
A Thesis

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by

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To the Memory of Patty Boyer
Chapter I
INTRODUCTION

The Daughters of Bilitis (DOB), founded in San Francisco, CA in 1955, was the first Lesbian social movement organization in the United States.1 In the midst of the conformist decade of the 1950's, when social rules required the acquiescence of all citizens to the reactionary and stifling norms of the day, a tiny cluster of individuals - the Homophile pioneers - dared to violate the standard set by their ultra-homophobic society. Agitating for decent treatment and self-respect for male and female homosexuals, this collection of socially-defined "deviants" created an alternative to the gay bar culture which was the dominant social institution in the emerging gay and Lesbian communities of this historical period.

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1 In the DOB's newsletter/magazine The Ladder, it was editorial policy to use a capital "L" for the word "Lesbian", as a symbol of pride. In order to reflect as accurately as possible the conventions of the DOB, the word "Lesbian" will be capitalized throughout this thesis. See Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin's "Reminiscences of Two Female Homophiles," in Ginny Vida (ed.) Our Right to Love, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978, p. 126.
It is difficult to overstate the significance of pro-homosexual efforts in this period. Contrary to what has been popularly assumed, the general Homophile effort and, more specifically, the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis, did not spring out of nowhere, but were instead a reaction to a complex set of pre-conditions which served to predict the eventual existence of such activity. It is important to examine the social change activities of the early female Homophile movement because its very existence challenges the common assumptions made about the social climate of the U.S. during the era best known for Cold War foreign policy and the domination of McCarthyism on the domestic scene.

In the context of the Cold War and McCarthyism, it is striking to find in 1955 the beginnings of the first Lesbian social movement in the United States. The DOB was not merely an outgrowth of male Homophile organizations, but was an autonomous collectivity with its own set of guiding principles and its own agenda for social action. The existence of an explicitly Lesbian organization is all the more surprising when juxtaposed to the knowledge of this era's institutionally supported anti-feminism.²

Until recently, the Homophile movement, of which the DOB was an integral part, has received little attention from either social scientists, historians, or members of the contemporary gay rights movement. This thesis, by focusing on the activities of organized Lesbians in the historical era 1955 to 1963, and by utilizing a social movement perspective, will add a new dimension to the understanding of female Homophile activities.

This chapter introduces and justifies the research problem, reviews the applicable social movement and gay history literature, and discusses the methodological strategies which guided the research and the methodological problems that were encountered in gathering and analyzing the data.

Feminist sociologists (Millman and Kantor:1975; DiIorio:1982; Cook and Ponow:1983; Eichler:1983 and others) are developing an increasingly more sophisticated perspective from which to criticize mainstream sociology. This feminist critique identifies the biases of traditional sociology that reflect the sexist, racist and heterosexual assumptions of patriarchal culture. At both interpersonal and structural levels, female experience has been devalued and underexplored. Everyday life for women, and women's relationship to the larger socio-economic superstructure, have been viewed as appropriate for social scientific study only
insofar as women’s experiences relate directly to those of men. The study of women has been largely limited to an examination of the social roles women play—as wives, as mothers, and, moving into the late 20th century, as workers (Richardson:1981; and Bernard:1981; Huber:1983).

Women’s voices have been missing from male-dominated scholarship. A parallel silence has existed in much feminist scholarship and has served to mute the individual and collective voices of Lesbians (Taylor:1980:224-229). By focusing on the Daughters of Bilitis, this work is a compensatory effort designed to enhance the appreciation of its contribution to both social movement and gay/Lesbian history. There has been relatively little scholarly social science literature on Lesbians. Pre-1960’s work almost exclusively found Lesbianism to be a form of individual sexual or social deviance and focused on a pathological definition of Lesbian behavior. Society’s homophobia was reflected not only in the assumptions made by researchers as they formulated their research questions, but also by the fact that so few researchers were willing to approach the “Lesbian question” initially. Following the advent of the gay liberation movement in the 1970’s, society increasingly came to accept a redefinition of Lesbianism and so did social science researchers. The popular social science definition of Lesbianism moves from the pre-sixties notion
of sexual deviance to the 1980's characterization of Lesbianism as an alternative lifestyle (for further discussion of this change, see Krieger:1982:91-97).

Much of the social science scholarship which reflects this emerging definition of Lesbianism has focused on Lesbian identity (Krieger:1982). This concentration, along with a parallel interest in Lesbian community and the interplay between identity and community, represents an important stage in the development of a more sophisticated understanding of the dynamics of the social reality of Lesbian women, but it leaves many important theoretical questions unanswered.

This thesis partially fills a gap in the current literature because almost none of the research to date comes out of a social movement perspective. This study is designed to contribute to both the growing accumulation of sociological analytical case studies of social movement activities and to begin a much needed analysis of Lesbian involvement in social change agitation while simultaneously examining a previously unexplored area in the field of women's history.
REVIEW OF GAY HISTORICAL LITERATURE

With the exception of the work of three notable scholars, whose contributions will be noted in some depth later in this review, little serious mention has been made of the activities of the DOB by historians or social scientists. As women's experience has been viewed as secondary in the study of "mankind", and Lesbian existence has most often been relegated to a footnote in presentations concerning male homosexuals, so too the Daughters of Bilitis has been viewed as an auxiliary of the male dominated Homophile effort.

Two categories of materials are identifiable that have referred to the activities of the Daughters of Bilitis. The first are writings that focus on reporting the organizational activities of the DOB. Historian Lillian Faderman's (1981) and sociologist Toby Marotta's (1981) writings are representative of this category: each presents a brief analysis of DOB's actions and places its activities in a broader socio-historical context. For Faderman (1981), DOB is part of the history of woman-identified relations, and for Marotta (1981), the DOB's importance lies in the role it played at the beginning of gay political activity.

Other social scientists (Cory:1964; Sagarin:1969; Sweet:1975; Wolf:1979; Weitz:1983), as well as historian
Licata (1980) and journalists Lewis (1979) and Shilts (1982), have discussed the DOB in some other context. Discussion of the DOB rarely goes beyond the passing reference and usually is set in the context of a more general historical review of gay and/or Lesbian history or social action activities.

Weitz's (1983) analysis of The Ladder focuses, from a deviance perspective, on an explanation of the changing social definition of Lesbianism. Her work is an example of the way that some sociologists use current standards to judge historical evidence. She analyzes a sample of the magazine's fiction, compares the style of language used in reporting and editorials, and evaluates Ladder contributors' attitudes and levels of interest in either the Homophile movement or feminism. Weitz concludes that the early Ladder was "apolitical", loyal to the male-dominated Homophile movement, and reflected ambivalence towards positive definitions of Lesbianism. These conclusions are based on her analysis of the fiction, editorials and reportorial coverage of the magazine as pessimistic or non-pessimistic, while she makes only passing reference to the historical context within which these writings appeared.

Weitz's analysis proves her point about the emerging redefinition of Lesbianism, but at the expense of labeling
early Ladder contributions non-feminist. An appreciation of the feminist tone used in much of the analysis appearing in the early Ladder is only possible when it is considered against the conformist and anti-feminist dogma of the period. Ahistorical presentations of sociological data prevent this level of understanding and analysis.³

A second type of coverage of DOB related materials is illustrated through the work of movement participants such as Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon (1972; 1978; 1980; 1983) and Barbara Grier (1980). Writings in this category focus largely on biographical and autobiographical accounts of movement leaders' activities. Others scholars (including Tobin and Wicker: 1975; Adair and Adair: 1978; Stanley and Wolfe: 1980; and Cruikshank: 1980) have contributed detail to the understanding of mid-1950's to early 1960's gay and Lesbian life and have reported on the influence of the DOB on this historical period's emerging definition of Lesbian identity.

A more sophisticated and exacting examination of gay and Lesbian historical materials, including an analysis of Homophile and pre-Homophile activities, is present in the writings of a trio of male historians (see Katz: 1983; D'Em-

ilio: 1983a and 1983b; Berube: 1983a and 1983b; and Berube and D'Emilio: 1984). Katz (1976 and 1983), a pioneer in gay history, has documented thousands of episodes involving gay men and Lesbians. Katz strongly supports a social construction of sexuality perspective with his documentary work and accompanying analysis.

John D'Emilio has published *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, the first book length manuscript devoted to the historical context out of which the homosexual minority in the United States appeared. An outstanding contribution, this work brings together the most complete record of Homophile activities available to date. D'Emilio (1983a and 1983b) analyzes Homophile activities and the pre-conditions which led to such agitation within a context that acknowledges industrialization, urbanization and a capitalist economic system as larger societal forces that impinge on and shape changing social definitions of sexuality.

Allan Berube's (1983a and 1983b) work has concentrated on the World War Two period and has established the importance of understanding the emerging urban gay and Lesbian sub-culture in the U.S. within the context of World War II and post-World War II social control efforts. His work documents military participation in the creation and sanctioning of sexual deviance. By focusing on the experience
of gays and Lesbians in the military, Berube (see also Berube and D'Emilio: 1984) has deeply enriched the literature on gays and Lesbians in this period.

**THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT PERSPECTIVE**

The sociological understanding of social movements has come out of a collective behavior tradition dominated by psychological and/or social psychological theories of unconventional behavior. The study of social movement activity has also played a central role in the discipline of history. Much of the subject matter of history has been devoted to the understanding of struggles between competing groups within a society over cultural change and/or valued resources. Historical study has shared its interest in social change with the discipline of sociology (Smith: 1982: 286-308).

The intellectual orientation of sociology has been one that focused on cultural forces, rather than on deliberate action by individuals or collectivities, as the dynamic factor responsible for social change (Kilian: 1975). The consequence of this theoretical direction has been that the study of social movements has tended to fall outside of the traditional sociological emphasis, initially on evolutionary and later on functionalist, understandings of social dynamics.
Sociologists analyzing historical data while attempting to prepare a case study of a social movement must take special caution to frame their understanding of movement activities within the socio-historical context in which it occurred. Too often social scientists fail to appreciate and/or consider context, and therefore produce an analysis based on contemporary rather than historical definitions of social situations.

The components of social movements focused on by scholars have been two-fold. Attention has been given to identifying the values which a specific movement develops and nurtures, as well as understanding the norms and values generated by the ideological identification of strain which a social movement's belief system attempts to explain and resolve. A second area of focus for many social movement scholars has been the social structure, the tactics and strategies, and the constituencies of a social movement. Researchers have attempted to identify and analyze the roles taken by the leaders and the membership of a social movement and have further sought to understand recruitment and mobilization patterns.

Social movements have been defined by various scholars (Smelser:1963; Berk:1974; Perry and Pugh:1978 and Wood and Jackson:1982). A synthesis of the definitions of the
researchers listed above produces the following definition: social movements display a type of structure characterized by a pattern of organization which establishes a basis for collective action through the maintainence of a commitment to an ideology for promoting or resisting social change.

The identification of various types of social movement activity has allowed researchers the opportunity to categorize or group social movements relative to a specific movement's relationship to the larger issue of social change (Perry and Pugh:1978:225-227). Blumer (1951) distinguishes between general, specific and expressive types of social movements. The social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis would be identified as a specific movement, using Blumer's scheme, because of its reform character, its well-defined goals, its organizational structure which included a definite leadership and a division of labor, and its ideology that encouraged a collective consciousness on the part of the movement's participants (see discussion of Blumer in Perry and Pugh:1978:225).

Smelser has identified two types of social movement orientations. Norm-oriented movements, such as the DOB, are characterized for Smelser by their limited set of objectives and are considered more likely to occur in societies
that are highly differentiated (Wood and Jackson: 1982: 46-47). Value-oriented movements, on the other hand, seek more fundamental social change, and are thought by Sowell (1963: 278-281) to be more characteristic of undifferentiated societies where the value system of the society and its social institutions are tightly interconnected.

Left-wing, right-wing and conservative movements are identified in Wood and Jackson's (1982: 9-12) typological presentation. The Daughters would be categorized as left-wing by this scheme because of its ideological commitment to "attempting to increase the freedom and equality for a submerged group."

Roberta Ash Garner (1977) has presented an intricate five part typology of social movements which focuses on a movement's understanding of and challenge to a society's class structure (see discussion in Perry and Pugh: 1978: 226). The DOB would again be classified as a reform movement using Garner's scheme because it did not attempt to change the class structure in the United States. Furthermore, the DOB's utilization of legitimate strategies and tactics demands that, using Garner's types, it be considered reformist.

In relationship to the specific focus of this thesis, the work done previously by social movement scholars is informative. The typologies reviewed above provide a frame of reference for understanding and describing the Daughters of Bilitis and its relationship to society and the type of social change it envisioned.

Constructing an analysis of the stages which a social movement passes through has been another area of considerable interest to social movement scholars. A developmental or "natural history" approach has been taken by Hopper (1950) and by Mauss (1975). It must be noted that social movements possess dynamic, changing natures and must not be viewed as static entities. The period 1955 to 1963 has, for the purposes of this research, been identified as the initial stage of the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis.

The time frame specified for this research, 1955 to 1963, is important not only in the context of the history of the Daughters as an organization but also in the larger socio-historical context. This time frame marks, within the DOB, the period when Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin occupied positions of dominance in the organization. The domination of Martin and Lyon is important in social movement terms because of the leadership role played by these two
key figures. This pair controlled the editorial policy of the organization's publication The Ladder and continuously occupied positions of leadership at both the national level and in the San Francisco Chapter of the DOB. Del Martin was the president of the National organization and Phyllis Lyon was the president of SFDOD. This era is important in the larger historical sense because it coincides with the transition from what Betty Friedan (1963) identified as "the feminine mystique" to the earliest beginnings of what was to develop into the contemporary women's movement.

Various levels of analysis have been undertaken by social movement scholars who have attempted to understand how social movements originate or why individuals participate in them. General theoretical perspectives for understanding social movement activities have been constructed by Neil J. Smelser and Karl Marx (see Wood and Jackson:1982:41-61 for a detailed comparison of these contributions). The work of these scholars has centered not on the single-factor theories of middle-range attempts, but on a broad based generalizable conception of social movement dynamics. Marx viewed social movements as arising from the basic structure of the social system. He identified economic factors, specifically economic exploitation and the resulting alienation of the working-class, as the basis for social movement activity. Smelser also constructs a com-
prehensive theory for understanding the social structural
dynamics of social movements, but he rests his model on the
assumption that social movements develop when a social sys-
tem experiences social disorganization or strain.

The majority of work done by most other social movement
scholars has been in the direction of middle-range, rather
than more general theoretical, analysis (see Freeman: 1983;
Zald and McCarthy: 1979; McCarthy and Zald: 1973; Turner and
Killian: 1972). Middle-range theories emphasize a more lim-
ited number of variables and attempt to explain a specific
aspect of social organization within a social movement.
Offering only partial explanations, middle-range theories
may attempt an explanation of why individuals choose to
participate in specific forms of agitation or how social
movements develop (see Wood and Jackson: 1982: 27-39 for a
discussion of the major theories and paradigms used by
social movement analysts).

In contrast, Smelser's theory is a comprehensive expla-
nation of how social movements develop which is based on a
social structural paradigm. Smelser's (1963) contribution
to the larger social movement literature has been substan-
tial because he has isolated important conditions associated
with the development of social movement activity and his
work has generated a great deal of additional research.
This is not to say that Smelser is without his critics. Dominant is the criticism that Smelser's theoretical perspective lacks the empirical criteria necessary for specifying the connection between the "real world" and his value-added scheme (Perry and Pugh: 1978: 40). Researchers using Smelser's model have both successfully (Lewis: 1972), and unsuccessfully (Quarentelli and Hundley: 1969) applied his model to actual collective behavior episodes.

Further criticisms have been directed towards Smelser. These criticisms have focused on problems with identifying his critical stages of collective behavior (see Perry and Pugh's: 1978: 41 discussion of Milgram and Toch: 1969: 561-562) and have concluded that his work is more of a typological scheme than a hypothesis-generating theory. Additional criticisms of Smelser's model will be presented in the conclusion of this thesis. With the various critiques made of Smelser in mind, it may be best to consider his macroanalytical approach as most valuable in its ability to serve as an organizing tool for systematizing empirical data.

Smelser borrowed his notion of a "value-added" model from economics, and his work was further influenced by Talcott Parsons' social action theory (Berk: 1974: 40). Using his vast historical knowledge, he presented comparative illustration as evidence in support of his general social
structural theory. Providing multi-variable levels of analysis, Smelser linked collective behavior to specific societal conditions. Smelser's value-added model identified structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the ineffective operation of social control, which, taken together, from the necessary and sufficient conditions for explaining why and how social movements originate.

METHODOLOGY
The research questions which guided this study grew out of the objective to describe and analyze the organizational structure and development of the Daughters of Bilitis, while acknowledging the societal response it generated within the socio-historical context out of which it emerged. This work is intended to be exploratory in nature and was largely defined and limited by the availability of possible data sources.

Data Sources and Analysis
Three major data sources were used in this thesis. The most significant source of material was The Ladder, a publication of the Daughters of Bilitis which the organization began in October of 1956.
The second major source of data was selected published primary source material chosen for its historical relevance and significance to the topic. Publications authored by the two founding members and major figures in the DOB, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, were chosen for special scrutiny. In addition, two of the classic volumes in print that deal with the topic of homosexuality from an "insiders" perspective were central. The Homosexual in America (1951) and The Lesbian in America (1964), authored by Donald Webster Cory, were widely-circulated volumes that commanded considerable attention within the confines of the emerging Lesbian and gay sub-cultures. A third source of data on the activities in the early years of the DOB was a formal interview with a key participant in this movement, Barbara Grier. Grier was a major contributor to The Ladder, and through this connection to the DOB, she established a large communications network of Lesbians and other readers of the magazine which she has been able to maintain

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5 Barbara Grier's, Phyllis Lyon's and Del Martin's true names are used here with their knowledge and permission. Because this work has historical as well as sociological relevance it has been important to maintain historical accuracy whenever possible. While this thesis was in the final stages of its production interviews were conducted in San Francisco, California with Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon. During this same research trip an interview with male Homophile activist James Kepner was conducted at the International Gay and Lesbian Archives in Hollywood, California. Special thanks and acknowledgement to the Ohio State University's Center for Women's Studies small grant program for providing partial funding that made this research trip possible.
into the present.

