Social theory, social movements and public policy:
recent accomplishments of the gay and lesbian movements in Minneapolis, Minnesota

by Lawrence Knopp

In recent years there has been a proliferation of ostensibly non-class-based social movements throughout the world. In the west, movements organized around issues of gender, sexuality, the environment, and nuclear war have all but displaced more traditional and self-consciously class-based ones. To be sure there are factions, sometimes strong, within each of these which stress the class origins of their particular concerns. But such analyses are rarely popularized, even within the movements.

This proliferation of seemingly non-class-based movements poses both theoretical and practical problems for a political-economic analysis of contemporary capitalist society. Strict economistic approaches usually reduce to functionalism, and ignore the important substance of many of these movements’ critiques of society. Thus the women’s movement, for example, is all too often ‘factored out’ of analyses of urban restructuring (see Rose, 1984, 52). Similarly, Castells (1978, 152–66) regards the environmental movement in the US as simply an ‘ideological mystification. What is needed here is the drawing of non-functionalist linkages between the class interests of human beings and their propensities to act politically on the basis of other affiliations.

Concomitant with this theoretical problem are the practical political dangers inherent in playing off traditional class-based movements against seemingly non-class-based ones. Class-based stratifications have developed within many movements which have resulted in the partial redefinition of their agendas by conservative interests (e.g. certain debates at the 1985 International Women’s Conference and the growth of ‘gay Republicanism’ in the US).

The gay and lesbian movements are excellent examples of movements which warrant analysis from a non-functionalist political-economy perspective. Historically, they have been leaders in revealing the socially constructed nature of reality at the level of everyday experience. This is because they have combined powerful critiques of the prevailing social definitions of gender and sexuality in capitalist society. But the gay and lesbian movements themselves do not normally make linkages to the issue of class.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the ways in which social definitions of

1This is more true of the US movement than of its European counterparts.
gender and sexuality were altered in a particular case through the struggles of gay and lesbian activists, and to make linkages between these struggles and a broader system of capitalist social relations. The class positions of various actors are identified, as are the class interests which their action served (these two are often not equivalent). The paper also explores the implications more generally of the challenge to contemporary capitalist social formations which the lesbian and gay movements represent.

I Social theory, social movements, and sexuality

Both liberal and much Marxist theory have failed to account adequately for the recent proliferation of seemingly non-class-based social and political movements. To many Marxists, an America in which organized lesbians and gay men in some places rival organized labour for political clout (e.g. San Francisco) is highly problematical. A great many neo-Marxists have scrambled to account for these movements, but except for feminist and/or lesbian and gay scholars, they have tended to regard them as, at best epiphenomenal and, at worst, counter-revolutionary.²

In the liberal tradition, these movements could not have been anticipated at all, since it was expected that the sway of 'collective conscience' and small 'moral communities' over individuals would diminish as the division of labour in society increased, to be replaced by a primary allegiance to the social 'organism' (Saunders, 1981, 35–47; Murray, 1984, 11). Even liberal positivists like Kinsey et al. (1948; 1953) denied the ontological status of identities, focusing instead on (sexual) behaviours and thus denying the possibility of new political subjects emerging from their analyses. According to Kinsey, there were no sexual identities, only sexual acts. There could therefore be no social movements based on a shared sense of sexual identity. Neo-Weberian analyses, meanwhile, tend to ignore the substance of the critiques which these social movements represent. They focus instead on creating typologies, understanding personal motivations through verstehen, and establishing correlations between events. The result is often superficial and trivial analyses (see, for example, Wilson's (1973, 45–47) discussion of US campus activism in the 1960s).

These problems pose what may be the most important set of issues in social theory: What is the relationship between the motivations and consciousnesses of human subjects and the social structures which they (re)produce and transform through their actions? How are personal identities sufficiently meaningful to fuel these movements formed, even while the sway of other affiliations seems to be declining? In short, how can we account for social change, the face of which is

²There is a strong tradition among some Marxists which is openly hostile to movements for 'sexual liberation' (see Derbyshire, 1980, for a review of Marxist theory and practice regarding gay men and lesbians). Herbert Marcuse's Eros and civilization (1955) is an exception.
quite different from that for which our theories have prepared us?

Radical theory has tended to stress the importance of unperceived structures, in the context of capitalist societies imbued with 'voluntarist' ideology (e.g. Fainstein and Fainstein, 1983; Clark and Dear, 1984). But too often radical theory has failed to conceptualize important links between these real structures and the active human subjects whose social relations these structures are, in particular the capacities of these subjects to struggle against domination in a multiplicity of ways. Liberal and conservative theories (both positivists and hermeneutic),\(^3\) meanwhile, have simplistically assumed the primacy of human agency (e.g. 'public choice' theory (Archer, 1981) and symbolic-interactionist studies of subcultures (e.g. Anderson, 1923)).

A considerable body of recently developed social theory recognizes these shortcomings (Giddens, 1979; 1981, Bhaskar, 1979). In political and economic geography, applications involve the development of new conceptualizations of 'explanation' which transcend the 'structure/agency' dichotomy (Sayer, 1982; Chouinard et al., 1984; Thrift, 1983).\(^4\) In feminist and lesbian/gay studies, similar developments are taking place. Here 'social constructionist' perspectives (Berger and Luckman, 1966) are gaining currency. Murray (1983, 56), for example, notes that the 'salience' of gender as an organizing principle varies from culture to culture. Escoffier (1985, 136) points out that even the link between genetic assignment and anatomy is not invariant. Similarly, concepts like 'sexual orientation', which categorize according to both the subjective perception of self and external labelling, have been shown to be highly culture-specific (Weeks, 1985; Murray, 1984; Carrier, 1980).

