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Emotion, identity, and social movements: The effects of Jeffrey Dahmer's serial killings on Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community

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The Ohio State University, 1993
EMOTION, IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:
THE EFFECTS OF JEFFREY DAHMER'S SERIAL KILLINGS
ON MILWAUKEE'S LESBIAN AND GAY COMMUNITY

DISSERTATION

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the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of the Ohio State University

By
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

On a hot Tuesday night in July, 1991, the usual television fare of summertime re-runs was interrupted by news clips of an unfolding horror. Viewers watched surreal scenes of police carting away assorted boxes, cartons, and vats from a North 25th Street apartment building in one of Milwaukee's rougher neighborhoods. Newscasters recounted tales of a shirtless man, one arm in handcuffs, who had escaped the sadistic torture of a man trying to kill him. When he took police back to apartment 213, they found human heads in the refrigerator, painted skulls on shelves, genitals stored in buckets, and Jeffrey Dahmer awaiting arrest.

It was a cinematic nightmare come true, foreshadowed by the recently released screen version of "The Silence of the Lambs." In the weeks that followed, Jeffrey Dahmer would be portrayed by press around the world as a real life Hannibal-the-Cannibal Lecter. Dahmer had confessed to killing 17 young men and boys, mostly Black and Hispanic gays. He admitted to photographing them, dismembering their corpses, and eating some of their body parts. In February, 1992, nearly seven months after his arrest, Dahmer was convicted by a jury in Milwaukee of 15 counts of first-degree homicide. Three months later, he was convicted in Ohio on one count of homicide for a
murder he had committed in his hometown. Bath, Ohio was my hometown too. Jeffrey Dahmer had been my classmate and friend.

His gruesome crimes captured national headlines for months. When my association with Dahmer became public, I was interviewed repeatedly by news organizations across the country. My own involvement with this case and with the press afforded me a unique opportunity to examine the sociological significance of these killings. Specifically, in this research I analyze the impact that the events surrounding the murders had on Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community. The media frequently focused on the issue of homosexuality. Dahmer's crimes were often constructed by the press as specifically gay crimes, as the result either of his own homosexuality or of the gay "lifestyle" led by many of his victims. The repeated emphasis on "gayness" within the media underscored the fact that the discovery of his killings was profoundly affecting the lesbian and gay movement in Milwaukee.

In this dissertation, I examine these effects, focusing specifically on the ways that the emotions evoked within that community shaped collective identity. My goal is to provide an empirical analysis of the centrality of emotion in social movement cultures. I approach the emotions of the lesbian and gay community not as individual psychological responses but as collectively constructed and shared experiences. Discourse, meanings, and symbols create the framework for defining and interpreting the emotion culture of a social movement. Jeffrey Dahmer became constructed as a symbol both in the lesbian and gay culture and in the dominant culture as well. These constructions were vastly different and reflected opposing political interests and agendas. I will argue that there was a competition between the dominant culture and Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists to define the emotions surrounding the Dahmer event. Within the
dominant culture, Dahmer was portrayed as the result of a gay "lifestyle," justifying increasing physical and political repression of homosexuals. Within the lesbian and gay community, Dahmer symbolized both the victimization that their community had long suffered and the devastating consequences of internalized homophobia. The meaning ascribed to Dahmer as an emotional symbol significantly shaped the meaning of gay identity, resulting in a similar shift in lesbian and gay activism.

I was able to collect data through: 1) participant observation in Milwaukee; 2) interviewing Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists, as well as reporters who served as informants; and 3) content analysis of both the gay and the mainstream press. The event that became known simply as "Dahmer" to Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists began with his July, 1991 arrest and continued through his February, 1992 trial in Milwaukee. That his arrest would be a meaningful and historical occurrence for Milwaukee's gay and lesbian movement became clear within one week following his arrest, yet the extended duration of the events leading to his trial afforded a rare opportunity to study the processes involved in the cultural construction of "Dahmer" while it was taking place.

Social Movement Events

Historically, it is relatively easy to trace the significance of events for the development of social movements. The names Rosa Parks (Morris, 1984; Weisbrot, 1990), Stonewall Riots (D'Emilio, 1983; Adam, 1987), Watts riots (Weisbrot, 1990), and Anita Hill (Taylor & Whittier, 1992a) have all become reference points of movement mobilization and increased activism. These
events encompass a series of actions and reactions that take on symbolic meanings beyond the single incident. They become reference points for framing emotions and constructing collective identity. Movement leaders transform such occurrences into rallying points for developing new strategies and for forming inter-organizational alliances.

Yet the process by which these occurrences become symbolic events around which social movement actors are mobilized has been virtually ignored. Classical theory in social movements has focused on macro-processes within social movements, such as movement life cycles, movement typologies, and forces of social change embedded within the social structure. Resource mobilization theory of the 1970s and 1980s, in focusing on the organizational components of social movements, has given little recognition to the role events have played in movement mobilization. There are some notable exceptions to the lack of attention that crisis events have received in resource mobilization theory, especially McAdam's (1986;1988) analysis of "freedom summer" activities, Morris' (1984) account of bus boycotts, or Killian's (1984) analysis of lunch counter sit-ins.

Often what is actually a series of events is reduced to a single nomenclature that embodies the significance of such occurrences for social movement activists. Recently, the term "Rodney King" has come to signify not only the 1991 beating of Rodney King by Los Angeles police officers, it also refers to their subsequent trial, the verdict to acquit the officers charged with the beating, and the three days of race riots in South Central L.A. that followed the acquittal. Such terms can also signify meaning related to larger activist issues of identity formation, activist "waves," and changes in political generations. When gay and lesbian activists refer to the "pre-Stonewall" era, they are
indicating a stage of the movement where "gay" as a political identity had not yet formed and where few specifically political organizations existed (D'Emilio, 1983). Thus events become constructed meaning for a movement's activists. They can crystallize a set of emotions, identities, activist stages, mobilizations strategies and tactics, increases in activism, and, in fact, births of movements themselves.

In tracing the development of class consciousness in the U.S., Fantasia (1988:16) has argued that it is through event analysis that a more thorough understanding of regular cultural processes can be achieved: "those periodic ruptures in cultural life may sometimes tell us more about the consistencies than the inconsistencies." Cultural anthropologist Victor Turner (1982) believes that "social life...is characteristically 'pregnant' with social dramas." For Turner, these "dramas" embody elaborate systems of cultural codes about conflict and can eventually lead to warfare or revolutions. Due to the increasingly complex technologies of modern societies "we have become somewhat more adept in devising cultural modes of confronting, understanding, assigning meaning to, and sometimes coping with crisis." Warner and Low (1947:1) further argue that episodes of crisis are the best times to understand both individual experience of social life and the larger social processes which shape those experiences: "In such crises men (sic) reveal what they are and often betray their innermost secrets. . .if this is true for the study of men as individuals it applies even more forcefully to the study of men in groups. It is when all hell breaks loose that the powerful forces which organize and control human society are revealed."

"When all hell broke loose" is the term frequently used by Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists to describe the effects of Dahmer's arrest on their community. Local, national, and international media organizations immediately
focused on Milwaukee. Speculation on the nature of Dahmer's crimes caused the issues of gay sexuality and "lifestyles" to be discussed and debated in newspapers, magazines, and radio and television reports for months. Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists reported feeling personally responsible for answering the homophobic charges that gained worldwide attention, and, in fact, they generally were alone in this effort. National gay and lesbian organizations were slow to join the discussion and offered little support beyond advice on holding press conferences. Milwaukee's activists, with little experience or training in handling national and international press organizations, reported spending weeks working to educate the media on homosexuality. Within months, city funding for the local gay pride celebration had been eliminated, a program designed to assist gay students in the public schools was overturned by the local school board, and reports of harassment and hate crimes against Milwaukee's gay and lesbian organizations, bars, and activists increased, all within a framework that was identified as "Dahmer." Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists reported that they were trying to conduct their movement under a state of siege and, in subsequent interviews, speculated that neither they nor their community would ever be the same after the Dahmer event.

Since social movement events can become symbolic "pieces" of cultural "toolkits" (Swidler, 1986), there is a process of event construction that occurs. Meanings do not just happen; they are constructed. Emotions become framed in oppositional ways, identities are constructed that define the very nature of movements, social movement communities coalesce, and, ultimately, new strategies for political action and new movement organizations form. It is through studying events that scholars of social movements can gain insight into
the ways that movement culture--values, emotions, identities--interact with movement structure.

Cultural Studies and Social Change

There has been a virtual explosion of cultural studies within the last two decades (Alexander and Seidman, 1990; Wuthnow and Witten, 1988; Lamont and Wuthnow, 1990). This renewed interest in various aspects of culture has occurred across disciplines, incorporating empirical and theoretical elements from sociology, anthropology, history, literary criticism, and women's studies, resulting in what Geertz (1980:312) has identified as "blurred genres" and what Macksey (1983:312) has described as a "disciplinary promiscuity for social scientists." Cultural theorists such as Michel Foucault, Mary Douglas, Pierre Bourdieu, Jurgen Habermas, and Clifford Geertz have gained increasing prominence within sociological discourse, including conflict theory, communications theory, and symbolic interactionism (Lamont and Wuthnow, 1990), as well as within more substantive areas in the field, including formal organizations, stratification, and the sociology of science (Wuthnow and Witten, 1988).

The debates currently at the center of cultural studies focus on the difficulties in conceptualizing the nature of culture and its components. At the heart of the culture debate is the issue of the relationship between culture and structure. Is culture completely determined by the social system, as classical Marxist theory would argue, or is culture best conceptualized as autonomous from structure, as Parsons and other functionalists assert? Cultural theorists are
increasingly arguing that culture and structure do not operate as separate and dichotomous (Bourdieu, 1993; Wuthnow, 1989; Alexander, 1990), but instead are better conceptualized as "dialectically interwoven" (Fantasia, 1988:10). According to Alexander (1990:26), "we cannot understand culture without reference to social structural constraints." There are also empirical issues centered around this theoretical debate which focus on whether cultural discourse can occur through analysis of tangible artifacts such as texts, or through intangible, implicit conceptualizations, such as Parsons idea's of norms and values or Geertz's notion of "thick description."

Increasingly, social change has been recognized as a central aspect of cultural studies. Approaches to social change taken by cultural theorists have tended to take three directions: 1) those who see change in macro, deterministic ways (Parsons, Durkheim); 2) those who see social change as influenced by power structures and systems, but not by human actors (Foucault); 3) those who view change as created by human actors but not shaped by hegemonic structures (Geertz). Each of these approaches is inadequate. If culture is increasingly viewed as both shaped by and shaper of structure, a mechanistic approach to social change is clearly limited. Social change models must likewise recognize that while human beings can be actors in creating cultural change, they still do so within systems of power and domination that shape and limit the choices available to the individual agents. Ashley (1990:xiv) argues that "the problems of historical change and human agency demand attention." Wuthnow (1989:531) further maintains that these approaches to change blur the significance of studying change itself: "each manifestation of cultural change ceases to be important in its own right. Instead
it becomes significant only as an indication that some deeper process is at work."

In order to better conceptualize the process of social change within a framework that allows for both human agency and systems of power, cultural theorists have increasingly called for culture to be examined as process, as a dynamic web of codes, relationships, and meaning that is ever emergent. Ashley (1990:x) argues for a view of culture that sees "humans as collective makers of meaning through symbolic actions and cultural performances."

Mullings (1986:13) asserts that culture is comprised of "the symbols and values that create the ideological frame of reference through which people attempt to deal with the circumstances in which they find themselves. Culture...is not composed of static, discrete traits moved from one locale to another. It is constantly changing and transformed, as new forms are created out of old ones." In his study on American labor movements, Fantasia (1988) examines the process of cultural construction by workers, arguing that it is in the process of constructing values, norms, attitudes that a worker culture is built and changed.

One perspective that has been suggested for viewing culture as process that can be particularly useful for social movement scholars is to reconceptualize cultures as subcultures. Simpson (1988:744) suggests that in replacing "culture" with "subculture," "the megalith of a normative and all-governing historical paradigm vanishes as once; we anticipate instead a world made of a complex assembly of interests and factions, each struggling to become the culture (or perhaps not)." Simpson stresses that the goal here is not to blur the distinction between a dominant structure and a subordinated one. He argues that this approach instead forces one away from both a deterministic
model of culture and a consensus model. He maintains that "this is not to celebrate pluralism or diversity as a matter of faith, but to recognize the place of material inequalities in the formation of social consciousness and in the resolution of social conflicts. Cultures emerge as the result of competing or cooperating subcultures." Fantasia (1988) also stresses the role of subcultures, especially as they effect social movement processes. In defining social movements' "cultures of solidarity," Fantasia is arguing for a conceptualization that is more "fluid" than traditional marxian notions of culture. Yet like Simpson he also stresses that these subcultures are not simply small, localized groups coexisting within the larger culture. They instead embody hegemonic struggles with the dominant culture. These subcultures comprise "a cultural expression that arises within the wider culture, yet which is emergent in its embodiment of oppositional practices and meanings" (1988:17).

The issues and debates within cultural studies have far-reaching implications for sociology in general and for social movement theory in particular. What constitutes components of culture, how to empirically evaluate and explain culture, and how to conceptualize social change within a cultural framework are key questions for the field of social movements. How to balance individual and group will within a dominant structure without a deterministic framework and how to analyze the relationship between microprocesses and structural components are increasingly moving into the center stage within social movement theoretical and empirical analyses.
Culture and Social Movement Theory

Components of culture have had a long history within social movement theory. Many of the debates between so-called classical theory and resource mobilization and political process theories have focused on the role of culture within the framework of social movement analysis. The "hearts and minds" approach of classical theory was rooted in Gustave LeBon's contagion theory (1960). In response to the French Revolution, LeBon saw collective behavior as the spontaneous result of a mob of irrational actors. He believed that there exists within a crowd the seeds for aroused emotion to become contagious. Once people are "infected" with this emotion, according to contagion theory, they lose their ability for critical thinking and thus become irrational. Blumer (1951) and Hoffer (1951) further maintain that collective behavior is discontinuous from everyday social actions and that its participants are significantly different from non-participants. Classical theorists argue that social movements arise spontaneously from an aggrieved group's frustration and anger. Smelser's value-added perspective (1962) sees social movements operating with a kind of "short-circuited" rationality. Classical theorists have tended to view the hearts and minds of social movement activists as easily duped and thus have equated emotion and spontaneity with irrationality.

Turner and Killian's emergent norm theory (1951;1972) has often been linked with classical theory in that it continues to focus on the role of emotion and sees collective behavior separate from ongoing social activities. Yet they have specifically rejected classical theory's equating emotion with irrationality. Killian (1985) has convincingly argued that spontaneity played a significant role
in the bus boycotts of the early civil rights movement in the south and that pre-existing organizations only responded to that spontaneity. Most recently, Turner and Killian (1987:14) have maintained that "to attempt to divide the actions of individuals into 'rational' versus 'emotional' or 'irrational' types is to deny the complexity of human behavior." Gamson (1992:54) argues that Turner and Killian have actually helped to "jettison the old baggage of irrationality and pathology" of the classical theory tradition.

As the dominant theoretical paradigm within the field of social movements (Morris, 1987; Zald, 1988; Mueller, 1992; Morris and Herring, 1987; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Gamson, 1990; Zald, 1992), resource mobilization has tended to reject the notions of emotion, grievances, and spontaneity present within these hearts and minds perspectives. As Taylor and Whittier (1992a:1) have asserted, an understanding of cultural processes involved in social movements has traditionally received scant attention due to "the structural bias inherent in dominant approaches to social movement theory. . .resource mobilization and political process models have allowed the pendulum to swing too far from classical theories that highlighted the link between culture, spontaneity, and social movements." Moreover, Mueller (1992) has noted that the emphasis on instrumentality has prevented resource mobilization theory from considering issues of structural inequality in resource distribution and aspects of meaning construction.

The rational choice model has been central to resource mobilization's focus on structural components of social movements (Zald, 1992; Mueller, 1992; Ferree, 1992; Jenkins, 1983; McCarthy & Zald, 1973, 1977). According to this perspective, participants in social movements are active not because of emotions or grievances, but because they decide based on a cost/benefit
analysis that the rewards of participation outweigh its tolls (Olson, 1965). According to resource mobilization theory, grievances alone are not sufficient to explain why social movements occur. Tilly (1978) and Jenkins and Perrow (1977) have argued that grievances in fact remain relatively stable over time and are therefore a non-problematic constant. McCarthy and Zald (1977) further maintain that "grievances and discontent may be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations." What is essential in determining when and how a movement will emerge is the availability of resources which a pre-existing group - a "cadre of entrepreneurs" (McCarthy & Zald, 1977) - can utilize to its advantage.

The rational choice model, at the heart of resource mobilization theory, has been criticized for its failure to recognize that determining factors related to "rational" choice is inherently hegemonic. It is assumed that all people make decisions based on the same systems of "rationality," regardless of gender, race, class, ethnicity, or even individual histories. Ferree (1992) has argued that the rational choice model is androcentric, individualistic, and capitalistic. She claims that a detached, contractual, means-ends relationship can be a theoretical focus only in a model based on adult male relationships, rather than on the most fundamental other-oriented relationship between mother and child. Rational choice theory has thus created a conception of rationality based on principles of social exchange that ignores non-commodity relationships and behavior. According to Ferree, a rational choice model also assumes that individual good supersedes collective good, that activism is without passion. In focusing on the primary role of individual incentives, rational choice also assumes participation is not related to self-identity and consciousness, although Friedman and McAdam (1992) have asserted that
identity can be incorporated into the rational choice model by conceptualizing identity as a solidary incentive. Cohen (1985:688) has argued that "the critique of the collective behavior tradition (has) thrown out the baby with the bathwater by excluding the analysis of values, norms, ideologies, projects, culture, and identity in other than instrumental terms." Perrow (1979), Ferree (1988), and Taylor (1988) have further maintained that the rational choice model of resource mobilization reduced social movement participants to "superactivists" who make all decisions in a distinctly unemotional way. Perrow (1986:41) has likened this model to an "Invasion of the Body-Snatchers" nightmare where "human forms are retained but all that we value about human behavior -- its spontaneity, unpredictability, selflessness, plurality of values, reciprocal influence, and resentment of domination -- has disappeared."

In eschewing classical theory's emphasis on emotion and thus, irrationality, the rational choice perspective of resource mobilization theory has actually reified the dualism of the classical approach. This dualism reflects a Eurocentric world view that ultimately supports systems of domination based on race, class, gender and sexuality. Hooks (1984:29) argues that systems of dualistic thought are "the central ideological component of all systems of domination in Western society." Physicist and rhetorician Keller (1982; 1985) has further argued that the thought-rationality/emotion-irrationality dichotomy is sexist because women are always equated with emotion and thus irrationality. She maintains that this dualistic language creates an intellectual climate which is hostile to women. Yet Keller also argues that this dichotomy, placed within a system of gender dualism, effects both what is considered to be appropriate for scientific inquiry and the nature of science itself. She argues that equating objectivity with masculinity allows the research community to exclude women
and to exclude basic aspects of human experience. Collins (1991:42) further recognizes three consequences of this dichotomous scheme that together "may be a philosophical lynchpin in systems of race, class, and gender oppression." She argues that this duality defines its constructs - black/white, women/men, rational thought/emotion - in terms of their differences. Secondly, these concepts are constructed directly in opposition to one another. Collins maintains the third and most devastating aspect of this dualistic construction is that these opposites are never equal; their construction is always hegemonic. Within these constructs, Collins (p.42) argues, "whites rule Blacks, males dominate females, reason is touted as superior to emotion in ascertaining truth. Dichotomous oppositional differences invariably imply relationships of superiority and inferiority, hierarchical relationships that mesh with political economies of domination and subordination."

As the critiques of the rational choice model have increased in the last decade (Mueller, 1992), the role of culture has moved to the forefront in research on social movements, marking a "second generation" of resource mobilization theorists. For example, in examining the significant role of black churches in the early civil rights movement, Morris (1984) has argued that significant resources are often indigenous to the culture of the insurgency group. Jenkins and Perrow (1977) have found that the farmworkers unions most likely to become active in the Farmworkers' movement were those who had strong kinship bonds with other farmworkers and that the unions most likely to succeed were those who stressed solidary incentives over "bread and butter gains." More recently, Rupp and Taylor (1987) have argued that in the 1950s the women's movement was actually sustained within both structural and cultural elements of an elite group of feminists. Scholars of social movements
are increasingly incorporating elements of cultural theory into their research and theory. The original debates that were at the center of classical theory are receiving renewed interest, including a focus on the roles of values and generalized beliefs systems (Smelser, 1962), emergent norms (Turner and Killian, 1972), emotion (White, 1988; Taylor, forthcoming), and spontaneity (Killian, 1984; Oliver, 1989). Taylor and Whittier (1992b) have recently identified four major areas within cultural analysis studies that are useful for social movement scholars. These include: 1) emergent values and norms; 2) collective identity construction; 3) the use of ritual, especially in emotion formation; and 4) discourse analysis. Swidler (1986) has also defined elements of culture that can be easily incorporated within social movement frameworks. For Swidler (p.273) culture is defined as "the publicly available symbolic forms through which people experience and express meaning...culture consists of...symbolic vehicles of meaning, including beliefs, ritual practices, art forms, and ceremonies, as well as informal cultural practices such as language, gossip, stories, and rituals of daily life." Swidler argues that culture can be conceived of as a "toolkit" of symbolic codes, rituals, and beliefs that help people assign meaning to both everyday and atypical experiences, a concept well-suited to social movement analysis.

The two central theoretical dilemmas of the resource mobilization model also imply cultural questions. The first critical problem is the Weber-Michels argument that organizations tend toward increased bureaucratization, focusing on self-maintenance to the exclusion of other goals. While the threat of increased bureaucratization of social movement organizations has remained problematic, research increasingly suggests that a complex arrangement of historical, structural and cultural factors, including values, ideology, and norms,
affects the structural outcomes of organizations. Zald and Ash (1966) have argued that different organizational structures will be created within a social movement based on whatever particular needs arise within a movement at a given time. Staggenborg (1987) has in fact argued that professionalization of organizations was critical to the survival of the pro-choice movement, while Rupp and Taylor (1987) have shown that the bureaucratization of the women's movement in the 1950s paved the way for more radical activism in the 1960s and 1970s. Buechler (1989:12) has further outlined how the National Organization for Women actually "became more radical, more decentralized, and more influenced by grass-roots activism through much of the 1970's."

A second major issue of resource mobilization theory is Olson's (1965) "free rider" problem. This dilemma points to a basic contradiction within the rational choice model, that the individual cost of participating in a social movement supersedes the benefits of participating, especially in light of the fact that individuals benefit from the gains achieved by a social movement whether they participate or not. Increasingly, cultural factors outside the realm of the rational choice model are offered to explain why activists participate in social movements, including friendship, love, family bonds, sexual norms, and identity formation (McAdam, 1980; Rupp and Taylor, 1987; Whittier, 1992; Adam 1987; Klandermans, 1984; Jenkins and Perrow, 1977; Staggenborg, 1987; Ferree, 1992, Snow and Benford, 1992; Melucci, 1985).

One of the most significant ways that considerations of culture have been incorporated into resource mobilization theory has been in the realm of social psychology (Mueller, 1992; Zald, 1992). Processes involved in micromobilization have gained increasing prominence in both theory and research (Gamson, 1992; Klandermans, 1984, 1992; Tarrow, 1989, 1992; Snow
et al, 1986; Snow and Benford, 1992; Ferree and Miller, 1985; Taylor and Whittier, 1992b). Rather than constructing new theoretical paradigms, social movement scholars have called for an integration of social psychological principles into resource mobilization and political process frameworks (Mueller, 1992; Jenkins, 1983). In analyzing the 1979 mobilization campaigns of the labor movement in the Netherlands, Klandermans (1984) has called for an expansion of resource mobilization to include expectancy-value theory as a way of better explaining activist participation. Ferree and Miller (1985) have developed a theoretical model incorporating cognitive social psychology into resource mobilization. They argue that three major mobilization strategies are employed by social movements based on the social psychological processes apparent in prospective activists. Snow et al (1986) have furthered the effort to bring culture back into social movement studies by incorporating basic principles of Goffman's dramaturgical approach into resource mobilization. Snow et al argue that the processes of events and experiential interpretation within social movements can best be understood through the use of Goffman's frame alignment analysis.