The Ladder was the only sustained Lesbian publication in the historical era under consideration. It was an important source of contact with Lesbian culture for many of its readers. Joan Nestle of the Lesbian Herstory Archives commented on the magazine by saying:

The Ladder brought off a unique balancing act for the 1950's. It gave nourishment to a secret and subversive life while it flew a flag of assimilation.  

The Ladder was a 6 x 9 inch, twenty-four page monthly publication controlled by the national officers of the DOB and The Ladder editorial staff. It was printed in and distributed from San Francisco, California completely through the volunteer efforts of SFDOB members. A Ladder work party was held by the DOB monthly to prepare the issue for mailing. The all-volunteer effort included not only the production aspect, but also the substantive creative work necessary each month to compose and edit all aspects of the publication.

Each edition included all or most of the following components: DOB "Statement of Purpose", list of officers, title page and table of contents, editorial comment, reportorial coverage of either DOB, Mattachine and/or ONE Inc.

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sponsored events, book reviews, Lesbiana (an annotated bibliographic column), poetry, short stories, and the Reader's Respond section. All sections of The Ladder were considered in this analysis.

The Ladder is probably the most accessible source for an analysis of collective Lesbian activity during this period. Though original copies are scarce, the full sixteen year run of The Ladder was made available in 1975 in reprint form as part of the Arno Press Series on Homosexuality. The secret nature of Lesbian culture has made it especially elusive to researchers, and the reissuance of The Ladder represents an important opportunity to expand scholarly understanding.

The Ladder provides a wealth of information on the activities and interests of the female Homophile organization the Daughters of Bilitis and also serves as a reflection of the changing nature of Lesbian identity and the emerging feminist consciousness of the period. The Ladder circulated to a very limited number of subscribers, but nevertheless, it was the most well known publication of its type. Retrospective reports indicate that The Ladder's popularity and readership were significantly higher than subscription rates might indicate because a single copy of the magazine would often circulate throughout an entire Lesbian friendship network.
Certain limitations became apparent when considering The Ladder as a data source. First, many of the contributors to the The Ladder used one or more pseudonyms. This is problematic on two counts. It makes it impossible to judge with any accuracy the actual number of individuals who were contributing to The Ladder. Secondly, it makes these women almost impossible to find today. Retrospective interviewing, which might provide valuable insight into the activities of the DOB, becomes very difficult because of the current inaccessibility of both the membership and the authors of material published in The Ladder. Locating any group of individuals who engaged in social movement activities more than twenty-five years ago would be difficult, but the Daughters' use of pseudonyms makes it nearly impossible.

A second limitation must also be noted. The Reader's Respond section of The Ladder contained only segments of letters received by the magazine's staff, who placed edited versions in the newsletter. These letters were rarely signed and usually only the writer's initials and city and state were printed. This again makes identification of specific authors problematic as well as knowing what other specific content was excluded by the editors.

Other primary data sources used in this analysis include the already mentioned publications by Donald Cory Webster
(The Homosexual in America (1951) and The Lesbian in America (1964)). Additionally, Phyllis Lyon's and Del Martin's Lesbian/Woman and other retrospective accounts authored by or about this pair were sources for this analysis. Del Martin's and Phyllis Lyon's retrospective accounts of their involvement in the DOB are included in the data base because these sources add to the understanding of the material found in The Ladder. As founding members and publicly recognized leaders of the Daughters, these women's contributions were considered to be important enough to warrant singling out their writings for special consideration.

Secondary data sources include all known sources which mention or describe female Homophile activities or the Daughters of Bilitis. These materials have already been commented on in some detail in the review of the gay/ Lesbian history literature.

The third major data source for this analysis is an interview conducted with Barbara Grier. As a longtime participant in Lesbian social movement activity, she served as an informant on early DOB events and provided considerable insight into the limitations of information obtained from The Ladder. Barbara Grier was an early and frequent contributor to The Ladder. She authored the Lesbian column
and was, by her own report, the unofficial correspondence secretary for the DOB. She, along with Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, were all singled out because of the voluminous contributions they made to The Ladder. An additional factor facilitating the choice of Barbara Grier as an informant is related to her current accessibility as an active and outspoken member of the Lesbian-feminist community.

This research was started with a view that Lesbian activities had been understudied and that a thorough analysis of Lesbian collective action prior to the emergence of the contemporary feminist movement presented itself as an appropriate and important topic for research.

The data sources available were carefully read, categorized, and coded in an attempt to apply a social movement framework to the historical data to make sense of it and to produce an analytical case study. In coding the data, attempts were made to identify from the sources data pertaining to the characteristics associated with a social movement analysis: organizational structure, including leadership, membership and recruitment strategies, ideology, including goals and strategies, and social reaction to movement activity. A list of the categories into which material was coded is contained in Appendix Two.
A determination was made that the Daughters of Bilitis did meet the criteria generally used to identify a social movement organization, following an identification for the DOB of the above mentioned characteristics. It was then possible to begin a general sociological description of the organization. Following the preparation of this description, which attempted to explicate the already identified general characteristics of a social movement specific to the DOB, Smelser's value added model was utilized to understand the conditions which gave rise to the activities of the Daughters of Bilitis.

Smelser's framework, including his six central concepts of structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the ineffective use of social control, was used as a content free ordering device for examining and presenting data pertaining to the development of the DOB. The data base described above provided sufficient evidence for an explanatory analysis of the conditions which generated the emergence of the DOB using Smelser's model.

In chapter two, the pioneering efforts of the Daughters on behalf of female homosexuals will be detailed and described using the organization's publication The Ladder.
as the primary data source. An analysis of the DOB, using Smelser's general theoretical framework for analyzing pre-conditions which predict the development of social movement activity, will be undertaken in chapter three. Conclusions will follow.
Chapter II

DESCRIPTION OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION

THE DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS

A type of Lesbian culture which had not previously existed was created by the activities and actions of the Daughters of Bilitis. The DOB hesitantly questioned popular stereotypes of Lesbians, scholarly theory, and, most importantly, the self-images of its constituency. This social movement organization played a vital role in the mid-twentieth century Homophile struggle that nurtured individuals and ideas which would blossom in the social liberation movements of the 1960's. A description of the social movement which arose out of the first attempt in the United States to organize Lesbians for other than social purposes will be constructed in the pages that follow.

Following a brief recounting of the founding of the Daughters of Bilitis, this chapter will begin with a discussion of the ideology of the DOB. Specific organizational goals will be identified, and strategies used to accomplish these goals will be illustrated. The DOB's leadership and membership will be described and discussed, with special
attention given to the recruitment strategies necessary to attract new members to a "deviant" cause. A third and final section will examine the cultural events and institutions that were created by the female Homophile movement. DOB conventions, activities, and events will be described and discussed, and the relationship of the male-dominated Homophile organizations to the Daughters will be explored and illustrated.

The Daughters of Bilitis began with the September 21, 1955 meeting of four lesbian couples in the living room of a San Francisco apartment. This was the first gathering of what was at that time intended to be a secret, lesbian-only club. In a few weeks, the decision to move ahead with plans was made, and the name "Daughters of Bilitis" was suggested by a member who was familiar with the works of the French poet Pierre Louys. Louys' homoerotic poem, "The Songs of Bilitis," which tells the story of Bilitis — a contemporary of the infamous Sappho of Lesbos — provided a name that would have special meaning to members without arousing the unwanted curiosity of outsiders.8

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8 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 210-211.
So named, the fledgling organization, in the months that followed, experienced its first crisis. A disagreement over the focus of the club's activities led to a split, resulting in the two working-class couples leaving DOB. Two of these women eventually formed Quatrefoil, the social-oriented club that they had envisioned the Daughters would be. Nancy (one of the DOB founders who left) and her partner sustained this group, which catered to the needs of blue-collar Lesbian mothers. Later Nancy founded another group named Hale Aikane, a secret sorority-type club.9 Only retrospectively did Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, both white middle-class women and the only two founding members to continue on with the DOB, recognize that the orginal split in DOB was along class lines.10

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon urged the DOB in the direction of political action and had by the end of the first year contacted a male Homophile organization, the Mattachine Society of San Francisco. The DOB's first public event was a forum co-sponsored with Mattachine on the different problems faced by male and female homosexuals.11 The Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc., two male-dominated but not male-only organizations, welcomed the Daughters of

9 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 213.
10 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 213.
Bilitis into the Homophile movement.

IDEOLOGY

The ideology of a social movement serves to explain the need for its existence to the movement's leadership and membership as well as to society at large. One broad function which ideology may fulfill is the construction of a version of history that demonstrates how the goals of a movement are in harmony with the basic traditions of a society (Killian:1964). The writings of Donald Webster Cory were the first to place the "homosexual problem" within the framework of minority relations.¹² Cory, a self-identified gay man writing from his "subjective" position as a participant of twenty plus years of gay life, places the struggles of gay men and Lesbians inside the democratic tradition of the United States by suggesting that homosexuals constituted an "unrecognized minority." Cory writes from a social science perspective. He discusses his "subjective exploration and appraisal" as a rarely used, but legitimate, method for scholarly investigation of sexual phenomena.¹³

In his ground breaking work, Cory stated:


¹³ See Cory *Homosexual in America,* p. ix.
We are a minority, not only numerically, but also as a result of caste-like status in society ... Our minority status is similar, in a variety of respects, to that of national, religious, and other ethnic groups; in the denial of civil liberties; in the legal, extra-legal, and quasi-legal discrimination; in the assignment of an inferior social position; in the exclusion from the mainstreams of life and culture; in the development of a special language and literature and a set of moral tenets within our group.14

The publication of Cory's work is significant in as much as it provided a framework with which gay men and Lesbians could construct a collective identity. No longer was it necessary to view the problems that accompanied daily life as a gay man or Lesbian as solely personal problems; Cory's reinterpretation of homosexual status allowed individuals to become aware of others like themselves. For those who previously had only shared the bonds of deception, lying, concealment, and, consequently, self-hatred, there was a possibility for community.

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14 See Cory Homosexual in America, p. 14-15. The table of contents for HIA breaks down into the following six sections: Sociology, Psychology, Patterns, Culture, Adjustments, and Outlook; this demonstrates a little about Cory's conception of the "problem" under study. See also D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 33 for another assessment of Cory's contribution.
**Education of the Variant**

The Daughters of Bilitis's ideology is most succinctly captured in its "Statement of Purpose," which appeared on the inside front cover of the organization's magazine *The Ladder.* The Daughters' ideological statement pushed beyond Cory's notion of minority status, assuming that individual Lesbians shared commonalities; it spelled out a pragmatic course of action, intent on encouraging and supporting women who were seeking integration into, not rejection by, the society. The DOB's "Statement of Purpose" contains loaded words and phrases such as "variant", "integration", "her adjustment to society", and "advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society". Instead of dismissing the philosophy outlined by the DOB, as contemporary feminist scholars have been wont to do, it is important to view it in its own socio-historical context as a vision of the future, a vision which would only be attained through sacrifice and struggle and not a vision that could be demanded of, or expected from, the ultra-homophobic 1950's straight society.

Gay and Lesbian rights activists currently working to expand the political and social position of Lesbians and gay men reject any implication that gay people should assume an accommodationist stance in relation to straight

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15 See Appendix one for a reprint of the DOB "Statement of Purpose."
society. Dolores Klaich's (1974) comment in Woman_Plus Woman is typical of the contemporary devaluation of Homophile supporters:

Today's activists are noisy, militant, publically proud. They don't hide behind high heels and neckties. 16

It must be remembered that the DOB ideology was formulated in an era when to be gay was to accept either complete self-denial, a lifetime of stifled, closeted pseudo-acceptance, or, as a homosexual, direct rejection if one exposed oneself to possible confrontation from a hostile society that held homosexuality to be criminally perverted at worst or sinfully sick at best. With this in mind, it is an exceptional accomplishment that the small band of women who assembled this document had the courage and sense of self-worth necessary to construct a philosophy as positive as the "Statement of Purpose."

The four-fold program of action outlined by the DOB revolved around the notion that it was possible and desirable to "integrate" the homosexual into the larger, mainstream society. The first tenet of that proposal was directed at Lesbians themselves:

Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications by establishing

and maintaining a library of both fiction and nonfiction on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.\(^{17}\)

Often criticized, this advocacy of "a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society" has been viewed by some as a self-defeating program of systematic sycophant-like behavior and self-denial which stifled the free expression of Lesbian differences.\(^{18}\) Once again, setting the proper social context is crucial to understanding what the Daughters intended to suggest in this portion of their "Statement of Purpose." The following is an excerpt from a letter written anonymously by Black political activist and playwright Lorraine Hansberry concerning the dilemma presented by cross-dressing Lesbians:

I have long since passed that period when I felt personal discomfort at the sight of an ill-dressed or illiterate Negro. Social awareness has taught me where to lay the blame. Someday, I expect, the 'discreet' Lesbian will not turn her head on the streets at the sight of the 'butch' strolling hand in hand with her friend in their trousers and definitive haircuts. But for the moment, it still disturbs. It creates an

\(^{17}\) *The Ladder*, Vol. 1, No. 1, (October 1955), p. 4. For the complete text of the DOB's "Statement of Purpose" see Appendix One.

impossible area for discussion with one's most enlightened (to use a hopeful term) heterosexual friends.¹⁹

The DOB "dress code", then, was viewed not as a restriction of Lesbian potential but as an effort to free Lesbians, both individually and collectively, from the negative stereotypes perpetuated by women who dressed in masculine attire. These stereotypes supported the popular misconception that Lesbians were pseudo-males who could be recognized by their adoption of masculine mannerisms and style.²⁰

To her seeming surprise, M.B., a reader of The Ladder from California, attests to the effectiveness of this strategy:

Through the years I have learned also, chiefly through the Daughters of Bilitis, that a full-fledged, honest-to-god Lesbian can hold down a responsible position, can wear skirts reasonably comfortably and gracefully, can wear her hair long, and can do a million and one things any other female can do in this society— with ease and poise too; that's the greatest blessing.²¹

¹⁹ This quotation appeared in The Ladder, Vol. 1, No. 8, (May 1957), p. 27. See also Jonathon Katz (1976) Gay American History, New York: Avon Books, p. 639 for a discussion of Hansberry's role as an early member of NYDOB. Hansberry was also discussed by Barbara Grier, taped interview June 27, 1983. Hansberry is best known as the youngest and first female black winner of the New York critic's award for her play, "Raisin in the Sun".

Additional testimony comes from Z.N. of San Leandro, California:

I have personally proved, in more than a dozen cases, the importance of mode of behavior and
dress in establishing an understanding with heteroequalals. It pays to make the small conces-
sion.\textsuperscript{22}

Investigation reveals that the DGB "dress code" had more
to do with having a positive self-image that would trans-
late into societal and self-acceptance than it was about a
rejection of those women who dressed "butch." The
"offical" word on the conformity controversy was reiterated
in Del Martin's editorial, "The 'Gay' Bar--Whose Problem is
It?:

The homosexual must learn that defiance in the
face of a prejudiced society does not serve his ends, but rather it tends to justify and intensi-
fy the prejudice he would seek to eliminate.\textsuperscript{23}

In sum, the seemingly apologist approach that DGB took,
which resulted in a pro-traditional femininity stance, must
be considered a response to the popular myth of the mascu-


\textsuperscript{23} The Ladder, Vol. 4, No. 3, (December 1959), p. 25. It
must be noted that the language used in The Ladder reflected the sexist bias of the era and culture of
which it was a part. In this context "homosexual" is
often used to refer to both gay men and Lesbians, but
Lesbian is not used in a generic form. Similarly, the
masculine pronoun "he" is also used as a generic con-
cept, even when the writer is actually referring to an
all female/Lesbian group.
line Lesbian and another example of the consequences of the rigid sex/gender roles scripted by society. The DOB "dress code" was a means by which the Daughters could reject the popular notion that, because they were Lesbians, they were women who wanted to be men.

**Education of the Public**

The second item in the DOB "Statement of Purpose" called for:

> Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.\(^2\)

The DOB's approach to the question of education was similar for both the public and the Lesbian. The organization devoted the majority of its resources to educational projects. Foremost were its efforts as the publisher of *The Ladder*. A second strategy used, and one that was already being utilized by the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc., was the quasi-public discussion meeting, where leading members of the legal, psychiatric, and religious institutions, as well as other professionals, would make scholarly presentations and respond to questions. Early DOB sponsored events would attract as many as 40 to 50 individuals to a public meeting, which gave the attendees the impression of relative safety from identification. As will

be discussed in more detail later, the Daughters was open to all women, not just Lesbians, but this was mainly a token inclusiveness designed to calm the fears of those hesitant to join a Lesbian-only organization.