Lauria and Knopp (1985, 156–57) provide the rudiments of a political-economic accounting of the social construction of the modern 'gay identity'. They suggest that homosexual repressions is tied to the repression of sexuality generally, and specifically to a form of gender relations in which women are dominated by men. Unrepressed homosexual relations are seen as a threat to the economically efficient (for capital) nuclear family, which, through its internal relations of gender and sexuality, sustains the ideological separation between the 'productive' and 'reproductive' spheres of daily life. The gay and lesbian movements are seen as reactions to this historically specific form of oppression.

More comprehensive efforts to approach the 'gay identity' (and social movements organized around it) from this perspective are found in the works of various feminist and lesbian/gay theorists (Snitow et al., 1983; Ross and Rapp, 1983; Altman, 1982; D'Emilio, 1981; 1983a; 1983b; Escoffier, 1985; Weeks, 1981; 1981; 1985). Here, sexual identities (indeed, sexuality itself) are also seen as deriving from industrial capitalism's separation of 'productive' and 'reproductive'

\(^3\) This is not meant to imply that hermeneutics are necessarily liberal or voluntarist; on the contrary, most are not.

\(^4\) Thrift (1983) suggests that the 'structure/agency' dichotomy itself reflects the bifurcation at the level of appearances of everyday life into spheres of production and consumption under capitalism.
life. The argument is roughly as follows: As capitalism developed, and free-labour
and exchange relations came to dominate production, the family became more
narrowly defined in terms of the reproduction of labour-power. Many of the needs
of labourers were now met within the family by unwaged (and hence ‘unproduct-
ive’ yet superexploited) domestic labour. An ideal of monogamous (and patri-
archal) heterosexuality underpinned the system ideologically. But at the same time,
the autonomous ‘personal’ realm created by the intersection of waged-labour and
industrialization made it possible (economically, if not ideologically) for waged-
labourers to explore new family-centred avenues of fulfillment. Sexual (and other)
subcultures thus emerged.\(^5\) The labelling of people engaged in same-sex sexual
relationships as ‘homosexuals’ by the medical profession in the late nineteenth
century then provided the final link in the process of personal and group identity
formation.

Escoffier (1985, 120–21) disaggregates the process of lesbian and gay identity
formation even further. He views sexual identities as

\[ \ldots \text{the results of struggles among concrete historical actors (for example, between pro-
stitutes and the state) and shaped by the social relations of \ldots the ensemble of discourses,}
practice and institutions that structure and regulate the social relations of gender as well
as the varieties of sexual behaviour (the ‘sex/gender system’).} \]

In particular, he argues that the modern lesbian and gay identities emerged from the
sexual revolution of the post-World War II era, which he links to the growth of the
welfare state. As women entered the work force, and more people lived outside
family households, ‘cultural revolts’ (e.g. the Beat Generation) and urban sub-
cultures (including sexual subcultures), steadily grew. Fueled by these develop-
ments, and by the growth of the women’s movement, the identity-based lesbian and
gay political movements developed. But Escoffier also notes that these movements
are currently attempting to cope with the realization that the ‘identities’ upon
which they are based are not fixed:

\[ \text{[By] reinterpret[ing] the symbolic significance of sexuality and gender \ldots [by] split-
[ting] sexual object preference from gender, and by challenging the heterosexual assump-
tion, [the movements have] legitimated the social construction of sexual identity (Esco-
ffier, 1985, 147).} \]

Escoffier argues that because of this, any movement based on identity will
eventually have to stress a politics of at least limited differentness as well as of
shared experience. Hence the emergence of separate lesbian and gay movements and
of intense controversies within these communities regarding, for example, sexual
ethics (e.g. debates about pornography, the practice of certain kinds of sexual ‘play’
(i.e. S/M), and how best to acknowledge and accommodate child sexuality

\(^5\) This is not meant to suggest that ‘heterosexism’ is found only in capitalism or that sexual
‘networks’ have not existed in previous modes of production (see Boswell, 1980, for evidence
to the contrary). I do mean to suggest, however, that the sexual identities and subcultures
constructed in capitalism are different from those found elsewhere.
Lauria and Knopp (1985) contend that a modest redefinition of the social relations of gender and sexuality may be in the interest of certain factions of capital. 'Service-sector' jobs in the centre-city, for example, are quite easily filled by gay men (Gagnon and Simon, 1973; Harry and Devall, 1978), many of whom locate in centre-city areas because of the concentration of gay institutions there. Similarly, the development of 'rent gaps' in the urban land market (Smith, 1979) favours the development of consumer markets for 'gentrified' housing (and other 'higher and better' land uses) among lesbian and gay populations. This is due to a combination of the relatively high disposable incomes of middle-class lesbians and gay men (especially the latter) and these groups' frequent preferences for easy accessibility to lesbian and gay social and cultural institutions.

Still, the process of redefining the social relations of gender and sexuality, which the gay and lesbian movements have encouraged, has been an uneven one. Arguably, it is not very advanced. For every San Francisco or Amsterdam there are hundreds of Wichitas. For every 'jet-set' there are thousands of traditional 'sets' that cling tenaciously to established norms. While the processes which Escoffier, Lauria and Knopp, and others identify are certainly occurring in the mass cultures of advanced capitalism, the actual struggles bringing about concrete changes have yet to be identified and analysed. The present study is an attempt to identify, in the context of a specific case, the process whereby a concrete change was achieved though a conscious struggle to redefine the social relations of gender and sexuality at the level of everyday life and experience. This redefinition has important implications for the particular class-based social formation which is advanced capitalism.