The new approaches to incorporating social psychological perspectives into resource mobilization and political process theories share certain components that have previously been ignored within the field of social movements. According to Mueller (1992: 5), the current approaches reconceptualize social movement actors as "socially embedded with loyalties, obligations, and identities" who actively participate in constructing meaning for their movement. These perspectives also emphasize the significance of face-to-face interactions - expanding previous notions of the primacy of organizations to include a variety of relationships - and focus on the elements of
social movements that form oppositional cultures to shape meaning at a variety of levels.

All of these aspects of micromobilization processes are central to this study. I will examine the role of emotion in social movements by looking at the ways that activists constructed oppositional emotions within their community. I also draw on the constructionist assumptions within the micromobilization approaches that emphasize symbols and meaning (Mueller, 1992; Zald, 1992; Tarrow, 1992). I believe that there was a competition of cultural discourse to construct the emotional responses to Dahmer's killings. At the heart of this competition was the varying ways Dahmer had become a symbol of homosexuality within the dominant culture and of homophobia within the lesbian and gay community. Milwaukee's lesbian and gay leaders - its "cultural producers" (Crimp, 1987b; Bourdieu, 1993) - had to construct the emotional responses of their community within the context of the emotion construction that was occurring within the dominant system. This shaped and limited the ability of the activists to frame their responses into oppositional emotions that could be used as rallying points for mobilization.

The role of collective identity is central to this approach. In later chapters I will argue that, while new inter-organizational coalitions formed to deal with the crisis presented to Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists, the ways that emotion shaped gay identity within their community had a more pronounced and perhaps more enduring impact. The centrality of identity is increasingly being explored as social movement scholars examine social psychological aspects of mobilization (Taylor and Whittier, 1992b; Friedman and McAdam, 1992). Collective identity can be viewed as a social movement goal in its own right (Garnson, 1992; Melucci, 1989) in that identity can maintain group loyalty.
and commitment and can be a significant factor in maintaining a social movement culture.

By far the greatest emphasis on the centrality of collective identity has come from the European new social movement theorists (Offe, 1985; Melucci, 1985, 1988; Cohen, 1985; Klandermans, 1986; Klandermans and Tarrow, 1988; Touraine, 1985; Pizzorno, 1978). According to this perspective, there are unique characteristics of many European and American movements of the past 30 years that allows these movements to be conceptually considered a new type of movement. The "new" movement paradigm is in many ways a postindustrial one (Touraine, 1985). It challenges the public/private dichotomy of modernity, places a heavy emphasis on non-institutional politics, and redefines notions of "politics" to include the means of action as well as its results. While "old" movements focused on class struggles and formal bureaucracies, new movements are culturally based (Plotke, 1990). New movements emphasize challenges to all forms of centralized power (Foucault, 1983) and are concerned with "valorizing" identities (Plotke, 1990). Offe identifies four major characteristics that define new social movements - issues, values, modes of action, and actors. The issues of new social movements involve concerns with the physical conditions of life, the quality of life for the future of humanity, the environment, and identity. New social movement values include a focus on personal autonomy and individual freedom and identity. Modes of action involve both a non-hierarchical informal collectivity ("internal mode") and an external mode that employs unconventional tactics and strategies. Finally new social movement actors do not rely on traditional definitions of political perspective (left/right; radical/conservative) nor do they adhere to traditional notions of political party affiliation.
Using these four criteria, new social movement theorists consider several movements in the United States to be "new," including the women's movement, the environmental movement, the peace movement, and the lesbian/gay movement (Plotke, 1990; Offe, 1985; Epstein, 1990). According to this perspective, these are movements that focus on cultural struggles over economic ones. The issues do not involve class conflicts; they involve battles over values and norms. Issues are defined not in terms of who controls the means of the production of goods but rather in terms of who controls the production of ideas, values, attitudes, and belief systems, where "the field of cultural production is the site of struggles in which what is at stake is the power to impose the dominant definition of the writer" (Bourdieu, 1993:42). Social change discourse occurs not in the arena of the factories but in coffee shops, bookstores, community centers, and city streets.

Thus identity is key to understanding new social movements (Pizzorno, 1978; Cohen, 1985; Touraine, 1985). While Cohen acknowledges that the new paradigm is not formulated around a "pure" identity model, identity has significance for new social movements that goes well beyond the limitations of resource mobilization's organizational framework. According to Pizzorno, the process of identity creation is a non-negotiable one that is focused not on specific political gains but on the production of group solidarity. The formation of an identity is complex one that involves a "collective interaction itself, within and between groups" (Cohen, 1985:692). Borrowing from Habermas' theory of communicative action, Cohen (1985: 706-7) has conceptualized identity as expressive and purposive in that the "presentation of self' entails an effort to get one's subjectivity recognized. . .expressive assertion of an identity. . .is thus not a matter of spontaneous expressivity but involves stylized and planned staging
of one's identity for the purpose of gaining recognition and/or influence." Yet Cohen also conceptualizes identity formation as a self-reflexive, intersubjective, and linguistically constructed and negotiated process. Thus new social movements involve an elaborate relationship between the "objective, subjective, and social worlds insofar as they thematize issues of personal and social identity, contest the social interpretation of norms, communicatively create and agree on new ones, and propose alternative ways of relating to the environment" (p.708).

Plotke (1990:94) criticizes new social movement theory for failing to recognize the limits of identity politics. He argues that the theory is reductive by defining activist movements according to a singular fixed identity. People occupy multiple roles and positions, and thus "no interpretation of those positions could long endure that dissolved all of them into a single, totalizing identity. . .Nothing fixes identities in such a way as to rule out further reinterpretations." Increasingly, lesbian and gay theorists conceptualize sexual identity as a fluid process rather than as the static entity that Plotke criticizes (Browning, 1993; Goldstein, 1993; Fuss, 1991; Sedgwick, 1990). In challenging cultural notions of body, sexuality, and gender, gayness implies a liminality that defies a structured identity (Fuss, 1991). Foucault (1980) has illustrated that once gayness becomes a form of "being" instead of "doing," it begins to disappear into the closet. Coming out of the closet is a continuous process of reasserting and redefining sexual identity. Gay identity is therefore always being created.
Clearly, culture is crucial to all models of social movement theory. Whether culture is at the forefront of analysis or simply an additional consideration in examining social movement structure, culture studies are well suited to analyzing the elaborate processes of social change. Notions of cultural values, norms, ideologies, and symbolic codes of discourse all add to a more complex understanding of the dynamic qualities of social movements and their actors. Yet social movement theory as a whole fails to fully recognize emotion as a significant aspect of culture. Both resource mobilization theory (including its theoretical offspring, political process theory) and new social movement theory are reluctant to empirically explore and to theoretically acknowledge the role that emotion plays in social movement culture. These vastly different theoretical perspectives share a perspective on emotion that contains three basic elements. First, both perspectives view emotion in a dualistic, dichotomous way that sets emotion in opposition to thought and reason. Secondly, they both take a reductivistic approach to emotion by conceptualizing it in the realm of psychological processes. Third, both perspectives tend to equate emotion with irrationality.

Yet conceptualizing emotion as culture is relevant to both theoretical perspectives. For resource mobilization theory, the study of emotion can help resolve such theoretically sticky issues as the free rider problem, as well as provide a greater exploration and explanation of the role that unique constituencies play in processes of movement mobilization. For new social movement theorists, conceptualizing emotion as culture can only help strengthen the understanding of the complex processes of identity construction.
As discussed above, researchers are increasingly calling for social movement theory to look to the growing literature on the sociology of emotion in order to theoretically define and empirically assess the role that emotion plays in developing social movement culture.

Cultural theorists recognize that so-called cultural movements challenge the right of the dominant culture to assert its ability to define values, norms, ideology, and belief systems. Oppositional cultures do not simply coexist within a larger context. They continuously compete for the power to create culture. In this dissertation I will argue that a similar competition exists for the power to define and shape emotion as part of that culture. If emotions are in fact culturally constructed, they too are created within a hegemonic framework, just as knowledge, ideology and other components of culture are. Rituals, symbolic codes, and other elements of the cultural "toolkit" do not just embody and express emotion. They can have the power to construct, define, and frame emotion in a way that benefits the culture that is composing them.

For social movement activists the framing of emotion into "oppositional" emotions can help strengthen identity and increase mobilization and commitment. Yet Milwaukee's gay and lesbian leadership - those with the power within gay culture to construct this framing - were only partially successful in this attempt. I will argue that this resulted in part from the limited ability of the lesbian and gay culture to construct the emotional framework for this event. In the face of an overwhelming effort of the dominant culture to define this event in a particular way and to provide the emotional construct for that definition, the gay and lesbian community itself became fragmented and splintered as a result of these competing definitions.
Chapter Two will focus on the methodology employed in this research. The press played a significant role in the data gathering process. Reporters helped to shape the focus and nature of this research. They influenced the topic selection process, assisted with issues of gaining entree, provided access to data, and facilitated some of the logistical problems encountered in any qualitative study. Although the press and social science researchers have often been considered at odds and, in some ways, in direct competition with each other (Richardson, 1991), I will argue that reporters were instrumental in the development of this study. This chapter will discuss the ways the role of reporters and researchers can be comparable and complementary.

Chapter Three describes Dahmer's killings, arrest, and trials. I use the police reports of Dahmer's confession, supplemented with press accounts, as the data source for this chapter. I also analyze various components of Dahmer's confession, including sociological aspects of his admission of cannibalism. Because this dissertation focuses on emotional discourse, issues of voice in writing this account became paramount. Chapter three is therefore written in my voice, set within the context of my memories and my relationship with Jeff.

In chapter Four I describe the construction of Jeffrey Dahmer's crimes within the dominant culture. This chapter presents the discourse that dominated both police and press accounts of this case, discourse that blamed the gay community for the murders. The equation of Dahmer with "the gay lifestyle" that permeated mainstream discussions of the case resulted in an increase in gay bashing and eventually in political attacks against the lesbian and gay
movement in Milwaukee. This chapter will also present the mobilization responses of the gay and lesbian community to these assaults. I will describe the many events in the months following Dahmer's arrest including press conferences, vigils, community meetings, and protest rallies and the inter-organization network that formed. Although the political organizations in Milwaukee's gay community were able to build coalitions that facilitated their ability to forcefully respond to the charges of the dominant culture, the effectiveness of their coalition politics decreased as the need for long-term structures emerged.

Chapter Five will explore the emotional responses within the lesbian and gay community over the crisis that Dahmer's killings presented. I will specifically focus on the fear, guilt, and anger produced by the "Dahmer" event. Lesbian and gay leaders struggled to find a symbolic construction of Jeffrey Dahmer that could both repair the political damage within the dominant culture and provide emotional interpretations to strengthen gay pride, to increase commitment and activism, and to reaffirm gay identity.

I will also examine the ways that the emotion created in response to the Dahmer killings shaped gay identity in Milwaukee and will argue that the emotions generated within their community in the wake of the killings produced a new notion of "gay" as a political identity. This shift identity in turn created new definitions of activism.

The final chapter will examine the impact that the processes of emotion and identity construction had on the Milwaukee lesbian and gay community. It will argue that these processes occurred within a system of hegemony in which the larger community asserted its own emotional construction and interpretation. The gay and lesbian activists were engaged in a struggle with
the dominant cultural forces to provide their own framework for the event. This struggle limited the options available to the activists and constrained the ways that they were able to fully develop a set of oppositional emotions in response to the killings. I will also discuss the implications of these findings for social movement research and theory, calling for emotion to brought fully into social movement theory.
CHAPTER II
METHODOLOGY

Jeffrey Dahmer's arrest for the murder, dismemberment, and cannibalism of seventeen young men and boys sparked worldwide media attention for weeks. It was an extraordinarily controversial event that produced profound effects on the gay and lesbian community in Milwaukee. The framework for this study and the process of data collection occurred within this arena of public debate and scrutiny, producing some unique methodological opportunities and problems. As Adler (1984:310) has argued, "negotiating a research role in a social setting is always somewhat difficult, but when this takes place in the public eye an extra dimension is added." Nearly all aspects of this research were effected both by the public nature of the event and by the media themselves. The processes involved in choosing this topic were shaped by a unique combination of personal, public, and sociological factors, while this study's design, data gathering procedures, and interviews were influenced by the celebrity status of the case and by individual reporters. The press significantly impacted the research process, my role as researcher, and the data that were collected. This process demonstrates the rich and complex interaction that can take place between the media and social science research.

The first and most fundamental consideration in any sociological study is also one that traditionally has received scant attention in methodological
discussions, that is, the choice of the research topic. As Renate Duelli Klein (1983:88) suggests, "the choice of the research topic--the 'what' to investigate--must come prior to the decision of 'how' to go about doing one's research."

Golden (1976) has outlined the ways that theory, previous research, and personal experience shape the choice of topic. Yet she argues that topic selection "is usually treated as if it were simply an intellectual exercise" (p.5), devoid of emotion, experience and "personal insight."

Feminist researchers, however, have increasingly argued that the choice of topic is a political one that has profound effects both for research and for the nature of what is considered knowledge (Harding, 1987, 1991; Keller, 1985; Smith, 1987; Collins, 1991). Topic selection is central to basic epistemological assumptions. Research in which women are central can both present fundamental challenges to existing androcentric research paradigms and offer concrete tools for improving women's lives (Oakley, 1981; Smith, 1987; Eichler, 1982; Nielsen, 1990; Stanley and Wise, 1983). Moreover, research that considers the "fragmented identities" of race, class, and gender can offer a force for emancipation and become "a rich source of feminist insight" (Harding, 1987:6).

The processes involved in topic selection have been explored by feminist researchers. Cook and Fonow (1986) have stressed the importance of spontaneity and creativity in choosing research topics, arguing that to see research as an opportunity to give voice to the socially disempowered often requires a researcher to be innovative in selecting both a topic and a methodology. Fonow and Cook argue that traditional avenues of research funding and data gathering are often closed to researchers wishing to study what are perceived as feminist topics. Thus, they maintain that for feminist
researchers, using the immediate situation as an opportunity for research "may be a survival mechanism. . . feminists (are forced) to be very opportunistic in their choice of topic, setting, and method" (1991:13).

Researchers often study what they know personally. Feminist methodologists have written extensively on the ways that individual interests effect why people research what they do, as in the case of Richardson's study of single women in relationships with married men, Schmidt and Feltey's comparison of Quaker women and Right-to-Life women (1985), Krieger's ethnography of a lesbian community (1983), Rupp and Taylor's analysis of the women's movement of the 1950s (1987), or DiOrio's (1982) research on working class women in a van club. Clearly factors other than simply state-of-the-field theoretical and methodological considerations are frequently at work when researchers select a topic. Schmidt and Feltey (1985:9) argue that "the choice of subject is influenced by a number of factors, not the least of which is personal history and experience." Similarly, Adler (1984) has described the process of "drifting into" a research topic that combines subjective interest with unexpected situations, providing unique opportunities for research. Moreover, Finch (1984) maintains that her own attempt to deny the personal factors influencing her choice of topic was actually detrimental to her process of data collection.

While the choice of topic for this research encompassed both personal involvement and the use of the situation at hand, it bore little resemblance to the "drifting into" process described by Adler. An excerpt from my earliest field notes indicates a sense that rather than my easing into the topic, this study was presented to me in a profoundly chaotic and disruptive way:
As much as I want to deny this (at times it all seems too painful and horrific to bear), I feel compelled to do this research. I know I am in a unique position. Everyone keeps telling me that I should be able to explain all this more than anyone else. I keep feeling that they're right, but sometimes I just want this all to go away. My life feels like it will never be the same.

Jeffrey Dahmer and I were childhood friends and classmates. I have known Jeff since the seventh grade in our small town of Bath, Ohio. I knew him well in high school, or so I believed. We enrolled in many of the same courses, were involved in the same extra-curricular activities, and went on school trips together. After high school graduation we both attended The Ohio State University. I last saw Jeff at the end of our first college term in 1978, six months after his first murder.

I learned of Dahmer's arrest for the Milwaukee murders several hours before the national press released his name to the public. The morning after the story of his arrest broke, I was contacted by a local television reporter who had heard of my association with Dahmer through a mutual friend. During that interview, the reporter asked me if I had any research plans on this topic. Many journalists subsequently suggested that I was in a unique position to conduct research related to this case. A number of these reporters eventually became instrumental in this research.

I was initially intrigued by the issues of homophobia that surrounded both the reasons for and responses to the case. As a social movements researcher, I quickly focused on the lesbian and gay movement in Milwaukee. As a result of the press coverage and my own reaction to the case, I suspected that both the killings and the vast media coverage surrounding the case would have profound effects on the local lesbian and gay community. My own quite visible
and personal involvement in this case gave me access to data sources, made me legitimate to the gay and lesbian activists in Milwaukee, helped to build instant rapport with interview respondents, and gave me insight into the emotional responses of the Milwaukee community.

While the reactions of the feminist and gay reporters, as well as of members of the Milwaukee lesbian and gay community, were very positive, my choice of topic was not well received by some reporters, colleagues, and occasionally even strangers. One reporter for a major urban newspaper asked if there was "something sexual" about my desire to do this research, while another sociologist speculated about potential pathological reasons for my choosing this topic. Still another feminist colleague argued that this research would potentially politically damage the gay and lesbian movement. Such reactions when women conduct research are not uncommon and have been well-documented. For example, Schmidt and Feltey (1985) have described the various harsh and nonsupportive responses of feminist colleagues to a study of women in the Right-to-Life movement, while Dworkin has discussed feminist resistance to studying right-wing women. Fonow has also discussed the hostile responses she received in researching women ironworkers. Fonow and Cook conclude that "women, especially feminist investigators, face special problems when. . . their topics are perceived as controversial" (1991:13).

The Role of the Media

Although the role the press can play in social science research has received little attention, "researchers. . . cannot afford to remain innocent of the
media's workings" (Best, 1986:381). Most explorations of the implications of
media for social science research have focused on the dissemination of
research findings within the popular media and conclude that the press
misinterprets, distorts, and trivializes most research results. Best (1986)
discusses press responses to his research findings that Halloween sadism and
the tainting of trick-or-treat candy are little more than urban folklore. He argues
that often the press "cast me as an ivory tower intellectual, whose findings
contradict common sense" (p.379) and concludes that researchers have little
control over the spin reporters place on a story. Richardson (1975) documents
the development of media reactions to her research on door-opening rituals
between women and men. Although they were presented at the annual
American Sociological Association meetings, her findings were eventually
trivialized and ridiculed by the press until she as researcher became the object
of mockery.

Social scientists have also documented the effects that a flood of media
attention to research findings can have on the researcher. Best (1986) reports
feeling exploited by the press as reporters began to ask for unreasonable time
commitments and yet themselves did not take the time or care to present his
findings accurately. Richardson (1991), in documenting her book tour
experiences with the media, concludes that contact with the press can exact a
personal toll on the researcher. She argues that reporters often had no
consideration of the time demands they were placing on her and no
appreciation of the physical demands of a rigorous interviewing schedule. She
maintains that the press has the ability to take total control of the interview
situation, reducing the researcher to near-child status.
In addition to exploring the effects of the press in disseminating research findings, Adler (1985) also discusses the role of media in the research process itself. He describes the ways his new-found celebrity status affected his data collection. His notoriety facilitated his ability to gain entree and enhanced his understanding of the impact of celebrity status on the basketball players that he was studying. Yet his celebrity also was at times detrimental to the research process. Adler concludes that when research is conducted under the scrutiny of the press, sociologists have even more power to influence their research settings and can actually jeopardize the status of the research participants that they seek to protect.

Best (1986), Adler (1985), and Richardson (1975) all emphasize the disruption the press can have on a researcher's personal and professional life, altering relationships with colleagues, family, friends, and, ultimately, one's sense of self. They all bemoan the fact that the process of social science research is widely misunderstood by the press and that the notion of research as a scientific endeavor is ignored and trivialized. Richardson (1991:294) concludes that the press assumes the right to define and control any encounter with researchers. She argues that "the media and sociology are competing institutions: the task of the sociologist is the discovery and implementation of ways to use the media, rather than being used by it." Yet media and sociology are not inevitably competing interests. The goals of both can be complementary, even while the processes involved in trying to translate sociology into a sound bite world are both frustrating and alienating. The relationship between the press and this research was a complex one. While I encountered many of the same issues and problems previously discussed, the press actually facilitated this research. Many reporters were instrumental to the
research process and helped to shape the nature of this study in three major ways. First, they assisted with many basic aspects of data collection. They helped me gain entree, provided me with data, and facilitated many of the logistics of conducting research. Secondly, the press also effected me, both personally and in my role as researcher. Finally, the press impacted the data that was gathered. Reporters served as informants, and, in a response similar to Adler's experience, the celebrity status accorded me by the press gave me added insight to the feelings experienced by the members of Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. Yet the processes involved in my encounters with the media also had a profoundly deleterious effect on me, an effect that resulted from the inevitable objectification that both television and print journalism require.

My decision to speak with the media, while a very deliberate one, was made with no research agenda in mind. I simply wished to address what I believed to be inaccuracies in the ways that Jeffrey Dahmer was portrayed in the earliest reports. I agreed to conduct one interview (which lasted two hours—an unheard-of amount of time in the world of television sound bites) and naively assumed that my public involvement with the case would go no further.2 Within hours of the airing of that interview, I was contacted by all three network affiliates, and a host of news organizations, including the Associated Press, USA Today, the Chicago Tribune, the Milwaukee Sentinel, and the New York Times. Local and national gay presses had contacted me as well. Within three days, due to wire feeds, I had, without my knowledge, appeared on the Today Show, NBC Nightly News, and various radio stations (although I never actually conducted any radio interviews) and had been quoted in newspapers around the country and throughout the world. Within weeks after Dahmer's arrest I
appeared on talk shows in Columbus, Chicago, and Milwaukee, as well as on The Oprah Winfrey Show. My unexpected celebrity status grew internationally, as I was asked to appear in a documentary for an Italian television network. One year after Dahmer's arrest, I conducted an interview for a new ABC News primetime show called Day One and was interviewed in February, 1993 in response to the airing of Dahmer's interview on Inside Edition. While I had initially made myself extremely accessible to the press for personal reasons, I quickly decided to continue that policy for the potential research benefits I could derive. The only media organizations I refused to grant an interview were the so-called infotainment shows, including Inside Edition and A Current Affair. I feared the total lack of editorial control I would have on these shows and knew that my role as sociologist would be, at best, trivialized, and, at worst, sensationalized.

Reporters frequently engage in what Crouse (1973) has identified as "pack journalism," where journalists approach an event with a kind of groupthink process, reporting on a story in a uniform manner. While Crouse focused on reporters who are physically grouped together (such as on a campaign press bus), Best argues that "something similar occurs even when reporters remain physically separated. The prominent media set the agenda, identifying newsmakers and defining the terms of the story, and the rest of the pack follows" (p. 377). I too quickly encountered this pack phenomenon, as information about me spread among reporters. I soon became constructed as an expert. I was known as a "good interview" and a "good quoter" (Altheide, 1984). Reporters frequently referred to me as the expert on the case. I was asked to serve in an informal advising and informant capacity for ABC News, the Oprah Winfrey Show, and the New York Times, among others. I was asked
which individuals were good - that is, reliable - sources and which data sources were good ones. I was asked to comment on other reporters' stories, the opening arguments of Dahmer's trial, the jury's verdict, and anything that was remotely related to Dahmer. I was given the expert status on all aspects of the Dahmer case; one communications researcher even asked to interview me on my impressions of the role of the media in the case.

As far as I know, no reporter ever investigated whether I was myself a reliable source. After I appeared on *NBC Nightly News* the day after Dahmer's arrest my status as an authority was sealed, even though that interview had actually been conducted by the local NBC affiliate. My position as an assistant professor of sociology also gave me immediate expert status. Additionally, I was articulate, and my willingness to be accessible at all hours contributed to this legitimacy; I promptly returned phone calls, including long distance ones, and always rearranged teaching and personal schedules to accommodate the needs of the reporters. Yet I believe one of the biggest factors which shaped views of me as expert was that I was also emotionally vulnerable and accessible to most of the press. With a few exceptions that were intended to preserve the privacy of others, I disclosed most of what I knew and, more significantly, most of what I felt.

