

THE GLOBAL EMERGENCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN POLITICS:  
NATIONAL IMPRINTS OF A WORLDWIDE MOVEMENT. Edited by  
Adam, Barry D., Duyvendak, Jan Willem & Krouwel, André. *Philadel-  
phia: Temple University Press, 1999. viii + 381 pp.*

This book examines the form and content of lesbian and gay social and political movements around the world. It attempts to make some generalizations about the preconditions under which such movements come into existence, and their goals, strategies, successes and other characteristics.

The editors have written an introductory chapter in which they review the relevant theoretical literature on social movements. The concluding chapter tries to draw the volume together by comparing and contrasting the country reports in the twelve intervening chapters, and to specify the circumstances in which lesbian and gay political movements manifest themselves in various ways. In all, consideration is given to 16 countries. Four chapters discuss the English-speaking countries of Australia, Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States; three chapters consider the Western European countries of France, the Netherlands and Spain; one chapter covers the Czech Republic, Hungary and Romania;

two chapters examine the South American countries of Argentina and Brazil; one chapter covers the Southern African countries of Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe; and one chapter is about Japan. Accordingly, the book has a strong emphasis on richer nations, and those in North America and Western Europe. There are 16 contributors, 13 of whom are men and most (if not all) of whom are white. Nine authors are based in Europe, five in North America, and two in Australia. To a considerable degree, these statistics are reflected in the book's content.

In the final chapter the editors present an "opportunities model" of movement emergence and development" (p.344). They note that a prerequisite for the emergence of a lesbian and gay organization is lesbian and gay identity and social space. Provided that it is not too strong, political repression appears to facilitate lesbian and gay political organization, which is influenced by developments elsewhere in the world. Lesbian and gay movements are influenced by local, national and international political and social structures. Similarities among lesbian and gay movements around the world which the editors note, are movement goals which include "fighting discrimination and establishing public space of their own" (p.345). Very often there are "struggles between more assimilationist and separatist tendencies within movements . . . [and] almost everywhere, mass demonstrations became institutionalized as Gay and Lesbian Pride, celebrating the Stonewall riots. . . . As well, particular issues such as AIDS have provided a worldwide focus for mobilization. . . . Gays and lesbians rarely use violence or mass civil disobedience to reach their goals" (p.346). Relations between gay men and lesbians in political organizations have often been tenuous, and in a number of countries there has been tension between the commercial scene and the government-subsidized movement. However, in spite of similarities in the symbols, language, dress styles and issues in the lesbian and gay movements of various countries, the editors note that these elements may have different meanings in specific countries. National political and cultural characteristics mold movement aims and strategies.

The editors conclude by identifying economic, social and cultural prerequisites to the development of gay and lesbian political organizations, and discuss how national political contexts and international factors affect the shape of these social movements. Elements of the societal context which they consider to be important in this regard are meanings of sexual identity, sex roles, type of civil society, organized religion, form of capitalism, boundaries between public and private worlds, cultural representations such as the mass media, other identity movements which may exist in a particular society, the impact of AIDS, and popular attitudes.

Aspects of the national political context which may facilitate lesbian and gay movements are legal repression, social heterogeneity, political structures and cultures, and the judiciary. At the international level, the editors recognize the role of organizations such as the International Lesbian and Gay Association in shaping the form of national lesbian and gay social movements. They remark that the US movement "has been dominant in the world scene" (p.369) and draw attention to events such as the Stonewall riots and organizations such as ACT UP in influencing what occurs in other countries. They nominate travel and migration as important vectors by which international diffusion occurs. While "gay and lesbian movements all around the world influence and imitate each other . . . national factors, nevertheless, do remain striking and weighty" (p.368). Adam, Duyvendak and Krouwel reject an evolutionary model of gay and lesbian political organization, and rather than speak of a single movement, prefer to think about "national imprints of a global movement" (p.368). This idea is reflected in the title of the book.

This book has the usual strengths and weaknesses of an edited volume, and one with the word "worldwide" in its title. On the one hand, there is a depth of knowledge and detail presented which draws on the expertise of a range of scholars. On the other hand, the articles are inconsistent in style and content. Some are theoretically oriented while others are not. Some are more like country reports on homosexuality in general, while others restrict themselves to gay and lesbian politics. Some provide detailed information about lesbian politics, while others largely restrict themselves to consideration of gay men. In a book of this type, the introductory and concluding chapters are very important in integrating the volume. I formed the impression that this task may have been made more difficult by having three editors, with different ideas, interests and writing styles, who collaborated in the writing of these chapters. This clash of styles was even more noticeable in some of the other co-authored chapters.

Of the 200 nations in the world, only 16 are represented, and of these, English readers with an interest in lesbian and gay studies would already be familiar with the lesbian and gay movements in several of these. Accordingly, I found the chapters dealing with Argentina, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Spain to be particularly interesting and well written. The chapter on Japan is the only one on Asia and it is very broad in its coverage.

While most of the chapters will provide a valuable service to readers who are looking for a short history of lesbian and gay politics in a particular country or region, in many ways, the concluding chapter is the most

important. For some readers, it will also be the most problematic. LGBT studies seems to have a generous proportion of scholars interested in post-structural perspectives, and these readers may find some of the generalizations contained within the final chapter to be either trite, abstract or essentialist. Others, who see that there are common elements in lesbian and gay identity, community and politics in various social contexts will find the synthesis offered here to be of considerable interest, even if its empirical base is skewed and limited. However, the authors do not overstate their case and there is scope to examine and develop their ideas in future research. On the last page, the editors make one of the few references to post-structural writing in the field with the comment: "In an era when queer theory seeks to throw gay and lesbian identity into question, it is interesting to see that gays and lesbians very often feel themselves to be 'a people,' considering an attack on their brothers and sisters in another country as an assault on themselves. . . . These strong ties of solidarity should be understood in the context of an identity movement, in which the gap between 'their' and 'our' struggle is rather small" (p.370).

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