II Gay and lesbian politics in Minneapolis in the seventies

The State of Minnesota has a liberal political culture. Except for a brief period during the 1930s, when its electoral politics were dominated by the left leaning Farm-Labor Party, the economic and social policies pursued by the state have been solidly Keynesian.

Postwar Keynesian liberalism has had contradictory social and cultural effects, however (Bell, 1976). On the one hand, the era's economic growth and rising material expectations have fostered the development of a libertarian individualist ethos, which translates into popular demands for equality of 'opportunity' and freedom from cultural 'constraints' of various kinds (e.g. traditional gender and sex roles). On the other hand, tight labour markets, the rising cost of living relative to the established family wage, and the attempted reconversion to a 'peacetime' (i.e. male-dominated) labour force, have created pressure for the reestablishment of

---

6Wichita, Kansas was one of several cities in the US where gay rights ordinances were repealed by popular referendum in 1977 and 1978.
7Exceptions may be New York (Teal, 1971; Marotta, 1981), San Francisco (D’Emilio, 1981; Castells and Murphy, 1982; Castells, 1983) and Weimar Germany (Steakley, 1975).
**Table 1** The political development of Minneapolis’s gay and lesbian communities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td><strong>May 18</strong> — Fight Repression of Erotic Expression (FREE) founded at the University of Minnesota.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td><strong>May 18</strong> — Jack Baker attempts to secure marriage license for himself and Michael McConnell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Summer—fall</strong> — State Board of Regents rescinds hiring of McConnell as university librarian; ACLU takes case, wins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>October</strong> — National gay and lesbian conference at the University of Minnesota sponsored by FREE.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td><strong>Spring</strong> — Baker elected president of Minnesota Students’ Association (MSA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>October</strong> — Appeals court overturns lower court decision in McConnell case.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972</td>
<td><strong>Fall</strong> — 100—200 gays participate in DFL (Democratic Party) precinct caucuses; gay rights, planks passed as State Convention; gay alternate elected to national Convention.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1973</td>
<td>** <em>/</em> */ ** — First attempt to pass statewide gay-rights bill is made.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1974</td>
<td>** <em>/</em> */ ** — FREE becomes Minnesota Gay Activists (MGA).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>March 29</strong> — Minneapolis gay-rights ordinance passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>May 11</strong> — Minnesota Committee for Gay Rights (MCGR) founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>July 16</strong> — St Paul gay-rights ordinance passed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>December 9</strong> — State Senator Allan Spear acknowledges publicly that he is gay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>** <em>/</em> */ ** — Baker brings suit against Big Brothers of Minneapolis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>** <em>/</em> */ ** — MCGR compromises on language of statewide gay-rights bill; Baker faction protests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>June 13</strong> — City Council proclaims last day of June Gay Pride Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>November</strong> — Conservative ex-Mayor Stenwig defeats liberal DFL mayor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td><strong>October 9</strong> — City Council rescinds Gay Pride Day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>November</strong> — Spear wins reelection over a Baker supporter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1977</td>
<td><strong>May</strong> — Statewide gay-rights bill nearly passes State Legislature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>June 23</strong> — Target City coalition founded.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Fall</strong> — 1300+ local gays and lesbians stage anti-Anita Bryant rally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td><strong>April 25</strong> — St Paul gay-rights ordinance is repealed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>November</strong> — Rally held locally on evening of gay-rights victories in California and Seattle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td><strong>June—</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>November</strong> — 8 murders of gay men in Minneapolis and St Paul.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>June 28</strong> — First police raid on a local gay bathhouse.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>July 27</strong> — State Supreme Court rules against Baker in Big Brothers case.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* ** = Exact dates unavailable.*
traditional (patriarchal) relations of gender and sexuality (among other sets of social relations). These contradictions were evidenced in Minneapolis during the 1970s by a profound ambivalence towards 'liberal' social agendas in elections. For the first four years of the decade (and two more later on), the city was presided over not by a DFL (Democratic Party) liberal, but by a conservative Independent mayor drawn from the ranks of the Police Department.

For the gay and lesbian movements the decade was a period of growth (Table 1). One of the first direct challenges to the prevailing social definitions of marriage, sexuality, and the family in Minneapolis was a well-publicized attempt to secure a marriage license by a leader of the city's first gay-oriented political organization, Jack Baker, and his male lover, in 1970. By appealing to the authority of the local state apparatus the two activists at once challenged and acknowledged the power of state sanction to legitimate the social construction of some kinds of social relations.

Others during the 1970s engaged in strictly pluralist, 'interest group'-orientated gay politics. Initial successes included the founding of a gay lobbying organization in 1971, the election of openly-gay delegates to the State DFL Convention in 1972, and the enactment of gay-rights ordinances in both Minneapolis and neighbouring St Paul in 1974.

But no sooner had these successes been achieved than pluralist tactics began to fail. In 1975, a liberal gay lobby agreed to compromise the language of a statewide gay-rights bill. This was because of two widely publicized and very controversial lawsuits brought by Baker under the 'public services' provisions of the Twin Cities' gay-rights ordinances. Baker challenged the Big Brothers organization in Minneapolis, and an adoption agency in St Paul, for inquiring as to the sexual orientations of prospective Big Brothers and adoptive parents, and using this information to screen applicants. Here he was challenging the social definition of the relationship between sexuality and parenting. This precipitated a considerable amount of hostile reaction. Eventually he lost the Big Brothers case. But in so doing Baker demonstrated that the prevailing social definitions of sexuality and parenting, and the legal structure which supported them, were patently contradictory.