This onslaught of the press had its personal consequences. For three weeks I discussed Dahmer constantly. Reporters frequently called my home as early as 8:00 a.m. and as late as 1:00 a.m. My daily routines became defined by the press; I ate and slept according to the breaks between deadlines. I was physically exhausted after one week of this routine. As difficult as this was, I was especially unprepared for the emotional toll that was accompanying this experience. I knew I needed time to process the events for myself emotionally,
and yet I was constantly asked to discuss the case. I felt horror at what my friend had been capable of, guilt over the ways I might have prevented it, and fear of what the future might hold. I felt a need to contact Dahmer, his family, and his attorney, and yet knew that I was increasingly conducting my life under media scrutiny. More than once, I told reporters that I simply could not talk about it all anymore, and yet these interviews occurred anyway. As Richardson had described, my life no longer felt under my control, and, worse, my own emotional processes felt on public display.

I continued to be disturbed by the public portrayal of Dahmer as either the ultimate embodiment of evil or as a real-life Hannibal-the-Cannibal Lecter. Both images of him, the monster and the psychotic, were constructed by the media, yet neither accurately reflected the complexity of the Jeffrey Dahmer that I knew. In each interview I both pleaded for Dahmer to be viewed as a human being and analyzed the complex web of sociological factors, including homophobia, class privilege, and internalized oppression, which helps to explain his killings. Yet because I was asking for him to be viewed as fully human within the context of media construction, there was inevitably a process by which I had to allow myself to be similarly constructed. Ironically, in arguing against the objectification of Jeffrey Dahmer, I had to objectify myself and Jeff and to be objectified professionally and personally.

Adler (1984:324) argues that when a researcher "becomes subject to the open scrutiny of the media. . . (it) can be very dangerous." This danger, Adler maintains, arises from the "powerful transforming effect" the media can have on a researcher. Sociologically, we know how deeply we internalize our identities, no matter how temporal those identities may be. In being constructed as the expert on Dahmer by the press, I began to assume many aspects of that role.
anticipated that every encounter with any individual would have to involve a discussion of some aspect of this case. I began to speak the language of the sound bite - short, colorful, quotable phrases - in every interaction. For months, I had to replace the spontaneity of everyday life with meticulous attention to the presentation of self. Because I never knew when an interview would occur, I planned each day's wardrobe according to the rules of television attire. I styled my hair in ways that looked best on television and wore makeup appropriate for camera lighting. My sense of self quickly centered on my media self. As Adler (1984:325) has described, "because of the power of the media in our society, I was forced to live up to the expectations created about me. To some extent, I came to believe them about myself."

I became similarly distressed with the ways I was required to objectify Jeffrey Dahmer. It was uncomfortable for me to refer to him as "Dahmer" when I knew him as my childhood friend Jeff. Reporters referred to "Dahmer" as an event, not as a human being; "Dahmer" became a shorthand for every aspect of the case (for example, a reporter would discuss what life had been like "before Dahmer"). Because the press was defining the story, I was forced into a framework that required me to use this language. Moreover, I knew that many of the aspects of Jeff that I knew would be distorted and sensationalized, and thus I chose not to reveal them. Eventually, two images of him emerged in my mind - one, Dahmer, the media constructed character I discussed in the press and the other, Jeff, the human being I knew and rarely discussed with even close confidants. In attempting to present him as fully human, I had unwittingly objectified both of us.

I also became objectified by others, both personally and professionally. Initially, I had to continuously defend my motives for how public I was being with
my association with Dahmer. Choosing this topic was controversial, yet as my personae as expert grew, so did professional acceptance of this as a legitimate research topic. I then experienced the consequences of the professional labeling that occurs when a researcher becomes strongly identified with a particular topic. For over a year, every introduction of me began with, "she's researching Dahmer" or "she's been on Oprah." Each of these encounters required me to discuss not just my research, but also Jeff in detail; to refuse to do so was perceived as a professional rudeness. My sense of privacy was lost; in every social setting I had to be prepared to discuss my research, but because I was so personally involved in the case, I could never retreat to the safety of professional distance.

Altheide (1982) has described a "ripple effect" that occurs with such sudden notoriety. Adler (1984:315) discusses his own experience of dealing with "acquaintances and neighbors whom I barely knew (who) went out of their way to discuss (the research) or called me." Best (1986:376) has adopted the folklore term "foaf"--friend of a friend--to describe his experience with the ripple effect, speculating that "perhaps because relatively few people make scheduled appearances on network television, even the opportunity to see someone who knows someone who you know seems special." I experienced the ripple effect in two distinct ways. First, I was contacted by numerous friends and casual acquaintances from around the country, many of whom I had not spoken with in a dozen or more years. Each encounter required that I tell the story again; since I was accustomed to speaking about Dahmer in sound bites, these personal contacts were accorded relatively the same status as a formal interview with an unfamiliar reporter. I also experienced the ripple effect in contact with strangers. Individuals would recognize and approach me in such public arenas as
restaurants and bars. These people wanted me to tell them some personal story about Dahmer, wanted to tell me their own theories or complaints about the case, or even asked me to deliver a message to Dahmer himself. These encounters invaded my sense of privacy and only added to my feeling that I had lost control over many aspects of my life. Because these interactions with friends, acquaintances, and strangers were occurring within the context of my constructed media image, they too became objectified. I spoke in interview phrases, selecting stories and choosing works that I had repeated in dozens of interviews. In many ways, I had become the constructed image to myself and in all but the most intimate contacts with others.

While these multiple layers of objectification were occurring, there was a simultaneous process involving the development of relationships with reporters that emerged. Paradoxically, this process was counter to the media's objectification of me and also greatly enhanced my ability to conduct this research. I formed these relationships quickly, especially with feminist and gay journalists. Within the first 48 hours of the story, reporters expressed concern for my emotional state and shared with me the effects that this story was having on them. One reporter asked me about my dream life and discussed the ways that she feared this story would effect her sleeping patterns. Another cautioned me about the unique emotional effects of serial killings and offered advice on ways to cope that he had found useful. Another gave me her home phone number and encouraged me to call her, day or night, if I "just need(ed) to talk."

Several of these relationships continued to develop. Familiarity increased and contacts became more casual. For example, one reporter originally telephoned, identifying herself as "Mary Smith with the New York Times." Soon she began phone conversations with "Marty, this is Mary." Finally
she used no identifier at all when calling. Another reporter eventually would identify herself only with her last name, a way that friends in the press commonly refer to one another. More reporters gave me their home telephone numbers. They began sharing such intimate items as information about their families, divorces, and impending surgeries, all signifying that a more personal rapport was forming. With four reporters a long-term relationship developed. One said, 10 months after the story originally broke, "I consider you to be a friend."

These relationships developed because of the unique aspects of this story. Many experienced reporters told me it was the most gruesome story they had ever covered. Several asked what emotional effects it was having on me and how I was able to deal with these effects. I talked openly about my feelings, and often expressed my horror, guilt, anger, and sadness (occasionally I even cried) both privately and on-camera. That I was an expert (having been so constructed by them) who was also emotional was unusual, and most reporters responded in sensitive, non-objectifying ways. Despite their professional duty to synthesize and reduce all information, including emotion, many reporters really listened to me. They gave me advice on coping strategies and talked about their own responses and perceptions. In this way, the press provided me with a sense of community, a community in which I felt active and important in response to a situation over which I otherwise had no personal control. Finch (1984) discusses the power of the interviewing process in providing individuals with a sense that "it's great to have someone to talk to." Ironically, in a situation where otherwise as researcher my primary role was listener, the press provided me with the opportunity to talk.
These relationships were not simply a pleasant and unexpected result in a rather grueling press experience; they became key in the research process. Event analysis such as this one can place special demands on a social science researcher; new developments occur quickly, and situations can change with little warning. News reporters are accustomed to these demands in a way that few social scientists are. Much of the assistance I received from the press helped me manage the immediacy of this event.

What was significant within these relationships was the perception of me as a research partner. Reporters indicated that they saw our roles as information gatherers to be similar. They believed that as an academic I had both the time and theoretical background to do more thorough researching than they could. In this way, many were eager to offer assistance and, in fact, seemed pleased to be able to be apart of a more enduring academic study. One reporter asked, "What can I do to help you?" Another reporter from Milwaukee sent me a letter imploring me to let him give me information: "It's a towering heap, threatening to overwhelm the newsroom, actually, that I could use to help you out." Initially, reporters became sources of data. They gave me wire reports, police and court documents (including Dahmer's 143-page confession), and access to press and court rooms. They served as important informants, supplying me with information on the political processes involved in and reacting to the Dahmer case. Three reporters, all of whom had interviewed me extensively several times, became informants that I interviewed. Having reported in the Milwaukee area for many years, they offered valuable information and insight into the political history of the city, including the history of the lesbian and gay movement, the civil rights movement, and the politics of coalition building within Milwaukee.
Reporters also assisted with many of the logistical difficulties involved in conducting research. My accessibility to the press helped finance two research trips to Milwaukee. For both trips, I conducted interviews for local and international press organizations. Travel and certain lodging expenses were thus covered. Additionally, reporters eased the burden of xeroxing, mailing, and telephoning costs. Reporters also helped with some of the physical difficulties involved in any research endeavor. They gave hotel advice, served as tour guides, bought me dinners and provided entertainment.

Reporters also served as points of entree into the Milwaukee gay and lesbian community, a community so besieged and beleaguered by attention that many of its members were distrusting of any outsiders. They sent me copies of gay newspapers, and eventually were able to introduce me to key informants within the community. One reporter took me on a tour of "Gay Milwaukee," showing me the locations significant to the case and to the community. Another reporter took me to the gay bars, where I was able to engage both in participant observation and in informal interviewing.

Finally, my experience with the media effected the nature of the data that was collected. The celebrity status constructed by the press gave me an instant legitimacy with members of Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. I found that I could relate to their sense of ambiguous identification with Dahmer, and they asked me numerous questions about my perceptions of him. Because I found the deluge of reporters overwhelming in my own life, I had an insider's understanding as respondents discussed their own experiences of disruption, disorientation, and fatigue. The community activists shared their own desire for some emotional privacy and asked me how I had coped with both the horror of the case and with the invasion of the press. Eventually, my experiences with
the media helped to provide my research with a methodological and theoretical unity. I had openly discussed my own emotional experiences and processes with reporters. These encounters had a profound emotional impact on me which in turn help me to understand the emotional responses of the gay and lesbian activists. Eventually, research on "the effects of the Dahmer case on the gay and lesbian community" grew into a study on the processes involved in the social construction of emotion within a social movement culture.

The relationship between the press and social science research is a complex one. The issues involved in researching a topic in which one feels a sense of personal involvement can be complex in their own right. When those issues must be negotiated in a public arena, the difficulties are accentuated. The personal toll of the media attention was great. It was expensive, time-consuming, enormously inconvenient and invasive in my life. As Richardson (1991), Adler (1984), Best (1986) and others have described, the "famous for fifteen minutes" phenomenon can be disorienting. For several weeks, my life was structured around and defined by the press and its demands. The celebrity status I had been accorded presented difficult and complex challenges. While the demands of the press were overwhelming, they also offered a unique opportunity for research. The reporter and the social scientist are not necessarily in competition. Their roles can often be complementary and reciprocal. As Adler (p.325) argues, "we need to become more aware of the sometimes symbiotic, sometimes deleterious, but usually complex effects of the media upon social scientists and their work."

However, these complementary and reciprocal roles operate within a complex system that is often difficult to manage. I had originally entered the world of the media with a desire to compete with the forces that placed the
prevailing spin on this story and to provide my own spin which decried the objectification of Jeffrey Dahmer. Yet the job of the media is constructing images; I had entered an arena that structurally requires objectification. At the same time, this story was intensely personal to me, and relationships formed with reporters based on my openness with my emotions and ideas. Thus two concurrent and contradictory processes were taking place. One required the construction of my image and Dahmer's image. The other involved a kind of anti-objectification in which reporters and I both worked to assist one another logistically and emotionally. As postmodern theorists increasingly examine the significance of identity construction, understanding the role of the press in that process is paramount. By its very nature the press must objectify events, humans, and emotion. Yet people seek to create identities that are the antithesis of objectification and use the media to do so. The tension that exists between the process involved in identity construction and the structural constraints that require objectification of that process demands the attention of both research and theory.

The Data

The structuralist bias of most research on social movements is due only in part to resource mobilization's organizational approach to social movements. The methodological requirements of researching organizations are well-suited to the lifestyles of social science researchers and to the restraints on research imposed by academic institutions (Taylor, 1988). Studying social movement organizations, with their varying structures, conflicts, unreliable membership lists, and secretive hierarchies can be difficult for any researcher. Yet concepts
central to cultural studies, such as community, identity, and emotion, present additional and unique methodological problems. While defining exactly what constitutes a social movement can be difficult (Lo, 1992; Schwartz, 1992), deciding the parameters of a social movement culture can be intensely problematic. What constitutes a gay and lesbian community? Should a gay community and a lesbian community always be examined separately? How can the components of a local gay and lesbian culture be identified? Should a political community be examined in the same manner that a bar community is (Signorile, 1993)? Organizations and their histories, structures, and leaders are relatively easy to identify and access. Yet there is often little written documentation concerning the development of a community. Definitions of identity are fluid and often specific to a locality. Identifying the leaders of a community and the creators of a culture is problematic and laden with race, class, and gender implications. Organizations usually have a physical space, even if that space is nothing more than a basement office of a member's home. Where does a community occur? Where does a culture happen?

Feminist research, in moving away from a structuralist approach, often utilizes the triangulation technique to deal with these methodological difficulties (Cook and Fonow, 1983). This strategy involves using multiple techniques simultaneously (Merton, 1957). Triangulation can help to increase the amount of data gathered when one technique alone would be insufficient. Moreover, this approach can provide a kind of checks-and-balances system of research, whereby data gathered with one method can point to gaps or inconsistencies in data gathered by another method. This research utilized this triangulation method. It used the three major types of qualitative methodology -- interviewing,
content analysis, and participant observation, -- to describe and analyze the ways that cultural constructions of emotion occur within a competing framework.

Interviews were conducted with 18 informants. Two of these respondents were interviewed specifically because they were reporters in the mainstream press. Another respondent played a key role in Dahmer's trial. The remaining 15 informants were all activists in the gay and lesbian community in Milwaukee. As community leaders, they wore many activist hats. Two were the publishers and editors of the two gay newspapers in Milwaukee. The other respondents included a gay bar owner, a social worker, an attorney, a teacher, a bartender, a small business owner, a government worker, 2 factory workers, and a writer. Two respondents were nationally known activists, one as the president of a national gay rights organization and the other as board member of another organization. Three of the respondents were interviewed twice; one, the editor of a gay newspaper, was interviewed four times.

All of the interviews were tape recorded and lasted between 45 minutes and three hours; the average interview lasted one and one-half hours. These interviews were usually "social events" (Rupp and Taylor, 1991) and occurred in restaurants, bars, and workplace offices. Only two interviews took place in the respondent's home. The interviews were semi-structured, although a different interview guide was constructed for each informant, depending on the nature of their specific activism and individual area of expertise within the community. The following major topical areas were addressed in each interview: the history of the gay and lesbian movement in Milwaukee; the respondent's own history of political activism; the significance of the Dahmer case to their own lives; what Dahmer symbolized to them personally, and what he symbolized to the community; what emotional responses they had to the event and what
emotional responses the community experienced; the effects of Dahmer on their own sense of identity and activism; and the effects of the Dahmer case on the community’s sense of identity and activism. When appropriate, I also asked questions related to increases in homophobic hate crimes, the effects of the case on what it means to be gay in Milwaukee, and the anticipated long-term effect that the case would have on Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community.

I also conducted content analysis of a variety of data sources. First, I used press accounts of the Dahmer case for information on the events, including the killings, the arrests, and the trials. Often the information presented in any one account was incorrect. I therefore used numerous newspapers and periodicals for this information, totaling 193 items. Each element presented in an article was cross-checked with at least three other sources. If there were discrepancies between articles, I used police reports and Dahmer's confession to verify a source. I also used newspaper accounts as primary data sources. I analyzed the press's portrayal of Dahmer, homosexuality, and the gay community to determine the construction of the case, and especially the construction of emotion, that was presented by the dominant culture. In this component of the analysis, discrepancies between sources became a point of data. For example, there are many gruesome details in Dahmer's confession concerning what he did with his victim's bodies that were never reported in the press; I considered this to be relevant to the construction of the emotion of the event by the mainstream press. Finally, I analyzed documents produced by the gay and lesbian community in Milwaukee. First, I examined all accounts relating to the case reported in the two gay newspapers in Milwaukee, In Step and The Wisconsin Light to determine how the issues surrounding the case were defined and how the nature of the debate over these issues was shaped. I
also analyzed organizational documents, including press releases, flyers, memos, letters, and policy statements.

The participant observation technique was also triangulized into three distinct arenas. Because concepts of culture, emotion, and identity are difficult to identify, these three aspects of participant observation provided significant data and served as points of reference for one another. First, I conducted participant observation informally within Milwaukee’s gay community. I conducted observations in the gay bars and restaurants and conducted informal interviews with patrons, bartenders, servers and owners. These observations occurred on three separate research trips - the first after Dahmer's arrest, the second during the first week of Dahmer's trial, and the third approximately two weeks after Dahmer's verdict and sentencing, nearly seven months after his arrest. One gay reporter, whom I interviewed several times, assisted with gaining entree here. He took me to several bars and introduced me to bar owners, servers, bartenders, and patrons (including a former Milwaukee mayor's son). One bartender expressed particular interest in this research and assisted me further. He introduced me to additional patrons, discussed the responses of bar owners and bartenders to the case, and provided information on the reactions of the bar community. He assisted me on all three research trips. On one occasion, he even lowered the volume of the music being played in his bar so that it would not interfere with my tape recording an interview.

The second method of participant observation focused on the formal legal processes of Dahmer's case. I attended both of Dahmer's court trials. Throughout the proceedings, I conducted observation in the courtrooms, in the corridors of the courthouse buildings, and in the pressrooms established in each building. Although I had no official press credentials, my frequent
association with reporters facilitated this process. Security at both trials was extremely tight. I therefore used my affiliation with the press, as well as my familiarity with reporters' demeanor, to gain access to otherwise restricted areas.

At the Milwaukee trial, a guard stopped me at the door of the pressroom, asking for my credentials. Earlier that day, I had appeared on a local talk show and had also been interviewed on the noon news. When I told her that I was there to meet with the reporter who had conducted those interviews, she permitted me to go in. In the pressroom I assumed the demeanor of a reporter, surveying notices posted on the wall and paying close attention to the close-circuit television monitors set up throughout the room. I overheard a reporter telling others that he was going to the courtroom, and I followed him closely. When we reached the security desk outside the courtroom, the guards examined his credentials and then assumed that I was with him. They searched us and our bags. Because the tools of the researcher are identical to those of a reporter, they let me into the room without question. Once inside the courtroom, I abandoned the personae of reporter and sat in the section reserved for the victims' families. Here I could eavesdrop on conversations between family members and between guards. Outside the courtroom, a reporter told me that he had seen me in the courtroom and that he assumed I had some personal involvement with the case. When I told him that I had been a childhood friend of Dahmer's, he responded, "Oh, you must be the college professor!" I agreed to give him an interview. He interviewed me several times, and I subsequently interviewed him as an informant. In this way, my association with the press was again crucial to my ability to conduct this research. At the Akron trial, a television reporter had asked for the opportunity to accompany me and agreed
to use her credentials to give me access to the courtroom, the pressroom, and the press conference conducted by Dahmer's attorney's after the trial. While I again had to act as a reporter to gain entree to the building, I also chose to abandon that personae inside. While I was once again interviewed by reporters who noticed my out-of-place demeanor in the pressroom, this also helped me gather data. The female member of Dahmer's legal defense team noticed at the press conference that I was not a reporter. When I approached her afterward she agreed to speak with me and ask me to write a letter to Dahmer that she delivered immediately. Thus my ability to engage in participant observation in these formal settings centered on my affiliation with the press. While reporters helped me gain entree, I also learned how to play the role of reporter. I carefully chose both to play this role and to abandon it in order to do what was necessary to facilitate the research.

The third form that my participant observation took was my personal involvement with the case and my experiences with the press. These aspects gave me the opportunity to experience many responses similar to the ones described by the community activists. The role that the researcher's emotional responses can play in the research process traditionally has been either ignored or viewed as an unavoidable consequence of field research (Krieger, 1991). Yet, as Stanley and Wise (1982:162) argue, research "personhood... cannot be left out of the research process. And so... it must be made full use of. If we can't do research in any other way than by using ourselves as the medium through which research is carried out, then we must fully explore this."

My emotional responses resulted from my own involvement with Jeffrey Dahmer and with the case; these reactions were often overwhelming, and because of them I frequently doubted whether I could really conduct this
research. Yet I quickly began to use my emotions in gathering and interpreting data. As the construction of emotion for the gay and lesbian activists became my focus, my emotional processes were not just unavoidable; they became imperative and significant data sources. My early emotional reactions, including my dreams (which I documented in my field notes), gave me insider’s insight into the reactions commonly discussed by my respondents. I experienced much of the same fear, anger, sense of helplessness, and guilt expressed by most of the activists. Later, I used my emotional reactions while in Milwaukee to experience the kinds of collective emotion that was occurring in the lesbian and gay community. Yet in using my emotions as data, I analyzed them as critically as any other data. I used the triangulation method as a way of verifying my emotional reactions and again providing a kind of checks-and-balances system of data collection.

For example, each time I was in Milwaukee, I felt enormous fear. Originally, I had believed that this fear was the nervous apprehension that ethnographers frequently experience when first entering a research setting. Yet the fear never subsided, and it actually increased during my final visit there, two weeks after the end of Dahmer’s trial. I felt it acutely while in the gay bars (where I would ordinarily feel comfortable) and at times was nearly paralyzed by it. I learned through interviewing that as homophobic harassment and threats had increased since Dahmer’s arrest, the gay bars had been particular targets of violence. A few weeks before I was in Milwaukee a gay man had been shot while leaving one of the most popular gay restaurants by a group of young men yelling “Dahmer!” Moreover, I drove an informant home late one night after interviewing him. As he got out of the car, he hesitated before closing the door and said, “Good luck. I wouldn’t want to be in your shoes.” While this only
added to my anxiety, it also verified that I was interpreting my reactions correctly; there was, in fact, something to fear. When I asked another informant, a reporter for the Milwaukee Sentinel about my feelings, he laughed at what he perceived to my naiveté: "You don't get it, do you? Your name's been everywhere here. You've been quoted all over the place." He told me that my discussions involving Dahmer and homophobia had been quite controversial there. Thus, when the activists later discussed their own overwhelming fear for their lives in being so publicly involved in the case, including the ways that fear made them want to return to the closet for safety, I could empathize with their responses.

My emotional openness also helped build trust in the interviews. Establishing this trust was crucial; the activists were accustomed to answering interview questions with sound bite phrases; it was critical that they perceive me as an insider in order to get them to openly and honestly discuss their own reactions and the reactions of the community. During the interviews, I talked about my experiences with the press and my feelings about Jeff and about the case. The activists often responded with a discussion of their own reactions; several cried during the interviews. The following excerpt from an interview with an activist illustrates this kind of interaction:

**Respondent:** So on a real basic level Jeffrey Dahmer was my brother. And it's a pretty awful thing to think about that (crying)

**Interviewer:** I guess I understand that, because

**R:** I'm sure YOU do! Probably even more than I do.

I was frequently surprised by how easy it was for me to share my emotional responses with these activists. Occasionally, I was very vulnerable,
and yet this always facilitated the interview. This excerpt demonstrates the ways that discussion of my own emotional processes helped to gain more information and insight from the activists:

R: So I guess I've had a lot of what my therapist would call interrupted grief episodes. So I suspect it'll keep happening, and it will be a long time before it's really out of my system.
I: All of a sudden I just feel jealous.
R: Of what?
I: I haven't... I haven't identified this for myself yet, but, I mean, the one thing that for me I felt from the very beginning, was how very very alone I felt. And I felt like there was nobody in the world who understood how I was feeling. I'm not sure that there's been anybody in the world who's sort of walked in my shoes in quite this way before. Of the common threads with him that just
R: Yeah.
I: . . . And all of a sudden I'm sitting here thinking, God, I would have loved to have been, to have had people to cry with, and felt a part of a community... .
R: And I think that certainly has been real important to me. Because even though I haven't done a lot of crying about it, I know that every one of my friends has been through the same experience on some level that I have. And actually that's been real helpful. That even if there hasn't been that sharing of emotions, there's at least that intellectual understanding.

