapy, a model which the consciousness raising groups all too easily adopted—the difficulty being that the new **psychotherapy** (like the old) fostered adjustment to the prevailing mores of society, while the gay/lesbian groups fitted their members for participation in a heterodox, dissident movement. By the end of the 1970s the CR vogue, part of the period's general enthusiasm for "doing things collectively," was effectively spent.

Whatever the weaknesses of consciousness raising in practice, it did address a pervasive problem in modern society, that of social atomization which frustrates the aspiration for solidarity with like-minded others. Modern consumer society engenders social isolation, and this can only be combatted by forming intermediate structures of group affinity. Moreover, homosexuals tend to meet only for sexual purposes: the consciousness-raising groups, together with coffee houses and community centers, were a laudable attempt to create an alternative. The consciousness-raising process served to spread the new ideology of the insurgent gay movement to broad circles of individuals who until then had been exposed only to the hostile indoctrination of the mass media; it initiated them into the beliefs and mores of the political community they were joining, following the original model of consciousness raising which in its homeland had functioned to incorporate the peasant masses into the fighting force whose victory founded the People's Republic of China. Historical hindsight, of course, reveals pitilessly the romantic illusions of such attempts at replaying a revolution, and once this incongruity was

perceived, consciousness raising as such was doomed.

CONSENT

Consent is broadly defined as "voluntary agreement to or acquiescence in what another proposes or desires." For the purpose of this article, however, it will to be taken to mean "willingness to engage in sexual activity with a partner of the same sex." Consent to a course of action does not imply a mature understanding of the consequences of that course of action, but merely a willingness that it should take place. Homosexual offenses are classified as consensual or non-consensual. The legal application of this distinction is not as clearcut as it would at first seem. The law is not obliged to recognize consent as a defense (for example, in incest cases); moreover, when it does, the persons must be over a certain age.

Homosexual behavior is criminal when it occurs without the consent of the other party. Rape is by definition non-consensual and so always satisfies this condition, as does indecent assault except in some cases involving minors; buggery (anal intercourse) may fall under this heading.

Homosexual behavior is criminal with a person under the age of consent, a demarcation which varies considerably from one jurisdiction to another, and may be higher than the age of consent for heterosexual intercourse. Likewise homosexual behavior is criminal if included in a category of sexual behavior that is globally prohibited, such as incest or intercourse with a mental defective. Finally, homosexual acts committed in public or in a place of public resort are criminal even with the consent of both partners.

That no one, even a hustler or a prostitute, should be compelled to engage in sexual activity against his or her will is a sound and unchallenged principle of law. The borderline cases are those in which consent was given grudgingly or promises