Reacting to the liberal gays' compromise, supporters of Baker conducted a high-visibility campaign to support the original version of the statewide gay-rights bill. This included a mock press conference in a Capitol building men's room and a parade of 'drag queens' (transvestites) testifying at committee hearings. The former was intended to expose the men's room as a place where many of the legislators voting 'no' on gay-rights were saying 'yes' to gay sex (i.e. actually having semi-anonymous gay sexual encounters) — an example of what Gofman (1959) and Giddens (1979, 207) call 'back regions', or locations in space and/or time where certain social contradictions are allowed to play themselves out. The transvestites' actions, meanwhile, can be seen as an even more radical attack on traditional

\[^8\text{In this case, the contradiction was between many legislators' socially constructed 'personal' sexual proclivities and their internalization of a 'public' sexual morality which could not accommodate these proclivities.}\]
notions of gender and sexual normalcy. These activists were symbolically reinterpreting the connections between gender, gender roles, and sexual preference (see Escoffier, 1985, 140–41). By demonstrating that men could affect feminine mannerisms and roles, including a sexual preference for other men, these actors validated the social construction of gender and sexuality.

Pluralist tactics, meanwhile, continued to fail through the end of the decade. In 1975, a conservative ex-mayor campaigned against gay-rights and was elected in an upset. In 1977, a statewide gay-rights bill, which appeared likely to pass the State Legislature, was defeated. Then, in 1978, a campaign to repeal gay-rights laws came to neighbouring St Paul and succeeded overwhelmingly. In 1979, trouble between the Police Department and the gay-male community began. Furthermore, there were eight murders of gay men in Minneapolis that year, so many that one issue of *Positively Gay*, a gay newspaper, featured the headline, ‘Another month, another murder’ (*Positively Gay*, 1979a).

These assaults mobilized the gay community. A ‘radical’ gay political organization, Target City, was formed.9 It was composed of both leftist and non-leftist activists who were united by a conviction that high visibility, confrontational responses to oppression were necessary. Its members engaged in, among other things, a series of ‘pie in the face’ attacks on antigay public figures. Although Target City never achieved the ‘official’ clout of liberal gay organizations, its members’ tactics were crucial to the outcome of the conflict between the Police Department and the gay male community which erupted in 1979.

III 1979–1985: the battle over ‘indecent conduct’

Through most of the 1970s, the primary source of hostility towards gays and lesbians was not the Police Department but rather other local state apparatuses (e.g. the courts, the city administration, the State Legislature) and non-state actors. Friendly police walkthroughs of gay bars were in fact common, and reports of police brutality and harassment of gays were sporadic.

But on the morning of Gay Pride Day, 1979 (28 June), a series of events began which can only be characterized as open warfare between gays and certain members of the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) (Table 2). At 4.00 am, the head of the MPD Vice Squad, along with the deputy mayor and a municipal bond salesman, forcibly entered a gay steambath and threw out the patrons. No arrests or citations were made. Affidavits signed by patrons claimed the intruders were drunk and abusive. A scandal ensued. At a meeting with the police chief, the head of the Vice Squad, and the deputy mayor (before it was learned that the latter was involved in

9Target City was so named because in 1978 antigay activist Anita Bryant had identified Minneapolis and St Paul as ‘Target Cities’ for her national gay-rights repeal campaign.
Table 2  The battle over ‘indecent conduct’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>June 28 (Gay Pride Day) — First bathhouse raid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 3 — Gays meet with police chief, head of vice, and deputy mayor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July — Cover-up of June 28 incident charged by deputy police chief; deputy police chief demoted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 9 — Police chief resigns; deputy mayor suspended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fall — Large-scale arrests for ‘indecent conduct’ in adult bookstores begins; Tim Campbell runs for mayor, campaigns against police harassment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 1 — Second bathhouse raid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>January 1 — 3 Popular gay bars raided for being open after hours on New Year’s Eve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>January 10 — Third bathhouse raid.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* * — Meetings between gays, Mayor Fraser, city council members held; bathhouse raids stop.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November — Target City runs slate of candidates for city offices; openly-lesbian Karen Clark elected to State House of Representatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981–1982</td>
<td>* * — Meetings between gays and city officials held periodically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>* * — Allegations of police brutality against gays escalates; civil suits cost city thousands of dollars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November, 1981 — Four openly-gay men run for sixth ward City Council seat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>November — Openly-gay Brian Coyle elected to sixth ward City Council seat.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>May 23 — Coyle meets with police chief; ‘got nowhere’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 24 — Coyle, another council member, meets with Fraser, attorneys for arrestees; Fraser refuses to interfere with police practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Summer — Allegations of police brutality, entrapment arrests escalate, spread to city parks and Park Police.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 21 — Coyle meets with Fraser; mayor claims directive was issued to cease entrapments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 7–8 — Minneapolis Civil Rights Commission holds hearings on police brutality; ‘seemed to favor’ citizens review panel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 20 — Intensive campaign by police against two bookstores downtown launched; 20+ visits a day; frequent arrests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 30 — Gay aides to Coyle and Fraser stress ‘equal enforcement’ concerns to police chief and head of Vice Squad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December — Coyle pressures police chief publicly at appearance before gay business organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>January 10 —Municipal judge rules that bookstore cubicles are not public places.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 15 — Attorney for Tim Campbell arrested while attempting to serve summons on officers named in class-action suit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 19 — Meeting between various gay and non-gay city officials; police chief tells Star and Tribune ‘I caved in’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 21 — Police chief orders Vice Squad to ‘radically deemphasize’ bookstore patrols; acknowledges effectiveness of gay lobbying.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 22 — Police chief denies gay lobbying influenced decision to change policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February 25 — New policy formalized and ‘accepted’ by Fraser.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 1 — May 20 — Only four ‘indecent conduct’ arrests in Minneapolis.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * — Exact dates unavailable.
the raid), members of the gay community were assured that the incident did not signal a change of policy towards gays in the Police Department or at City Hall (*Positively Gay*, 1979b).