The informants often perceived me in the role of confident, as Finch (1984) has described, "someone to talk to." The activists frequently made such remarks as, "to you I'll say this. I wouldn't dare say it to anybody else" or "I empathize with Jeffrey Dahmer. . . part of that came out of talking to you."

This triangulation approach provided a methodological and theoretical unity in this research. My own emotional reactions to the killings and my involvement with the press shaped the methodology of this study. These factors helped define the significant research questions, establish an empathetic rapport with gay and lesbian activists, provide informants from the mainstream press,
and provide the theoretical focus of this study. It is through the triangulation method that this study became truly "lived research" (Cook and Fonow, 1991).

A Discourse on the Discourse

This chapter began with the first aspect of methodology -- choosing a topic. It ends with the final component of methodology -- the writing, the "making of texts" (Clifford, 1986:2). As the positivist paradigm of modernism has been challenged, its language of objectivity has also been attacked. This notion of objectivity in writing is reflective of a hegemonic system based on gender, race, class, ethnicity, and sexuality (Keller, 1985; Harding, 1987; Richardson, 1988; Richardson, 1991; Signorile, 1993). Steeped in the belief of its own neutrality, scientific language has failed to recognize that it is discourse (Tyler, 1986). The lack of reflexive writing, according to anthropologist James Clifford (1986:2) "reflects the persistence of an ideology claiming transparency of representation and immediacy of experience. Writing reduced to method: keeping good field notes, making accurate maps, 'writing up' results."

Moreover, Stephen Tyler uses the rhetoric of science to illustrate how the scientific paradigm was doomed to fail:

Scientific thought succumbed because it violated the first law of culture, which says that "the more man controls anything, the more uncontrollable both become." In the totalizing rhetoric of its mythology, science purported to be its own justification and sought to control and autonomize its discourse. Yet its only justification was proof, for which there could be no justification within its own discourse, and the more it controlled its discourse by subjecting it to the criterion of proof, the more uncontrollable its discourse became. Its own activity constantly fragmented the unity of knowledge it sought to project. The more it knew, the more there was to know. (1986: 123)
Writing is political (Richardson, 1991); the "voices of the pages" (Stock, 1983:408) tell the story of cultural contestation and emergence. Discourse does not simply reflect the writer's perspective; it relates a conversation between author, reader, and culture. As James Boon (1990:52) argues, "read texts," radically construed, certainly speak back; they may, moreover, change their mind's message on each rereading." As researchers read culture -- and then write culture -- the voice of the discourse becomes paramount; recognizing the collective construction that is taking place in the telling of the story becomes crucial. The poetry of what Tyler (1986:126) has termed a "post-modern ethnography" lies in the fact that it "foregrounds dialogue as opposed to monologue. . . In fact, it rejects the ideology of 'observer-observed,' . . . there is instead the mutual, dialogical production of a discourse." Yet Tyler (128) maintains that in not allowing all of the voices in the ethnography to be "heard," some postmodern ethnographers "have committed a terrorist alienation more complete than that of the positivists. . . non-participatory textualization is alienation." Richardson further (1991:36) argues that, although postmodern writers have also attempted "to delete the author," the voice of the writer is critical in "tell(ing) the stories of those who have been textually disenfranchised" in order to create a "writing-union between feminism and postmodernism."

This research is about the clamoring of voices involved in the competition to construct emotional responses to Jeffrey Dahmer's killings. Most of the voices that will be presented belong to Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists. The more powerful voices of the dominant culture will also be examined. To provide a context for analyzing the effects on the gay and
lesbian community, the next chapter will describe Dahmer’s killings, arrest and trials, as well as events in the Milwaukee community that occurred between the arrest and trial. This account must also have a voice.

While a journalistic style may appear to provide an obvious solution, this form is both theoretically undesirable and ethically dangerous. The language of journalism is grounded in the paradigm of objectivity that renders it blind to its own constructions and thus establishes itself as the authoritative voice in the telling of the story. Media is a major institution by which the dominant culture has the power to assert its own interests. The press has been an especially powerful tool for reflecting an anti-gay agenda of the dominant culture. Taylor Branch (1982) has identified the media as one of the "closets of power," while Michelangelo Signorile (1993:xiv) has most recently named the press one of "three power structures in America" involved in a "widespread conspiracy. . . uniquely interrelated and dependent upon each other. They form the Trinity of the Closet." Signorile (p.76) argues that "the so-called journalistic ethics. . . were dreamed up a long time ago by straight white men to protect the world of straight white men." The voice of journalism, grounded in the language of objectivity, is itself shaping the cultural discourse to reflect the interests of the dominant paradigm.

Chapter Three is therefore written in my voice. The information presented in this chapter is based on interviews, press accounts, police reports, and court documents. It is also based on my experience. Ironically, in many of the press accounts my experiences became part of the public record, transposed by a journalistic interpretation into part of the objective "Truth" of the case. In this chapter, I strive to achieve a balance between accuracy in relating the events and an understanding that these truths are themselves
constructed. I have attempted to blend personal narrative with research, recognizing all experiences and interpretations, including my own, as data. As Stephen Tyler (1986:138) has argued, the experience of the field researcher becomes experience "only in the writing of the ethnography. Before that it was only a disconnected array of chance happenings. . . . The experience was the ethnography. Experience is no more an object independent of the ethnography than all the others."

This approach to documenting the events is problematic. The details of the killings are extraordinarily gruesome, yet it is necessary to discuss them in order to understand the effects that they had on the lesbian and gay community. While I try to avoid language that unduly dramatizes the details, there is a danger here that in the collective reading that is part of the discourse the details can be read as either alienating or sensationalistic. An even greater difficulty lies in the some of the sources of data for this chapter. As I have indicated, the press accounts and police reports from which I have gathered information are constructions of the dominant culture and as such present the details of the case as "Facts" from that perspective. For example, there are numerous grisly details outlined in Dahmer's confession that were never reported in any press account; several reporters told me that they were afraid of being perceived as too sensationalistic and therefore as disreputable journalists. Dahmer's confession itself is not his accounting of the events; it is the police's accounting of his recollections. There were even aspects of the case that the police did not include in their official reports in order to "spare the families" of the victims; in one instance, the sexuality of the victim was deliberately masked. While these sources often reflect the interests of the powerful, the narrative style allows me to examine these discrepancies more
critically than a journalistic style would. I am able to use memory, conversation, and experience, as well as data gathered in interviews, to help deconstruct official recordings of the "Truth."

Journalistic story-telling involves a clearly defined sequence; stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end (Headlee, 1993). Yet sequences are themselves constructions, reflections of a belief that time and culture can be fragmented, compartmentalized, and, most significantly, separated from the discourse in which they are occurring. As Tyler (1986:139) argues, "the postmodern world is in a sense timeless; past, present, and future co-exist in all discourse. . . to speak in the language of identities, to say 'I saw the same thing,' or 'it has changed'. . . requires a changed time and changeless objects and subjects, but a discourse can make all three-time, subject, and object-what it will."

There are numerous ways to establish sequence of the Dahmer story, each offering a different timeline based on their framework. Does the sequence occur the way that Dahmer experienced it? Does it occur as the press reported the details? These different approaches present nearly opposite systems of ordering. While the 1978 murder of Stephen Hicks in Ohio was the first event according to Dahmer's perspective, the event began for the press with the 1991 discovery of the body parts in Dahmer's apartment; the information about Stephen Hicks was one of the last aspects of their experience. In his confession Dahmer notes this paradox: "It's ironic that it's ending up with Ohio where the first one was, but this whole thing is ironic."

Because I have chosen to describe the events in my voice, I have had to face the task of identifying significant occurrences and determining their sequence. Yet, I have found it impossible to discern a beginning, a middle,
and an end to this story, even within my own field of discourse. I therefore
draw on my experiences of these events that do not subscribe to the
sequences presented by other sources. While I have documented certain
occurrences chronologically, this account is presented within a narrative that
fuses past and present. The telling of this story begins with memory.
Notes

1 The most extreme response to the publicity surrounding this research was related to me by a friend who had been donating blood at the local Red Cross. The man donating next to her began to discuss the Dahmer case. He asked her if she had heard about "that crazy woman" college professor who wanted to marry Dahmer.

2 Richardson, Adler, and Best have each described what they perceived as their naive surprise at how much press coverage they received.

3 See Appendix A for a listing of Gay press articles.

4 From Tyler, 1986.

5 Dahmer's confession was never tape-recorded. Officers took notes during the questioning sessions and later transcribed them into the official police documents.
I remember Bath mostly for its hills. People from back east or out west think that Ohio is flat farmland, but Bath is mostly horses and hills. There are no flat roads in Bath. Driving through town is an ear-popping nightmare for those prone to car sickness. Although the posted speed limit is 40 mph, out-of-towners nervously hold close to the shoulders of the roads doing 25, shifting into third gear, back down to second, back up to third.

Although I lived the first 18 years of my life in Bath, I never learned the names of its roads. I only spoke the local vernacular of "go down in the valley and turn right," or "when you get to the bend go left." I had no need for any other language. I knew those roads and those hills. They were the landscape of my life, my youth, and my innocence.

Today, when I visit Bath, I keep a stranger's grip on the road, shift gears continuously, and read the street signs. Back then it was different. Then Bath was my home.

The seventies. They stand out as a prominent sweet blur to me. I was part of the tail-enders of the baby boom. I don't remember much before the Vietnam War and the domestic wars it spawned. I was 14 when Nixon resigned. Watergate hearings left their fuzzy impressions on me, in between debate team practice and pep rallies. I was 16 the year of the bicentennial and
the tall ships. That year I was ecstatic over a new presidential election. Revere High School, in traditional Democrat territory, held a mock convention every four years. Classes cancelled for the day, we formed state delegations, threw confetti, and made speeches nominating our favorite sons. In the seventies there were no favorite daughters. That year we nominated Ted Kennedy and John Glenn. It was a strong ticket; I still think the Dems should have listened to us.

The wonderful awful politics of the seventies stood like a vague off-color backdrop to our lives in Bath, Ohio. We listened to Led Zeppelin and John Denver, feigned injury to avoid gym class, signed up for marriage class to avoid study hall, and smoked cigarettes in the bathroom. In English and history we diligently wrote papers that were forming the ways we would see the world. In physics, we were creating a system of cheating on tests that rivaled the Morse Code. Fall friday nights meant football, marching band, and couples making out under the bleachers. Today the smell of popcorn made in kettles caked with years of oil still makes me nostalgic. We gave slumber parties, wrote sickly sentimental poetry, kissed our first loves, and, through every bit of it, wondered what delicious futures lay ahead.

In the middle of it all, there was Jeff. Jeffrey L. Dahmer. A sort of Stan Laurel, Holden Caulfield, Billy Budd, and Barney Rubble rolled into one sixteen-year-old boy, a boy who loved to make people laugh at themselves, always by making himself the target of ridicule. One day, when a teacher was taking attendance she got to Jeff's name on the roster and the class began to roar. There was Jeff, outside the classroom windows, jumping up and down, wildly waving his hand, shouting, "I'm here! I'm here!" We laughed at Jeff, even when we didn't really want to.
Jeff was so unpredictable that even those of us who liked him were often embarrassed by him. He would pretend to have seizures on crowded street corners or would run, stumbling sideways through the local shopping mall, his face distorted, his shoulder hunched to his ear. We were having dinner in a Pizza Hut one night when Jeff suddenly began shouting. He knocked over our glasses, spilled water on our pizza, and then smeared the whole mess all over the table. I took a picture of him that night; today, it's the only photograph of Jeff Dahmer I have.

Still, there was the funny Jeff, the clever Jeff. One day he motioned me over to the pay phone in the hallway, saying there was something neat he wanted to show me. He dialed the international operator and placed a person-to-person collect call to Mr. John Smith at Lloyds of London. He began a lengthy discussion with the receptionist there; she insisted that, without a department name, it would be impossible to locate Mr. Smith and that his request was akin to placing a call for Mr. Smith at the New York Stock Exchange. Jeff hung up, triumphant. "I just got to talk to London, England for free," he beamed.

Two weeks out of every spring was picture-taking time for the school yearbook. While we all loved the opportunity to be excused from class for a group photo, these sessions were events for Jeff. He liked to pose in the student organization pictures, whether he was a member or not. His favorite was the National Honor Society. In our junior year, he stood, barely noticeable, in the back row of the group shot. The yearbook editor retaliated by not listing his name in the picture's caption. Senior year, Jeff went one better. He placed himself square in the middle of the National Honor Society picture. The editor
had had enough; she printed the photo with Jeff's face blacked out by a magic marker. It was a great joke to Jeff and to the rest of us.

Thirteen years later, we would, with the rest of the nation, see that photograph as an eerie omen. "Ever since high school we've just thought that picture was hilarious," a classmate told me a few days after Jeff's arrest. "Up until a week ago, anyway. It's not so funny anymore."

I was taping a segment of "thirtysomething" for my Sociology of Women students when a high school friend called about Jeff. Cancer-stricken Nancy, coming home from her hysterectomy, can't find the words to explain why she suddenly feels her life is forever changed. When I received that phone call, I suddenly understood what Nancy was trying to say.

"Have you heard about that guy in Milwaukee who murdered those men and kept their body parts in his apartment?" I had heard, briefly, a teaser at the end of the local evening news, mentioning an Ohio man was involved, promising film at eleven. "That guy is Jeff Dahmer."

No one ever expects to know a serial killer.

My body went numb, while my mind began to argue with itself, trying to comprehend both the horror of the crime and the familiarity of the criminal. I knew the bizarre side, the alcoholic side, the lost side of Jeff Dahmer. I was not surprised to learn that his life had taken such an ugly and tragic road. Yet I also thought about another Jeff, the Jeff that had been my classmate, the funny Jeff, the Jeff that got me into Vice President Mondale's office when I was 16, the Jeff that had been my friend.
My memories of Jeff remain excruciatingly vivid. One day in English class, he told me that people were slaves to their telephones, responding to a ringing bell with Pavlovian obedience. He said that his parents were gone, and often he didn't answer the phone. In Bath there were no buses or sidewalks. We didn't live on lots; we lived on acreage. It was inconceivable to my seventeen-year-old mind, longing for non-familial relationships, not to answer a telephone. We argued.

My adult mind now knows that conversation had nothing to do with ringing telephones. Jeff was trying to tell me that he was alone; his parents, newly divorced, had abandoned him. When his mother left with his younger brother, she told Jeff not to let anyone know she had gone. There was A restraining order keeping Jeff's father away from the house, and she undoubtedly feared that her ex-husband would return in her absence. Jeff didn't answer the phone because he wasn't supposed to.

Killing

Soon after that conversation we graduated. Two weeks later, Jeff picked up Steven Hicks, a 19-year-old hitchhiker. They went to Jeff's empty house, drank beer, smoked pot, and talked.¹ When Steven tried to leave, Jeff hit him in the head with one of his father's dumbbell weights. He strangled him and hid the body in the crawl space under the house. He dismembered Steven's body and placed it in three garbage bags. He put the bags in the back seat of his father's car, intending to dump them nearby into the Cuyahoga River. He never made it. He was stopped by Bath police for driving left-of-center. The police spent more than a half hour with him administering a sobriety test. They even shined a
flashlight into the back seat. Jeff told them the bags were filled with garbage; they gave him a ticket and let him go. Jeff returned home and placed the bags in a drainage pipe behind the house. Two weeks later he used a sledhammer to smash the decomposed body into fragments, dumped the pieces over a small cliff on the side of his house, burned Steven's clothing and identification, and threw the necklace Steven wore into the Cuyahoga River. Thirteen years later he would be able to draw a map of the yard pinpointing the exact spots where he had scattered the bones.

"You don't forget your first one," he told detectives.²

Jeff and I both went to The Ohio State University that fall. I saw him several times, and on each occasion he was more drunk than the time before. One night he was passed out on a city street; when I knelt down, he opened his eyes, muttered, and passed out again. I remember at that moment thinking that he was lost, and I expected to never see him again. Jeff dropped out of college after that first term. I did see him again, more than a decade later, in a courtroom in Milwaukee.

As he notes often in his confession, Jeff's life was filled with irony. He enrolled in the army and was accepted into military police training at Fort McClellan, Alabama. Jeff's alcohol abuse was obvious, and his commanding officer responded to Jeff's drunkenness by punishing the entire outfit. Two other recruits retaliated, and Jeff suffered a concussion and a fractured ear drum. He was then transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas and received training to become a medic. Jeff told police that "this training agreed with him more," and he eventually was stationed with the 2nd Battalion, 68th Armor in Baumholder,
Germany from June, 1979 to March 24, 1981. Jeff liked the structure of the Army and wished he could have completed his entire tour of duty. He was, however, finally discharged six months early due to alcoholism.

Jeff was tired of the harsh winters in northern Ohio. He went to Miami Beach, worked in a sandwich shop, and slept on the beach. Poverty was too hard, and in December, 1981, Jeff went to live with his paternal grandmother in the Milwaukee suburb of West Allis, Wisconsin. Jeff told detectives he never had a woman lover and he always believed that he was a homosexual. He felt guilty over his sexual feelings and started to fantasize about killing and dismembering men. By moving to West Allis, Jeff had "decided to make a concentrated effort to find some direction in his life." He felt empty and lonely, and his grandmother, a devout protestant, assured Jeff that religion "could turn his life around." He began to attend church with his grandmother in the hope that God would cure his homosexuality and his homicidal fantasies, in Jeff's words, "to walk the straight and narrow."

It didn't work. In the words of the Milwaukee police, Jeff "gave in to his homosexual tendencies." He went to the gay bookstores in Milwaukee to get information on bars and "the homosexual areas of town." Jeff frequented the bathhouses and on several occasions drugged men-"friends"- that he wanted to spend the night with. In August, 1982, he was arrested on a charge of indecent exposure at the Wisconsin State Fair Park, and was convicted of disorderly conduct, receiving a fine. In September, 1986 he was again arrested for lewd and lascivious behavior for urinating in front of children in public and received one year's probation for a reduced charge of disorderly conduct.

One week before Thanksgiving, 1987, he met Steven Tuomi in Club 219, a gay bar on 2nd St. in Milwaukee. Jeff offered him money to have sex
with him. When Steven agreed Jeff took him to the Ambassador Hotel and fixed him a rum-and-coke laced with 5-7 crushed Halcion, a prescription sleeping pill. They went to bed naked; when Jeff awoke, he discovered that Steven was dead, with a black-and-blue chest and blood running from his mouth. Jeff rented the room for an extra night. He purchased a large suitcase from the nearby Woolworth's, placed Steven's body in this luggage, and took a cab back to his grandmother's house. In his grandmother's basement he drained the blood from Steven's body, dismembered him into fist-size pieces, placed the remains in garbage bags, and threw them away in the trash. Because Jeff has no memory of actually killing Steven and there were no physical remains, he was never charged with this murder.

Jeff met Jay Doxtator in January, 1988 at Club 219, and Richard Guerrero in March, 1988 at the Phoenix, a gay bar near the 219. He enticed both men back to his grandmother's house on South 57th Street with promises of money for sex. In both cases, he gave them a drink of rum and sleeping pills, and they had sex. When they fell asleep he strangled them, dismembered the bodies, and threw the all of the remains away in the garbage. He later could identify Richard because he remembered seeing a "missing persons" photograph of him in the personals section of the local newspaper two weeks later. Jay was Jeff's most difficult victim to identify. After combing through missing persons reports, the police suspected that Jay was indeed the third victim and asked Jeff if he could remember anything unusual about the body. Jeff could not remember if there were tattoos or if the victim had been circumcized. He did remember that there were two scars around the man's nipples and also remembered that upon dismembering the corpse he
discovered the right kidney was missing. The police were able to use this information to identify Jay Doxtator.

Jeff met Ronald Flowers at Club 219 on April 4, 1988 and invited him to his grandmother's home. Flowers accepted, and the two men had "light sex" (he defined this to police as "light body rubbing") in the basement room that Jeff occupied. Afterward, Jeff gave Ronald a run-and-coke with 12 5-mg. tablets of Halcion. When Ronald was unconscious, Jeff lay next to him on a blanket on the basement floor. Although he had difficulty remembering, Jeff believes that he then may have raped him orally. Jeff told police that he never intended to hurt or kill Ronald; he only wanted sex, and he wasn't sure if Ronald would consent. Jeff stressed to police that the reason he hadn't wanted to kill Ronald was that he wasn't his type. Ronald started to regain consciousness around 7:00 the following morning. Jeff's grandmother saw the two men together and asked Jeff to have the man leave. Jeff walked him to the bus stop and gave him money to get home. Later that day, Flowers filed a theft complaint against Jeff with West Allis police. No investigation was conducted.

Jeff's grandmother was upset by seeing Jeff with another man in her basement and asked Jeff to leave. In May, 1988, Jeff moved to an apartment at 808 North 24th Street in downtown Milwaukee. On September 26, 1988, Jeff offered 13-year-old Sinthasomphone $50 to pose nude for photographs. The Laotian teenager agreed. Jeff gave him coffee laced with Halcion and then fondled him. When he was arrested for this incident, Jeff told police that he had never intended to drug Sinthasomphone and that his sleeping pills had accidently been mixed with the coffee. Jeff was charged with second degree assault and enticement of a child for immoral purposes. In March 1989, he pled
guilty and received a sentence of one year in the work release program and five years probation.

The irony that marked Jeffrey Dahmer's life continued. Often when he was attempting to be the victimizer, he ended up being the victim instead. In November, 1988, Jeff invited a man to pose for pictures. Although Jeff had moved back in with his grandmother in October, he still had the key to his North 24th Street apartment, and, with the hope that it would still be vacant, he took this man there. When they discovered the apartment had already been rented, the two men drank beer in the stairwell of the building instead. When the beer was gone, Jeff was suddenly knocked unconscious by a blow to the back of his head. He awoke bleeding to find the man, along with the $350 Jeff had in his pocket, gone. Jeff called the police who took him to a hospital for stitches and then unsuccessfully showed him mug shots to identify the suspect. Jeff filed a police report for charges of battery against the man that he had intended to victimize; the man was never found, and his identity remains unknown.

It was the night before Easter in March, 1989, one year since he had killed Richard Guerro, when Jeff met Anthony Sears at LaCage, a gay bar in Milwaukee. Anthony was 24 years old, Black, and wore his hair in a ponytail that Jeff found intriguing. Jeff offered Anthony money for sex. Anthony agreed, and the two went to Jeff's grandmother's house where they had sex. Afterward, Jeff gave Anthony what was by now his standard drink of rum and coke and Halcion. When he was unconscious, Jeff strangled him. While his grandmother attended Easter Sunday church services, Jeff began the process of cutting up the body. Yet this time, he didn't dispose of all of the pieces. Jeff saved Anthony's head, which he later boiled down to the skull and sprayed with a fake granite paint to give it the appearance of a plastic model. Jeff had called an Ace
Hardware store to ask advice on how to dry rabbit skin. On the recommendation of the sales clerk, Jeff used acetone and Soilex to preserve the scalp with the ponytail "because he liked it." He also saved Anthony's genitals, which police later discovered stored in a black metal filing cabinet. In a bizarre case of racist construction, Jeff painted the penis, with skin paints purchased from the local Sear's store, to look Caucasian. According to the police report, "he bought a skin color paint (sic) and painted the penis simply because it seemed like a fascinating idea and he wanted the penis to look more natural."

Jeff began serving his work release sentence in June, 1989. Under that program, he was allowed to leave the House of Correction every weekday to attend his job at the Ambrosia Chocolate Company in downtown Milwaukee. He was quiet and well-mannered, a favorite of the caseworkers, who were mostly women, at the facility. Jeff was given a weekend pass for Thanksgiving in 1989, but was too "ashamed to face his family who were gathered at his grandmother's house." After dinner, he went to the bars in what detectives described as "the homosexual gay area of Milwaukee." At Club 219, he met an older white man; they talked, and then Jeff blacked out. When he woke up, he was in a strange apartment, "hogtied" and suspended from hooks in the ceiling. The man from the bar was inserting a white candle into his anus. When he began to scream, the man, dismayed, cut him down. Jeff told police he later had a bowel movement that expelled a six-inch portion of the candle. The police report again emphasizes the role of homosexuality here, a role that would be repeated throughout the media for months after Jeff's arrest. Detectives wrote that "he chalked this up to being an experience that he had to
endure because his high risk life style and the homosexual area of town. He stated that at this time he was actually the victim."