Early topics for discussion at the monthly public discussion meetings concentrated on the issues of fear and self-acceptance. The Ladder's "Calendar of Events" listed such titles as "Must we have Fear?, "Self Acceptance", and "Your Civil Liberties" among the topics for the first discussion meetings. Although there were no speakers independently sponsored by DOB during the period from May 1958 to June 1959, other Homophile organizations continued to sponsor events, and the DOB's commitment to education through the use of "experts" appears to have remained strong.\(^25\)

The Ladder coverage of Homophile conventions always included reference to the professional speakers in attendance. Phyllis Lyon, a founding member, first editor of The Ladder, and one of the driving forces in the early success of the DOB, retrospectively observed:

The fact that we enlisted professional speakers, who volunteered their services and many times opened themselves up to suspicion and criticism from their colleagues, did not stem from our inability to recognize that we were indeed the "experts" and could speak for ourselves. Rather, it was acknowledgment, first, that few of us were in a position to speak out publicly, and second,

\(^25\) This gap is unexplained in the data sources available for this research.
that professionals are the public opinion makers.\textsuperscript{26}

The attention provided by these professionals served an important legitimizing function during the early years of the Daughters of Bilitis. Additional details concerning the quality and content of the work of these professionals will be presented later in this chapter, along with an assessment of the experts' collective influence on the DOB.

The DOB had an ideological commitment to the changing definition of homosexuality that many, although not all, of these "experts" held. The possibility of recruiting new clients from the DOB's membership was an additional factor which may have contributed to the motivation of some professionals who became involved with DOB. It is interesting to note that in the earliest years of publication, only letters written by professionals to The Ladder's "Reader's Respond" section included signatures.

Both the publication of The Ladder and the DOB's sponsorship of public discussion meetings point to a mainstay of the Homophile ideology, the recognition of the importance of free communication on the homosexual theme. Once again, by setting themselves in the context of advocates of "free speech," Homophiles were able to view their goals as

compatible with mainstream American politics.

Research Projects

The Daughters' commitment to education and the creation and dissemination of knowledge concerning Lesbianism is again reflected in the third segment of the organization's "Statement of Purpose", which advocated promoting the integration of the homosexual into society by:

Participation in the research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts, directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual. 27

Although the Daughters (like Mattachine Society members) did offer themselves as research subjects, only a few researchers took advantage of this data base. Homophiles presented themselves as the only pool of non-patient, non-criminal subjects available to take part in research on homosexual men and women.

The failure on the part of professionals to accept the Daughters' offer to become research subjects motivated the DOB to take a more aggressive posture. The June 1958 edition of The Ladder (mailed out to all subscribers) included a four-page questionnaire. Case histories were compiled by the DOB research committee of volunteers in the immediate San Francisco area. 28 Florence Conrad, research project


director for the DOB, provided a technical, very astute report of the findings in the September 1959 edition of *The Ladder*. The specifics of the project will be discussed in some detail in the following section of this chapter which focuses on DOB membership.

A similar questionnaire (on the topic of male homosexuality) was also constructed by the DOB research committee and was distributed by the Mattachine Society and *ONE*, Inc.

The September 1960 edition of *The Ladder* was entitled: "DOB Questionnaire Reveals Some Comparisons Between Male and Female Homosexuals." The Daughters' hopes that its own research efforts might spur "legitimate" professional interests were fulfilled.

Following the 1960 convention, the DOB was approached by numerous researchers seeking additional information concerning DOB research and offering their own services. Proposed projects ranged from an "investigation of the psychological, psychiatric, and sociological aspects of the lives of people with other than usual problems in sexual adjustment," by Robert Stoller of the University of California Medical Center at Los Angeles, to a study of Lesbian couples conducted by a graduate student at San Fernando State College, Mrs. Susanne Prosin. Del Martin, past DOB

30 A list of researchers and research projects involving
national president and second editor of The Ladder, pushed for DOB involvement in additional research efforts.\textsuperscript{31}

The Daughters' commitment to research sharply contrasted with the efforts of ONE, Inc. The male-oriented Homophile organization concentrated its efforts on publication and scholarship, but it did not recognize any authority in the field of homosexuality other than itself.\textsuperscript{32} The ONE Mid-winter Institutes, ONE Institute for Homophile Studies, and their three publications - ONE Institute Quarterly, Homophile Studies, ONE Confidential, and ONE: A Magazine - were by Homophiles and for Homophiles.\textsuperscript{33}

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DOB participation includes: Dr. Robert Stoller University of California Medical Center in Los Angeles; Dr. Ralph Gundlach, psychologist from New York associated with the Society for Medical Psychoanalyst; Mrs. Bernice Engle of the Langley-Porter Neuropsychiatric Institute of San Francisco; and other professionals whose work is referred to, but who are not themselves named. See The Ladder, Vol. 3, No. 1, (October 1958), p. 3. See also D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities. Evelyn Hooker, probably the best known researcher to use a Homophile sample in her work. Additionally the July 1962 edition of The Ladder was devoted to a long essay by Suzanne Pros in reporting her research on Lesbian couples. The list of researchers comes from The Ladder, Vol. 6, No. 1, (October 1961), p. 6-8.

\textsuperscript{31} The Ladder, Vol. 7, No. 6, (March 1963), p. 4.

\textsuperscript{32} The Ladder, Vol. 6, No. 8, (May 1962), p. 4.

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The Daughters' ideological commitment to professional research helped to shape the strategies that the young organization adopted. By making its membership available to researchers, it made a significant contribution to scholarship by providing a non-clinical informant pool which had not been previously explored. DOB's own attempts at research were handled professionally, which was its goal, and were certainly a source of pride and accomplishment for those who took part. As professionals became interested in the DOB and began to use the organization as a referral/resource group, the DOB could claim its first real ideological victory. Its goal of social change through education was becoming a reality.

Law Reform

The fourth item in the DOB's "Statement of Purpose" is perhaps the clearest example of the "reform-oriented" change that the Daughters advocated. Calling for "investigation of the penal code," DOB supported "changes through due process" of laws pertaining to the homosexual. Law reform issues did not present themselves with equal urgency to male and female Homophiles. Bar raids victimized both Lesbians and gay men, but entrapment and police crackdowns on public cruising areas, bath houses, beaches, and public restrooms were of little concern to the vast majority of Lesbians. B.G. of Missouri, whose letter appeared in the June 1961 edition, contended:
I'm sorry to have to write this, but any two adults of any sex who live together quietly confining their sex life to their own bedroom and not the public latrines run into very damned little trouble.  

The first major excursion into mainstream political debate for the DOB took place in the September issue of The Ladder, in which an "Open Letter to Assemblyman John A. O'Connell", signed by DOB president Del Martin, was published. It praised Assemblyman O'Connell's efforts, but suggested that without hearing the voice of the Homophile, his committee's judgment on the vagrancy law revision under consideration would be hasty and incomplete. Martin cites the Wolfenden Report from England as a possible model that could be examined during the review of the section of the vagrancy laws that pertained to sex crimes.  

The letter asks O'Connell "to judge sexual activity on the grounds of whether or not society is harmed."  

Further, it stated the Daughters' position on the issue to be that "homosexual activity between consenting adults in private is not harm-

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ful to society." The letter continued, asking O'Connell's committee to reconsider laws which required sex offenders to register with local police upon their arrival into a new community, and spoke out against police entrapment practices which "enticed" individuals.

Confrontation on issues pertaining to law reform continued to be of importance to the Daughters. At the third convention, attorney Leon Mayer, one of several lawyers actively associated with DOB, presented a talk "On The Changing Sex Laws," in which he advised the Daughters on the law reform proposal being suggested by the American Law Institute. Throughout the early years of the DOB, the organization spoke out strongly against police and liquor control agencies' harassment of gay bars and their clientele. Del Martin authored an article published in the


38 No response from Assemblyman O'Connell is documented in The Ladder.


40 Numerous reports of gay bar raids were printed in The Ladder, beginning with Vol. 1, No. 2, (November 1956), p. 5. DOB support for the victims of these raids, and criticism of law enforcement officials, escalated throughout the 1950's and into the 1960's. See Vol. 1, No. 9, (June 1957), p. 19 report of the arrest of local
June 1962 edition of *The Ladder*, entitled "The Philosophy of DOB: The Evolution of an Idea," which the DOB position as an activist organization was clearly explained:

Where there is infringement of the homosexual's rights, when freedom of the press is threatened, when a Homosexual loses the opportunity to earn a livelihood, DOB will not only take a firm stand, but will act boldly and aggressively to alleviate or correct the situation. True, we will mediate, discuss and arbitrate wherever possible, but we will also stand our ground when we feel there is unjust discrimination. 41

Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon have pointed to an early statement made by Martin as a representative example of the ideological stance taken by DOB. Martin's editorial, "The Positive Approach," reads in part:

The salvation of the Lesbian lies in her acceptance of herself without guilt or anxiety, in her awareness of her capabilities and her limitations, and in her pursuit of a constructive way of life without misgivings or apology. 42

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The DOB's ideology, as it has been outlined above, reflects, rationalizes and defends the social and political commitments of the organization. Further, the ideological framework on which DOB rested served as a philosophical justification for the group's pattern of action, attitudes and goals. The ideological stance provided an alternative set of expectations for life as a Lesbian for those women who, once aware of its existence, choose to associate themselves with the organization. The DOB, therefore, supported an alternative frame of reference and encouraged commitment to Homophile ideals by presenting self-affirming options for Lesbians.

Commitment to promoting positive alternatives for individual Lesbians and to educational efforts directed at challenging negative stereotypes held by both straight and gay society are evident in the strategies utilized by the organization as it worked to actualize its goals. This ideological imperative influenced the intellectual, political, and social lives of The Ladder's readers and DOB members.

The intellectual lives of DOBers were enriched by the wealth of otherwise unavailable information on issues of concern to Lesbians and gay men that The Ladder provided. Additionally, the "Lesbiana" column, assembled by Gene
Damon (aka Barbara Grier) and Marion Zimmer Bradley, supplied lists of fiction and non-fiction books that were not well known or easily accessible. Even though much of the early outside writing examined by The Ladder offered only negative and condemning attitudes towards Lesbianism, it must be remembered that a negative image may better serve to confirm a woman's sense of self than could no image at all. Any image, even a negative one, served to make Lesbianism a possible option.

The Ladder was also a tool used to increase the political awareness of DOB members. Readers must have been gratified to hear reports of Homophile news around the U.S. and around the world. With an increasing awareness of the scope and intensity of Homophile activity, even Lesbians far away from DOB Chapters could begin to make the connection between their own life experience and that of other Lesbians. Later, with the resurgence of the women's movement, similar sharing of information allowed women to make their own connections between political and personal worlds.

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Coverage of international issues in THE LADDER included a discussion of the British Wolfenden Report. See footnote number 35 for additional details. The Ladder's coverage of Homophile news also reported on the Lesbian movement in Germany (June 1958) and Holland (December 1961).

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News of bar raids and information on how to conduct oneself if arrested had very practical implications for Lesbians who dared to venture out to these establishments. Discourse and debate on such varying topics as prostitution, transvestism, heterosexual and homosexual marriage, and childrearing opened avenues of communication and thought that were closed in the standard press.

The Daughters of Bilitis increased many-fold the social activity options of the women who participated in the various DOB chapters. Prior to the existence of the DOB, few opportunities, outside of gay bars and pre-established friendship networks, availed themselves to Lesbians. What may have been the greatest purpose served by the DOB was the organization's provision of a safe space for Lesbians to come together, to meet and share their life experiences with one another either in person at Chapter events, or vicariously through a subscription to The Ladder.

MEMBERSHIP, LEADERSHIP, AND RECRUITMENT

Women-only and female-led social movements have been understudied. Much of the social movement scholarship which has attempted to analyze leadership, membership and

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45 ACLU recommendations for arrested individuals were published in The Ladder, Vol. 1, No. 3, (December 1956), p. 2-4.

46 See Wood and Jackson (1982) and Jo Freeman (1983) for examples of male-oriented studies.
recruitment strategies utilized by social movement organizations has failed to take into account the consequences of gender and its influence on the ability of individuals to organize collectively. The all-female character of the DOB demands that special attention be paid to the possible consequences of the feminine role.

A small core of highly dedicated women formed the inner circle which sustained the Daughters of Bilitis throughout the early years of its existence. Three women have been selected out of that inner core for special consideration and comment. Two of these women, Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, are DOB founding members, and their contributions have already been mentioned in the above discussion of ideology. These two women's names were synonymous with the Daughters of Bilitis throughout its existence. From the time The Ladder was first published in October of 1956 until March of 1963, the editorship was under the control of these women, partners in a Lesbian relationship that has lasted until the time of this writing. Martin served as DOB national president from 1957 to 1960, while Lyon undertook the responsibilities of president of the San Francisco DOB Chapter.

47 The exact number, or even an approximation of the number, of women involved in the inner circle is not possible given the available data sources.
Barbara Grier's devotion to *The Ladder*, and to the message of hope it sent to those readers who lived outside of the areas served by DOB Chapters, stretched over almost the entire sixteen year period it was published. Grier wrote under numerous pseudonyms: Gene Damon is the best known, but Lennox Strang, Lemnox Strong, and the initials "BG" and "GD" are other identities under which her work also appeared. 48 Grier's contribution as *The Ladder*'s intellectual sage opened new literary worlds to many of the magazine's readers.

The leadership structure which coordinated the DOB activities was not unlike that of other organizations of similar size and composition. One of the first tasks taken on by the women who gathered at the initial group meetings was to design a constitution and bylaws.49 Organizational offices were held at the national and the local levels: President, Vice President, Recording and Corresponding Secretaries, Treasurer, Publications Director, and Librarian are the titles which were listed in the front of each edition of *The Ladder*. There is no record in *The Ladder* of elections taking place, but there were monthly busi-

48 Taped interview with Barbara Grier, June 27, 1983.

49 Although limited information concerning organizational structure (or surviving organizational papers) is available, it may be noted that such documents were created for DOB during its first year. See Martin and Lyon, *Lesbian/Woman*, p. 210.
ness meetings that were open to DOB members only, and it is very likely that voting for officers occurred at these closed-door conferences. Most of the changes which did occur in officer listings appeared in the month of October, so this may reflect the schedule of elections. Likewise, there is no mention of the process followed for appointing staff members to the crew of The Ladder.

The DOB initially shared office space and a phone number with the Mattachine Society. During April of 1958, the DOB moved out on its own and maintained an independent office space throughout the tenure of the organization.\textsuperscript{50}

With the Mattachine Society decision to dissolve the organizational ties between its Chapters in various U.S. cities in April of 1961, the Daughters was left as the only national Homophile organization. Although The Ladder provides little information on structure, it is clear that a Governing Board of Directors for DOB made such decisions as the granting of Chapter status to those groups that made application.\textsuperscript{51}

As was mentioned earlier, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon were the force that got the Daughters of Bilitis off the ground, and it was through their dedication that the young

\textsuperscript{50} See Martin and Lyon, \textit{Lesbian/Woman}, p. 223.

organization was able to survive. Their collective influence and authority helped in large part to determine the goals and strategies of the DOB. They had a strong commitment to the social component of the organization and a keen sense of what it took to get the most out of the Daughters' limited membership.

In describing the early years they have said:

We coddled, nursed and practically hand-fed every woman who expressed the least interest. We had them over for dinner, offered them rides to and from the meetings—some even moved in on us for days and weeks at a time.52

Del Martin was an outspoken woman who clearly articulated her beliefs and her steadfast support for the DOB philosophy whether she was writing a year-end summary as the organization's President, presenting a controversial position in a Ladder editorial column, or stanchly defending the need for a separate woman-only organization in the Homophile movement. No single excerpt could completely illustrate the many hats worn by Del Martin, but the following statement made in 1959 at the Mattachine Convention held in Denver, Colorado, is illustrative:

But at every one of these conventions I attend, year after year, I find I must defend the Daughters of Bilitis as a separate and distinct women's organization. First of all, what do you men know about Lesbians? In all of your programs and your "Review" you speak of the male Homosexual and follow this with—oh, yes, and

52 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 214.
incidentally there are some female Homosexuals too and because they are Homosexual this should apply to them as well. ONE has done little better. For years they have relegated the Lesbian interest to the column called "Feminine Viewpoint." So it would appear to me that quite obviously neither organization has recognized the fact that Lesbians are WOMEN and that this 20th century is the era of emancipation of women. Lesbians are not satisfied to be auxiliary members or second class Homosexuals. So if you people do wish to put DOB out of business, you are going to have to learn something about the Lesbian, and today I'd like to give you your first lesson.53

Following her statement, Del Martin presented the results of the DOB's first research project. The feminist tone of this statement may appear somewhat surprising given the date of its presentation, but as will be discussed in the conclusion of this thesis, there was a strong feminist awareness reflected in the writings of numerous contributors to The Ladder.

Phyllis Lyon was The Ladder's first editor. Both Lyon and Martin were journalism majors in college, and Lyon used her skills to pilot the young publication, which she watched grow and steadily improve in quality and form. In the second edition of The Ladder, November 1956, an article entitled "Your Name is Safe", which attempted to calm the fears of some receiving the newsletter that its mailing list might fall into the "wrong" hands, was written by editor "Ann Ferguson", a pseudonym for Lyon. Lyon three

months later published an obituary which declared that Ann Ferguson was dead. After this time she did not use a pseudonym, but this episode illustrates the fear of DOB members.

Barbara Grier's association with the Daughters began when she obtained her first copy of The Ladder in April 1957.54 A longtime resident of the Kansas City area, Grier was representative of the hundreds of women who experienced the Daughters of Bilitis vicarously through the mail. A steadfast and voluminous contributor to the pages of The Ladder, her annotated bibliography offerings, found in "Lesbian", expanded the opportunities of readers searching for printed materials on the Lesbian theme. Under the pseudonym Gene Damon, Barbara Grier, often in collaboration with Lee Stuart, published a series of short research papers on Lesbians who made significant literary contributions.55 These articles were important because they allowed the magazine's readership to identify and make connections with the historical figures whose lives were presented. Lesbians badly needed heroes.