But shortly thereafter, the attacks on gay men and gay establishments escalated. A pattern of large-scale arrests for 'indecent conduct' in adult bookstores began in the fall (Halfhill, 1984; *GLC Voice*, 1985a). Arrestees were almost always gay or bisexual men whose sexual proclivities were for the most part hidden from friends and family. Typically, the police would employ decoys and/or storm through the establishments, forcing open doors to viewing booths and roughing-up patrons. Numerous complaints were filed with the Police Internal Affairs Unit. Rarely, if ever, were these sustained. 10

In December and January there were two more raids on bathhouses, resulting in over 200 arrests or citations, including nine for sodomy, which is a felony in Minnesota. Then three popular gay bars were raided for being open after hours on New Year's Eve, 1980.

Target City responded to eight murders, a hostile State Supreme Court ruling on the Big Brothers issue, and a sudden upsurge of antigay police harassment and violence by running a slate of third-party candidates for city offices and demanding meetings with the new mayor and members of the City Council. A list of demands was formulated which included abolition of the Vice Squad and reparations for victims of the bathhouse and bookstore raids. Although no policy concessions were made, the bathhouse raids did stop. The bookstore raids did not.

The city's daily newspapers, meanwhile, ran lurid stories about drugs and unusual sexual paraphernalia at one of the bathhouses (Halfhill, 1984). It was the conclusion of many in Target City, at the time, that the increased police harassment downtown, and the sensationalist press coverage of it, were part of an effort by the city to legitimate the redevelopment of a downtown street on which many gay businesses are located.

Over the next four and a half years there were between 3500 and 5000 arrests of gay and bisexual men for 'indecent conduct', most of them in adult bookstores (*GLC Voice*, 1984a; 1984c; 1985b; Halfhill, 1984; interviews). Allegations of police brutality against gays escalated, and meetings between representatives of the gay community and the city were held at least once a year (*GLC Voice*, 1985a).

Members of the local gay press took a very active role in these meetings and the conflict in general. Bruce Brockway and Tim Campbell (both of whom had ties to Target City) published *Positively Gay* and, later, *GLC Voice*, carefully documenting every arrest, beating, trial and election concerning the gay community. These journalist-activists always contrasted 'official' accounts of incidents involving the police with those of eyewitnesses, and exposed contradictory official accounts and missing or altered police reports, as well. They frequently helped coordinate meetings and public demonstrations. Their advocacy style of journalism made the

---

10 Of 144 complaints filed from March 1 through August 31, 1984, none was sustained (*GLC Voice*, 1985c).
capricious and unequal enforcement of indecent conduct laws an indisputable fact in the gay community, and many of their findings were picked up by the mainstream press as well (e.g. Davies, 1985).

These gay activists also continually questioned prevailing sexual norms. Positively Gay pressed Mayor Fraser in a 1979 preelection interview to comment on the 'legitimacy' and 'morality' of gay sex (Positively Gay, 1979c). Fraser refused to discuss the issue in these terms. He did, however, evince mixed feelings about the Big Brothers case:

... under these circumstances the question of sexual preference... is a different kind of issue than religion, color, race. (Positively Gay, 1979c, 8.)

In the case of morals code enforcement he drew the line at 'public sex'. This distinction between 'public' and 'private' sex had repeatedly been used by the police to justify their enforcement practices. It also raised important questions about where the line between 'public' and 'private' was to be drawn, and whether or not there was a public interest in holding gays to a different standard than straights in this regard.

Brockway, Campbell, and others relentlessly challenged the purpose of distinctions like 'public' versus 'private' sex, as well. In 1984, Campbell documented a correlation between police harassment of two adult bookstores, declining business at those stores, and an increased number of offers by property brokers to purchase the businesses (GLC Voice, 1984d). Campbell charged 'graft', asserting a connection between the city's December designation of an area adjacent to these bookstores as the site of a proposed convention centre, and a particularly intense campaign of police harassment at these locations in November. Furthermore, Campbell argued forcefully throughout the conflict that the place where most of the so-called 'public sex' was taking place (adult bookstore movie cubicles and certain portions of public parks late at night) constituted essentially private places, and moreover that they were the only private places available to some gay people, namely those who have not come to terms with their sexualities (GLC Voice, 1982b; 1984b; 1984c; 1985a; 1985d; 1985e). Thus like the Capitol building activists in 1975, he identified perfectly a set of 'back regions', the only difference being that this time their patrons were cast in a more sympathetic light. In both cases the 'back regions', and their patrons' confused 'identities', were presented unequivocally as social products. Campbell also argued that sexual activities had been going on in these places for years without apparent harm to anyone.11

'Radical' gay activists also stressed the history of morals codes and the 'gay experience' to present policies and practices. At one of the earlier meetings between

11 Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) did not enter the public consciousness as an issue until relatively late in this conflict. Furthermore, the same gay press which struggled against harassment of bookstore patrons was at the same time painstakingly educating its readers about the disease and demanding that the city and the state devote more resources to coping with and preventing it.
gays, Fraser, and Police Chief Bouza, a non-traditional 'sensitivity training' was proposed for the police by gays. This included calls for a look at uneven patterns of law enforcement vis-a-vis morals codes, presentations of the history of the development of gay and other sexual subcultures, and an examination of the contradiction between the city's human rights ordinance and the state's sodomy laws (GLC Voice, 1982a). These proposals were clearly an attempt to raise consciousnesses and force an examination of the issues raised by Fraser's and Bouza's explanations.