When he was released from jail in March, 1990, Jeff moved into apartment 213 at 924 East 25th Street. In April he began his routine again: offering men money to pose for photographs and/or sex and then drugging them with the rum, coke, and Halcion concoction. The first time he tried this in apartment 213 resulted in a scene from a B-grade comedy. After Jeff mixed the drinks he accidentally switched the glasses and ended up drugging himself. When he regained consciousness, the man was gone, along with $300 from Jeff's pocket. This time, Jeff didn't report the crime to the police.

The next month, he brought home Raymond Smith. Raymond, also known as Rickey Lee Beeks, was a 32-year-old Black man whom Jeff met in Club 219. Jeff took pictures of Raymond and then drugged him, strangling him after he was unconscious. Jeff orally raped the body before he dismembered it. He saved and later painted the skull. Jeff was able to identify Raymond easily: he had had a tattoo that read "Cash D." Jeff was now afraid that disposing of bodies in the garbage dumpsters all at once would be too easily detected. After the murder of "Cash D" he bought a freezer to preserve the remains until he could "dispose of them discreetly."

In July, at Club 219 Jeff met a handsome dancer who had formerly performed with the Milwaukee Ballet. Edward Warren Smith was 27, Black, and known in the gay community as the "Sheik" because of the headband that had become his trademark. Jeff operated with the Sheik as usual, having sex with him before drugging and strangling him. He kept no parts of the Sheik's body.

Jeff met a man that police would later identify only as "Mr. P" on July 7, 1990, at the Phoenix, a gay bar in Milwaukee. Jeff offered him $200 to pose
nude for photographs; Mr. P agreed, and the two returned to Jeff's apartment where they had, in Jeff's words, "normal homosexual sex." They agreed to meet again the following night at the Phoenix. Mr. P again agreed to pose for pictures. On the way to his apartment, Jeff asked the cab driver to drop them off at a convenience store several blocks from the building, presumably to buy cigarettes. Jeff always had the cab drivers drop him and whatever man was with him several blocks from this apartment, so that no one would know exactly where he lived. That was the only usual part of the scenario on this night. Jeff had fully intended to make Mr. P his eighth victim. Yet earlier that day, he realized he had run out of the Halcion and he didn't have the thirty dollars for the prescription refill. Instead, he purchased a rubber hammer from the local Army/Navy Surplus store. That night, when Mr. P was posing for him, he asked him to turn on his stomach on the bed. Jeff then struck Mr. P on the back of the head, but miscalculated the force of the blow. It didn't knock Mr. P out; it only made him angry. They fought, struggling for a while on the floor, while Jeff tried to explain that he had only been afraid Mr. P was going to rob him and pleaded with Mr. P not to call the police. Eventually, Mr P agreed, and Jeff allowed him to leave. Mr P immediately went to a pay phone to call for help but realized suddenly that he had no cash. Ten minutes later, he returned to Jeff's apartment to ask for money to get home. Once inside the door, Jeff attacked him, attempting to strangle him. They fought again, and again Jeff was able to persuade the man to calm down. They sat on Jeff's bed, talking for the rest of the night. At one point, Jeff actually convinced Mr P to let himself be tied up. Mr P was eventually able to free his hands from the ropes, but he continued to talk with Jeff. Finally at 7am, Jeff allowed him to leave. In a statement that reflects the role of objectification in his homicides, detectives wrote that "Mr. Dahmer
stated that although he did intend to kill P and make him one of his victims, that because of the previous nights (sic) sexual activities and that fact that they had spent hours talking, he began to sober up and know Mr. P on a more personal level and had decided he would not kill him."

In September, Jeff met Ernest Miller, 23, outside of a bookstore on North 27th Street. Ernest was the only man that Jeff didn't strangle after drugging - he cut his throat instead. Jeff could later remember how the blood had splattered on the walls and soaked into the bedding. He took pictures of the body while dismembering it. He told police that he had really liked Ernest and that was why he kept so much of his body. Jeff placed Ernest's heart and bicep in the freezer. He removed the skin from the skull, dried and painted it. Jeff also kept the entire skeleton of Ernest Miller, storing it in a vat of bleach.

In October, Jeff met David Thomas at a bank on Wisconsin Avenue. He's not sure why he took David home with him; he wasn't attracted to him, and they didn't have sex. He drugged David, but this time was different. Jeff had killed the others, he told police, because he hadn't wanted them to leave him. The more he liked a man, the longer he kept the body and the more body parts he saved; he kept mostly skulls because he believed they represented the "true essence" of his victims. Jeff told police that David "wasn't his type," so he really didn't want to kill him. He was afraid that David would be "pissed off" after he woke up, and that's why Jeff felt he had to kill him. He saved nothing of David's body.

In February, 1991, the killings accelerated to one a month. First, it was Curtis Straughter, an 18-year-old Black man that Jeff met at a bus stop in front of Marquette University. He kept the skull, hands, and genitals of Curtis and then placed the rest of the body in two barrels of acid - one for bones and one for
flesh. In March, Jeff met Errol Lindsey, 19 and Black, on the corner of 27th Street and Kilbourn Avenue. He raped Errol orally after killing him and kept his skull. Errol's body was the only one that Jeff completely skinned. It took him two paring knives and two hours to accomplish the job. He later could describe the entire process in graphic detail to police.

Tony Hughes was a 31-year-old Black man who was deaf and mute. Jeff wrote him a note offering him money for sex at Club 219. Tony was last seen alive May 24, 1991; Jeff doesn't remember the date he took Tony Hughes home, nor does he remember killing him. After they had sex and Jeff fixed the usual Halcion-laced rum-and-coke, they both passed out; when Jeff awoke, Tony was dead. Jeff saved his head and left the rest of the body lying on his bedroom floor for several days.

Jeff's thirteenth victim was the one that would later cause the most controversy in Milwaukee for months following the discovery of the murders. Konerak Sinthasomphone was the 14-year-old brother of the boy that Jeff had drugged and molested in 1988. Jeff met Konerak at the Grand Avenue Mall on May 27 and offered him $50 to pose for photographs and to watch videos. After the modeling session, Jeff gave Konerak the Halcion drink and walked him into the bedroom. Although Konerak saw the naked body of Tony Hughes on the floor, he was too drugged to react. After Konerak fell asleep, Jeff kissed and fondled him and may have orally raped him. Jeff was hoping to arouse Konerak, but to no avail. He then fell asleep for several hours. When he awoke, Konerak was still asleep, and Jeff decided to go to a local bar for a beer. While Jeff was gone, Konerak regained consciousness and stumbled out of the apartment and onto the street, naked and disoriented. Nicole Childress and Sandra Smith, two young Black women, found Konerak, who was bleeding
above his eye, and called police for help. As Jeff was walking home from the Care Bear Tavern, he found Konerak, who had been speaking English all evening, speaking in Laotian to the women. When Jeff began to pull Konerak back to the apartment building, the women shouted at him to stop. Three police officers, along with an emergency medical team from the fire department, soon arrived. The paramedics wrapped Konerak in a plastic blanket, but otherwise offered no medical assistance. Jeff told the officers that Konerak was his 19-year-old lover who would occasionally wander away nude from his apartment when he was drunk. The women were insistent that they had seen Konerak before and that they knew he was a young boy. The officers attempted to question Konerak, but he was too groggy and disoriented to speak English. As it became apparent that officers were believing Jeff, the women grew more frantic. One of them, who touched an officer on his shoulder to get his attention, was told to stand back, that "I don't need an amateur to tell me how to do my job." After threatening to arrest the women if they didn't go away, the officers accompanied Jeff and Konerak back to apartment 213. Once inside the apartment, with the body of Tony Hughes lying on the floor in the next room, the officers determined that Jeff was telling the truth. Glenda Cleveland, the mother and aunt of the two young women who intervened, called police wanting to know what they had done with the young boy. She was told that he was Jeff's adult lover and that there was nothing they could do about someone's sexual preference. Cleveland insisted that she knew Konerak was a boy and that sexual preference had nothing to do with it. The police told her to forget it. Meanwhile, now alone with Konerak, Jeff strangled him and then raped him anally after he was dead. He dismembered the body, keeping the head and putting the rest in the barrel of acid. According to Milwaukee Police Chief Philip
Arreola, the officers spent less than 16 minutes on their investigation and did not take notes or names of witnesses. Five days later Glenda Cleveland again telephoned police after seeing a news report about the missing Konerak. The investigating detective never returned her call.

After Konerak, the killings became even more frantic. Jeff met Matt Turner, a 20-year-old Black man after the June 30 Gay Pride Parade at the Chicago bus station. Jeff convinced Matt to accompany him back to Milwaukee with promises of money in exchange for sex and modeling. After strangling Matt, Jeff kept his head and stored the rest of his body in a recently acquired 57-gallon barrel. Jeff also met the next victim, Jeremiah Weinburger, in Chicago. He picked up Jeremiah, a 24-year-old Puerto Rican man, at Carolyn's, a popular Chicago gay bar, on July 6, 1991. Jeremiah stayed with Jeff for two days. It was only when Jeremiah indicated that it was time for him to leave that Jeff intervened with the Halcion drink. He put Jeremiah's head in the freezer and his body in the drum that already contained Matt Turner's remains.

The bodies began to pile up. It was difficult for Jeff to find the time to dispose of them and still keep his job. Often he would sleep with the bodies next to him in the bed. One day he had to take a shower before work, but two torsos were soaking in bleach in the bathtub, one hanging by a strap from the curtain rod. Jeff found a simple solution; he drained the bleach out of the tub and showered with the bodies. He began to run out of storage space as well. He kept skulls in filing cabinets, hands and feet in pots of formaldehyde, penises in covered pans and bottles. He placed one painted skull in his locker at the Ambrosia Chocolate Company. As difficult as it was to deal with the bones, Jeff found disposing of the flesh problematic as well. He would soak the torsos in acid and then flush the remains down the toilet when the flesh
"became sludgy." The police were later mystified how he had managed to remove the "brain matter out of the skulls" without damaging them, so he described to them the elaborate process he had devised. The medical examiner wondered why he had removed the skin off of the bottom of the feet - did this have ritualistic significance? Jeff explained to police that the skin on the bottom of the foot is generally too tough for acid to effectively dissolve. While dismembering the corpses, Jeff often photographed them. Sometimes he would masturbate over the bodies, ejaculating in the viscera. When police first entered the apartment, they found bodies on the bed and on the bedroom floor. It was getting crowded in apartment 213.

The following week, Jeff met Oliver Lacy, a 24-year-old Black bodybuilder, on 27th Street and invited him home to pose for photographs. They engaged in "body rubs" and then Jeff drugged him. After Oliver was dead, Jeff anally raped him. He told police he was particularly fond of Oliver, keeping his heart and right bicep in the freezer. He put Oliver's head in a box in the refrigerator and the rest of his body in the freezer that he purchased after killing Raymond Smith. A few days later, on July 19, 1991, Jeff met Joseph Bradhoft while waiting for a bus on the street near Marquette University. Joseph, 25, was the only Caucasian victim since Jeff killed Steven Tuomi in the Ambassador Hotel in 1987. The Milwaukee medical examiner later asked police to find out why Joseph's head, stored in the freezer, was already partially decomposed. Jeff told detectives that he had kept Joseph's body covered with a blanket on the bed for two days. It was a hot July, and Jeff's air conditioning didn't work well. When he checked on the body, the head had already "acquired some maggots," and Jeff knew he had to dispose of the body immediately. What he did not know was that Joseph Bradhoft would be his last victim.
Getting Caught

Jeff first met Tracy Edwards while they were both waiting for a bus at 24th and Wisconsin. Tracy asked Jeff for a cigarette, and the two men chatted. A week later on July 22, 1991 - three days after the murder of Joseph Bradhoft-Jeff saw Tracy again at the front entrance of the Grand Avenue Mall. He offered him $50 to pose for pictures and to watch videos. Tracy was with friends, and they all decided to go to Jeff's place. On the way they stopped at a liquor store so Jeff could buy some rum. When he came out of the store, the friends were gone, and he and Tracy decided to take a taxi. As usual, Jeff had the cab driver drop them off several blocks from his building. Jeff fixed drinks, but this time he was out of Halcion. They talked about what it was like to go to the gay bars in Chicago and then watched a video of Exorcist II. Jeff remembers telling Tracy that he wanted to take bondage pictures of him and being allowed to put Tracy in handcuffs. He doesn't remember anything else until hearing a police officer shout "cuff him!"

Tracy remembers. He told police that after the handcuffs were on, Jeff waved a knife in front of his face. Jeff told Tracy that he was going to cut his heart out and eat it. Tracy was able to push past Jeff and run out of the apartment. Still in handcuffs, he flagged down two officers on West Kilbourn Avenue. He asked the officers to remove the cuffs and told them that a man had tried to kill him. The officers took Tracy back to the apartment to investigate, and Jeff calmly let the men in. They later told the press that they were first overwhelmed by the stench. One officer went into the bedroom; the first thing he saw was a dresser drawer overflowing with the Polaroid photographs of
mutilated bodies. That's when the officer shouted, "cuff him!" With the handcuffs on, Jeff began to struggle. As one of the officers headed for the refrigerator door, Jeff began screaming and fighting harder. Police eventually called in a hazardous waste team, who worked through the night in rubber suits and air masks, removing boxes, vats, and even the entire refrigerator. Jeff, highly intoxicated, was taken to police headquarters for questioning. Detectives asked him where the key was to the handcuffs he had placed on Tracy Edwards. He told them that he had thrown the key away and that "he would have been unable to remove the cuffs if he had placed them on the victim unless he removed the hands from the victim."

Confessing

The questioning of Jeffrey Dahmer by police began shortly after his arrest, at 1:30 am on July 23, 1991. This first session lasted until 7:15 am. He was interviewed two more times that day, twice the following day. Jeff was questioned by Detectives Dennis Murphy and Patrick Kennedy repeatedly over the next month resulting in an approximately 160-page series of documents. The theme of objectification reappears throughout these documents, just as it has reappeared throughout the process of conducting this research. Jeff approached his victims with offers of money for watching pornography, for posing nude for photographs and for sex. Even though he kept many pieces of identification of the men, he didn't learn their names. He drugged even the men he considered his "friends" in the bathhouses, while the one man with whom he spent the night talking he let go. Jeff was himself repeatedly victimized and objectified by others.
Yet the writing of the police reports also reveals a paradoxical process developing, the relationship that forms between Jeff and the two detectives within this larger context of objectification. On July 23, Jeff is referred to as "Dahmer" or "Mr. Dahmer" only occasionally. He is instead repeatedly referred to as "the subject" or simply as "he." By July 27, he is called "Jeff." The rapport between Jeff and the detectives continued to grow. Although they advised him of his rights before every interview, Jeff volunteered to talk with them without his attorneys present. He frequently requested the chance to speak with them as fragments of memory return. The most revealing discussions occurred after formal questioning sessions had finished. Jeff would smoke cigarettes, drink coffee and talk with the officers. It was at these times when they also felt more comfortable asking him the hard questions. It was at these times when they asked him why. They discussed evil, fear, God, and Satan. Jeff repeatedly indicated that he wanted to help them identify the victims to ease his guilt. On July 24, they described his responses this way:

He also stated that he drank excessively to forget the nightmare he felt he was living as he remembered the horror of some of the acts that he performed. He stated that he is deeply remorseful now for what he had done and wished that he had never started. He stated that he is not sure why he started committing these offenses and feels that in order to make restitution to the families of those he has killed, that he would like to help the police in any way that he can by trying to identify his victims.

The relationship developing between Jeff and these detectives was apparent on July 25, the day of Jeff's first court appearance. Jeff "expressed apprehension" over appearing in court in the paper jumpsuit provided by the county jail. Detective Kennedy, who is Jeff's size, brought his own clothing for
Jeff to wear in court and arranged for Jeff to be provided with shoes. According to Detective Kennedy, "to this, Jeffrey Dahmer stated that he would be most appreciative."

The most striking aspect of Jeff's confession to the police is the way the theme of cannibalism is treated. Jeff revealed that he had eaten Oliver Lacy's right bicep to detectives the night of his arrest. The police report of July 23 simply states, "he stated the reason he consumed this biceps (sic) was because it was so big and he wanted to try it. He then stated he didn't want to talk about it anymore." On July 24, one sentence addresses Jeff's cannibalism: "Regarding the fact that he stated that he had in fact (sic) eaten the parts of one of his victims, he states that he feels that by eating parts of the victim, this was his way of keeping them with him even longer and making his victims part of himself." Cannibalism is the cultural unthinkable. Our language does not permit a true recognition of it. Beyond the words "eat" and "consume" there are no phrases which allow for a discourse on cannibalism that do not fall into the realm of culinary absurdity. The detectives struggled with this problem of language, and their attempts border on the humorous. For example, Jeff repeatedly described to them the process of stripping the flesh from the bones. The detectives recounted it as "(Dahmer)...strangled him, and filleted him in the bathtub..." and "The flesh that he filleted from the body he put into trash bags." Another report said that "decomposition took care of pretty much of the meat."

The unthinkable meets the world of the everyday in startling and, again, often humorous ways. Jeff purchased two small paring knives and a large six-inch blade knife from Lechtner's Kitchen Mart in the Grand Avenue Mall. The store operated a free knife sharpening service, which Jeff periodically used when dismemberment had dulled the blade. The heads of his last three victims
he stored, fully intact, in the refrigerator, along with a box of baking soda to absorb the odor. The police asked Jeff to talk about the "patties of meat" found on the bottom of the lower freezer compartment. Jeff responded that those were "not exactly patties." He explained to the officers that he would store strips of muscle in bags in the freezer until he could dispose of them in the garbage. Those particular bags had frozen to the bottom of the freezer, and he hadn't had time to defrost. These moments continue to emerge throughout the police documents and are striking both in their horror and in their humor. The absurdity cannot be helped; Jeff conducted a routine of behavior so outside of cultural norms that we have no language to comprehend it, yet this behavior occurred within a framework adhering to standards of the everyday.

The most bizarre and macabre example of this paradox was reminiscent of a scene from the 1991 academy award-winning film "The Silence of the Lambs," in which Hannibal-the-Cannibal Lecter reads an issue of *Bon Appétit* magazine. On August 22, 1991, one month after his arrest, Jeff asked to speak with the two detectives. Apprehensively, he admitted to them that he had lied; he ate more victims than he had originally told them about. He then provided a detailed description of his consumption: while Cash D's heart tasted "spongy," Ernest Miller's thigh was too tough to chew. He experimented with meat tenderizer and Crisco, and that seemed to work; Ernest's bicep and heart, and later Oliver Lacy's bicep all tasted like "filet mignon." One detective ventured a risky question: Did Jeff ever consume any parts without condiments? Jeff answered no, always with salt, pepper, and A-1 steak sauce. He assured detectives that he only ate the men he cared the most about. The officers, understandably troubled by the extent of the cannibalism, asked Jeff why he
hadn't told them all of this sooner. He replied that he had been afraid they would think less of him if they knew the truth.
The Trial

Jury selection for the Milwaukee trial of Jeffrey Dahmer began January 27, 1992. He was charged with 15 counts of homicide, to which he entered a plea of guilty but insane. The trial drew enormous press coverage from media organizations around the world. The proceedings were carried live on cable television's Court TV. CNN broadcast numerous live reports daily. *Entertainment Tonight* was even present to report on the reporters. Bomb threats had been received at the courthouse, and security for the trial was extremely tight. All observers passed through metal detectors, and bullet-proof glass had been constructed in the courtroom between the spectators and the proceedings.

The opening arguments presented the jury with two options: they could find Jeff either crazy or evil. Defense attorney Gerald Boyle built the entire insanity defense on the grounds that Jeff suffered from necrophilia. This was a controversial strategy, especially since the DSM III-R, used for diagnosing mental illness did not recognize necrophilia as a specific mental illness, placing it under a general "other sexual disorders" category. Boyle claimed, "This was not an evil man. He was a sick man." Yet prosecuting attorney Michael McCann told the jury that Dahmer was evil: "Mr. Dahmer knew at all times that what he was doing was wrong. This is not the case of a psychotic man."

The jury voted for evil. On February 15, 1992, after ten days of testimony and one day of deliberation, jury members, in a 10-2 split vote, found Jeffrey Dahmer guilty of all 15 counts of first degree homicide. Before sentencing Jeff, Milwaukee County Circuit Judge Laurence C. Gram Jr. invited one family
member for each victim to address the court and Jeff. The result was a spectacle. Some family members calmly read prepared statements, while others wept and yelled at Jeff. One woman physically attacked Jeff, screaming, "I hate you! I hate you, you motherfucker!" and had to be restrained by guards. Jeff then addressed the judge, reading from a prepared statement. He said he would ask for no mercy and that he wished Wisconsin had a death penalty. He said he did not blame his parents, the police, nor society for his actions. He only blamed himself. He asked the families to forgive him for the "holocaust" that he had created and concluded that "only the Lord Jesus Christ can save me from my sins."

While announcing his sentencing decision, Judge Gram declared, "I believe what we had was a homosexual who could not accept the fact that he was a homosexual." He sentenced Jeff to 15 consecutive life terms at Wisconsin's maximum-security Columbia Correctional Institution. Jeff will not be eligible for parole for 936 years. Milwaukee's newspapers declared that the city could now breath a collective sigh of relief. "The Dahmer nightmare" was finally over.
Notes

1 It is unclear whether Jeff and Steven had sex before Steven tried to leave. At different points in the police reports Jeff states that they both did and did not have sex.

2 All quotations in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated are taken from the reports of the Milwaukee Police Department detectives. These reports are the detectives' accounting of events. They occasionally quote Dahmer directly. When I use one of these quotations, it is indicated that these are the words of Dahmer; otherwise, all quotations are from the police detectives.

3 Dahmer originally told police that he believed the Milwaukee killings began in 1984.

4 I have chosen here to make the distinction between the consensual sex that occurred between the men and the rape of the men that occurred either after they were unconscious or after they were killed. The police, and later the press, never make these distinctions. In fact, Dahmer is never officially charged with rape, even though he readily confessed to it. The police use the word "sex" to describe both consensual and nonconsensual encounters.

5 I was unable to obtain the first name of this Sinthasomphone boy. As a juvenile victim, his name was blacked out of police reports and could not be found in press accounts. His last name is known only because his brother, 14-year-old Konerak Sinathasomphone was Dahmer's thirteenth victim.

6 This man was described in police reports only as "a black male."
During one of the talk shows on which I was interviewed in Milwaukee, I met the woman who had been Dahmer's caseworker while in the House of Correction. An elderly African American woman, she said that no one - no police or reporters - had ever interviewed her. She described Dahmer as "one of my babies" and told me that he would frequently bring chocolate samples from the Ambrosia Chocolate Company to the women who worked there, even though it was a violation of the rules of that facility.

Ironically, Dahmer did not know that Konerak was the brother of the boy he had molested. He was surprised when police informed him of this. At his 1988 sentencing, no one from the Sinhasomphone family was present, and it is unlikely that he had ever seen Konerak before the night that he killed him.

There remains considerable controversy over the condition of Konerak at this time. The witnesses claim that he was bleeding from his buttocks, although the police deny these accounts. Dahmer said that he had anal contact with Sinhasomphone only after the police had returned him and he was unconscious.


See article cited above.

It is difficult to determine the exact number of pages produced in this confession. The pages are not sequentially numbered, and many pages are missing. Police also blacked out entire sections of the report.

While I was attending the trial I was cautioned by one of my reporter informants to be careful of everything I said, even in hallways and restrooms. He said that reporters were so bored during the jury selection that they were interviewing each other. He warned me that press coverage was so great (over 70 media organizations were present) reporters would use rather extreme tactics to "scoop" one another.

Wisconsin law requires only ten votes for a verdict.
I was told by an informant that city officials were extremely worried about possible race riots that could result if Dahmer was found guilty but insane, and that Judge Gram was prepared to overturn such a verdict.

Dahmer had a new defense team for his May trial in Akron. After the morning-long proceedings had ended (Dahmer entered a guilty plea), his attorneys held a press conference where they denounced the Milwaukee trial as a circus, citing specifically the conduct that Gram had permitted the family members to engage in. The attorneys, noting that Gram had received a contract to write a book on the case, called for the judge to retire from the bench.