54 Taped interview with Barbara Grier, June 27, 1983.
55 Including Renee Viven (May 1959), Colette (December 1961), and Radclyffe Hall (December 1958).
Grier also wrote lengthy book reviews of the major works that were published each year on issues pertinent to the Homophile. Through the use of multiple pseudonyms, she sometimes made several contributions to a single edition of the magazine.56

For all three of these women, their contributions to the betterment of Lesbian existence did not end with their work with the DOB and *The Ladder* but stretched on as life-time commitments to improving the personal and political life chances of the next generation of their Lesbian sisters.57

**Membership**

Membership figures for the DOB are largely unavailable.58 There is little question that the organization failed to amass a large following; it began with eight members and at the end of the first year had only fifteen members.59 Figures reported for 1957 show 45 members and 400 *Ladder* sub-

56 Taped interview with Barbara Grier, June 27, 1983.

57 Barbara Grier is a mainstay in the Lesbian-feminist publishing industry and is associated with Naiad Press. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon currently serve as government officials. Lyon is chairperson of San Francisco's Human Rights Commission and Martin serves on the California State Commission on Crime Control and Violence Prevention. Martin has authored *Battered Wives* and has been active in the movement against family violence. Lyon is also co-director of the National Sex Forum.

58 See D'Emilio *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, for a figure of 110 members in 1960, p. 115.

scribes; by October 1958, the number of DOB members had risen to seventy.60

Information that is available on DOB members comes from an analysis published in the September 1959 Ladder reporting on the first project of the DOB's Research Committee. Because of sampling constraints, the project—a sociological survey of Lesbians—provides very little information about Lesbians in general, but it is an excellent profile of The Ladder's readers.61 The survey found the women to be primarily white, middle-class, with a higher than average educational level, with a median age of thirty-two; these women were predominantly employed in the professions and clerical occupations and overwhelmingly self-reported as being exclusively homosexual in orientation.62

Not all of The Ladder's readers, however, were white. Audre Lorde, a black Lesbian-feminist poet and author, in her autobiographical work Zami: A New Spelling of My Name, noted the isolation often associated with her life in New York City in the 1950's:


61 Five hundred questionnaires were mailed out to readers and 157 of those responding were included in the final report.

Meeting other lesbians was very difficult except for the bars which I did not go to because I did not drink. One read The Ladder and the Daughters of Bilitis newsletter and wondered where all the other gay-girls were.63

Lorraine Hansberry, a black feminist playwright, was an early NYDOB member and an important contributor of feminist thought to The Ladder. Providing a sophisticated and keen analysis, Hansberry in the late 1950's engaged other Ladder readers in an ongoing dialogue through a series of essays printed in the "Reader's Respond" section.

The DOB was an inclusive organization in the sense that membership was open to all women, Lesbian, bisexual and heterosexual, who were over the age of twenty-one and paid their organizational dues. Because of the stigma attached to Lesbianism, many women who may have wanted to join DOB were frightened away by their perceptions of the possible consequences.64 The Daughters' leadership pledged to keep the mailing list of the newsletter and organization confidential, and during the crisis generated by a scandal concerning homosexuality in 1959, the mailing lists were hid-


64 There was a rare happy ending to the story of one DOB member who was "found out" by her employer when a copy of The Ladder with her artwork on the cover was left on her supervisors' desk. After admitting the artwork was hers, she was fired. Later she was reinstated with the assistance of her APL-CIO union representatives. The Ladder, Vol. 5, No. 7, (April 1961), p. 23.
Armand Mauss (1975) suggests that a membership ring model may be used to illustrate the membership pattern found in social movements such as the Daughters of Bilitis. (See the diagram below.)

Region One includes a very small outer ring of supportive members of the general public who believed in and supported the ideology of the DOB. This included the few professionals (clergy, lawyers, psychologists, sociologists and others) who were speaking out against public anti-gay sentiment.

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59 Martin and Lyon Lesbian/Woman, p. 223. Mayoral candidate Holden's attempt to discredit San Francisco's mayor Christopher by exposing the existence of Homophile organizations in San Francisco backfired and eventually Holden was resounding defeated. For further details of the scandal see The Ladder, Vol. 4, Nos. 2/3, (November and December), 1959, p. 4, 23.
Region two totalled less than 500 readers and subscribers to *The Ladder*, active and associate DOB members, including those individuals in Chapters outside of San Francisco and those women isolated in areas without DOB Chapters.

Region three was the very small inner circle of the organization, including national and Chapter officers and *The Ladder's* editorial, reporting and corresponding staff. Very active, they were responsible for the programming of organizational activities and the monthly production of *The Ladder*.

Those professional individuals belonging to region one will be discussed more thoroughly later in this work. This group of experts must be seen as mavericks within their own disciplines or areas of expertise, because professional standards of the day held Homosexuality to be a taboo topic. 66

Often individuals included in Region Two only associated with DOB for a relatively short period of time. Sten Russell, a reporter for *The Ladder* and an active member of

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LADOB, offered the following analysis of the DOB's membership pattern:

The Daughters functioned as a "revolving door" for women in need. They joined the group, put their lives in order, acquired pride and self-respect, and then "graduated."*67

Because DOB was oriented towards improving a woman's self-image and assisting with her efforts to adjust to becoming a type of Lesbian who could be successful as a part of straight society, it was not uncommon for women to leave DOB once they were feeling better about themselves. DOB leaders presented themselves as role models. New women would be introduced into the friendship networks of established DOB members, which increased the Lesbian connections being made through DOB. Quite possibly, an initiate would find a lover, and the new couple would often drift out of involvement with the DOB. Ironically, a personal success, as marked by the start of a new love relationship, might eventually mean the loss of that individual to the organization.

Only a limited amount of information is available about the intricacies of the DOB inner circle. The story of Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon's involvement is best known, and

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*67 This discussion comes from D'Emilio's Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 106. For a similar analysis see also "The Dare of the Future: An Appraisal of the Homophile Movement" in The Ladder, Vol. 6, No. 8, (May 1962), p. 10.
Barbara Grier's association with Naiad Press has kept her a visible personality in Lesbian life in the 1980's. But, unfortunately, many of those involved in the early days of female Homophile activities have thus far been lost in historical anonymity.

Recruitment

DOB's possibilities for recruitment were very limited. Referrals to the organization came largely through the male Homophile movement organizations and the various sympathetic professionals. In recruiting new members, the Daughters employed utilitarian strategies rather than moral appeals or coercion-based strategies (Perry and Pugh:1978:260). The DOB was presented to new members as a friendly and safe place where a woman could meet others who understood her problems and were sympathetic to her needs. By promoting an atmosphere where Lesbians could feel good about themselves, the DOB created an alternative social option for gay women in a period in which private parties and gay bars dominated the social scene.

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As an attempt to gain recognition, DOB members sent copies of the original Ladder to 200 psychologists, women attorneys, psychiatrists, and other professionals listed in the San Francisco telephone directory. Reported in The Ladder, Vol. 2, No. 1, (October 1957), p.4.

An additional strategy involved using The Ladder as a tool for spurring interest in DOB.

Members and friends of the Daughters are ... asked to supply us with more names and addresses in order that sample issues of The Ladder may be sent to introduce the publication and organization. Since it is not feasible to advertise openly, there is no other way in which to increase The Ladder circulation.\(^70\)

**DOB Chapters**

The Daughters of Bilitis was founded in San Francisco, California, but by 1958, provisional Chapter status had been granted to groups in New York and Rhode Island.\(^71\) Los Angeles soon joined the ranks of new DOB Chapters. Helen Sanders, a past SFDOB president, and Sten Russell, a member of the editorial board at ONE, Inc. and a Ladder reporter, were the mainstays of the LADOB.

New Jersey and Chicago Chapters also received mention, but little evidence past the first recognition has been recorded and preserved.\(^72\) In order to be considered by the

\(^{70}\) The Ladder, Vol. 2, No. 1, (October 1957), p. 4-5. This plea was repeated in Vol. 4, No. 1 (October 1959), p. 22.

\(^{71}\) The Ladder, Vol. 3, No. 2 (November 1958), p. 8. Barbara Gittings, later to be a Ladder editor, was the first president of NYDOB. The Rhode Island DOB never appeared to get past the announcement of their West Warwick, RI post office box.

\(^{72}\) The Ladder, Vol. 5, No. 7 (April 1961), p. 20. New Jersey was granted provisional Chapter status and was never heard from again. See D'Emilio Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 115, for a report on the Chicago Chapter of DOB in the 1950's. Also, taped interview with Barba-
DOB's Governing Board of Directors for provisional Chapter status, a new group had to have at least five active DOB members. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin played a direct role in establishing many of the new Chapters. They would use their vacation time to travel to the site of a new Chapter to meet with interested individuals and to help with organization.

Chapters played an important part in carrying out the philosophical goals of the DOB. Jaye Bell, National DOB President, spoke on the role of the Chapters in her Presidential Message of October 1961:

We do not feel we could be making the organizational strides we are without the ever-common goal consciousness and work of the Chapters.

Bell went on to list the benefits of introducing new Chapters into DOB. She mentioned the influx of new ideas, personalities and energy, and stressed the significance of increasing the opportunities to come into personal contact with "more Homosexuals."

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Ra Grier includes mention of the Chicago Chapter.


74 See Lyon and Martin's description of their efforts in Lesbian/Woman, p. 218-219.


Following the reorganization of the Mattachine Society, DOB was the only Homophile group to retain a national scope. DOB Chapters took turns hosting the bi-annual DOB conventions, and most published their own newsletters to publicize the upcoming events they sponsored. Although the organization remained small, the message it was sending to Lesbians was beginning to spread across the U.S., and another victory in the Homophile struggle against invisibility and silence was being won.77

**Cultural Life and Activities**

As a social movement organization, the Daughters of Bilitis served to expand Lesbian culture. The activities sponsored by DOB and the dialogue that originated at these events had not been a part of organized Lesbian culture prior to the founding of the DOB. Breaking the societally imposed silence around the topic of Homosexuality and providing an opportunity for individual Lesbians to make connections with other Lesbians outside of their own personal worlds were two of the major contributions made by the DOB.

Its contribution to Lesbian cultural life was a collective creation of the women who came together in DOB. The mere awareness that an organization like the Daughters

77 Letters published in the "Reader's Respond" section of "The Ladder" came from all over the United States and numerous foreign countries.
actually existed must have influenced the way some Lesbians thought of themselves. For those women who read *The Ladder* or took part in DOB events, the effect would have been more direct. The following two statements speak to the importance of *The Ladder* to its readers:

> Congratulations!! However silent or distant we may be there are many good friends of yours back here in the East. Although I wish my spine, backbone and courage could be as great as yours -- it isn't. Anonymous, Brunswick, Ohio

Another reader responded, saying:

> With the last two copies of the publication I am more convinced than ever of the depth and sincerity and -- dignity -- you people are determined to pursue your work with. I cannot tell you how encouraging it is. From where you are getting the energy and courage is something of a mystery to me, but please know it begins to inspire similar qualities in those who read *The Ladder*. (Emphasis in original) L.N., New York

Some Lesbians were frightened, fearing backlash and exposure; others privately applauded the efforts of the DOB, but would never actively support the Homophile movement. A few thought DOB was moving in the right direction, but criticized it for not going far enough.

A third example again illustrates the importance of *The Ladder* for some of its readers:

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I, like most others, live two lives, one for the benefit of the public and the other for myself. The majority of the so-called "normals" will not accept us on any basis and so we live in a sort of make-believe world, a secret, exciting world, but a bit frightening too. When The Ladder comes to my door once a month I live in that secret world for 20 or 25 minutes while I read each and every word and marvel at the work that is being done to alleviate the pain of false lives that most of us endure just for the sake of not being called queer.

Information is available detailing the structures created by the DOB, but an assessment of DOB's social psychological influence has not been attempted. An examination of that structure will none the less prove to be insight producing.

Experts

DOB sponsored events may be categorized as having been either social, educational, or organizational. Discussion groups, featuring invited professionals who would present a scholarly report on an issue of interest to Homophiles, were examples of "educational" opportunities sponsored by a local DOB Chapter. Experts from various fields offered their services. Considerable debate has arisen in contemporary scholarly circles concerning the wisdom of opening DOB functions and the pages of The Ladder to unsup-

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81 Little information is available concerning the organizational meetings of the DOB because they were not reported in the pages of The Ladder.
portive scholars. In an interview with Gay historian Jonathan Katz, Barbara Gittings (founder of NY DOB) responded to this debate:

Katz: In reviewing The Ladder from the early sixties I was struck by the fact you even invited "experts" to speak that totally put down Gays.

Gittings: At first we were so grateful just to have people—anybody—pay attention to us, that we listened to and accepted everything they said, no matter how bad it was. That is how different the consciousness at the time was. But, I must emphasize, it was essential for us to go through this before we could arrive at what we now consider our much more sensible attitudes. You don't just spring full blown into an advanced consciousness.82

Gittings' suggestion that the attention paid to DOB by the "experts" was an important source of legitimatization is an important one. Also, the dialogue begun in these sessions served an additional silence breaking function. Doors to the academic community that were opened in later years would lead to major changes which would affect the emphasis and approach toward research on gay and Lesbian topics among the disciplines themselves. Homophile leaders saw the professionals they courted as the shapers of social policy. Lesbians and gay men knew that the Church, the Law, and the theories of the psychologists and psychiatrists served to shape and reinforce the negative stereotypes of Lesbians which they sought to change. The interest in "experts" must be viewed as consistent with the goal

82 See Katz, Gay American History, p. 641.
of education. DOB leaders took advantage of the discussion meetings to familiarize "experts" with Homophile ideology.

There were costs involved for the experts who spoke at DOB functions. Members of the clergy were often unable, or unwilling, to identify themselves with their denomination."3 Evelyn Hooker, one of the best-known of the scholars associated with the Homophile movement, said:

academic researchers are fearful of working in this area because they can't afford the risk of becoming labeled."4

Some of the research reported on in the early years of The Ladder offered negative evaluations of Lesbian life. No single scholar stirred more reader response than did Dr. Ralph Banay, psychiatrist and Director of the Youth Institute. Speaking at a forum sponsored by the Manhattan College Institute for Forensic Research and the Metropolitan Law Enforcement Conference in Riverdale, NY, in December of 1958, Banay "warned that homosexuality often leads to more violent and serious crimes including homicide." The Ladder (January 1961) article discussing Banay's comments went on to report:

He stressed the "urgency and necessity" of establishing clinics where homosexuals can be treated individually or in groups and said therapy should be made compulsory."5

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"3 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 228-229.

Numerous outraged Ladder readers wrote in criticism of Banay and his recommendations.\textsuperscript{86}

Blanche Baker, a psychiatrist and longtime friend and associate of the Daughters, is an example of a supportive professional who devoted her time and energy to the DOB. Following the death of Dr. Baker, a memorial scholarship fund was established as a tribute to her dedication.\textsuperscript{87} Dr. Baker consistently spoke in favor of self-acceptance for Lesbians. She conducted seminars and attended many of the conventions sponsored by Homophile organizations.

Experts played an important role in the Homophile effort, but for the DOB, self-help was the key issue. The cornerstone of the self-help efforts of the Daughters is to be found in the monthly informal "Gah 'n Java" sessions held by local Chapters.


\textsuperscript{86} See the Reader's Respond sections, February and March 1959, for numerous letters protesting Dr. Banay's statement.

"Gab 'n Java" sessions were woman-only events sponsored by DOB Chapters which created a safe space for Lesbians to come together and discuss the problems they faced and ways to manage them. Solutions to problems could be collectively generated. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon recall:

During these meetings we discussed all the problems we faced as Lesbians, how we managed them in our personal lives, and how we could deal with the public both individually and as a group."88

The "Gab 'n Java" gatherings were listed in the Calendar of Events as "featuring topics pertinent to the everyday life of the Lesbian."89 Del Martin, in an explanation of the "Gab 'n Java bull sessions", stated that they arose from a need for "more intimate, let your hair down" type discussion.90 Homophile women were meeting to discuss their common problems in a self-defined woman-only space almost ten years before consciousness-raising, a key strategy of the feminist movement of the late 1960's and 1970's, became fashionable. Meredith Grey, a NYDOB President, commented on the substance of "Gab 'n Java" sessions:

88 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 212.
90 The Ladder, Vol. 2, No. 1, (October 1957), p. 5. The parallel between the "Gab 'n Java" sessions and the consciousness-raising groups that were popularized in the late 1960's and early 70's by the Women's Liberation Movement described by anthropologist Joan Cassell (1977) is significant. See Cassell A Group Called Women New York: David McKay Co. Inc., p. 34-55.
The best attended activities were gab 'n java (talk and coffee) sessions, uninhibited in-group discussions of problems, and the perennial favorite topics selected by participants give a fair idea of the type of problem the average young lesbian considered important.

1. Butch and Femme (role playing, it's use and abuse)

2. Shall I tell them I'm gay? (Parents, friends, associates)

3. Children in a gay family (including many childless gay girls who wanted to adopt children) On the whole, the questions were matters of private concern.91

Social Events

Aside from the political and educational work being done by the Daughters of Bilitis, there was an entire array of social events sponsored by the organization. In the effort to create an alternative to bar life and meet the social needs of its members, the DOB hosted, to name only a few, holiday parties, dances, bowling events, spaghetti dinners, and picnics. A month did not pass without some social opportunity being offered.