Gays and lesbians in the DFL (and therefore in the city bureaucracy and on the staffs of DFL officeholders, including Fraser) also brought pressure on the mayor and the police chief to resolve the conflict. However, this was only after the problem became very large scale and these 'insiders' were either personally touched by it or pressured by their gay constituents because of it. An open lesbian, Karen Clark, was elected to the State Legislature from a central-Minneapolis district in 1980. In 1983 a gay man, Brian Coyle, was elected to the City Council from the city's sixth ward, which includes most of the areas with heavy concentrations of gays. Neither of these two emphasized gay and lesbian politics, or this particular conflict, in their campaigns, however. Indeed, they generally opposed the high visibility tactics and specifically 'gay' agendas of Target City and people like Campbell and Baker. Nevertheless, by 1984 Coyle (under pressure from gay constituents and Campbell's GLC Voice) was publicly pressuring Chief Bouza to change his enforcement policy.

The enforcement policy was finally changed in February, 1985. Chief Bouza's public reaction reveals both his bitterness at being forced into this position and his acknowledgement of the role played by gay activists in bringing it about:

I caved in. I always caved in to every pressure group. Whatever they want. All they have to do is ask me (GLC Voice, 1985a, 3);

and

I succumbed to the pressure . . . It's absolutely true, there's no doubt, I've never been involved with such a high-powered effort to influence policy involving gays (Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 1985a, 1A.)

The new policy calls for irregular Vice Squad entries into adult bookstores, usually only when uniformed officers report trouble (Minneapolis Star and Tribune, 1985c). Since its implementation, indecent conduct arrests have decreased significantly: only four were recorded between March 1 and May 20, 1985 (GLC Voice, 1985b.) For the moment, arrests in city parks have declined as well.

The policy change does not mark an end to the battle over the redefinition of

Clark, as a lesbian, did not have to interpret the bookstore arrests as a lesbian issue. Indeed, she could have allied herself with feminist antipornographers who opposed such establishments as a matter of principle. She did not.

In subsequent races against other gays with ties to Target City, both Coyle and openly-gay State Senator Allan Spear have won handily.
the social relations of gender and sexuality in Minneapolis. Mayor Fraser still clings steadfastly to the importance of a police department being able to act independently, free of ‘political’ pressures. Thus he dislikes interfering in matters of police policy and continues to oppose a citizens’ review board to handle complaints of police misconduct. And at the same time that he announced the ‘radical deemphasis’ of bookstore patrols, Chief Bouza told the *Minneapolis Star and Tribune*:

> I want to make it clear these places won’t become privileged sanctuaries where the police won’t ever intrude. We’ll still patrol. And anything that spills into the public won’t be tolerated if it’s indecent conduct . . . I’m saying this: Keep it discreet and keep it very private. (*Minneapolis Star and Tribune*, 1985a, 6A.)

### IV Discussion: identity politics and class

By the late 1970s liberal lesbians and gay men had finally secured more or less permanent access to most local state apparatuses in Minneapolis, through the DFL’s lock on local electoral politics. Whereas previously their main opponents had been non-state actors and state apparatuses other than the police, the police were now the one state apparatus with which they (or, more specifically, gay men) were most in conflict. Liberal gays and their allies were unable to do anything about the massive assault waged by the police on gay men for over five years, just as they had failed to turn back other assaults earlier (e.g. the 1978 gay-rights repeal in St Paul). More ‘tactically radical’ gay activists struggled to expose the police campaign as contradictory and plainly homophobic. They effectively challenged official accounts of events and of motives, including arguing that the police campaign was linked to city and private developers’ plans to redevelop a downtown street on which the majority of Minneapolis’s gay establishments are located. But their success was also due, in part, to their enemies’ overzealousness. Analysts of minority activism, from Suttles (1972) to Murray (1984) have acknowledged that hostile external assaults often galvanize oppressed groups so that they react.

These ‘tactically radical’ gays were not necessarily consciously anticapitalist. Tim Campbell, for example, describes himself as ‘very comfortable in capitalism’ (personal interview, 19 July, 1985). Conversely, Council member Coyle, while eschewing ‘special interest’ gay politics, comes from a background of tenants’-rights activism, and is generally sceptical of the public-private economic development ‘partnerships’ which have been the hallmark of liberal DFL urban policy in Minneapolis in recent years. Similar contradictions can be found in the internal politics of Minneapolis’s gay press. In April of 1982, a second gay newspaper, *Equal Time*, was founded. Although tactically much more ‘conservative’ than *GLC Voice*, it also claimed to be addressing needs of the usually more radical lesbian community, which *GLC Voice* was allegedly ignoring. *Equal Time*’s downplaying of

---

[^1]: Very recently Coyle has strengthened his ties to the DFL establishment and Mayor Fraser, and muted his criticism of some forms of urban redevelopment and revitalization (e.g. gentrification – see Knopp, 1986).
explicitly sexual issues (its coverage of the bookstore issue was scarcely more extensive than that given it by the Minneapolis Star and Tribune) was regarded by at least one staffer as reflecting a desire to de-emphasize casual (and especially commodified) sex, which he felt the gay male subculture and GLC Voice, promote irresponsibly (personal communication).

These contradictions are symptomatic of the heterogeneity inherent in any social movement organized around a socially constructed (and hence dynamic) identity which crosses class boundaries. But this is not to say that gay and lesbian actors are lacking in class interests, or that their actions’ impacts are ‘class-neutral’. Rather, there are divergences between the real class interests of some of these actors and those on behalf of which they may consciously (though incidentally) have been working. Confrontational yet avowedly accumulation-minded activists like Campbell, for instance, consistently challenged the limits of contemporary capitalism’s relations of gender and sexuality during the course of the police-gay community conflict. In spite of their personal aspirations, such individuals paid a price for their activism. For example, the publication of an article on ‘man-boy love’ in the May, 1984 issue of GLC Voice (though not directly related to the police-gay community conflict) prompted several advertisers, both gay and non-gay, to withdraw their support for the paper permanently. Similarly, Jack Baker, though now an attorney, is not particularly influential, even within the gay community. On the other hand, gays like Brian Coyle, whose political backgrounds and personal histories are more traditionally ‘progressive’, have fared quite well personally.