Chapter IV

COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO DAHMER

The nightmare of Dahmer was a unique experience for Milwaukee's gay men and lesbians. Dahmer and his crimes created a crisis for them of unprecedented proportions. The discovery of his killings surprised everyone. No one had known that gay men were disappearing. No one had been looking for a serial killer. Yet Dahmer's arrest detonated a cultural bomb within the lesbian and gay community, one that activists said repeatedly had changed them forever. It created a wave of homophobic backlash that they could not have anticipated. These assaults were both political and physical and, from the perspective of the lesbians and gay men, demanded an immediate and well-organized response. In this chapter I will examine the construction of the cultural discourse on Dahmer within the dominant community and the subsequent rise in gay bashings and political attacks against Milwaukee's gay men and lesbians. In the second half of this chapter I describe the responses of the gay and lesbian community to the assaults it was experiencing within the framework of "Dahmer." I will describe the major political organizations operating within this community at the time of his arrest. Although there were significant differences between these groups in terms of their structures, goals, tactics, and membership, they were responsible for forming the coalitions that would enable the community to respond quickly to the crisis.
The Dominant Cultural Discourse

From the moment of Dahmer's arrest two of the dominant culture's primary institutions in Milwaukee - the police and the media - established the nature of the discourse on the case. From the outset, the primary focus in the construction of the discourse on the case was homosexuality. Gayness and the gay and lesbian community were used by both police officials and the press to explain why the crimes had occurred. This framework for constructing "the Dahmer nightmare" actually began to develop weeks before Dahmer was arrested. In next-door Racine County, Joachim Dressler was on trial for the murder and dismemberment of James Madden on June 27, 1990. Madden had been a canvasser for an environmental organization and was going door-to-door, distributing information, and seeking contributions. His body was found in garbage bags scattered throughout farm fields near Dressler's house in the small town of Raymond. Milwaukee County Medical Examiner Jeffrey M. Jentzen termed Madden's homicide a case of "homosexual overkill." According to one of Milwaukee's gay newspapers, The Wisconsin Light (v4, 5:5):

"This is what we call "homosexual overkill," said Jentzen. "There was more here that was done than is necessary to stop a person from breathing." Jentzen called such frenzied violence typical of "homosexual overkill" murders. In his admittedly "limited" experiences, Jentzen claimed to have seen five cases of "homosexual overkill." He theorized that the perpetrators reacted angrily out of deeply repressed homosexual feelings and attacked their lovers in a frenzied rage.

According to press accounts, the only evidence presented at the trial to show that Dressler was gay was pornographic photographs and videos and his
wife's testimony that he often used a computer bulletin board designed for gay men. Racine County District Attorney Lennie Weber repeatedly used the term homosexual overkill throughout Dressler's trial, and, according to press reports, used it nearly interchangeably with the official charge of first degree murder. This term was repeated extensively by the media covering Dressler's trial, and was used as late as July 19, 1991, four days before Dahmer's arrest. There is no official psychiatric or forensic term "homosexual overkill." Jentzen refused to disclose where the term had originated, and local gay reporters, the only members of the press who investigated this phrase, could not document its use within the professional literature. It appears that Jentzen himself made it up. Yet the term had become part of Milwaukee's legal vernacular. When Dahmer was arrested on July 23, one of the police officers on the scene told a reporter that this appeared to be "another case" of homosexual overkill. With that offhand evaluation, the officer helped establish the basis of discourse on the Dahmer case for months to follow.

Within hours of Dahmer's arrest, the city was deluged with reporters from around the world. The earliest accounts of Dahmer's arrest focused on the issue of homosexuality. An article appearing in the Milwaukee Journal, one of the city's two daily newspapers, headlined "Man Held in Grisly Slayings" claimed, "Police said the slayings appeared to have been related to deviant homosexual behavior" and discussed whether the case was one of homosexual overkill as police had asserted. The July 28 Sunday feature article in the Milwaukee Journal was headlined, "The man who hated other men." The article began with, "Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer had an insatiable sexual hunger for men -- and he hated them. That portrait emerges of the suspected 31-year-old serial killer and sex deviate whose name became permanently inscribed last week in
Milwaukee's history." The article continues to stress homosexuality: "Dahmer lurked in gay bars, here and in Chicago. He shopped for men in malls. And he even hand-picked a man from a gay pride parade." Still another Journal article characterized him as "a gay misfit." The Associated Press reported that "Dahmer committed homosexual acts" with his victims, and subsequently reporters repeatedly described the "homosexual acts." Dahmer's victims were all males, and sex occurred between them. By not simply describing the behavior as "sex" and by instead referring to "homosexual sex," the press was defining the case as a homosexual one. Most press accounts also declined to make distinctions between which behaviors were consensual sex acts and which were rape (there were many instances of both).

Milwaukee's gay community became the focus of reporting, and the physical locations of the community, such as the bars and press offices, provided the backdrop for both television and print coverage. Gay and lesbian leaders reported feeling "overrun" and "overwhelmed" with the press coverage. Gay bars and organization offices described the difficulty in coping with the television camera crews filming on their premises "incessantly." Activists described the onslaught of attention as "horrendous," "difficult," and "a horrible time." One lesbian claimed that dealing with the continuous stream of press was "one of the strangest experiences of my life." Often lesbians and gay men used language of invasion to describe this experience. One lesbian recounted how "the press descended on us," while another activist claimed, "we were under siege."

Gay Bashing and Gay Politics
The dominant culture increasingly focused on the relationship between homosexuality and the killings, equating Dahmer with the gay community. This resulted in an increase of homophobic harassment and violence against members of Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community. One so-called "shock talk" radio show host seemed to embody the homophobia of the dominant Milwaukee culture. On his daily talk show, Mark Belling of WISN had a long history of homophobic, racist, and anti-AIDS comments. Earlier in the summer of 1991, Belling had declared that all gay men should be stamped as potential health risks. Within days after Dahmer's arrest, Belling claimed that the victims had been responsible for their own deaths and called the murders the "logical extension of the gay lifestyle." Gay activists responded by calling for a boycott of Colder's Furniture, the sponsor of Belling's program. The boycott didn't work, and Belling continued to make homophobic and racist comments from 3 to 6 every weekday afternoon. As one activist said, "We had guys on shock radio saying that this was just the natural extension of gays' lifestyle. I think a lot of people really believe that."

Immediately after Dahmer's arrest, gay and lesbian organizations throughout Milwaukee experienced a sudden and dramatic increase in anti-gay telephone calls and harassment. The executive editor of The Wisconsin Light received an anonymous letter claiming, "I don't care if you queers die of AIDS or dismemberment. Do us all a favor though and hurry it up, OK? I hope Dahmer gets off on a technicality." The President of the Gay/Lesbian International News Network, who is also the typesetters for both In Step and The Light, received this message on his answering machine: "Hello, this is Jeffrey Dahmer. I want your head in my refrigerator. Call me." Gay bar patrons were pelted with eggs and verbally harassed when leaving bars.
Gay and lesbian activists described the rise in homophobic harassment and the wide range of behaviors that manifested that harassment:

Being out in front, being on television, being interviewed a lot, and my name was everywhere, I was hassled. My car was vandalized.

We get a lot of phone calls here. People saying, "I think Jeffrey Dahmer is a wonderful person. He did the right thing. Get rid of those queers."

It's a bumper sticker that says, "Jeffrey Dahmer Fan Club." Somebody had it made like two days after the murders were discovered. It's one of those magnetic ones that you stick on a car. I pulled it off a car at our own candlelight vigil.

I called someone in the school counselor's (office) and said, "make sure you're also aware that some of these kids might start picking on the gay kids and refer to them as killer Dahmer," that sort of thing. Tom told me that when he was going to school people were calling him, "hey, you Dahmer."

But it really brought out a lot of hatred. And listening to radio talk shows and just hearing people on the street talk about Jeffrey Dahmer being a hero because he killed gay people.

We got phone calls - "too bad Dahmer got caught when he did. He should have killed more of you faggots. He did a service to the community."

I was driving not far from here, and there was this truck in front of me. It was a dirty truck. You know how people always write on the back of dirty trucks? It was - "Dahmer got stopped too soon. Kill more fags.

The harassment quickly escalated beyond phone calls and homophobic remarks. Bomb threats were repeatedly made to gay bars; there was also a reported increase in police harassment of the bar patrons. One man was shot while leaving a gay bar by a group of men yelling, "Dahmer!" Another gay man
was threatened and harassed repeatedly by neighbors who pasted "Dahmer" over his name on the mailbox. The police refused to take action; this man finally appeared before a judge to obtain a restraining order against his neighbors. His attorney, Thomas Martin--well-known in the gay community--told reporters, "The entire city seems to be experiencing a collective nervous breakdown."

During the fall of 1991, the rise of gay bashing appeared to be quieting. In November, all of that changed. During the November ratings "sweeps week," Milwaukee TV-Channel 12 News ran a four-part series on Milwaukee gay life called, "Flirting With Danger." This series, which aired in three-to-four minute segments November 19-22, was highly promoted by its station, WISN. It was WISN's radio station that aired the Mark Belling talk show. The four parts of this series were: 1) hidden cameras showing under-age males gaining access to gay bars; 2) men having sex in Milwaukee county parks; 3) gay teens having access to the "adult" section of "Crossroads" a gay-oriented computer bulletin board; and 4) community reaction to previous three pieces. These segments also showed a map of the most popular gay cruising parks, as well as a map of the "Cruise Route" in Milwaukee's historic Third Ward. The station received hundreds of phone calls and written complaints by members of the gay community. The management finally agreed to allow Scott Gunkel of the Lambda Rights Network to have a short rebuttal segment. The station also agreed to devote the November 25th airing of "Milwaukee's Talking," a live local talk show, to discussion of the series.

Gay and lesbian activists were invited to appear on the show and also to fill the audience. The show also featured representatives of WISN to respond to the criticisms. WISN TV News Director Fred D'Ambrosi explained his rationale for airing the series: "In the wake of the Dahmer investigation, which involved
many Gay victims, (reporter) Dane (Placko) was approached by some people in the Gay community who said, 'Look - this is how it happened. This is how people can be victimized.' We felt it was a legitimate story to go about explaining some parts of the Gay world heterosexuals aren't familiar with."

(InStep, v8,24:4)

The gay community was outraged by this series. One lesbian activist called the reporter who produced the segments to discuss the dangerous implications the series presented for the gay community:

I said, "I think it's very ironic that the whole reason Jeffrey Dahmer was as successful as he was--is what you're saying about this--is because he preyed on people that he felt would not create an uproar if they disappeared. Here you go showing people who possibly want to do the same thing exactly where they (gay men) are, and you reinforce that belief. So exactly what are you doing?"--"We're doing
this for safety." I said, "bullshit, you're doing it for safety. You put bull's eyes on our backs and just say, 'ok, it's open season.'"

The personal harassment and assaults levied at members of the lesbian and gay community grew into political attacks against the gay and lesbian movement. These attacks came in two arenas where lesbian and gay are particularly vulnerable, one involving children and the other, the use of public funds. That week in November proved to be a difficult one for the lesbian and gay community due to more than the "Flirting With Danger" series. The other major battleground for the community during sweeps week was the Milwaukee Public School System. Earlier in the calendar year, Superintendent Robert Peterkin had formed the Task Force on Gay and Lesbian Teens in the Milwaukee Public Schools. After meeting with students and gay activists who complained of homophobic harassment, threats, and violence in the schools, Peterkin directed the Task Force to develop a series of proposals to remedy the problem. The Task Force held public hearings throughout the fall of 1991, with little publicity or controversy. The group produced a lengthy set of proposals, including faculty sensitivity training, support groups for gay and lesbian students, and statements by the district affirming the rights of gay and lesbian students to a supportive environment and a sensitive curriculum. The Task Force was scheduled to present its report to the Milwaukee School Board for a vote on November 20, two days into the "Flirting With Danger" series. When the agenda for that meeting became public, religious forces determined to stop the vote quickly mobilized, under the direction of WCVY, the local Christian radio and television stations, and Reverend Vic Eliason.
Eliason was a nationally known leader among the fundamentalist anti-gay organizers. One of his most famous anti-gay campaigns began in Washington DC. in April, 1990, when Eliason discovered a UPI reporter, Julia Brienza, had written a free-lance article for a gay newspaper in Washington DC. Eliason began a national campaign to get Brienza fired, calling her a "Double agent" and claiming that she represented "a case of lesbian penetration of United Press International." UPI fired her on April 26, 1990. In November, 1990, Brienza filed 12.5 million suit charging Eliason with "malicious interference" with her contract, "unlawful violation of her privacy" and violation of both Washington D.C.'s Human Rights Act and Wisconsin's Hate Crimes Statute. On Nov. 20, 1991, the day of the school board vote, Brienza announced she was amending her lawsuit to include charges of conspiracy against Eliason.

Thus seemingly unrelated events--the WISN series and the conspiracy charges against Eliason--occurred at precisely the same day of the long-awaited school board vote. Anti-gay activists began to arrive at the School Board building by 4pm. By the 7:00 meeting, over 1,000 anti-gay activists had amassed, while only 50 gay and lesbian activists were in attendance. It was the largest turnout ever for a Milwaukee School Board meeting. A room large enough to hold the crowd could not be located, and protesters crowded into hallways and lobbies. The InStep reported the results of the school board vote: "Reacting to recall threats by hundreds of bible quoting fundamentalist Christians, the Milwaukee School Board November 20 approved watered down proposals on Gay/Lesbian issues. An ad hoc citizens' group, not satisfied with the 'gutting' of the proposal, threatened to remove five board members who expressed support for the Gay issues." (v8, 24:5). The "watered down" proposal
allowed for teacher sensitivity training, but removed all language referring to the task force. The revised statements affirmed the rights of "all students" to an equal education, removing references to gay and lesbian students. The board also allowed the non-discrimination policy to include "sexual orientation."

Some activists claimed victory, noting that in the face of such overwhelming homophobic sentiment, any compromise constituted success. Many activists, including the gay press, saw the school board vote as a major blow to months of work, lobbying, and coalition politics.

Many activists reported feeling overwhelmed with the intensity of the anti-gay activists at that meeting. One group of gay teens trying to leave the school board meeting, was surrounded in the building's lobby by a group of fundamentalists who put their hands over the heads of the teenagers to pray. A gay man who had played an instrumental role in developing the school board plan discussed how frustrated he was by that meeting. He had hoped that in providing gay youths with support, a repeat of the killings could be prevented. He described his dismay that the majority of the people in attendance at the school board meeting "said Jeffrey Dahmer is the ultimate degradation and perversion in society because of homosexuality!"

In the same ways that lesbians and gays had described the invasion of the press in war-like terms, one activist, who is also a veteran, described the sense of battle and fear that was generated at that meeting:

I have never experienced such hatred in my life...I was afraid that I might be hurt. The hatred was palpable; it was in the air. And my back twitched, and I went into combat mode. Watch and see if anybody starts to move towards me. I received a number of threats against my life.
After their experiences at the school board vote, gay and lesbian activists were prepared for a resurgence of homophobic backlash with the coming of Dahmer's trial, only two months away. Yet there was in the interim one more defeat, one which none of them had anticipated. The Milwaukee Lesbian Gay Pride Committee had been planning and organizing the annual Gay Pride Parade held in June. As part of their fundraising efforts, the committee applied to the Milwaukee Festival Funding Board for $8,000. The committee met all of the criteria for funding, and the Board recommended that $5,000 be granted to the Pride Committee. On January 21, after extensive lobbying efforts from the lesbian/gay community, the Milwaukee Common Council approved funding for the Pride celebration, along with 36 other festivals. Yet the following day, five days before the beginning of Dahmer's trial, Mayor Norquist vetoed the Council's vote. This surprised and outraged the gay community; it had been the mayor, after all, who had originally suggested to the activists that they apply for this funding. Queer Nation demonstrated in front of the mayor's home, and two members were arrested for disrupting the mayor's State of the City address. An editorial in InStep (v9,3:5) described the sense of betrayal felt throughout the community:

The mayor has said that Milwaukee's Gay/Lesbian community was an important part of the 'fabric' of the city. He had told us he was a friend. We felt included, part of the 'family' for the first time. After the veto many felt like the 'problem child' who was kicked out of the parental home in an act of 'tough love.'

Lobbying efforts for a veto override failed. On February 5, ten day into Dahmer's trial, the Milwaukee Common Council voted to uphold the mayor's veto.
The relationship of the backlash experienced by the lesbian and gay community to the Dahmer case was inescapable to Milwaukee's activists. In the six months between Dahmer's arrest and trial, Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community had experienced a wave of homophobic harassment, threats, violence, and political and public relations defeats. One lesbian described the challenges posed to the community:

I think that recent event have been directly related to the Dahmer murders. The school board not taking a proposal on better training for the staff and sensitivity and sex education for kids on gay/lesbian stuff. And I think also the mayor vetoing the funding for the Gay Pride Parade. He didn't want to do it. He didn't want to do that veto. He told us all he did, but it was very clear he did it for political reasons. And it's because the right-wing fundamentalists feel like Jeffrey Dahmer has basically proven them right. And they've really organized much more strongly than we have, unfortunately. And they're putting a lot of pressure on all the right people. To stop things from happening. So I think it means we've got to work a lot harder to just get the little things we want.

The dominant culture had created a discourse about Dahmer that was designed to generate fear and anger against gay men and lesbians. Anti-gay forces seized the opportunity that the symbolic construction of Dahmer had provided them. They used the fear and anger to mobilize against the political gains the gay and lesbian community had made. It became clear to members of that community within hours after Dahmer's arrest that they too were going to have to create opportunities for the activism necessary to defend themselves against the swelling wave of homophobia.

Crisis and Coalitions: The Gay and Lesbian Community Responds
The "state of siege" sparked by Dahmer's arrest represented a crisis to gay and lesbian community organizations, threatening to erode the gains they had made in Milwaukee city politics. In 1982, Wisconsin became the first state in the country to pass sexual orientation anti-discrimination legislation. The Gay People's Union, formed in Milwaukee in 1970 after the Stonewall riots, had been the major political organization for the lesbian and gay community leading up to the 1982 ordinance. The Gay People's Union had been, as one activist described, the "parent" of the other organizations in Milwaukee, yet its mission had proven too diverse to be sustained by one group. By the early 1980's several organizations and projects had separated from the GPU, and by 1991, GPU consisted of a referral hotline and an archives for the community in a former president's basement.

Many of the group that evolved from the GPU in the 1980's dealt with sexual health, support, and service interests. Activists reported that the focus of their community in the 1980's had been on the emerging gay and lesbian culture rather than on mobilizing for specifically political gains. Of the 50 organizations listed in Milwaukee's gay magazine, In Step, 46 represented a particular component of gay culture, such as religious and medical organizations, sports teams, choirs, support and recovery groups, veterans associations, and AIDS services. The leaders of Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community tended use one of three frameworks to discuss their movement. Some activists drew on the notion of political generations and described the current generation of gays as less politically aware or concerned than the generation of activists in the prior decade. One gay man even compared the community to an adolescent who rebels against its parents but doesn't have the maturity to establish its own course of action. The second framework
community members used to describe their movement was in terms of activist waves. They described the first wave of activism as the "Stonewall" wave of the early 1970s and the second wave as centered around the state's anti-discrimination legislation. Many gays in Milwaukee considered a third wave of activism beginning with the establishment of the Gay Pride Committee (see below) in 1988. Some believed that the Dahmer event would spawn yet another wave. The third framework that gay men and lesbians used to describe their movement was within a regional context. For these activists, the gay community in Milwaukee was always discussed relative to San Francisco or New York. One man offered to place Milwaukee's movement "on a scale of one to ten, where San Francisco is ten." Others talked about San Francisco as a gay utopia and analyzed their community in relation to that ideal. Whatever schemata was used to assess their movement, activists tended to agree that their community was focused more on cultural components than on specific political agendas.

At the time of Dahmer's arrest there were four main organizations whose primary function was direct political action. These organizations were vastly different in organizational structure, goals, strategies, and membership. There were, in fact, few elements that were shared between these groups. Yet the Dahmer event created a need for broad-based activism and an opportunity for members of these organizations to coalesce in ways that had proven futile in the past.

The largest and best organized was the Lesbian Alliance of Metro Milwaukee (LAMM). LAMM was founded in 1989 "because there was a serious problem of lesbian invisibility in Milwaukee. The only visible gay...activity was white gay men. And it had been that way for years." LAMM began originally
with six friends holding potluck suppers in their back yards. By July 1991, LAMM was the largest gay organization in Milwaukee, with nearly 500 dues paying members and a mailing list of nearly 1300. One of the leaders of LAMM described this organization as "member-driven." Every active member belonged to one of LAMM's task groups. Each task group decided its own goals, structure, and strategy. LAMM's board of directors was comprised of one member of each task group selected by that group. Each task group had specifically defined goals and strategies and yet LAMM's structure allowed the organization to still be broad-based. LAMM's membership was described as "middle class, professional women," many of whom worked for government agencies. Within LAMM's framework, these women wrote grants, developed media kits, and outlined a five-year plan for the organization.

The Lambda Rights Network was the second major organization in Milwaukee. During the 1980's the LRN had been the primary force in the city for organizing around gay and lesbian legal and political rights. Although it was still considered one of the leading groups in the community, by 1991, the activities of the Lambda Rights Network had diminished and its membership had dwindled. Two gay men maintained LRN's referral hotline, the only consistent function of the organization. Yet because the LRN had a board of directors which consisted of gay and lesbian community leaders, it was an effective organization for quickly mobilizing community activists.

Queer Nation was the third organization operating with a distinctly political agenda in Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. At the time of Dahmer's arrest it was a small (5-10 members) group that operated under consensus principles. Most of the members of Queer Nation had been involved
in ACT UP. Although it was a small organization, its well-publicized tactics and actions had given it prominence in the activist community.

The final organization active in gay politics at the time of Dahmer's arrest was the Milwaukee Gay Pride Committee. This committee was a coalition of the other political groups, as well as service and support organizations in the community. This was the coalition responsible for organizing the annual Gay Pride march. While this was a major cultural event for Milwaukee's lesbians and gays, issues involving funding and security required the Pride Committee to work with and lobby city authorities. Membership in the MGPC frequently overlapped with the other three organizations. Since these groups were so diverse in terms of structure and strategy, the history of the committee had been defined by many activists in terms of the tremendous conflicts and in-fighting common to the committee.

Activists from these groups reported knowing immediately that Dahmer's arrest constituted a crisis for their community. One of the leaders of the Lesbian Alliance of Metro Milwaukee (LAMM) called the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force on July 24 seeking advice. The public relations director of the Task Force told her to "call the rest of the community. Get as many people together as you can from all the organizations. Get a press conference together, and tell the world that gays are fine. That's what you have to do." She called the president of Milwaukee's Lambda Rights Network, and they decided to hold a meeting for gay and lesbian organizations and bars to develop a strategy for dealing with the crisis. They agreed to hold the meeting at 7p.m. on July 25; this gave them little more than 24 hours to mobilize the gay and lesbian community. As one them related, there was a sense of urgency for a response:

I saw it first as a big p.r. problem and an image problem. And just looking at it from a real technical
sort of a viewpoint. We needed to do some damage control, and we needed to do it real fast.

They divided the list of organizations and started making phone calls. They also asked the publisher of *The Wisconsin Light* to print notification of the meeting; the deadline for *The Light* was 6pm on the 24th, and that issue was released on the morning of July 25. Nearly 70 people attended that first meeting. They decided to form an official alliance, naming themselves the Milwaukee Lavender Network. This network was the first time in the history of Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community a coalition of this magnitude -- 16 organizations, presses, and businesses -- had been forged. One activist described the need for this coalition:

> As the days went by, a couple of days later, I realized that it was much bigger than I had ever dreamed. And that the story was not going to go away no matter what we did. And the press had really started to get ugly. They were saying things like "gay misfit." We were getting hurt... And such was born the Lavender Network.

Three task forces were formed at this first meeting, dealing with police and city officials, community groups, and the media. The immediate focus of the group was to organize a press conference to issue a statement on the killings and also to educate the press on how to report on gay related issues. Members of the coalition decided to hold the press conference on July 29, less than one week after Dahmer's arrest. During those four days after the formation of the Lavender Network, activists worked full-time on the conference, training those selected to speak, writing statements, preparing press kits, and educating the speakers on the agenda items that the group had decided to cover. Members of the coalition were committed to having the speakers at the press conference
reflect the diversity of their community. Yet there was a basic lack of trust that these representatives be counted on to deliver the messages that the coalition had outlined. As a result, many members spent a great deal of time educating other coalition members. One lesbian described her frustration with this process:

A lot of good things started happening, came out of that press conference. The statements at the press conference, they worked on those for days and days. And (we) made these guys write and rewrite these statements. And rewrite them. There was so much energy into politically educating the people who were going to speak at the press conference about what does the term 'people of color' mean. And why do you say things in a certain way. And what does it show if you don't say it like that. And what are we really trying to get across. Boy, whew, it was a lot of work. But I think that it was really a very important thing that happened. And so that was really a pretty big deal. The conference. It was really symbolic in a lot of ways, I think, of different gay and lesbian organizations coming together.