Relationship with the Male Homophile Movement

Male-dominated Homophile activity pre-dated the efforts of the Daughters of Bilitis, and the relationship between DOB and the male-dominated organization will be explored in this section. The Mattachine Society was founded in Los

Angeles in 1951 by leftist Henry Ray. Increasing visibility for Mattachine brought with it conflict, and by the time the DOB discovered the group, it had settled into the more conservative posture it would maintain for the duration of its existence. ONE, Inc., also Los Angeles based, was formed in 1953 as a forum in which gay men and lesbians could present their views to the public and to one another.

These organizations were not exclusively male, and each at some point in their history had women in leadership roles. Ann Carll Reid and Sten Russell were members of ONE's editorial board. Woman-led discussion groups were a part of the early Mattachine secret society structure, and there were female members of the Mattachine's leadership known as the fifth order. Nevertheless, both organizations willingly admitted their failure to attract sig-

92 See D'Emilio for a more complete history of the early years of Mattachine in Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 58-74.

93 See D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 72-73.


95 See D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 63-69.
significant numbers of female members and were pleased to welcome the Daughters into the movement. Relations between the male-oriented Homophile organizations and the DOB ranged from periods of wholehearted cooperation to outright confrontation.

Shortly after DOB was founded, its members became aware of the existence of Mattachine. In Del Martin's presidential statement, published on The Ladder's first anniversary, she noted:

> While the Daughters of Bilitis is a separate and distinct organization with its own polices and goals, the "growing pains" would have been a great deal more excruciating had it not been for the full cooperation and support of the Mattachine Society and ONE, Inc.

DOB and Mattachine shared office space and a telephone number during the first few years of the DOB's existence. The first edition of The Ladder was run off on the Mattachine mimeograph equipment, and the organizations regularly co-sponsored speakers and events. DOB representatives were most often included in the programs of Mattachine conventions and at the ONE Annual Midwinter Institutes.

Although DOB thanked the Mattachine Society and ONE at numerous points for their helpful advice and assistance with DOB activities and facilities, the organization did

96 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 219.
not begin in any way as an auxiliary to or copy of the male-dominated organizations. In her Presidential Message of 1961, Jaye Bell reflected on the DOB's position in the larger Homophile effort:

We feel that much of our progress in the movement has necessarily filled the gap which ONE and Mattachine do not particularly cover in their work, namely that of: 1, paying particular attention to the individual Homosexual; 2, instigating our own research on the Homosexual; and 3, offering the most complete reportorial coverage of the Homophile movement itself. ⁹⁸

Eventual confrontation between DOB and the male-dominated Homophile organizations was inevitable because of the differing agendas held by each. Gay male priorities and Lesbian priorities were not always similar. Del Martin, in a retrospective accounting of the relationship among the Mattachine Society, ONE, and the DOB recalled:

But the DOB's always had another "hidden agenda" in mind: to find out what the male-oriented groups were up to. This is important because the DOB felt a responsibility to temper the more rash or "far out" tactics of the male organizations. ⁹⁹

The DOB's commitment to "tempering" the actions of male Homophiles was never more clearly illustrated than during the "Homosexual Bill of Rights" controversy of 1961. That year's ONE Midwinter Institute was dedicated to the produc-

⁹⁸ See The Ladder, Vol. 6, No. 1, (October 1961), p. 4. DOB's role as the reporter of Homophile movement activities appears to be a new goal added to the Daughters social action agenda.

⁹⁹ See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 220.
tion of such a "Bill of Rights." The DOB, both as an organization and through the actions of individuals who attended the Institute, worked to derail the proposal on the grounds that it implied an inappropriately "demanding attitude toward society." In the months that followed the Institute, ONE and the DOB traded "official statements" on the issue.

Jaye Bell, at the time DOB national President, used the "Feminine Viewpoint" section of ONE: A Magazine officially to disassociate the DOB from the "Homosexual Bill of Rights." A special "Masculine Viewpoint" column with a rebuttal presented by ONE Institute director W. Dorr Legg suggested that the DOB's actions of protest were in "bad taste" and that perhaps Lesbians' "favored social and legal status" as women had put them "but one step ahead of heterosexuals in their comprehension" of the problems facing Homosexual men. The rift created by this incident had long lasting negative effects on the relationship between ONE, Inc. and the Daughters.

The differences in male and female Homophile styles and strategies mirror the gender role differences of the late 1950's and early 1960's. DOB philosophy seemed consistent

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100 See "How Far Can We Go?" an editorial by Del Martin in The Ladder, Vol. 5, No. 4, (January 1961), p. 4-5.

with feminine styles and expectations presented to women and are in contrast to the often active and aggressive strategies of the male Homophiles. These differences are illustrated through the following analysis offered in The Ladder:

To date DOB has been more conservative than any of the other organizations, more introspective and less extroverted, because its members believe that the Homosexual can be integrated into society through understanding—by understanding self, by understanding society, by offering and giving understanding. It is felt that much more can be accomplished for the common good of the Homosexual and society in this manner than by the beating of drums— and the gongs. It is felt that discussion and the exchange of ideas will do more to change the lot of the Homosexual than ranting and raving. (Emphasis in original.)

An analysis of relations among the organizations that formed the Homophile movement that takes into account the consequences of gender roles is a more informed critique. It is necessary to recognize the limitations of the common bonds between gay men and Lesbians.

**SUMMARY**

The Daughters of Bilitis, the first Lesbian social movement organization in the U.S., dared to challenge the repressive and conformist strictures of an American society obsessed with communist subversion, the escape to suburbia, and James Dean. DOB faced the condemnation of society's most powerful social institutions: religion, medicine and the

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law. These pioneers for social change confronted and challenged their own doubts and fears, as well as those of an intensely homophobic society. The efforts of this woman-only Homophile group facilitated a now three decade old struggle for self-acceptance, recognition, and civil rights and freedom for a self-defining Lesbian minority.

The DOB stressed and supported the notion of "integrating" Lesbians into the larger society. The goals and strategies of the organization reflect an ideological commitment to improving the popular image of Lesbianism through education, while offering strong support, role models, and friendship for individual women. Education, self-help and law reform were the most clearly articulated goals of the organization in this time period. Multiple strategies were used by the DOB in their efforts to accomplish the outlined goals: the publication of the organization's magazine *The Ladder*, the sponsorship of "expert" led discussion meetings and female Homophile conventions, participation in research efforts, letter writing and political maneuvering aimed at influencing local officials, the establishment of social opportunities outside of the gay bar setting, and the creation of the "Gab 'n Java" sessions where Lesbians could come together to share and discuss their common circumstance.
With a strong and determined leadership, the DOB, although never capable of commanding a mass based membership, broke important ground and established precedents for Lesbian attempts at social change and political agitation. Largely, but not exclusively, a movement of middle-class white women, the DOB, with Chapters throughout the United States, opened channels of communication and stirred the consciousness of untold numbers of Lesbians. The creation and subsequent maintainence of a new form of politically aware Lesbian culture is the greatest gift given by the early members of DOB to the generation of Lesbian activists that would follow.

In order to understand the activities of the Daughters of Bilitis in sociological terms, it is most helpful to examine the socio-historical pre-conditions out of which the organization emerged from a social movement prospective. The value-added model presented by Neil J. Smelser (1963) provides a framework for understanding the social factors that gave rise to the DOB in its historical context. The following chapter uses Smelser's model to examine the conditions associated with the development of the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis and to analyze how these factors shaped the kind of Lesbian movement that emerged in this period.
Chapter III

ANALYSIS OF THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION THE DAUGHTERS OF BILIXIS

The sociological understanding of social movements developed out of a collective behavior tradition dominated by psychological and/or social psychological theories of unconventional behavior. During the past two decades, social structural theories and explanations have come to dominate the sociological study of collective behavior. The work of Neil J. Smelser has contributed greatly to an increasingly sophisticated analysis of social movement activity. Smelser's classic book, Theory of Collective Behavior (1963), outlined his general social structural theory of social movement development. This theory generates a "value-added" model of social movement activity and is an attempt to provide a broad framework with which to analyze and explain various types of unconventional organized social change.

This chapter will use Smelser's general social structural theory of social movement development as a theoretical framework for analyzing the conditions that led to the
emergence of the female Homophile movement from 1955 to 1963. The "master proposition" of Smelser's (1963:385) theory states:

People under strain mobilize to reconstitute the social order in the name of a generalized belief.

Using Smelser's "master proposition" as a guide, an analysis of the social, historical, and political context out of which the Daughters of Bilitis emerged will follow. The analysis will apply each of Smelser's conditions—structural conduciveness, structural strain, growth and spread of generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization of participants for action, and the ineffective operation of social control—as a content-free framework with which to examine the factors that gave rise to the female Homophile movement in the period from 1955 to 1963. Smelser's value-added model suggests each of that the above named conditions is a necessary, but not sufficient, indicator for social movement activity, and that they should be viewed as cumulative in effect. This provision will also be considered in this analysis.

This chapter will conclude with an assessment of Smelser's general theory in terms of its usefulness in explaining the rise and success of the initial stage of the Daughters of Bilitis and of the social movement it represents.
NORM-ORIENTED SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIVITY

The Homophile movement was a norm-oriented social movement. Smelser defines norm-oriented movements as those that "attempt to restore, protect, modify, or create norms in the name of a generalized belief." The ideological underpinning of the Homophile movement supported agitation for normative change at both the attitudinal and institutional levels. The Daughters' educational and research goals, which were directed at both a Homophile and a larger societal audience, identified the need for "an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices" held about male homosexuals and Lesbians.\footnote{103} DOB's efforts to modify normative expectations about Lesbians not only affected societal perceptions, but simultaneously made positive self-evaluation easier for those women associated with the organization, and thus resulted in the modification of ingroup norms.

DOB advocated change at the institutional level by recommending a review of the penal code. Support for the creation of new normative standards that would more fairly police the homosexual community is illustrated by the final item in the DOB's "Statement of Purpose", which advocated:

Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through

\footnote{103 The Ladder, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 4.}
due process of law in the state legislatures.  

In sum, the Daughters of Bilitis was a norm-oriented social movement organization whose quest was a reformist one. By advocating change in social and institutional norms, the DOB would, in Smelser's (1963:275) terms, be defined as a newly organized non-party affiliated group formally constituted for the specific purpose of promoting social change, defined by its efforts to influence the relationship between Lesbians and the larger society.

**Structural Conductiveness**

For Smelser (1963:384), structural conduciveness "refers to the degree to which any structure permits a given type of collective behavior." Consequently, an evaluation of the permissiveness of the structure of a society in terms of its ability to generate social movement activity becomes a central consideration when applying Smelser's framework to a given social movement.

Smelser identifies the structural conduciveness of a society, as illustrated by its ability to accommodate change, as a major indicator of the type of collective behavior to be expected in that society. The political structure of the United States, because of its democratic nature, as Smelser (1963:200) points out, has been general-

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ly tolerant of reformist or less fundamental efforts
directed towards social change. The Daughters of Bilitis
was clearly a social movement organization which focused on
attempts to challenge and change social norms, as the pre-
vious chapter's discussion of the DOB's "Statement of Pur-
pose" has already demonstrated.

Smelser's theory asserts that the type of structural
differentiation found in a society can be used as an indi-
cator of permissiveness towards social change in that soci-
ety. A highly differentiated society is one in which the
major institutions function independently of one another
and are not tightly connected to the value system of their
society (Wood and Jackson: 1982:46).

Smelser (1963:280 see also Gamson:1975) evaluates the
institutional structure of the U.S. and finds it to be
highly differentiated. Thus, norm-oriented social move-
ments are acceptable in the United States because they con-
front specific institutions within society, rather than
opposing society as a whole. The Daughters of Bilitis, by
explicitly supporting a minority group re-definition of the
social status given to female homosexuals, challenged three
major societal institutions which had previously controlled
and defined Lesbianism: religion, the criminal justice
system, and the medical establishment.
Judeo-Christian theology had declared the homosexual a sinner; according to the criminal justice system, participation in homosexual acts was a crime against the state; and the prevailing medical orthodoxy offered an illness model which defined homosexuality as unhealthy sexual behavior. The religious, criminal justice and medical establishments of the U.S. in the 1950's were powerful opponents of this small band of Lesbian pioneers, but as these Lesbians' collective self-image, their individual self-images, and their organization grew, they came to challenge substantially the popular negative stereotype of the female sexual deviant.

In Smelser's terms (1963:284-285), structural conduciveness is present in a society when avenues for agitation which could be utilized to affect normative social arrangements are open. An analysis of the social, historical, and political context of the period before and during the formation of DOB is crucial to making a determination concerning the ability of American society to accept the Daughters and the activities it supported. It must be noted that the structural strain that appears as a precipitant for collective action by the female Homophile organization the Daughters of Bilitis must also be recognized as having contributed as well, to the emergence of general Homophile efforts.
In the U.S., if gay men and lesbians were to organize successfully in support of their own rights, two criteria needed to be met. "Homo sexual" and "Lesbian" had to become socially recognizable categories, and individuals within those socially defined categories needed to develop an ideology that justified the establishment of a collective consciousness.

Sexual identity is a social construction (Katz: 1983: 137-174; Altman: 1983; Darsey: 1981: 232), and in the period under examination, the dichotomous notions of "hetero" and "homo" sexuality were created and expanded. Debate in the pages of American medical journals in the period 1880 to 1920 has been identified, by historian Jonathan Katz, as the context out of which the concepts "homo sexual" and "heterosexual" were constructed. The years 1920 to 1950, directly preceding the formation of the Homophile movement in the U.S., constitute the period when these notions, created by physicians and early sexologists, moved out of the confines of the medical world and into public awareness.

The socially-constructed redefinition of sexuality and sexual identity emerging in the U.S. during the seventy years from 1880 to 1950 must be viewed against the backdrop of the twin processes of urbanization and industrialization
(see D’Emilio:1983:11). Work opportunities in rapidly growing American cities permitted increasing numbers of young adults the occasion to maintain themselves as autonomous individuals, free from the traditional constraints of rural life and the extended family (see Cory:1964:156; Martin and Lyon:1983:46 for further discussion of the importance of emerging urban space for Lesbians).

Both gay and Lesbian subcultures developed during this period. For Lesbians, there is evidence that social class was an important determinant influencing the parameters of a woman’s Lesbian identity. Working-class Lesbians created a sub-culture in the gay bar world. A larger gay male sub-culture has also been identified. Medical and sex researchers were also becoming aware of this emerging community. Dr. Aaron J. Rosanoff, commenting in Manual of Psychiatry (1927), reported the existence of homosexual slang "suggesting a subculture with a fairly developed system of private communication."\(^{105}\)

Further illustration of the coalescing gay male community can be found in the earliest recorded organized efforts of homosexuals. Henry Gerber founded The Society for Human

\(^{105}\) See Jonathan Katz (1983), Gay/Lesbian Almanac. New York: Harper and Row, p. 438. See also p. 571-584, for Sex Variant by George Henry (1941) which included a lengthy glossary of homosexual slang; Cory (1951:120-128) for the significance of gay bars to emerging gay male subculture.
Rights, a gay male group, in Chicago in 1925. Members of this organization, which was chartered by the state of Illinois, were arrested and jailed for possession of the organization's paper, Friendship and Freedom.  

John Kelsey reports on "The Cleveland Bar Scene in the Forties," documenting the existence of gay bars "not only in San Francisco and New York, but in a city easily scoffed at or ignored by sophisticates on either coast." A different type of Lesbian life for middle-class women emerged, not out of a gay subcultural existence, but out of the Victorian "female world of love and ritual" (see Smith-Rosenberg:1975:1-29; Paderman:1981). Historians have begun to document the lives of elite women who were Lesbians. These women had access to class privilege, and the closed Lesbian friendship networks that they created must be contrasted with the world that would eventually come to dominate the public perception of Lesbianism being created by working-class Lesbians.  

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106 See Katz Gay/Lesbian Almanac, p. 418-421.


108 See the work being done by the Buffalo Women's Oral History Project, also Joan Nestle's "Butch-fem relationships: Sexual Courage in the 1950's," Heresies, Issue 12, p. 21-24. For further discussion of middle-class Lesbian life see: Judith Schwarz (1979), "'Yellow Clover': Katharine Lee Bates and Katharine Coman,"
The challenge created by the emergence of a collective presence of gays and lesbians in the U.S. is further marked by the response it generated from various social institutions. The federal government and the military formulated official policy to deal with homosexuals. (see Cory:1951; Williams and Weinberg:1971; D'Emilio:1983; Berube:1983a and 1983b; D'Emilio and Berube:1984). The media, which often reflects changes in social norms and expectations, introduced same-sex erotic behavior to the general public, first through literature and later in film portrayals and newspaper coverage. The importance and scope of these institutional responses to the emergence of gay culture will be discussed and analyzed later in this chapter.

109 Although prior to this period the military had no official policy, there are reported episodes in which the issue of homosexuality did surface in the armed services. See Katz's documentation of the July 20, 1921 scandal at Naval Training Station in Newport, RI. Then acting secretary of the Navy, Franklin D. Roosevelt, acted to stop military police vice squad entrapment of personnel. Gay/Lesbian Almanac, p. 398-399.

110 See Katz Gay/Lesbian Almanac, p. 462-463, for a discussion of April 1, 1930 Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association's decision to include in their regulations the following clause: "sex perversion or any inference of it is forbidden on screen". The reversal of this decision was reported in The Ladder, Vol. 6, No. 2, (November 1961), p. 11.
American society in the 1950's, then, was structurally conducive to the emergence of a Homophile movement. The general conduciveness of American society towards all forms of norm-oriented social movement activity is relevant here, but even more important is the special set of conditions which came together to encourage the emergence, initially, of the socially-constructed categories of "homosexual" and "Lesbian", and, secondly, the appearance of gays and Lesbians as a collectivity.