Thus the gay and lesbian activists who radically challenged contemporary capitalist social relations of gender and sexuality in Minneapolis were successful only in so far as they were able to expose members of the police department (and their actions) as deeply reactionary, or as acting in the interests of certain factions of local capital (i.e. developers). They helped bring about only a partial redefinition of gender and sexual relations in Minneapolis, the same redefinition which their liberal brethren had also been struggling to accomplish (with only limited success). This redefinition could only accommodate a very narrow and fixed form of homosexuality. It could not accommodate other, more radical redefinitions which recognize gender and sexuality as changing social constructions (e.g. transvestism, non-monogamy, and intergenerational sex). This is because such redefinition would undermine many of the foundations of contemporary capitalist social formations (e.g. gender divisions of labour, stable ‘family’ units, and the socialization of children into these). Liberal and middle-class gays, then, whose politics of a fixed gay identity had been losing ground to the political right through much of the 1970s, were, ironically, the primary beneficiaries of the actions of these more ‘radical’ gay activists.
V Conclusion

The gay and lesbian movements in Minneapolis have succeeded in altering the social relations of gender and sexuality which prevail there. Middle-class lesbians and gay men are now well integrated into the prevailing liberal political culture, and to a considerable extent into the popular culture as well. In contrast to the San Francisco experience (Castells, 1983, 138–70), this is the result of neither spatial concentration nor the development of gay community economic clout. Rather, it is the result of struggles between lesbian and gay activists (usually without a ‘class analysis’ of their own oppression) and various state actors representing traditional gender and sexual norms. Also in contrast to the San Francisco experience, this redefinition of social relations has been extremely modest.

The contradictions and tactical divisions within Minneapolis’ gay and lesbian movements are a testament to the variety of ‘gay identities’ which exist there. The difference between the two tactical factions is that one recognizes this diversity as the product of an ongoing process of social construction while the other denies it. Neither camp, however, necessarily makes links between gender and sexual relations and the class structure of advanced capitalism. Yet both advance the interests of one or more factions of capital and/or labour. In the conflicts recounted here, liberal gay men and lesbians advanced the interests of what might be termed ‘progressive capital’ — those capitalist interests (e.g. the ‘service sector’ in the centre-city) which stand to benefit from a modest alteration in the social definitions of gender and sexuality — and those gay and lesbian people (disproportionately white, male and middle class) who can fit into these redefinitions. More ‘radical’ gay and lesbian activists, regardless of their conscious intentions, challenged contemporary capitalist social formations much more deeply, by challenging the present social relations of gender and sexuality almost completely. These social relations are critical links in the particular social formation which is advanced capitalism. Thus ‘radical’ lesbians and gay men undermined the interests of capital generally, and of many middle and upper-middle class lesbians and gay men, as well. The police, meanwhile, by attempting to enforce the ‘naturalness’ (ideologically) of existing social definitions of gender and sexuality, advanced the interests of what might be called ‘conservative capital’ — those factions (e.g. manufacturing) which continue to benefit from strictly defined gender and sexual relations.

Gay men and lesbians have gained a certain amount of acceptance in Minneapolis. But, like other minorities, they face the dual obstacles of increasing internal heterogeneity and a tenacious system of social relations which cannot offer many of their members full ‘citizenship’. The outcomes of similar battles elsewhere, and of struggles over other aspects of social relations (including other aspects of gender and sexual relations), will ultimately determine the extent to which all individuals are able consciously to participate in the social construction of their world.
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Jim Blaut, Maggie Clover, Richard Kujawa, Mickey Lauria, David R. Reynolds, Joe Scarpaci, Fred Shelley, Fran Ulkes-Daniels, and an anonymous referee for comments of earlier drafts of this paper.

VI References

Davies, P. 1985: To protect and serve. City Pages, July 17.
GLC Voice 1982a: Bouza holding tight against inservice training on police-gay relations; Fraser thinking, stalling for time. Issue 7, February 1.
1982b: Judge Porter decision thought likely to slow down gay arrests. Issue 8, February 15.
1984b: Police decoys shift all efforts to gays and bisexuals. Issue 106, December 2.
1984c: Police decry operations lead to third death. Issue 102, October 1.
Knopp, L. 1986: Gentrification and gay community development: a case study of Minneapolis, Minnesota. Paper presented to a special session on urban restructuring at the annual meetings of the Association of American Geographers, May, Minneapolis, MN.
Minneapolis Star and Tribune 1985a: Bouza curtails bookstore patrols. February 22.
1985b: Bouza denies gay pressure on bookstores. February 23.
1985c: New policy will send vice squad into bookstores less frequently. February 26.
Personal interview, Craig Anderson, August 1, 1985.
Personal interview, Tim Campbell, July 19, 1985.
Personal interview, Brian Coyle, July 15, 1985.
Personal interview, Jim St George, March 28, 1985.
1979c: special election pullout. September.