During the press conference, the activists criticized press coverage of the case and specifically condemned the press and officials for continuing to use the term "homosexual overkill," even though it had become clear that this phrase did not exist within the forensic or psychiatric communities. The activists charged the Milwaukee police department with homophobia and racism, and called for an independent investigation of the police's conduct with this case. They also demanded ongoing education and training for police on gay and lesbian issues and the establishment of an official liaison between the police department and the gay and lesbian community. The press conference was declared a success by the Lavender Network. After that day, the press no longer used the term homosexual overkill and began to cover the story with greater sensitivity.
Challenging police procedures proved to be more difficult for the activists, requiring greater organization and more long-term strategies. The police department became the central focus for other political coalitions in the city, especially in the African American community. Charges of racism and a general insensitivity toward Milwaukee's minority communities had plagued the police and the mayor's office for years. The Dahmer case became a rallying point for increasing mobilization based on that issue. At the August 5 vigil, Queen Hyler, founder of Stop The Violence, an anti-violence project within Milwaukee's Black community, charged that "African Americans, Gays, and other minorities are being treated as second class citizens. We must do everything in our power to eradicate racism. This one case has reopened so many wounds." Milwaukee State Representative Gwen Moore received numerous reports after the discovery of the murders about references to "niggers" and "fags" circulating within the police department. The Wisconsin Light reported that a lobbyist for the Milwaukee Police Association had been overheard by a legislative aide discussing the case. This lobbyist claimed that "these Gays all chose the lifestyle which gets them killed. . .People ask the police if it's hard to look at these murders. It's a lot harder for me to see a ten-month-old baby with its head beat in. . .The baby was completely innocent."

Mayor Norquist did not issue a statement regarding the killings and the police until July 29, six days after Dahmer's arrest. The mayor told reporters that "if the allegations are confirmed by a court of law, it appears not only were the slayings vicious, but they were racist and homophobic. This city will do absolutely everything in its power to ensure that the person responsible for these unspeakable crimes is put behind bars and never, ever let out." Yet the mayor cut his press conference short when he was heckled by members of
Black community, criticizing him for his late response and lack of leadership. Activists within the Black and gay communities charged that the homicides had been allowed to continue for so long because of police apathy towards Dahmer's victims. Family members of the victims told stories about police indifference toward the missing persons reports they had filed. The editor of one of the gay presses described police insensitivity to violence in the gay community as a whole:

Not once did a cop come in. No police, nothing like that. I would have thought the police as part of their thorough investigation behind the whole thing would have come in and talked to me or (the editor of the other gay paper). We've offered in the past...if you need any help. If you see a trend, or whatever. If you want to warn us about somebody who you know is victimizing gay people, let us know. We'll be glad to work with you...Never. Nothing...I'd be glad to have a cop come in here and say, "look, we're looking for this person. He's victimizing gay people"...I know it's happening. It's got to be happening. But they don't come.

The police's handling of the May 27, 1991 incident with 14-year-old Konerak Sinthasomphone quickly became the focal point for anger. On July 26, Police Chief Philip Arreola suspended (with pay) the three officers involved in Sinthasomphone's case. The Milwaukee Police Association criticized this suspension and called for a vote of no confidence against the police chief. A subsequent report issued by Wisconsin State Attorney General James Doyle found that the officers were not guilty of any criminal act. Yet on September 6, after a six-week internal investigation, Police Chief Arreola announced the dismissal of two of the three officers. The third officer was also fired, but his termination was "held in abeyance for one year."
In a further attempt to quiet community outrage over the police response in the Sinhasomphone case, Mayor Norquist established the "Blue Ribbon" Citizen Commission on Police-Community Relations (CCPCR) on August 6. The goals of this panel were to investigate police service to minority communities and to make recommendations on reforms in police training and procedures.

Anger immediately erupted within the gay community over this panel. Of the committee's nine members, only one appointee was openly gay. The mayor had previously solicited input from lesbian and gay leaders; the activists stressed the need for both a gay and a lesbian representative and gave the mayor a list of appropriate names. The one gay man the mayor finally appointed to the Blue Ribbon Commission was not one of the names on that list. Gary Hollander was a psychiatrist and board member of the Milwaukee AIDS project, although his appointment was controversial in the gay community. Many leaders did not consider him an activist. The Wisconsin Light claimed Hollander was "on the fringes of the community." One activist described the controversy:

Many of the community felt that he was out of touch with many in the gay/lesbian community. 'Cause he was a psychiatrist who lived in...a high rise apartment building condo with his lover. And his lover is a concert pianist, and they just live in their own little circle. And so there was some hostility towards the mayor for that being the only gay person on this Blue Ribbon Panel.

Gay and lesbian activists were more disturbed by the mayor's choice of Albert DiUllo as chair of the commission. DiUllo was a priest and president of Marquette University. Activists were worried that the Catholic Church's stand on
Gay and Lesbian issues, as well as on women's issues, would effect the findings of the commission. Similar controversies occurred within the Black community over the composition of the commission. Black activists later formed an independent "Black Ribbon" Commission to investigate racism within the Milwaukee Police Department.

The Lavender Network also formed a Police Proposal Task Group to monitor and publicize the Blue Ribbon Commission's progress, survey the gay community on police relations, and submit its own proposal to the Panel. The Blue Ribbon Commission was conducting public hearings for members of minority communities to testify on their police experiences. The commission scheduled September 17 for members of the gay and lesbian community to testify. The Lavender Network organized the nearly two dozen members of the community to testify at that hearing. Witnesses told stories of police insensitivity, harassment, and abuse. Many anonymous testimonies from people who feared job loss or other reprisals were read to the committee, including statements from two Milwaukee police officers. One activist described both her fear at hearing the numerous stories of police harassment and her anger that the gay and lesbian community had not organized around the issue of police abuse prior to this hearing:

Some of the stories I heard there could have been my own story. And I told my own. But to hear them over and over and over. I just didn't have an understanding of how much we were despised before. So that was pretty useful to me. It was also very frightening. Because we had never, there had never been a forum like that, where people stood up and told their own personal story and what the police did to them. And when we all were in the same room, and all these stories, one after another, I thought to myself, why haven't these people talked to each other? Why hasn't there been something like
On October 1, three lesbians from LAMM and one gay man from Lutherans Concerned, submitted a 30-page report to the Blue Ribbon Commission on behalf of the Lavender Network, a report that "contained 32 appendices...a 3 inch thick report in a binder that impressed not only the BRC, but other community groups as well" (InStep, v8,22:4). On October 15, the Blue Ribbon Commission released a 50-page report documenting charges of racism and homophobia within the police department and recommending 50 specific proposals for change in police training, personnel management, and community relations. The report called for more active recruiting of minority police officers, including gay and lesbian officers, and recommendation the establishment of an official police liaison with the gay/lesbian community. The lesbian and gay activists were dismayed to find that the report "often lifted entire sections from the MLN police-community relations report."

One week after the Lavender Network delivered its recommendations, and a week before the release of the Blue Ribbon report Queer Nation staged actions that targeted Milwaukee's City Hall, the Milwaukee Police Department, and the Milwaukee Journal. The actions centered around issues in the Dahmer case. Activists smeared blood-red paint on buildings and held a "die-in" at the police headquarters. The protester shouted chants of "Do not fear, John! Just say queer, John!" (a reference to the mayor's speech at the vigil); "Justice! Equality! It's all a fucking lie! Your homophobic policies are letting people die!"; and "MPD you can't hide, we charge you with homicide!" Four members were arrested and charged with vandalism; these charges were later dropped.
Milwaukee's gay press played a significant role in constructing the responses of the gay and lesbian community to events surrounding Dahmer's arrest and in mobilizing members of the community for the strategies for activism established by the Lavender Network. The city's two gay publications began extensive coverage of the case immediately after Dahmer's July 23 arrest. *The Wisconsin Light* included accounts of the killings in its July 25 issue, including calls for community responses to the police and press. *The Wisconsin Light* produced its first "EXTRA" issue on August 1. This issue was eight pages devoted entirely to the Dahmer case, including 12 articles, three editorials, two letters, and numerous advertisements from gay bars and organizations (for example, the bar "This is IT" published an ad dedicated "In Memory of the Brothers We Have Lost"). The bi-weekly *InStep* published its first issue covering the case on August 1. The cover of this magazine was dedicated "In remembrance of the victims..." Within the first month following the discovery of the killings these two publications produced 53 articles in 5 issues covering numerous aspects of the case. A reporter for one of the mainstream Milwaukee newspapers indicated to me in an interview that he believed the best and most thorough coverage of the case was done by the gay press in Milwaukee.

While the Milwaukee Lavender Network was proving to be a successful coalition for dealing with the crisis that the killing had introduced to the gay and lesbian community, activists immediately identified a need to form coalitions with other community groups, especially those from the Black community. Activists believed that a temporary coalition could help ease both the homophobia in the African American community and the racism in the gay and lesbian community. After the success of the press conference, activists decided
to organize a candlelight vigil for the victims and invite members of the African American community to assist in that planning. The vigil, held less than two weeks after Dahmer's arrest was called "To Remember and Rebuild in Peace." The logo developed for the vigil was a drawing of four hands, palms extended, in a row, each hand a shade darker than the previous one. In the palm of the final and blackest hand rested a white dove. On August 5, Milwaukee's gay bars closed their doors for the evening. More than 1,000 people gathered in Juneau Park, marched in candlelight through downtown to MacArthur Square, just outside the city jail where Jeffrey Dahmer was being held. From the platform erected for the event, family members of the victims, local ministers, leaders of the black and gay community spoke about the victims, the police, and the city. They talked about homophobia and hatred, racism and remembering. Milwaukee Mayor John O. Norquist gave what many gay activists considered a memorable speech. He decried "disrespect for individual people based on race"--he paused, stuttered for a moment and then continued--"or the way they live." Many in the crowd booed this remark. Norquist never used the words gay or homosexual in his speech.

Seventeen-year-old Bernell Howard also gave a memorable speech at the rally in MacArthur Square, memorable for reasons quite different from the mayor's comments. Bernell's best friend was Curtis Straughter, known to his friends as Demetra, Jeff's tenth victim. When his mother discovered he was gay at 16, Bernell left home. After two stays in group homes, Bernell moved into the home of the director of Gay Youth Milwaukee, a support program for gay and lesbian teenagers. The director learned of Demetra's murder from Bernell:

I got in about 1:30, and the doors were locked and he had all the lights on. He had a friend of his over, and he said, "Mike, Demetra was killed!" and I said
"what?" and he said "Demetra was one of the people that he killed!" and I thought oh, my god. And so for two weeks after that, at least, he was really upset. He didn't want to sleep in his room. He'd be up with the lights on, and he asked, "do you mind if I sleep in the bed with you? I don't want to sleep by myself. I keep having these dreams of seeing him, of seeing Demetra." That went on for about two weeks, and he finally got over that and was able to sleep on his own. But it hurt me to see him go through that, 'cause this kid was real dear to me. By that time he was like my own kid, so it was almost like watching your own kid go through that.

Demetra's mother had been unable to provide police or the press with a picture of her son. The photograph that was shown repeatedly in the press was the picture Bernell had taken of his best friend. Bernell decided at the last minute to speak at the vigil about his friend. According to the youth director:

He didn't know what he was going to say. He was all nervous; we were marching down the street. He said, "what am I going to say up there?. . .I thought he was going to get up there and kind of mumble his way through. And he got up there and said a few words, and then he just went running with it. And everyone was just clapping and cheering this 17-year-old kid. And that's why we've got to show that the young people in this town have got to take the lead and have the guts to speak out for their friend. . .Afterward, he was sitting on the steps with some of his friends, crying. They were sitting with him. I wanted him to do that, because in a sense it would get out some of his anger and would help him to be able to talk about what his friend meant to him. . .And it worked. After a while, he was able to deal with it.

This is the speech that Bernell spontaneously made, the speech they all clapped and cheered for, the speech that the gay and lesbian activists would remember for months:

My name is Bernell Howard, and Curtis Straughter was my friend. I'm 17 years old, and I'm black, and I'm proud. And I'm gay and I'm proud. I want to be
able to grow up in this town. But I had a friend who will never have a chance to grow old because of all of this hate. We need to come together and destroy all this hate. He never hurt anyone, he was a true friend.

Two days after the vigil Jesse Jackson visited Milwaukee to conduct a "service of healing" for friends and family of the victims. At a press conference on August 7, Jackson called the murders the "logical conclusion of indifference." He claimed that "lesbian people and gay people are victims of the sin of indifference" and called on lesbians, gays, and other minorities "to build bridges, band together."

Emotion-Based Organizations Respond

When natural disasters occur within a community, psychological services are often among the first organizations to respond (Taylor, 1978). Counseling groups in Milwaukee reacted to the discovery of the killings in ways similar to the responses commonly associated with natural disasters (see Erikson, 1976; Gleser, 1981). Soon after Dahmer's arrest, psychological centers and programs increased their services, offering specialized counseling for family and friends of the victims, as well as for the gay and lesbian community at large. While no new emotion-based organizations formed, many preexisting groups expanded their services and offered support groups and workshops designed specifically to address the Dahmer killings. Other organizations used the Dahmer case as a drawing point for a potential new constituency for pre-existing programs. None of the services were long-term; most did not last beyond six weeks after Dahmer's arrest. Despite the original flux of
psychological services, there were no on-going support groups or programs offered during Dahmer's January trial. The research on psychological services in natural disasters indicates that even though the psychological consequences can be severe and long-term (Gleser, 1981), the demand for and availability of counseling services diminish quickly after the disaster (Taylor, 1978).

What is perhaps more significant for the lesbian and gay community in Milwaukee is that these services helped shape the nature of the discourse on Dahmer. The articles, notices, and advertisements for these services outlined a set of emotional responses for members of the gay community and stressed a process through which healing from these emotions could occur. The Counseling Center of Milwaukee offered free drop-in support groups for gays and lesbians on August 11, 18, and 25, "to discuss their fears and anxieties and to help begin the healing process. The Counseling Center promises a safe secure place in which to sort through feelings and experiences" (Light, v4,17:1). Support groups offered in nearby Madison by the United on Aug. 11 and 18, "will focus on the grieving process and fears and anger felt in the wake of the mass murders. All interested Gays and Lesbians, especially those having a difficult time dealing with the terrible tragedy, are encouraged to attend" (Light, v4,17:1). Homicide Survivors Support Group offered special invitation to family and friends of the victims, while HELPLINE, a 24 hour, 7 days/week service, encouraged Milwaukee residents to call with this advertisement:

The recent tragedy on Milwaukee's west side has caused an immense amount of grief and anxiety for many people who live in the Milwaukee area. People who may or may not have anything to do with this chain of events are touched and saddened by what has happened. The coverage in the media can serve to heighten people's uneasiness. Many people have a need to talk to someone and
sometimes people have no one to turn to (*Light v4,17:16*).

The National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA), was asked to come to Milwaukee by State Representative Gwendolynne Moore on July 30. NOVA, a volunteer group of psychologists and psychiatrists, spent 3 days in Milwaukee, conducting information and training sessions outlining the characteristics and effects of post traumatic stress syndrome. On July 31, NOVA organized a special meeting of the gay and lesbian community for the purpose of "people freely expressing their feelings and responses to the Dahmer crisis." NOVA also recommended to the mayor's office the establishment of an official gay/lesbian liaison with the police. Additionally, a special 90-minute edition of "New Tri-Cable Tonight," the local gay and lesbian talk show, aired live on August 1 specifically to discuss emotional responses to the killings:

"The program...had about 25 people in the studio audience as well as numerous people calling in with their comments of anger, frustration, grief, support and encouragement - and occasional hatred and homophobia. ...This special program was designed to offer an opportunity to vent reactions to the catastrophe as well as receive validation from members of the community." (*Light*, v4,17:1)

These programs helped to establish a framework in which gay and lesbian leaders could begin to define and interpret their emotions. They established within their community a set of "natural" emotional reactions that paralleled responses to other community disasters. Yet many lesbians and gay men felt alienated from the existing psychological organizations. Although frequently activists indicated that they had experienced a need for some kind of
support group or counseling service, most believed the programs that had arisen immediately after the discovery of the killings did not really understand either the intensity of the homophobic attacks on their community or the needs of lesbians and gay men. Some said they wished that the city's gay and lesbian counselors would have formed their own coalition to provide services and that programs of support would have continued throughout the trial.

The Limits of Coalition Politics

Social movements frequently experience the need for inter-organization activism (Zald and McCarthy, 1979, 1980; Barkan, 1986; Staggenborg, 1986). Coalitions are particularly likely to form in response to a crisis (Staggenborg, 1986). Preexisting coalitions in Milwaukee were inadequate to meet the demands for activism that the Dahmer crisis presented. They were too riddled with conflict over strategies and structure to be able to organize with the immediacy that this crisis demanded. The upheaval that Dahmer's arrest created allowed the Milwaukee Lavender Network to form with no specified structure or procedures. This permitted gay and lesbian leaders to suspend the everyday concerns within their organizations and focus on the necessary tasks at hand. This new coalition also served as an effective means for recruiting new members. While new activists felt that preexisting organizations were too exclusive, the crisis-orientation of the Milwaukee Lavender Network created an atmosphere that was more welcoming to new members. This crisis-orientation defined the Milwaukee Lavender Network more than six months after Dahmer's arrest. Coalition leaders noted the sense of urgency which had allowed their organizations to coalesce. They repeatedly emphasized that the MLN had been "born out of crisis" and described how "there wasn't a lot of time to have
any problems or squabbling." Moreover, the urgency that defined the MLN required it to operate as a loosely-formed network with no specified organizational structure. Activists reported that there simply hadn't been time to work on formalizing the group's structure. As a result, there was no board of directors or organizational mission statement. One gay man described how even procedures for conducting meetings and making decisions were unclear:

And these people, every time we have a meeting, these new faces want to know, well who's in charge. And it's like, well NO ONE'S IN CHARGE! We kind of appointed, or we kind of all concur that (a lesbian and a gay man) would be the two co-coordinators and run the meetings. Because we need someone to focus things. And they were both very adept at focusing things. So we more or less all agreed by consensus that they would coordinate the meetings. And we reach most agreements by consensus. And everybody was looking for this organizational structure with a board of directors. And there is nothing like that there. And they all sit there and scratch their head, and it's like, well, sometimes they show up at the next meeting, sometimes they don't.

The Milwaukee Lavender Network was considered highly successful in responding to the community's crisis. A flyer announcing an upcoming meeting in November, four months after Dahmer's arrest, declared that the coalition "achieved many successes as a cooperative venture among many groups. . .The power structure took account of lesbian and gay concerns to an unprecedented extent. It wasn't perfect, but once again lesbians and gay men responded well in a crisis." Yet with the end of Dahmer's trial, the crisis from which the Lavender Network was born had ceased. The goals that coalition members had established for themselves had been achieved. The future of the MLN became the focal point for its meetings. Activists reported that the attacks embodied in the school board vote and the mayor's funding veto sparked a
belief in many lesbians and gays that the MLN needed to become a permanent part of their community. Those lesbians and gay men involved in the Milwaukee Lavender Network recognized that the success of the network was related to the fact that it was a coalition, not a new organization. They discussed wanting to continue the coalition that MLN represented without forming a new organizational structure. They described wanting some sort of alliance, coalition, or "umbrella organization," while recognizing, as this lesbian's comments reflect, the difficulties inherent in creating new formal structures:

But as monthly meetings have gone on...we all realized we work so well together. Those four products that came out of that first meeting were all dealt with so well, and done so well, that it even impressed us. And we were like, well, we work pretty well together. Maybe this group should continue to be. Well, now we're trying to increase diversity in the group before we even think about setting up an organizational structure or setting a mission statement. Because how can we speak for all gays and lesbians, when we're mostly white males and white females. And predominantly white males. We need blacks. We need more women involved in the group before we could even think of setting up an organizational structure or setting a statement. So, but every time we have a meeting, more people come that weren't at the previous meeting. There's always new faces.

Staggenborg (1986) has argued that while social movement coalitions often work well in response to a specific crisis, there are numerous obstacles to establishing coalitions as long-term organizations, including ideological and structural conflicts. Milwaukee's activists experienced such struggles whenever they discussed how to maintain their community coalitions. Their conflicts were based on differences in organizational hierarchies (consensus vs.
democratic) and political strategies (separatist vs. assimilationist). Many of the conflicts erupted between LAMM and Queer Nation, as they represented nearly opposite organizational positions. Queer Nation was a direct action group that engaged in zap actions and other illegal tactics. LAMM's primary strategy was using mainstream political tactics, like lobbying, networking, and organizing support within the city administration. Queer Nation typically engaged in "reactionary politics," responding to immediate political situations as they arose. LAMM operated with an annual budget and organized around a five-year plan. While this diversity of approach benefited the community overall, activists repeatedly described the difficulties in overcoming these differences to establish a permanent organization.

Often the conflicts that reflected basic differences in ideology and goals were played out with a kind of fetishism. For example, complex and painful debates would occur over such points as whether it was appropriate for a gay man to wear a nose ring while speaking to the press, or whether a member of LAMM aspired to political office. These points of conflicts simply became symbols of larger differences in activist approaches and perspectives. By far the greatest arena for conflict was differences based on gender. Because the most powerful organization, LAMM, was an exclusively lesbian group, while gay men comprised most of the membership of the other organizations, the discourse of these conflicts was typically gendered. Women repeatedly complained that many gay men were misogynists who ignored lesbian issues and concerns. Some women argued that the gender conflicts that had plagued their community for years created too many difficulties for long-term coalition building:
But you know, when you're talking about gay men and lesbians, you're also talking about a long history of all of their personal shit, and all of their political agenda, especially when you're talking about the differences between Queer Nation and Lesbian Alliance. You're not just talking about gender, you're talking about class, you're talking about economics. You're talking about everything.

But we really don't have a vision of what that future is we want to have and how to get there. And I think there's specifically there's a big difference between the way the women, where the women are going and how they want to get there and how the men want to get there.

At the heart of the gender conflict, was the difference in approaches based on feminism. Most of the lesbian organizers identified as feminists and had a long history of activism within the feminist movement. While they felt alienated by the lack of attention to lesbian concerns within the women's movement, they also discussed the difficulties of trying to organize within a gay community that they perceived was often hostile to their issues. One lesbian described how the differences based on feminism affected differences in ideology, strategy, and structure:

I would say the difference is a feminist perspective, or maybe even a womanist perspective. And that is you get there by having a sense of community and by bringing everyone in first. And then you become that together. I think that the gay men's vision in general is, we're not here to change the system. We're just here to get our share. And I think those are two very different ways of looking at it.

Activists repeatedly reported feeling a tremendous need for their coalition politics to continue while doubting that it would be possible without first building trust between the factions in their community. Many described the ways that "differences in vision" and difficulties in communication were causing
Milwaukee's lesbians and gays to doubt whether the "miracle" of effective coalition politics could ever be realized. They had been highly successful in forming a short-term goal-specific network. Translating that success into a permanent structure presented such difficulties that many activist despaired that long-term organizational changes could ever be achieved. Yet Milwaukee's lesbians and gay men indicated their belief that long-term changes in their community had occurred, changes that were not apparent in their organizations. The more enduring consequences for gay and lesbian culture in Milwaukee happened in the realm of emotion and identity. Chapter five will explore the processes involved in this arena and how these processes shaped activism in ways that their organizations could not reflect.
Notes

1 The emphasis on homosexuality, and particularly on the "gay lifestyle" of both Dahmer and his victims continued throughout the press coverage, particularly among periodicals. The most extreme example of this appeared during Dahmer's trial in the February 3, 1992 issue of Newsweek. The feature story was titled "Secrets of a Serial Killer." The opening paragraph of the article illustrates how the press equated sexual identity and homosexual sex with danger and death, in much the same way that accounts of AIDS equate the two (see Bersani, 1987, "Is the Rectum a Grave?").