**STRUCTURAL STRAIN**

Structural strain refers to ambiguities, deprivations, tensions, conflicts, and discrepancies within a society (Wood; 1974; 144). Smelser further delineates the concept by observing:

> Sometimes the appearance of new knowledge initiates a movement to apply this knowledge in order to eradicate a condition previously taken for granted.

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This discussion of strain will document the changes occurring in American society, which were preconditions for agitation by an emerging homosexual minority. The cumulative effect of the discussion, debate and deliberation by the medical establishment, and later the public, created "new knowledge" concerning homosexuals that did, as Smelser's model predicts, lead to collective behavior activity.

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Additional tensions contributing to the general structural strain experienced in this historical period include post-war conservatism which manifested itself in an idealization of family life, a re-emphasis on traditional roles for women, and a social climate that rewarded personal conformity. White middle-class Americans, weary from the war years and the hard economic times of the great depression that preceded World War Two, moved, with the help of federal loan programs, in mass to suburbia where conformity reigned supreme (see Jezar:1982:187-196). Women were encouraged to return to the home following their experiences in the military or as war workers. Domesticity and motherhood were twin concepts that served to define and limit women's options and experience.

Another seemingly contradictory historical trend which augmented the rising level of strain was the steadily increasing rate of workforce participation of white middle-class women, occurring throughout the 20th century, that challenged gender norms and gave women a greater opportunity to make a "living wage" (Fox and Hesse-Biber:1984; Ryan:1983:281-282; Huber:1983; Rupp:1982:36). Ever-increasing numbers of wage-earning women were discovering opportunities for autonomous lives free from the constraints of the subordinate role of the traditional homemaker. The tension between the 1950's "feminine mystique"
and the realities of female labor force participation provide further illustration of the social strain experienced in this historical era.

Finally, McCarthyism, with its widespread attack on civil liberties and its hardline anti-communist furor, exemplifies the social character of the decade in which homophobic efforts emerged (see Baxandall et al:1976; Anderson:1981; Jezer:1982 and Ryan:1983). A product of the Cold War experience, U.S. frustration with the limited nature of the Korean Conflict, and the fear of renewed economic depression after the war, McCarthyism and the anti-homosexual and anti-Communist crusades it generated were repressive political tactics used to censor Hollywood stars, intellectuals, educators, unionists and others (see Jezer:1982:77-106).

Dissenting voices were silenced as a climate of fear and mistrust encouraged by the proceedings of the House Committee on Un-American Activities swept the country. Conformist norms ruled and civil liberties suffered as American society attempted to confront the perceived Communist menace.

An ever-increasing level of social tension is evident when the conservative forces which dominated post World War Two life are contrasted with the realities of the growing
urban gay subculture, its developing public identity, and, most important, the changing individual consciousness of male and female homosexuals. As gay and Lesbian individuals became aware of their own sexuality and the possibilities for expressing themselves which were available because of changing societal sexual scripts, their expectations concerning social life were altered accordingly. Lisa Ben (an anagram for "Lesbian") details her "coming out" in the Los Angeles gay scene during World War II:

Then finally I got my own room with kitchen privileges and from there I met some gay girls. They lived on the floor above me, and one day we were all sunbathing on the garage roof, and they got to talking and I got to listening and I thought, "Gee, I wonder if these are some of the girls that I would very dearly love to meet?"... So when I heard these girls talk, I started talking, and finally they asked me, "Do you like boys, or do you go out strictly with girls?" and I said, "If I had my rathers, I 'd go out strictly with girls," and they said, "Well, then you're like we are," and I said, "You mean you're like that?" It was like a Victorian melodrama! (Emphasis in original).\footnote{Katz Gay/Lesbian Almanac, p. 618-619. Lisa Ben is best known as the one-woman publisher, editor, typist and distributor for \textit{Vice Versa}, the first Lesbian periodical to appear in the United States, June 1947 to February 1948. Calling itself "the Gayest Magazine in America," each typewritten edition contained play, film and book reviews, poetry, short fiction, editorials, and a bibliography of novels of interest to Lesbians.}

A review of the historical period leading up to the emergence of the Homophile movement suggests that it is possible to recognize two contradictory social forces at work. First, the new social knowledge concerning the exis-
tence of a social category of individuals called "homosexuals" developed and moved into public consciousness. Second, a collective consciousness among homosexuals themselves began to emerge as gay subcultures developed in urban America.

Social control agencies responded to the challenge directed toward society by the emerging gay and Lesbian subcultures by using multiple strategies. These strategies, designed to harass gays and control the growth of gay life, included bar and bath house raids, entrapment, purges of government employees and military personnel, and even institutionalization in a sanitarium or psychiatric ward. Multiple sources of strain produced an alteration in social expectations and further contributed to the change in the social perception of homosexuals and Lesbians. Gay men and Lesbians living in this historical era were experiencing the ambiguities, conflicts and discrepancies characteristic of what Smelser defined as structural strain.

GROWTH AND SPREAD OF GENERALIZED BELIEFS

Social strain was produced by the emergence of homosexuality as both a social status and a collective entity. In response to the conditions of strain which male and female homosexuals were experiencing, it became necessary to develop an ideological perspective from which the source of
that strain could be identified and possible solutions to the problems created could be suggested. Such an ideological understanding was offered by the Homophile movement.

The philosophical stance taken by the Homophile movement as a whole during the period from the mid-1950's through approximately 1963 was guided by a liberal reform ideology which focused on a belief in the importance of the welfare and freedom of expression of the individual member of the Homophile community (see Marotta:1981:11; Licata:1980). The ideological system adhered to by Homophiles reflected their belief that discrimination, prejudice and stereotyping were the source of the problems of male homosexuals and Lesbians. Homophile organizations supported programs of public and in-group education, promoted social policy reform, and provided support and assistance for gay and Lesbian individuals. In this way, they defended their commitment to an integrationist strategy which centered on the conviction that hetero- and homosexual persons were basically similar and that equality of treatment for homosexuals, once achieved, would result in the elimination of anti-homosexual sentiment. Their ideology located the sources of strain in specific institutions within society. Religion, medical and social science, unfair laws and law enforcement practices, the military, and the federal government all represented targets for DOB actions and possible reform.
Smelser (1963:293) notes that the generalized norm-oriented beliefs may "build up" in various ways and "may develop gradually over decades in a literature." The ideological commitments made by the Homophile movement in the 1950's are a consequence of both changing definitions of sexuality and the strain experienced by male and female homosexuals.

Smelser has noted that it is important, if a social movement is to flourish, that there be growth and spread of the generalized beliefs generated by a movement's ideological identification of the source and possible solutions for the structural strain which defines a movement's purpose. Remedies suggested by a movement must, in Smelser's terms, grow and spread if social movement activity is to be sustained.

The Daughters of Bilitis, with its ideological commitment to the promotion of a socially-acceptable Lesbian identity and with the goals and strategies which that ideological stance generated, did produce a set of generalized beliefs that matured and spread with the movement. Specifically, the DOB emphasis on the individual Lesbian and her experience set an agenda for the organization which stressed integration into straight society, education of the public and the Homophile, Lesbian research, and law reform.
PRECIPITATING FACTORS

Precipitating factors serve to underline or create a condition of strain (Smelser: 1963: 295). For Smelser (1963: 294), precipitating factors "mark the sudden establishment or symbolization of one of the conditions of conduciveness or strain." Many of the events that are a part of the social and historical context from which the DOB emerged can be identified as precipitating factors.

Examples will illustrate how particular episodes served to sharpen the focus of strain and how these events facilitated a Homophile response. The ever increasing public awareness of homosexuality, as we have seen, contributed to the structural strain that affected male and female homosexuals living in this historical era. The precipitating factors which will be identified and discussed in this section include: the publication of specific texts, a more general trend associated with the publication of explicitly Lesbian fiction, the consequence of emerging media representations of homosexuality, and the role played by the opening up of military service to women.

No single set of scholarly studies has had such a profound effect on the American collective consciousness of sexuality as Alfred Kinsey's Sexual Behavior of the Human Male (1948) and Sexual Behavior of the Human Female (1953).
These works introduced sexuality into public discourse in a way that had never before occurred: as the most read sex books ever, each publication has sold nearly a quarter of a million copies.

Kinsey's reports outlined a picture of white America's sexual practices that shocked the nation: masturbation was a nearly universal practice; Freud's notion of vaginal orgasm was a myth; premarital intercourse and extramarital relations were far more common experiences than popular wisdom would have believed. The most scandalous of all of Kinsey's findings were his statistics that reported on the incidence of homosexual behavior.113

Among males (Kinsey) found that 50 percent admitted erotic responses to their own sex, 37 percent had had at least one postadolescent homosexual experience leading to orgasm, 4 percent were exclusively homosexual throughout adulthood, and in one out of eight cases, same-sex eroticism predominated for at least a three-year period. For women the proportions, though lower, still revealed extensive lesbian activity. Twenty-eight percent responded erotically to their own sex, and 13 percent had experienced orgasm with another woman, while the percentage of women either exclusively or primarily homosexual in orientation was between one-third and one-half of the corresponding male figures.114

113 The preceding discussion relies heavily on D'Emilio's analysis and presentation of Kinsey's contributions. See See D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 33–39.

114 See D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 35.
Furthermore Kinsey went on to assert, after checking and rechecking his tabulations:

Persons with homosexual histories are to be found in every age group, in every social level, in every conceivable occupation, in cities and on farms, and in the most remote areas of the country (Kinsey: 1948:627).

As the significance of Kinsey's findings seeped into the public consciousness, these studies signaled a dual response. For straight society, they increased homophobic paranoia concerning the dangers of homosexuality, and for gay people, the reports established an unexpected numerical strength that made the possibility of community real. D'Emilio offers the following analysis of Kinsey's influence:

Scientific evidence appeared to confirm what many gay people in the 1940's were experiencing. Kinsey's work gave an added push at a crucial time to the emergence of an urban gay subculture.\footnote{115 See D'Emilio, \textit{Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities}, p. 37.}

Although its impact was much smaller in scale, the publication of Donald Webster Cory's sociological treatise on male homosexuality similarly expanded discourse on topics related to the homosexual question. Widely cited, Cory's groundbreaking work, \textit{The Homosexual in America}, was the first monograph to present a "minority group" analysis relative to homosexuals. Cory's analysis and presentation allowed for a redefinition of the problems encountered by
homosexual men and women in terms of a collective identity and a commonly shared social status.

The sudden explosion in the quantity of, and the appearance of less negative Lesbian characters and storyline, in, the Lesbian fiction available in the late 1950's and early 60's reflects a larger social trend of permissiveness and is illustrative of the rapid changes which were occurring in the publishing industry.\textsuperscript{116} The media - newspapers, fiction and nonfiction writing, radio, television and film - all expanded the quantity and improved the quality of their coverage of the issue of homosexuality.

The increase in coverage of the Lesbian theme in the pulp literature has already been discussed, but a similar trend may be identified in other types of media as well. To state that there was "improvement" in the quality of media responses to the homosexual question is a relative evaluation. Media coverage early in the 20th century was rare and almost always negative. As the decades passed, the amount of media attention increased significantly, and although anti-homosexual presentations were still the norm,

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they were not without exception. Any break in the flood of homophobic imagery communicated by the combined forces of the mass media was important to the self-concepts of gays and lesbians, especially those isolated individuals who depended on such presentations as the sole, or major, source of their information concerning male or female homosexual identity.

In reference to the Daughters of Bilitis itself, the press rarely took notice; when it did, as many times as not the result was that DOB leaders gained access to the media as a forum in which they could discuss the Daughters' ideological stance and could appeal to the audience for new members and supporters. In the late 1950's and early 1960's Homophile leaders on various occasions made appearances on local TV and radio broadcasts originating from Los Angeles, San Francisco, and New York City. These first opportunities for personal exposure were risky undertakings.

117 See Katz Gay/Lesbian Almanac p. 158-162 for a discussion of the most significant exceptions to the homophobic norm found in popular and medical presentations of homosexuality.

During the 1961 DOB convention held in Los Angeles, "Terry", president-elect of the LADOB Chapter, was interviewed by Paul Coates, a Los Angeles based TV personality. The Ladder offered the following report:

"Terry" described herself as a 38-year-old college graduate who is presently running a poodle grooming parlor. She said she appeared on the program because she believed the organization (DOB) to be striving for a worthwhile goal and "because I'm the least vulnerable."119

Media coverage relating to the activities of gay people was not always supportive. By the 1950's, newspapers and magazines became more willing to publish articles dealing sensationally with gay issues. The role the media played in perpetuating homophobia is noted by D'Emilio, who discusses the consequences of both the police harassment of male homosexuals and Lesbians and the resulting newspaper coverage:

Newspaper headlines announced that the police were combing the cities for nests of deviates. Editors often printed the names, addresses, and

places of employment of men and women arrested in bar raids. Police parked their squad cars in front of homosexual taverns to intimidate patrons. Every evening spent in a gay setting, every contact with another homosexual or lesbian, every sexual intimacy carried a reminder of the criminal penalties that could be exacted at any moment.  

The association between Lesbians and the female branches of the military services gained public attention with the appearance of Radclyffe Hall's classic novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928). Stephen Gordon, the heroine of this extremely popular and controversial work, was an ambulance driver during *World War One* for the *British Women's Army Corps*. The popular stereotype that women in the military are predominantly Lesbian developed in the Second *World War* and endures today (Treadwell: 1953: 625). Cynthia Enloe (1983: 191) reports:

After the second world war, when the women corps were sharply cut back and persisted as small self-contained communities marginalised by their senior commands, many lesbian women were able to

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120 *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*, p. 49.

121 See Katz *Gay/Lesbian Almanac*, p. 444–446, 448–452, for the European and American responses to the publication of *The Well of Loneliness*. Hall's work represented one of a very few available images on which a young woman could model her own life, and reports indicate that the influence of this work was extensive. Pat Bond, mentioned above, DOB founder Del Martin, and Barbara Gittings, NYDOB founder, all discuss the importance that *The Well of Loneliness* had in their development of a Lesbian identity. Stephen Gordon set the style for "Butch" followed by generations of Lesbians. See also Dolores Claib (1974) *Woman Plus Woman*, New York: William Morrow and Co., p. 179–195, for a detailed account of the Radclyffe Hall story.
use the WACs to develop comfortable women-identified worlds.

Young women in search of Lesbian community, even to the present, are aware of the Armed Services' reputation, and it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy that works to swell the ranks of one of society's most openly homophobic institutions.122

These examples serve as illustrations of the multifaceted means by which precipitating factors encouraged the mobilization of individuals into organized activity on behalf of male and female homosexuals, and, further, exerted their influence on the social consciousness of this historical period. These examples of instances in which homosexuality surfaced in public discourse demonstrate how precipitating factors facilitated the emergence of the Daughters of Bilitis. Smelser notes that "strain and precipitating factors shade into one another" and that "a single empirical event may be significant analytically in many ways."

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The existence of multiple precipitating events reveals the magnitude of the social pressure that was beginning to coalesce at this stage in the development of a collective gay and Lesbian identity. No single event can be identified as the one specific determinant which engendered Homophile activity in general or the founding of the Daughters specifically. Instead, it is important to view these examples of strain as being cumulative in effect.

In conclusion, it appears that these events were precipitating factors that served to sharpen the focus of strain experienced by members of the emerging gay and Lesbian minority. Even though often negative in their immediate consequences for the gay and/or Lesbian individuals intimately involved in the reported episodes, these events served to increase the public awareness of homosexuality. And because of this awareness, the Homophile movement grew.

MOBILIZATION FOR ACTION

In order for a potential social movement to become a reality and move into its incipient phase of development, it must organize individuals (Wood and Jackson:1981:49). Smelser (1963:297-298) stresses the importance of leadership to social movement mobilization efforts. The influence and importance of the leadership of The Daughters of Bilitis has already been discussed in some detail in the
preceding chapter. Here the focus will be on functions performed by leadership within the organization.

Smelser (1963:297) recognizes two kinds of leadership. First, there is leadership in the formulation of the beliefs of a movement and, second, there is leadership in the actual mobilization of participants for action. Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin must be viewed as individuals who served both functions for the Daughters of Bilitis. They spearheaded the organization's attempts to recruit and maintain membership, and they also played major roles in the construction of the organization's philosophical presentation in the DOB's "Statement of Purpose".

Additionally, each woman contributed a significant amount to the sum total of the writing that appeared in the early editions of The Ladder. Each served as editor and thus exerted considerable influence on the editorial policies of the magazine. Furthermore, these two women also commanded considerable influence with the other member organizations of the Homophile movement and were recognized by others outside the DOB as its leaders. It is clear from the available records that Martin and Lyon were the driving force which initially established, then nurtured and sustained, the DOB as an organization committed to pro-

Lesbian political activism.

Two societal-wide factors served to facilitate mobilization efforts among homosexuals and Lesbians. First, the existence of cooptable communication and friendship networks that developed out of the wartime experience were central (Lewis:1979:50-51; Berube:1983a:98; D'Emilio:1983:27). And, second, the increasing concentration of gay and Lesbian populations in larger cities (Cory:1951:78; Cory:1964:156; Berube:1983b:45; Emloe:1983:141), where opportunities for autonomous living encouraged the growth and expansion of the gay subculture and made mobilization possible, was important.\footnote{See Randy Shilts (1982) \textit{The Mayor of Castro Street: The Life and Times of Harvey Milk}. New York: St. Martin's Press, P. 51 for a discussion of why San Francisco is a major population center for gays and Lesbians. Shilts notes that San Francisco served as the processing center for all military personnel leaving the Pacific theater at the conclusion of World War II; thousands of gay men and Lesbians just never left.} Allan Berube, a gay historian, has commented:

Each attempt to punish, "manage" or isolate gay Americans - from the queer stockades, psych wards and blue discharges of War II to the all-out war on homosexuals in the 1950's - only reinforced gay identity as an emerging minority. The new gay networks and social institutions created during the war persisted, despite pervasive efforts to destroy them in the postwar years.\footnote{See Allan Berube, \textit{Mother Jones}, Vol. 8, No. 2, p. 45.}
Smelser envisions programs of mobilization as requiring sustained efforts, substantial time, and the complex effort necessary to maintain a social movement organization. The DOB was no exception to this general rule. With no paid or full time staff members, the organization existed solely on the volunteer efforts of its active members.