La prolifération récente de mouvements sociaux apparemment non basés sur les classes pose des problèmes théoriques et pratiques pour l’analyse politico-économique d’une société capitaliste avancée. Il est nécessaire d’établir des liens non-fonctionnels entre les mobilisations basées sur la structure des classes et non basées sur elle. Les liens sociaux de genre et de sexualité sont des éléments importants de tout système de rapports de classes. Les mouvements de gais et de lesbiennes ont mis en question les rapports actuels du genre et de la sexualité. Ils méritent, de ce fait, une analyse politico-économique attentive (c.a.d. non-fonctionnelle). Cet article examine, dans cette perspective, ce qui a été récemment accompli à Minneapolis par les mouvements de gais et de lesbiennes. On s’attache tout particulièrement à étudier un conflit entre la communauté des homosexuels et la Police. Les acteurs, les événements examinés se situent dans un système assez lâche de rapports de classes, tel qu’on le rencontre à l’échelle locale. Les activistes, homosexuels et lesbiennes, ont fait appel à une stratégie de confrontation qui a exposé le caractère de genre et d’identité sexuelle élaboré par la société. L’une des conséquences non intentionnelles de cette stratégie est qu’elle s’apporte un lien important dans le système élargi des rapports sociaux en société capitaliste.

La reciente proliferación de movimientos sociales aparentemente no clasistas plantea problemas teóricos y prácticos para un análisis político-económico de una sociedad capitalista avanzada. Es necesario establecer lazos no funcionales entre las movilizaciones basadas sobre la estructura de clases y las movilizaciones sin base clasista. Las relaciones sociales de género y sexualidad son componentes importantes de cualquier sistema de relaciones de clases. Los movimientos de hombres y mujeres homosexuales han puesto en tela de juicio las relaciones actuales de género y sexualidad. Por consiguiente, merecen un análisis político-económico profundo (es decir no funcional). Este documento examina los logros de los movimientos de hombres y mujeres homosexuales en Minneapolis desde dicha perspectiva. Se ha prestado especial atención a un conflicto entre la comunidad “gay” y la Policía. Los actores y acontecimientos considerados, están situados dentro de un sistema amplio de relaciones de clases, según se experimenta a escala local. Los activistas homosexuales emplearon una estrategia de confrontaciones que expuso el carácter de género e identidad sexual elaborado por la sociedad. Una consecuencia no prevista de esta estrategia fue el debilitamiento de un eslabón importante en el sistema más amplio de las relaciones sociales en una sociedad capitalista.
STUDENT HOMOPHILE LEAGUE: FOUNDER'S RETROSPECT

Robert A. Martin
(“Stephen Donaldson”)

The spring of 1982 saw the fiftieth anniversary of an historic moment in the history of the gay movement, an event which made the front page of The New York Times and reverberated around the world. In late April, 1967 (the 23rd or 27th, more likely the latter date, if memory serves me), Columbia University gave official recognition to the first known/public gay student group in North America, and quite possibly the world. This group, recognized then as the Student Homophile League, later changed its name to Gay People at Columbia-Barnard.

The historical memory of student groups, with their rapid turnover, is notoriously short, but there is a great deal of which to be proud. So that the history of that time, of the beginning of the gay student movement which now spans the globe, shall not be lost, I have undertaken to write this memoir. I must draw entirely on my own memory, for I have no access to the documents of the times. But I was there; I was the founder; and I am proud.

Background

Columbia has come a long, long way. I talked to Allen Ginsburg, the poet, one time in the late 'sixties. Allen told me that he was expelled from Columbia College in 1947 on suspicion of homosexuality, at a time when, according to him, he was still a virgin.

In the 1964-65 school year, the Board of Managers of Columbia's Ferris Booth Hall (FBH) created a furor by inviting a representative of the Mattachine Society of New York (MSNY) to speak as part of a series of FBH lectures. Prof. Gilbert Highet of the Classics Department cancelled his own lecture at FBH in protest against allowing a homosexual to speak on campus. In the same year, according to reports I heard two years later, one of the more athletic-oriented fraternities had a gay student playing piano at one of their parties. Getting drunk, they forced the pianist to perform sexually and then systematically broke his fingers. This was hushed up by the administration and the fraternity involved received a private slap on the wrist.

In the summer of 1965, prior to my registration as a freshman in the College, I had a social worker from Traveler's Aid (I had run away from home) call the dean's office, not using my name, to find out whether Columbia would allow a homosexual student known to them to register. It took two weeks for the administration to make up its mind; I have no idea how far up the decision went, but there was clearly no precedent. When the decision came down, it was this: the student would be allowed to register, on condition that he undergo psychotherapy and not attempt to seduce other students.

With this understanding, I began my studies in the fall of 1965, as far as I could determine the first officially cognized homosexual student to be tolerated. I was and am actually bisexual, but orientational dualism was even stronger then that it is now, and anyone who related to the same gender was considered homosexual.

During my entire freshman year I did not discover any other gay students (or faculty, for that matter) at Columbia, which tells you a lot about the atmosphere at that time. I began in a four-man suite in Carman Hall, but in December of 1965 my suite-mates went to the dean's office and told the dean that they felt uncomfortable having a homosexual living with them. I was taken out of Carman and assigned a single, 322 Livingston Hall, where I resided for the rest of my undergraduate days. That incident left a deep impression on me.

Meanwhile, I had "come out" in the spring and summer of 1965 and joined MSNY at that time. Having run away from home due to my mother's hysteria over homosexuality, I accepted an invitation from Julian Hodges, then president of MSNY (New York's major gay group at that time, founded in 1955), to stay at his apartment. So I began gay life with instruction from a movement activist.

Spending August '65 with Hodges, I met Dr. Franklin E. Kameny at a meeting held in Hodges' Greenwich Village apartment.

Frank Kameny's significance to the gay movement is well recognized. He and I became friends; in the summer of 1966 I got a job as a House of Representatives intern (with Rep. Donald E. Lukens, R-Ohio) and lived with him in Washington. Frank, unemployed at the time, was an enormous influence on me, one of two people who most have shaped my thinking modes (the other being my