A clear picture of the pattern of mobilization for action of the Daughters would necessitate a study of the organization throughout its over-sixteen-year history. By analyzing the Daughters' actions over time, it would be possible to ascertain changes in patterns of mobilization and establish a clearer picture of the phases which the movement may have passed through during its history. Continuity or change in the Daughters' ideological statements and in the goals and strategies that it suggested might also be discovered if a more complete record of the organization's stages of development were available. Additionally, more complete study would provide an opportunity for analysis of the Daughters' ultimate success or failure, but such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this thesis.
SOCIAL CONTROL

Smelser (1963:306) emphasizes the influence of social control agencies on multiple aspects of a social movement organization's activity. He notes that there are limitations placed on social control agents in highly differentiated, as compared to undifferentiated, societies. In highly differentiated societies such as the U.S., social control forces will be more tolerant of reform efforts. As a reform movement experiences success, it may cause a reaction on the part of social control principals. The possible resulting shift or reevaluation of the efforts of social control may have significant consequences for the development of a social movement (Smelser:1963:306-309).

If social control is exercised in a manner that "closes off the avenues to normative change" (Smelser:1963:306-307), it may lead a norm-oriented movement to reevaluate its strategies and direct the movement towards a value-oriented position. Smelser (1963:307-310) has outlined two strategies which may be employed by social control agencies attempting to avoid influencing a movement in the direction of the more structurally challenging avenue of value-oriented social change. First, they must permit the expression of legitimate grievances, although Smelser points out that this does not mean that social control agents must acquiesce to all demands made by agitators. A
second strategy that may be taken by social control forces hoping to maintain a social movement in a norm-oriented, rather than value-oriented, condition is to express willingness to establish a forum for the fair hearing of the complaints and issues being brought forth by a movement. When a social movement is allowed openly to express its grievances and is treated justly by a social system, it is likely to retain its norm-oriented status.

The following discussion will attempt to map out some of the different responses of social control agencies in the U.S. in relationship to the emerging homosexual minority. The military, local police, and the federal government each took efforts to combat what they perceived to be the "homosexual problem". Further, religious, academic and medical professionals' contributions as potential social control agents will also be considered.

Many gay and Lesbian individuals suffered tremendously from the harshness and severity of the actions thus taken, but, ironically, each attempt by social control forces to contain homosexual and Lesbian behavior only served to increase public awareness of the issue and, in an indirect way, to spotlight gay life. Consequently, many isolated homosexuals found the way to the very subculture that the authorities were attempting to suppress. This is an exam-
ple of an anticipatory social control action performed in an effort to prevent collective action that backfires, becoming instead a precipitant for collective activity.

During and after World War II, the military played a significant role in shaping the collective experience of thousands of gay men and Lesbians. The Selective Service Act of 1940 set into motion the process of screening more than 15 million American males for possible military duty. For the first time in U.S. history, this process included a psychiatric evaluation designed, in part, to eliminate individuals with a history of homosexual behavior and those with "tendencies" towards this type of sexual inclination. Disqualification during the Selective Service screening process resulted in a stigmatizing 4F rating. Not only did the inclusion of psychiatric evaluation in the Selective Service screening process serve to bolster the


127 For a discussion of the Selective Service process, see D'Emilio Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 24; see also The Ladder, Vol. 3, No. 9, (June 1959), p. 17-20.
status of the psychiatric community as a whole, but it also
served notice to those gay men and Lesbians that eluded
detection that the military was not a safe place.

In addition, 150,000 women served during World War II
in the Women's Army Corps (see Berube 1983a:90). Although
the Armed Services were only newly opened to women, the
fledgling Women's Corps had already experienced problems
with its public image. Military service, even in non-
combat positions, did not fall within the traditionally
accepted definition of femininity, and as a response to
this challenge to appropriate gender behavior came a popular
evaluation of women in the Armed Services as either
Lesbians or "whores".

The leadership of the Women's Corps and others in senior
command positions were aware of the stereotypes that were
identified with female service in the military. Periodi-
cally, purges of women's units would be conducted in an
effort both to control the Lesbian "problem" and to demon-
strate the willingness and resolve of the military to take
action against sexual deviance within its ranks.

Pat Bond, a Lesbian who was stationed in Tokyo during
one segment of her Army life, stated:

They started an incredible witch hunt in Tokyo. Unbelievable!— sending 500 women home with dish-
onorable discharges. Practically every woman I
know who was in the army has a dishonorable dis-
Dishonorable or "blue" discharges for Lesbians and gay men removed from military service constituted official harassment of individuals. Guilt by association, invasion of privacy, and denial of due process characterized the practices of military investigators conducting the purges which were commonplace in all branches of the Armed Services.  

In a more general sense, the military experiences of many young gay and Lesbian Americans during WWII served to increase the possibility that they would make contact with other homosexuals or Lesbians. Through systematic harassment, the military brought together a relatively newly-defined category of deviants in both military stockades and mental wards. For those men and women both lucky and careful enough to escape detection, the stress of living under wartime conditions in combination with the opportunities presented by a sex-segregated military service often


129 For a discussion of the military discharge process, see The Ladder, Vol. 3, No. 9, (June 1959), p. 17-20; see also D'Emilio Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 24-28, 44-46. "Blue" discharges, which were neither honorable or dishonorable, were issued from 1943-1944 during a period of relative leniency towards homosexuals and Lesbians in the Armed Services. They were a special form of discharge used by military authorities to bypass costly and time-consuming court martial procedures. Many gays and Lesbians were railroaded through the system and dismissed without benefit of due process on the basis of hearsay and rumor.
encouraged "coming out under fire", and in the process
instigated the development of secret friendship networks
that survived after military service had been completed.
Those on active duty shared the common bond of maintaining
a secret identity.

The purges of gays and Lesbians from the military also
proved to be ineffective. Although absolutely devastating to
the individual soldiers, sailors, marines and air force men
and women who suffered because of the hysteria, and
although the anti-gay policy of the military remains in
effect into the present, a gay and Lesbian presence per-
sists in the Armed Services.130

Like the military, local police harassed gay individuals
452-453). Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon, in discussing the
ey early to mid-1950's, remember: "police raids were common-
place then."131 Police activity and reports of gay bar
raids throughout the U.S. were reported in the pages of
The Ladder.132 Major scandals rocked several U.S. cities

130 See the American Civil Liberties Union Handbook, Thomas
Stoddard et al. (1983), The Rights of Gay People, New


132 See the coverage of gay bar raids in The Ladder, Vol.
1, No. 2, (November 1956), p. 5, the Alamo Club aka
Kelly's, Vol. 1, No. 9, (June 1957), p. 19, "three San
during the 1950's and early sixties. Boise, Idaho, and
Sioux City, Iowa, are two of the unlikely spots where city-
wide roundups of homosexual men were conducted (Gerassi: 1966; D'Emilio: 1983: 49-51 and Lait and Mortimer: 1951: 116-125 for a sensational presentation of Washington, D.C.'s efforts to crackdown on homosexuals).

Local police also participated in the harassment of
Homophile organizations. The Mattachine Society's eighth
annual convention, held in Denver, Colorado in 1958, was
attended by Denver vice squad members. Later police raids
were conducted at the homes of various Denver Mattachine
members. The arrest and conviction of Bill Matson, the
librarian for the Denver Chapter, on charges of possession
of nude male photographs, resulted in the eventual decline
of the organization in that area and in the loss of Matson's job at a local hospital (see D'Emilio: 1983: 120-121
for further details). As these illustrations of official
harassment suggest, there was a systematic and sustained,
although largely uncoordinated, effort on the part of
social control agencies to circumvent the activities of
homosexual and Lesbian individuals. There was in contrast
only a relatively small amount of official attention direct-
ed specifically at the activities of the Homophile move-

Francisco State University co-eds arrested in a bar and
charged with wearing men's clothing—slacks." Vol. 5,
No. 7, (April 1961), p. 24, fifty-two arrested in Chi-
cago, IL gay bar raid.
Additional anti-gay activities of social control agencies occurred at the state and federal levels as well as on the local scene. The U.S. Senate's Committee on Expenditures in the Executive Department in 1950 conducted an investigation of "sex deviants" in the federal government, largely due to pressure from conservative forces which supported the "commies and queers" rhetoric of Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy. That committee's report on the "Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government" assumed that the employment of homosexuals was undesirable and presented the official government conception of homosexuality, detailing the perils of employing "sex perverts".

According to the findings of the report, homosexuals' general unsuitability for employment stemmed from "the fact that perverts are frequently victimized by blackmailers who threaten to expose their sexual deviations,"; "that those who engage in overt acts of perversion lack the emotional

133 Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon discuss Dr. Vera Plunkett, a chiropractor who was one of the handful of advertisers in the early Ladder and a straight woman, as the only individual they are aware of whose involvement in DOB brought official harassment. The San Francisco Chiropractic Society brought, and later dropped, an investigation of Dr. Plunkett's Homophile activities. See "Reminiscences of Two Female Homophiles" in Our Right to Love, Ginny Vida (ed.), (1978), Englewood, NJ: Prentice-Hall, p. 124.
stability of normal persons"; and "that indulgence in acts of sex perversion weakens the moral fiber". The Committee's findings also included the following observation:

It is particularly important that the thousands of young men and women who are brought into Federal jobs not be subjected to that type of influence while in the service of Government. One homosexual can pollute a Government office.  

The systematic harassment of federal employees increased throughout the 1950's. In 1953, the Eisenhower administration expanded the scope of the loyalty-security program established by President Truman with Executive Order 10450, which specifically included "infamous behavior" and homosexuality as sufficient causes for removal from federal employment. From 1947 to the mid-1950's, 1,700 job applicants were excluded from federal employment for reasons of homosexuality (D'Emilio: 1983:44).

The Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Post Office independently conducted investigations of Homophile organizations and of individuals thought to be homosexual.  

134 See Cory, Homosexual in America, for reprint of U.S. government documents relating to homosexuality (Appendix A) p. 269-280.


136 See Martin and Lyon Lesbian/Woman p. 319-321 for a discussion of FBI files obtained by Del Martin through the Freedom of Information Act on surveillance of the DOB. See also Katz, Gay/Lesbian Almanac p. 530-531 for a report on J. Edgar Hoover's private files which recorded rumors concerning the sex lives of numerous persons.
Los Angeles Postmaster Otto K. Oleson seized copies of ONE, Inc.'s publication One on the grounds that it was "obscene, lewd, lascivious and filthy". Postal inspectors (D'Emilio: 1983:47), citing their responsibility to prevent the dissemination of obscene materials through the mail, subscribed to pen pal clubs in an elaborate attempt to infiltrate homosexual networks. Additionally, the recipients of physique magazines and other forms of gay male erotica were put under official postal surveillance.

Those efforts directly taken to influence the behavior of Homophile organizations proved, in the final analysis, to be largely ineffective. The Postal authorities' attempts to have the Homophile publication of ONE, Inc. banned as pornographic failed. Religious leaders, academics, and legal scholars, as well as medical professionals, failed to present a united front in opposition to the efforts of Homophiles. A tiny minority of "expert" dissentors represented each of the social institutions that had previously laid claim to possessing the "truth" on the issues raised by Homophiles. The presence of pro-Homophile experts severely undermined the overall effectiveness of their respective institutions by providing a challenge to

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137 See D'Emilio, Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities, p. 115, and also The Ladder, Vol. 1, No. 9, (June 1957), p. 3-6 for an account of ONE's efforts to resist censorship efforts of Postal authorities.

orthodoxy from within. Furthermore, Homophile leaders were able to make use of any pro-homosexual research conclusions made by these professionals as evidence of the legitimacy of the dialogue in which the movement itself was engaged.

The strategies taken by social control agencies in relation to the Homophile movement in general and to the Daughters of Bilitis in particular appear to demonstrate a pattern. It is unlikely that social control agencies ever perceived the DOB, or any Homophile group, as a serious threat to the established order worthy of all-out repression. Rather, the social control agencies largely confined their activities to harassment. Serious attempts to restrict the activities of the movement were not systematically applied by social control agents. The leadership of the movement was never jailed, the offices of the Homophile organizations were not shut down; there were no efforts made to confiscate mailing or membership lists. In general, it appears that social control forces believed that the harassment of gay and/or Lesbian individuals, whether in the context of entrapment, military or civil service purg-

139 It must also be noted that the medical system was one of the most abusive institutions in its treatment of gay and Lesbian individuals. For details of the atrocities which occurred in U.S. hospitals and asylums including electroshock, pharmacological shock treatment and lobotomy, see Katz, Gay American History, p. 252-255, 268-276
es, or some other way, was a better strategy for controlling gay people than the blockage of Homophile social movement activities.

It is possible that the small numbers associated with the Homophile movement, especially the DOB, encouraged officials to overlook the activities of the movement. Another possibility is that popular stereotypes of gay people as irresponsible, sick, and immoral creatures prevented social control agents from viewing collective activities by gays in a serious manner. Certainly, to a large extent these stereotypes functioned as some of the most powerful tools of social control of all, preventing gay and Lesbian individuals from acting on their own sexual feelings, let alone in organized efforts on their own behalf.

CONCLUSIONS

The value-added model presented by Smelser is useful for understanding both the Homophile movement in general and the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis in particular. An analysis of the historical, social, and political context out of which the Homophile movement originated, using Smelser's model, allows a greater understanding of the complex set of interconnected factors responsible for this movement's development. An examination of the substantive factors associated with each of Smelser's con-
ditions - structural conduciveness, structural strain, generalized beliefs, precipitating factors, mobilization for action, and the activity of social control agents - shows how and why female Homophile activity emerged when it did and, further, suggests why it took the form of a norm-oriented rather than a value-oriented social movement.

Smelser's model is a general one and is not designed to fit any specific type of movement. The events and conditions analyzed here in Smelser's framework did not occur in a neat chronological fashion, nor did every specific occurrence contribute in equal proportion to the actualization of the Homophile effort. But together the activities and events of this historical period created the context out of which Homophile activity emerged.

The Daughters of Bilitis must be viewed as a reaction to the cumulative strain present in the U.S. in the mid-1950's. It must be viewed as a product of its time, for only in its historical context can the activities of the Daughters be fairly understood and judged. The largely white middle-class clerical and semi-professional women who constituted the membership and supporters of the DGB responded with a type and style of social movement activity that they deemed appropriate to meet the problems and challenges they were confronting collectively and as individu-
als. They created a norm-oriented movement which stressed the need for "objective" scholarship that would produce "new" and "fair" descriptions and analyses of Lesbian life. The Daughters strove to educate straight and gay audiences in an effort to ease the burden of the "deviate" label with which they were judged by a homophobic society.

In a different time, the late 1960's and early 70's, a younger cohort of activists exposed to the radicalism of the sixties, rather than to fifties conformity, would respond differently to similar conditions of structural conduciveness and strain. Social movement organizations operating in different historical period often take diverse paths, this is a familiar and not surprising pattern (see Smelser:1963:310-311). It is nevertheless important to acknowledge the scope and impact of the efforts made by the Daughters of Bilitis and the Homophile movement in general. By so doing, we place these women and their activities in their proper place and perspective in the history of Lesbian struggle.
Chapter IV
CONCLUSIONS

SUMMARY
This thesis provides a systematic description of the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis and utilizes Smelser's value-added model to explore the conditions associated with its development as a social movement in the period 1955 to 1963. The systematic description of the characteristics of the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis offered here makes a substantive contribution not only to the understanding of female-led social movement efforts, but also to the general field of women's history. A description and analysis of the activities and ultimate consequences of the DOB allows for a recognition of the historical continuity between female Homophile efforts and the later social movement activities of both the contemporary women's movement and the Gay Rights struggle.
The DOB was a reform-oriented social movement, with an ideological perspective that stressed self-acceptance and encouraged the integration of Lesbians into the larger society. The DOB established a politically-oriented Lesbian precedent in the midst of the repression and conformity of 1950's America. The DOB, a numerically small organization largely composed of white, middle-class semi-professional and clerical workers, was under the leadership of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, two of its founding members.

Conceived as an alternative to the gay bar scene, the Daughters went on to develop a new form of Lesbian social and political life. Educational presentations by experts on issues of concern to female Homophiles, social events, and Lesbian-only discussion groups were three of the strategies used by DOB to foster a political awareness on the part of a minority of self-defining Lesbians.

A more clear understanding of the DOB's relationship to its historical, social and political context can be achieved by using Swelser's value-added model as an ordering device to identify and analyze events, activities, and general social conditions that affected the formation of the DOB. The United States, with its highly differentiated social structure, has historically been conducive to refor-
mist actions directed at social change. The DOB, as a part of this reformist tradition, offered its ideological perspective as a response to multiple sources of strain and specific precipitating factors that characterized this historical era.

The socially constructed categories of homosexual and heterosexual, which emerged out of the writings of medical doctors and sexologists during the early decades of the 20th century, made possible a later collective awareness among the female and male homosexual populations. Homophile efforts developed out of the emerging gay and Lesbian sub-culture of the 1940's and 1950's and successfully mobilized its tiny constituency during a period when intense efforts on the part of social control agents were being made to censor the behavior of individual gays and Lesbians and to control the gay bars, the most visible institution in gay life.

**Implications of DOB Activities for Social Change**

The DOB's social change agenda provided an opportunity for the systematic introduction of new ideas concerning Lesbianism into American society. The consequences of DOB efforts suggest implications for social change and were pioneering attempts which facilitated the presentation of
positive options for Lesbians who had been systematically denied such alternatives by an intensely homophobic society.

The DOB, whose efforts have been largely ignored by scholars and devalued by gay rights and Lesbian-feminist activists, nurtured a belief in the basic dignity of women who loved other women. The Daughters valued the individual and existed as an organization that could provide support, reassurance, and a positive evaluation of Lesbian identity in spite of a hostile and repressive socio-historical climate.

The ideological commitment of the DOB was based on a conscious awareness that society treated Lesbians unfairly. The DOB went on to identity negative stereotypes and popular misconceptions about Lesbians as the source of society's unequitable treatment of the female homosexual. Analysis generated by female Homophile efforts stressed that Lesbians were not bad people, sinners, criminals, or sick women, and need not be cured of any disease.

The ideological analysis produced by DOB engendered multiple goals for the movement, but most salient among those goals was the DOB's desire to make Lesbians acceptable. Dominated by relatively well-educated semi-professionals and skilled clerical workers, the Daughters' political
action agenda reflected white middle-class sensibilities and, correspondingly, a white middle-class understanding of what constituted acceptability.

Making Lesbianism a more acceptable alternative for both the female homosexual and straight society necessitated a diverse set of strategies. Open communication on the topic of homosexuality was the key to social change in DOB terms. Specific tactics that demonstrate this commitment to dialogue include the publication of The Ladder and DOB sponsorship of Gab 'n Java sessions, discussion meetings, and the bi-annual DOB Convention.

The DOB goal of making Lesbians acceptable was most explicitly reflected in the controversial "mode of dress and behavior" clause in the organization's "Statement of Purpose". The Daughters again reflect its middle-class sensitivities by stressing the promotion of "positive" images of Lesbians that expressly rejected the style and mannerisms of the predominate working-class Lesbian bar sub-culture.

Contemporary criticisms of Homophile efforts, which dismiss their actions as weak and assimilationist, might analyze the ultimate outcome of the movement in negative terms. But the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis was not a failure. For example, it must be not-
ed that DOB included and successfully carried out its program for challenging existing laws that provided inequitable treatment for members of the homosexual "minority group".

Perhaps the most important single success of the DOB's effort to combat institutional discrimination against male and female homosexuals was represented by the DOB's contribution to the judicial reaffirmation of homosexuals' right to congregate in public places that took place at the conclusion of the "Mary's First and Last Chance" gay bar case in 1958. Furthermore, the Daughters initiated and encouraged contact and communications with representatives of the other major institutions - religion, medicine, academia - which had a vested interest in the social definition of Lesbianism.

In measuring the successes and failures of the DOB as a social movement organization, it is crucial to acknowledge both the progress made towards the stated goals of the DOB and the long-term effect these efforts had on later stages of social movement activity. The women who sustained the Daughters of Bilitis both recognized and rejected the neg-

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140 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman p. 225-226, for a more detailed account of this case which upheld a State Supreme Court decision that outlawed discrimination against homosexuals in public facilities and, thereby, guaranteed gays and Lesbians the right to congregate in public places.
ative societally supported myths concerning Lesbians. They were committed to changing the popular image of Lesbianism, and their evaluation of the hostile climate out of which DOB was conceived led them to focus their energy on chang-
ing individual women, rather than directly facing the dan-
gers of the initial confrontation with an intensely homo-
phobic, rigid and conformist American society of the 1950's.

One of the consequences of the long and often discourag-
ing work for education and the maintainence of open commu-
nication on Lesbian issues was the gradual beginnings of
the process of destigmatizing Lesbian identity. DOB
focused its energy and resources on individual Lesbians in
an attempt to promote self-acceptance that would foster
self-respect. The social and educational events sponsored
by the Daughters' were conducted with these goals in mind.
Self-help, or Lesbians for Lesbians, was a keystone of the
DOB approach.

The organizational and cultural life that was created by
the Daughters through The Ladder and the other social and
political activities of the organization came together to
produce a sense of belonging for its membership, as well as
opportunities for forming personal relationships and a
sense of a supportive community, even for those women whose
only contact with this emerging Lesbian world was a twenty minute monthly reading of *The Ladder*.

The DOB vision of Lesbian life, as limited as its exposure was, grew and spread through *The Ladder* and the addition of DOB Chapters throughout the United States. This growth meant not only the dissemination of new options for Lesbians, but also illustrates how the DOB vision of social change and the organization's goals and strategies were extended well beyond the wildest dreams of the eight women who gathered together in a San Francisco apartment in the fall of 1955 to discuss an alternative to the Lesbian bars.

Using Smesler's model as an ordering device, it is possible to understand and specify the general progression of strain, precipitating events and societal responses that formed the socio-historical context out of which, first, the male-oriented Homophile movement and, later, the DOB emerged. From the conditions specified by this model, it is possible to ascertain not only the social change implications of the DOB's activities, but simultaneously it becomes possible to establish a clearer understanding of the historical processes of which female Homophile participation is a part. The 20th century socially constructed deviant label, applied to male and female homosexuals, was
one response to changing macro-sociological forces. Expanding levels of urbanization and changing patterns of work force participation for both men and women, in combination with the tensions created by World War Two, proved to be fertile ground from which a substantial gay and Lesbian sub-culture grew.

It is necessary to understand the limitations of the historical, social and political contexts in which Homophile members and their movement existed. Many aspects of this emerging socio-historical context were devastating for the individual gay men and Lesbians affected. It is especially important to note that the activists who came together to form the Homophile movement in this period were individuals who predominantly "came out" prior to the surge of gay awareness that accompanied World War Two. In a period where there was no clearly articulated understanding of gay and Lesbian oppression, let alone a well-organized gay community, pioneers of gay rights activism sought out not only each other, but also the positive sense of self that was clearly missing from the images offered by a homophobic society.

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While society devalued and condemned the female and male homosexual, offering justification for the most heinous forms of punishment and ostracism, a small but flourishing gay subculture emerged to challenge society's censure by redefining the socially sanctioned abuse as grievances. Injustices, once identified, become a rallying point around which collective struggle can be formed. Thus, the general Homophile effort, and specifically the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis, emerged as a response to and a collective struggle against the negative consequences of the homosexual label.

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LATER SOCIAL MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES

The long-term impact of the efforts of the Daughters of Bilitis may be considered for both the later militant Homophile and gay liberation movements and the contemporary women's movement. Mass agitation for social change, and the social movement activities and organizations that accompany such change, do not spring full grown into existence. The post-Stonewall gay liberation movement of the 1970's was mass based and was capable of mobilizing a constituency thousands of times larger than that of the entire Homophile era. The analysis of gay oppression

offered by the liberation movement of the seventies and eighties was, however, facilitated by the efforts of Homophiles.

The Daughters of Bilitis and other Homophile organizations established strategies for action which benefited later pro-homosexual agitation. Concretely, the Homophile movement had established a tradition of gay and Lesbian publishing that was enlarged and expanded into a cooptable resource by later activists whose efforts benefited greatly from the example set by *The Mattachine Review*, *ONE: A Magazine*, and *The Ladder*.

In addition, and possibly more important, the early efforts of Homophiles, including the Daughters, created a history of resistance to gay and Lesbian oppression in the United States from which the later efforts could draw example and hope. A sense of historical continuity is an important part of any movement's ideological understanding of itself. Homophiles, even when scorned, provided gay liberationists with a frame of reference with which they could mark themselves as the radical new bearers of a cross others had also carried.

In relation to the contemporary women's movement, the efforts of the Daughters of Bilitis clearly influenced later developments. Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon both emerged
as leaders in the feminist movement: their involvement and personal willingness to take the risks associated with self-defining as Lesbians in a non-Lesbian setting provided a model that was followed by others Lesbians. Martin and Lyon, in their association with the San Francisco National Organization for Women, became some of the first, but not the last, openly Lesbian women to join and lead the feminist movement of the late sixties, seventies and eighties.

The Ladder was a cooptable resource available to the women's movement, and the readership represented an already established network of potential supporters for feminism. Feminist comment and critique which appeared in the writings of The Ladder from the very earliest issues mark an unexpected source of woman-identification, 1950's style. From the first issue of The Ladder comes the following recognition of women's history and its accompanying analysis:

It has been only in the 20th century through the courageous efforts of the Suffragettes and the influx of women into the business world, that woman has become an independent entity, an individual with the right to vote and the right to a job and economic security. Del Martin went on in this, her first "Presidential Message", to challenge potential supporters of the DOB's cause to meet the challenge the Homophile effort represented and

143 See Martin and Lyon, Lesbian/Woman, p. 252-263.

to join them in their efforts to thwart "the evils of ignorance, superstitution, prejudice and bigotry."

The already discussed series of correspondence from Lorraine Hansberry is still another example of the explicitly feminist content of the early *Ladder*. Once again, the continuity between seemingly distinct activities for social change is demonstrated and an appreciation of the connection between female Homophile action and the women's liberation movement is facilitated.

The following comments by Hansberry, published in May 1958, serve as such an illustration of feminist analysis in the early *Ladder*:

> Our problems, our experiences as women are profoundly unique as compared to the other half of the human race. Women, like other oppressed groups of one kind or another, have particularly had to pay the price for the intellectual impoverishment that the second class status imposed on us for centuries created and sustained....What ought to be clear is that one is oppressed or discriminated against because one is different, not "wrong" or "bad" somehow.\(^1\text{4}5\)

An even more surprising and radical statement appears three months later as Hansberry's essays continue:

> I think it is about time that equipped women began to take on some of the ethical questions which a male dominated culture has produced and dissect and analyze them quite to pieces in a serious fashion. It is time that "half the human race" had something to say about the nature of its existence. Otherwise - without revised thinking - the woman intellectual is likely to

find herself trying to draw conclusions — moral conclusions — based on acceptance of a social moral superstructure which has never admitted to the equality of women and is therefore immoral itself. . . . In this kind of work there may be women to emerge who will be able to formulate a new and possible concept that homosexual persecution and condemnation has at its roots not only social ignorance, but a philosophically active anti-feminist dogma. 146

Feminist analysis of the DOB's "dress code", of popular fashion in general, and several critiques of heterosexuality as an oppressive force in all women's lives were also recorded. 147 A final example illustrates the type of feminist analysis which appeared in the pages of the early Ladder and served to open avenues of dialogue which have been previously overlooked by critics of the Daughters of Bilitis. This quotation is taken from a "Why am I a Lesbian" statement published in conjunction with a DOB-sponsored research effort aimed at collecting data on causes of Lesbianism, and is an interesting antecedent to a similar often-cited statement framed in 1970 by Radicalesbians in "Woman-Identified-Woman":

I would suspect that a more likely factor leading to Lesbianism would be a protest against the domination by the male... There would seem to be a


withdrawal from the heterosexual marketplace of glamour and emphasis is placed rather upon the independence of the individual and the development of the full personality. 148

There are other ways that the early activities of the DOB were related to the later resurgence of the contemporary feminist movement. A significant factor which is partial explanation of the DOB's appearance in the mid-1950's is that the Homophile movement that existed at that time was not meeting the needs of its female members. Both ONE, Inc. and the Mattachine Society freely admitted their inability to attract and maintain a significant female membership. 149

As attested to in the earlier quotation by Del Martin as she prepared to share the results of the first DOB research effort at one of the male-homophile sponsored conventions, the leadership of the DOB was required regularly to defend the woman-only nature of the Daughters. The DOB was committed to maintaining a female only, female-led existence, and there is no evidence in the data explored for this thesis that would question the depth of that commitment.


149 Taped interview with Jim Kepner, March 26, 1985.
THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

Theoretical shortcomings associated with Smelser's (1963) value-added model have been discussed by numerous scholars (see Smelser: 1969: 89-94; Quarentalli and Hundley: 1969: 538-554; Berk: 1974: 40-46; Wood: 1974: 143-153; Perry and Pugh: 1978; Wood and Jackson: 1982: 41-61). Criticism of Smelser has largely revolved around the perception that his model does not provide adequate information about the six necessary and sufficient conditions for the development of a social movement and that this lack of specification prevents empirical testing of the model.

For the purposes of this thesis, Smelser's value-added model was used as a content-free ordering device that allowed for the arrangement of specific historical events, episodes and socially constructed beliefs. The most problematic aspect of Smelser's presentation for this study also centered on the issue of the ambiguous nature of the six pivotal conditions which compose the model.

Specifically, this ambiguity created some difficulty in specifying the role that certain factors played in bringing about the development of the DOB as a social movement. Often it would be unclear if a specific event or episode should be classified, for instance, as a precipitating factor or a source of structural strain. Smelser's presenta-
tion of his model in *Theory of Collective Behavior* does not provide the type of guidance that would have served to facilitate the classification of such an event or episode. Simply put, without a precise delineation of the concepts, making a determination of what constituted structural strain, conduciveness, precipitating factors or social control efforts, often became problematic.

An additional set of difficulties associated with this project center on inadequacies in the data on which the thesis is based. Only limited data sources were readily available, and often questions of substantive interest were not answerable given the data base being used. Specifically, information pertaining to the organizational structure of the Daughters of Bilitis and the ways the DOB conducted the business of the organization is almost entirely missing from this description and analysis. Two strategies might be used to remedy this flaw. First, interviews with active DOB members from various chapters of the organization and leaders at the national and local levels would augment the existing data and would become a valuable resource for later research efforts. A second option for increasing the amount of information concerning the organizational structure of the DOB would be through a thorough review and analysis of the surviving organizational papers of the
Daughters. An additional source of data that would enhance our understanding of the Lesbian culture of this historical period would be a survey of Lesbian fiction from this era. The work of Lesbian bibliographers Jeanette Foster and Barbara Grier would facilitate the identification of these materials, and the fiction collections of various gay and Lesbian archives would serve as a possible source of these novels and collected short stories (Foster: 1975 and Grier: 1981).

A fourth strategy which might be taken to overcome some of the limitations of this thesis would involve the redefinition of the present research question to include the full tenure of the life of the Daughters of Bilitis. The analysis of The Ladder would be expanded and the full sixteen years of the magazine would necessarily come under scrutiny and analysis. This expansion of the research parameters would allow for an identification and analysis of the pattern of decline which led to the ultimate disbANDING of the national organization.

An extended investigation of the DOB would also allow for the examination of change and/or continuity in the ideology, goals, strategies, leadership, membership and

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130 These papers are currently in the possession of Phyllis Lyon and Del Martin, and are stored in the office of Delmar Associates in the Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, CA.
recruitment policies of the Daughters over time. Of particular interest would be the analysis of the DOB reaction to the social movement activities of both the gay liberationists and the contemporary women's movement.

Another future research strategy might be to widen the scope of the study even further to include the type of systematic comparative illustration that was so central to the work of Smelser (1963). Interesting research problems would be generated if the activities and organization of the social movement organization the Daughters of Bilitis could be compared and contrasted to other women-only and/or women-led social movement collectivities.

In summary, the analysis of Donald Webster Cory writing on *The Lesbian in America* (1964) is perhaps a most fitting close to this description and analysis of the Daughters of Bilitis.

Whatever DOB's failings and shortcomings ... its very existence is an expression of the belief by some women that to be a lesbian is not a disgrace. It would be very difficult to exaggerate the importance of such a fact.\(^{151}\)

Appendix A

DAUGHTERS OF BILITIS—"STATEMENT OF PURPOSE"

1. Education of the variant, with particular emphasis on the psychological and sociological aspects, to enable her to understand herself and make her adjustment to society in all its social, civic and economic implications by establishing and maintaining a library of both fiction and non-fiction on the sex deviant theme; by sponsoring public discussions on pertinent subjects to be conducted by leading members of the legal, psychiatric, religious and other professions; by advocating a mode of behavior and dress acceptable to society.

2. Education of the public at large through acceptance first of the individual, leading to an eventual breakdown of erroneous taboos and prejudices; through public discussion meetings aforementioned; through dissemination of educational literature on the homosexual theme.

3. Participation in the research projects by duly authorized and responsible psychologists, sociologists and other such experts, directed towards further knowledge of the homosexual.
4. Investigation of the penal code as it pertains to the homosexual, proposal of changes to provide an equitable handling of cases involving this minority group, and promotion of these changes through due process of law in the state legislatures.
Appendix B

LIST OF CODING CATEGORIES

Membership
Leadership
Chapters
Ideology
"Mode of dress ..."
Experts
Gab 'n Java
Feminism
Male-dominated Homophile Organizations
New Homophile Organizations
Male Organizations and DOB
"Bill of Rights" controversy
Media
Politics
Gay Bars
DOB Conventions
International Organizations and News
THE LADDER
Queens and Prostitutes
Heterosexual Marriage
Lesbian Marriage
Fear
Lesbian Fiction
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Adam, Barry D

Altman, Dennis

Anderson, Karen

Babbie, Earl R.
Baetz, Ruth


Baxandall, Rosalyn, Linda Gordon and Susan Reverby (eds.)


Beck, Evelyn Torton


Bernard, Jessie


Berk, Richard A.


Berube, Allan and John D'Emilio

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Blumer, Herbert


Boswell, John


Boston Women's Health Collective, (eds.)


Bowles, Gloria and Renate Duelli Klein


Brooks, Virginia R.


Bullough, Vern

Bullough, Vern and Bonnie Bullough


Caprio, Frank S.

Cassell, Joan

Chesebro, James

Chester, Eustace

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