Along the decaying Walker's Point strip in Milwaukee, the gay bars line up like tarts in the night, identical red neon signs extending their OPEN invitation to the restless in pursuit of easy comfort or casual sex. One night last summer a blond six-footer in jeans and a black nylon net shirt stood in Club 219 sizing up his prospects. "Hi. I'm Jeff. I like the way you dance," he said to a muscular model. A loser's come-on. But it was the hour of inner beauty in Club 219, that last-chance moment near closing when the lights go up and standards plummet. The model bought it, and the two men wound up in the blond man's apartment. It was hot that night. The model thought he could smell mildew. And when he looked into the bedroom he saw a mattress stained with dried blood and a knife with a blue plastic handle. He looked into the blond's eyes. His skin crawled. "Boom. Boom," he now recalls. "I knew and he knew I knew something was wrong." Precisely. To go home with this stranger could cost you your life.

This account clearly paints the gay lifestyle as unseemly and dangerous. It invokes gendered images of dangerous sexuality ("bars line up like tarts"); bars become whores "extending their OPEN invitation" to anyone seeking anonymous sex. In this depiction, the gay men (along with women in the tarts/bars analogy) are not fully human. References to "a blond six-footer," "a muscular model," "a loser's come-on" turn gay men into physical objects. This life is sinister and ugly, yet the reporter ignores his own contradictions. If when the lights go up, standards really "plummet," why is Dahmer attracted to a man who makes his living on being the opposite of ugly? If Dahmer is really such a
loser, why does "the model" return the attraction? This one paragraph tells us everything we need to know: these crimes are gay crimes, the victims are ultimately victims of their own desire. The reporter concludes by arrogantly and smugly reminding both the model and the reader that "precisely": gay means death.

2 I also appeared on WISN's "Milwaukee's Talking" on January 29, 1992, to discuss the beginning of Dahmer's trial.
CHAPTER V
EMOTIONS, IDENTITY, AND ACTIVISM

Emotion plays a significant, though typically unacknowledged role in social movements. Taylor (forthcoming) has argued that "one is forced to conclude that social movement scholars have been exceedingly ambivalent about the role of feeling in collective action." As discussed in Chapter One, the resource mobilization perspective, in eschewing previous notions of collective behavior as irrational acts, has all but ignored the ways that emotion cultures (Hochschild, 1990) influence social movement activism. Researchers of the sociology of emotion increasingly recognize the structural significance of emotion (Kemper, 1990; Scheff, 1990; Collins, 1990; Gordon, 1990). Emotions are conveyed and managed within a cultural framework that often reflect dominant values (Hochschild, 1990; 1983). The ways that emotions contribute to processes of mobilization and activism have been increasingly recognized, for instance, in the works of Lofland (1982; 1985) and Morris (1984). Most recently Taylor (1992) has outlined ways that emotion has shaped the development of feminist organizations. She argues that the feminist movement has channeled women's feelings of frustration and fear into points of activism and that feminist organizations have framed an emotion culture reflective of feminist values.
New social movement theorists have presented new theoretical possibilities for incorporating emotion into our understanding of movement activism through their emphasis on what Cohen (1985) has termed "identity-oriented paradigms." New social movement theorists emphasize that the centrality of collective identity distinguishes new movements from old (Melucci, 1985; Klandermans, 1986; Offe, 1985; Touraine, 1985). Collective identities define social movement cultures and shape social movement mobilization and activism. New social movement theory does not presuppose structural boundaries linked to defining activists' identities; instead collective identities are continuously re-defined and re-shaped. While collective identity is constructed in opposition to the dominant culture, it is maintained through shared values and symbols and becomes a part of daily life for social movement participants (Klandermans, 1984).

The process of the construction of collective identity is paramount for understanding how identity shapes activism. Taylor and Whittier (1992) have offered a model containing three factors that shape the processes involved in politicizing identity. The first is establishing boundaries, either symbolic or physical in nature, that define a "social territory" for activists. Boundaries help develop a positive identity by establishing members of a group as a collective and setting them apart from the dominant culture. The second component of the Taylor and Whittier's model is the development of consciousness for participants in a social movement. Drawing from the concept of master frames developed by Snow et al (1986) and Melucci's notion of cognitive frameworks (1989), this model proposes that consciousness provides an interpretive framework that can coalesce a group through shared values, interests, and, primarily, a sense of shared oppression. The final factor in this model is
negotiation, establishing the processes by which symbolic meanings change publicly and privately, explicitly and implicitly. Taylor and Whittier use this model to analyze the lesbian feminist movement, arguing that these three processes occur in a reciprocal way to shape a lesbian feminist identity that sets it apart from both the gay men's movement and the liberal feminist movement.

While they provide a model for a systematic analysis of the processes involved in the formation of collective identity, Taylor and Whittier do not include the role that emotion plays in shaping collective identities and therefore in affecting movement activism. In this chapter, I propose a framework for understanding how emotion affected gay identity in Milwaukee. This framework is consistent with the model of identity development offered by Taylor and Whittier, presupposing that emotion can be analyzed in light of the ways it influences the processes of boundaries, consciousness, and negotiation that are central to shaping the construction of collective identities.

Social movement communities create emotion cultures (Taylor, forthcoming). These emotion cultures are shaped by and provide the backdrop for the construction of identity. I propose that there are three distinctive yet interrelated steps in this process. Through these three stages, emotion helps construct collective identity; constituents of a group identity are encouraged to feel a sense of collectivity - a sense of the "We" - through a shared emotional experience. The first step in this process is that an emotion must be defined. Some of the most common emotions identified within social movement cultures are grief, fear, pride, and anger (Taylor, forthcoming; Smith-Lovin, 1990).

Secondly, emotions are contextualized. They are interpreted and provide a framework for meaning. Emotions are typically explained in response to aspects of the dominant culture that the social movement is engaged in fighting.
For example, women's fear about rape has been explained by the feminist movement as a sexist tool of oppression (Taylor & Whittier, 1992b; Ferree & Hess, 1985). While this process is similar to the concept of frame alignment that Snow et al (1986) derived from Goffman's framing notions (1974), it is different in significant ways. Snow et al look at the ways that social movement organizations provide systems for interpreting specifically cognitive micromobilization factors, such as goals and ideology. The interpretation process that I am suggesting occurs as a social movement culture, in this case, a local community, collectively constructs frameworks for contextualizing emotion. While it is assumed that there are social movement leaders who help to shape the nature of the emotional discourse, conceptualizing emotion occurs as an on-going process within a social movement community. The third stage in constructing emotion is that social movements outline avenues for mobilizing resulting from the emotion. This final step is key for social movements in that it stimulates and shapes both the amount and types of activism that occurs. Social movement leaders have a significant role in this stage, providing opportunities for collective action and avenues for mobilization.

Social movements construct their emotion cultures using a variety of tools that come from their cultural toolkits (Swidler, 1985). Movements use symbols, such as music, flags, slogans (Herrell, 1992), clothing (Taylor & Whittier, 1992b), hair, and language (Grahn, 1984) to construct emotion (Taylor, forthcoming). A verse from Holly Near’s "Fight Back," an anthem of feminist activists engaged in anti-rape politics, illustrates both the defining and interpreting of emotion, as well as the desired course of action:

Some have an easy answer,
Buy a lock and live in a cage.
But my fear is turning to anger
And my anger is turning to rage
And I won't live my life in a cage.
And so we've got to fight back in large numbers

The lesbian/gay movement has adopted the symbol of the pink triangle,
signifying the forgotten deaths of homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps.
The symbol is intended to invoke fear and anger -- the implication is that the
holocaust against gays and lesbians continues (Crimp, 1990). Red ribbons,
"Silence = Death" signs, and even the very name of the vanguard of the AIDS
movement, ACT UP, are all intended to reflect the emotion of the AIDS
movement - grief, fear, and anger (Goldstein, 1993).

Movements also use rituals to construct emotion cultures (Taylor,
forthcoming; Taylor & Whittier, 1992b). Feminist "Take Back the Night" marches
have been used in creating emotional contexts for responding to rape. "Speak
Outs," organized to combat anti-choice forces allow women to discuss their own
experiences with abortion within a political context. While the Names Project
Quilt is itself an important emotional symbol within the AIDS movement, the
displaying of the quilt has itself become an elaborate ritual of grief and anger
(Krause, 1993). Gay Pride marches, organized each year to commemorate the
Stonewall Inn riots, reflect a ritualized process of constructing a gay/lesbian
emotion culture -- the very name of the event suggests both the creation of
emotion within a gay/lesbian context and the relationship between emotion,
identity, community, and political activism (Herrell, 1992).

Media is a third way social movements establish emotion cultures.
Alternative presses and organization newsletters have long been a part of
movement activism. Books and articles have played a significant role in
recruiting new feminists and rallying established activists. Most recently,
community access cable television channels have allowed social movements access to electronic media. Many feminist, gay rights, atheist, and civil rights organizations around the country have television programs in their own communities.

The Construction of Dahmer as an Emotional Event

The discovery of Jeffrey Dahmer's serial killings was a profoundly emotional event for Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. Activists defined the impact of the killings as an emotional and political watershed for their community. In much the way that the Stonewall riots transformed the gay rights movement across the nation (D'Emilio, 1983; Adam, 1987), "Dahmer" was recognized as a major crisis that would shape their community. As one activist declared, if fifty years hence a gay historian were to identify significant moments in the gay/lesbian movement, "this would be one of them." The emotions that became associated with the Dahmer event were not simply individual psychological experiences for Milwaukee's activists. They were defined, shaped, and framed by their participation in gay and lesbian culture.

The headline of the July 25, 1991 edition of The Wisconsin Light, the first discussion of the case within the gay press, addressed specifically the community's emotional responses: "Community Stunned by Murders, Angered By Press Coverage." The first headline about the case in InStep (v8,n15:4) similarly read, "Community cringes as massacre details unfold." Many activists discussed the initial intensity of emotion that the killings had generated for them personally and for the community as a whole. One gay psychotherapist reported a dramatic increase in the number cases of post-traumatic stress
syndrome in his clients after the discovery of the murders. The killings sparked memories of abuse for many -- "a lot of bad feelings and memories for a lot of people." One gay man described how this emotional intensity affected even young people in Milwaukee:

One of the women from the school board that I know well, a black woman, she said her son, one day, when they had it on TV, they mentioned his name. He ran upstairs and his mother said what's wrong? And he said well I went to school with that kid in middle school. So her son even broke down and was crying. Everybody was affected.

One gay activist discussed his surprise at the intensity of his own emotional reactions:

It even affected me. I didn't think it would. I thought, this is tragic for these people that got killed, but...for that whole week after I got back I was real melancholy. You know when you're depressed, but you don't think you are, and you just pretend you're not.

Lesbians spoke more freely of their emotional responses. They were more likely to define the Dahmer crisis in specifically emotional terms. For example, one woman declared simply that "It's really a very emotional time for us." In describing how these emotional responses had affected them, they often noted the role that emotion had always played in their own activism. Most had previous experience in the women's movement and discussed their feminist affiliations and perspectives. Feminist theory has challenged positivist positions that eschew considering emotion as a serious subject (Keller, 1985; Gilligan, 1982; Collins, 1991), making the feminist movement as a whole more reflective of the role that emotion plays in activism. Milwaukee's lesbian, within the
context of the Dahmer killing, discussed how their activism was motivated by their feelings:

This is very passionate stuff for me. If it weren't I wouldn't be doing this. I have many many other things that I would like to do. But my passion is in this movement, in this gay and lesbian movement. The whole movement. A movement toward a world where we can all live. Where everybody has the right to be alive and have a chance for something. We don't have it now. And that's what the movement is for me. To change the whole world. To change the way everybody thinks. And everybody looks at things. And I'm afraid that the gay and lesbian people as a group don't really share that vision. . . We can't let ourselves be isolated, separated for a lot of reasons. One of them is just pure safety. . . And we can't allow these things to happen to us. But we're doing it every day. You know this wasn't the first time that gay men had been murdered in this town and no one said anything about it. It was like the fifth, sixth time. And it's happening everywhere. One by one by one. Gone. Dead.

Women also discussed their frustration that gay men were less comfortable with expressing their emotions in response to the Dahmer killings. One lesbian discussed how she felt vulnerable to "attack" from gay men when she expressed her feelings in meetings. She described the ways she felt gay men dismissed her as "an emotional woman" whenever "you lay yourself out like that and put your whole real humanness on the table for everyone to see."

Another lesbian expressed her frustration that gay men seemed unwilling to acknowledge the role that emotion played in their political activism as a whole:

We've really separated our feelings, all of us, I think, from this whole thing. And I think part of that was we really didn't have time to sit around and talk about our feelings. And the other part of it is that these men that I am connected with don't sit around and talk about their feelings. I've never heard any of them
talk about feelings. In any setting, around any issues. Nothing. I know they have them. But it's not part of their process. They don't identify political work with emotional things. And of course it's all connected. If you didn't feel bad about the way you were treated, you wouldn't do this work to be treated better, right? But they really have a pluralistic way of looking at things. Men do. I really think that's true. They've been taught to do that. Separate the political from the personal. Of course women have always said the personal IS political and we bring it all together. That's part of our process.

Every activist and virtually everyone with whom I conducted informal interviews was eager to tell the story of where they were and what they were doing when they first heard the reports of the discovery of the murders. This excerpt from an article titled "Bringing about a 'healing process'" in InStep (v8, n16:16) illustrates how emotionally significant the moment of learning about the case was for Milwaukee lesbians and gay men: "Remembering a certain smell, taste, sight, touch or sound when you first heard about the Dahmer case [can cause one to] recall the horror of the case whenever you experience those certain smells, tastes, sights, touches or sounds again." In a way similar to the recollections of people about what they were doing when John Kennedy was assassinated or when the Space Shuttle Challenger exploded, the activists could recall their experiences and reactions vividly:

But [my partner] and I were on our way home from the cabin. And we were listening to the radio and they were talking about taking these dead bodies out of somebody's apartment. And [she] looked at me, and she said, "Geez, I wonder where that was happening." We didn't think about it. We came home, it was late at night. We came home, we went to bed. Woke up the next morning, and she called me at work, and she said, "you won't believe it. It's here in Milwaukee. This thing is here in Milwaukee." And then, suddenly, things started happening.
We did a lot of work around. We did lobbying for our little proclamations and stuff like that. And I was pretty tired by July. I was really sort of burned out. And I wanted to go fishing, mostly. And [laugh] so I wake up one morning and read in the paper that they're finding these bodies. And the police are quoted as saying, "another case of homosexual overkill." And I was furious, I was absolutely furious. And at first, I saw this as primarily a P.R. problem.

I came back from vacation... I just happened to be up late and I live real close to where Jeff lived... so when I see the news and see my street number I started to watch. And I ended up watching until three o'clock in the morning. Of course the next day I was a little bit in shock, but not quite - stuff was still coming in. Stories and stuff were still coming in and them once the press kind of got ahold of things and started to say things that were just off the wall. My sickness and sadness over what had happened turned to real frustration.

What distinguishes the telling of these stories from other personal traumatic events was the sense of going through a shared experience. People remember their moments of learning about historically significant events -- the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the assassination of Martin Luther King, or Neil Armstrong's first words on the moon -- because they are collective experiences. While Milwaukee's activists expressed their personal shock at the time of learning of the killings, their emotions were always expressed within the context of how they would affect the gay and lesbian community. An InStep columnist wrote about her initial reaction was shaped by consideration of the potential costs to the gay and lesbian movement:

When I first heard the news about Jeffrey Dahmer, my immediate reaction was, "Oh, no, we don't need this!" It was a selfish response. Selfish because my first reaction was one of concern for the Gay/Lesbian community and for myself, rather than concern for the
victims and their families. Frankly my initial reaction was cynical, bitter and very political. In light of all that came after it, my first reaction seemed right on target. Jeffrey Dahmer's actions, along with the media's handling of his story, could do more harm to the Gay community than any other incident in recent history. (v.8,n,16:60)

The personal feelings of shock and horror were defined within the gay press as a uniquely gay and lesbian experience. A headline in the "EXTRA" edition of The Wisconsin Light (v4,n16:6) read, "Fear, Shock, Paranoia Expressed by Apprehensive Community." The article concluded that, "throughout the bars the reaction seemed much the same: fear, shock, and 'paranoia,' along with a great outpouring of grief." The headline "Publisher's Comment" in the InStep (v.8, n.15:7) read, "Murders shock/anger community," while the article concluded that "our community reeled. We realized the 'homosexual overkill' term would deflect the community's anger onto the Gay/Lesbian community, which is already besieged with homophobia and hate crimes." One lesbian compared the impact to that of a natural disaster:

I hadn't thought about these men. I hadn't thought about these men that were dead. And I hadn't thought about Dahmer as a human being at all. I mean, he was to me like, I don't know what category to put him in. Something happened, sort of like a tornado. Something bad happened. And I was more concerned about the effect on the community for years to come than I was about feeling bad for the families, and all of that stuff.

The gay and lesbian community was overwhelmed by the crimes and the resulting press coverage. One article in The Light (v4, n16:8) reported that "expressions of shock have been a constant denominator." Another article claimed that "in what has to be an entirely subjective impression, people in the
Gay bars seemed as horrified and confused about the case as everyone else."

An article on the emotional responses in the bars indicated the devastation felt in the community:

   Kelly, an older woman at C'est La Vie, seemed to sum things up. "Shit, it's going to hell," she said, referring to a world that, after the Dahmer case, Casy, a young Black man called simply, "insane." (Light, v4,n16:6)

Activists reported feeling overwhelmed both by the impact of the murders on the community and by the increase in activism required to respond to early press reports. Many felt that discussions of "Dahmer" had taken over not just their community but their own personal and professional lives as well:

   A year ago I'd never heard of him. Now he occupies a very large part of my life. He continues to occupy a large part of my life, my thinking. Quite strange, how things work out.

   People are so worn out by this thing and drained, energy-wise. Basically, I don't have the energy I use to have before this, and I don't know if it's because of this psychologically, or because of the whole community, the attacks on the community with the school board, the police raids on the bars, the mayor's knocking us around and the fundamentalists' attacks on the Pride stuff. It's like the gay community - it's been an onslaught all year.

One high school teacher described how the killings had required her to disclose her own sexual identity to her students:

   It's so frustrating, but Dahmer has been a pain in the ass to me personally simply because I've had to talk more about myself to my students. Which I really don't think is any of their business. I've had to deal with more gay issues and talk to students about it.
Activists repeatedly discussed the amount of time and energy that they had devoted to organizing responses to the mainstream press coverage of the case. They described feeling overwhelmed and exhausted. One lesbian noted that, "I just felt like I had not personal life" and others described ways they "didn't have enough time" or "were just too busy." Many expressed a sense that they had lost control over their lives as a result:

But one of the things that really happened for me was that I lost a part of my life. I was so hurt and angry and afraid. And sad. I mean practically every emotion that you can imagine, that I thought I had no choice but to put every minute that I had into organizing. And into trying to change what I saw happening around me. Which was a lot of misinformation. And a lot of ignorance. And people's fears coming out, non-gay people. But even some gay people, the internalized homophobia, was really quite amazing.
Defining the Emotions

Milwaukee's lesbians and gays described their individual reactions in strikingly similar terms. While their language and experiences varied according to gender, age, class, and political differences, they expressed similar emotions in terms of grief, guilt, fear, and anger. These emotions were not simply stages within psychological models of healing from trauma (see Kübler-Ross, 1969). While the concept of stages implies a sequencing, these emotions occurred simultaneously for nearly seven months. Models of healing stages are based on a recovery from a single traumatic event that occurs at a given point in time. The event known as "Dahmer" continued to emerge from the time of his arrest until his sentencing. The feelings expressed by the activists were not temporal passing experiences. While activists discussed ways their feelings had changed and were continuing to change, these emotions were emergent in the ways that concepts of gay identity and community are always evolving (Browning, 1993; Herdt & Boxer, 1992; Herrell, 1992; Murray, 1992). They were collective experiences, framed by the cultural producers (Bourdieu, 1993; Crimp, 1987) within that community. Components of the gay cultural tool kit -- newspapers, newsletters, memos, press releases, terminology, and discussions in meeting rooms and barrooms -- helped shape the collective emotional experience and responses of this community. In interviews, expressions of what "I" felt quickly turned into discussions of what "we" felt. The I/We feelings were always, in every interview, article, press release, and informal discussion, set in a political framework. The emotions expressed by lesbians and gay men reflected the tension between the power of community activists to define and
focus feelings into powerful experiences that would promote activism and the power of the dominant culture to define the killings as a rallying point for anti-gay sentiment and action. For Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists, their emotions were political; they had become embedded in the emotion culture of their community.

Activists discussed the intensity of their own personal grieving processes. Many had never met any of the victims, and yet they expressed their sadness as a personal loss:

I was driving to Madison and I had a meeting, and it was something...and here I was, driving to Madison, listening to the radio, and just sobbing and sobbing. I kept thinking, "I have to turn the radio off, I can't do this." So I guess I've had a lot of what my therapist would call interrupted grief episodes. So I suspect it'll keep happening. And it will be a long time before it's really out of my system.

But it wasn't until the trial actually, that I started seeing these people as human beings. And it was the first time I looked at Dahmer as a human being. And I actually started feeling sort of bad. For him. And I started feeling sort of sad about it. And that was the first time that sadness had ever come into it.

I didn't really know them, but I knew who they were. And that was hard enough. I thought geez, imagine if I, you know, imagine if I, if I'd actually known them. I don't know how I could have gone through it.

Because even though I haven't done a lot of crying about it, I know that every one of my friends has been through the same experience on some level that I have. And actually that's been really helpful. That even if there hasn't been that sharing of emotions, there's at least that intellectual understanding. And so that's been really good. What I'm really sorry about for this specific community is that we haven't
had more, more structured ways of sharing those emotions.

Although the National Organization for Victim Assistance organized support meetings for Milwaukee's citizens, most gay and lesbian activists believed that the group did too little to meet their needs. They believed that as an outside agency, NOVA did not understand the enormity of the grief that their community was experiencing and did not have the resources to provide long-term assistance. They described NOVA's attempts as "terrible" and "like putting band-aids on a massive sore." Most felt the gay community had been excluded from the grieving process:

Our community has not had a real good opportunity to grieve. We haven't been included in the steps of grief. I mean, I'm outraged that what happened here hasn't really been very well organized. Why deny that these guys were gay? What's so shameful about being gay? It's our community that was, in some measure, shut off.

The one arena where gay and lesbian leaders felt they had some power to shape the grieving process for their community was through the candlelight vigil. This ritual was intended to be a statement of grief and of anger. Organizers of the vigil focused on mobilizing the community and establishing networks with other minority communities. In an early article on the case, a "Publisher's Comment" in InStep (v8,n15:9) declared that, in addition to a need to organize to respond to press and police relations, "we also need a time of healing. In that vein, a Candlelight Vigil 'To Remember and Rebuild in Peace' has been called for Monday, August 5." This comment encouraged seeing the vigil as an opportunity for rallying the community around its grief: "speakers from diverse community groups will also appear to bring us together after this most
recent heinous act of violence. Bring a flashlight or candle. Brings your friends.
We must all put this behind us, together." Members of the community
repeatedly expressed the importance of the vigil for providing a context for the
grief, fear, and anger they were experiencing. The vigil was significant in three
distinct ways. It was the only expression of collective grief that the lesbian and
gay community would have during the Dahmer crisis. It was also one of the few
pro-active opportunities for mobilization in the community. Finally, lesbians and
gay men described the vigil as a "humanizing" experience. For many of them, it
was the first public recognition of the victims as real people that their community
had lost. One activist described this "affirming" experience:

The vigil. [long pause] Well, it was certainly the only
affirmation that I have seen the whole time, that really
said to me these young gay men were important, that
anybody cared about them. And it was really an
important event in the sense that there were a lot of
straight community leaders who worked with the gay
organizers of the vigil. I think that was really a critical
thing. . . . I think for some of the people, it had a major,
it was a major influence on them.

Yet for many of the organizers of the vigil, the experience was less significant.
These activists had already organized the press conference responding to the
homophobic reactions of the press. The vigil was less a ritual of emotion and
more a symbol of the political processes that were occurring beyond their
community's control. The vigil became a paradox for these individuals. While it
represented a humanizing experience for rank-and-file members of the
community, the vigil's organizers found the political conflicts and the
overwhelming presence of the press to have a de-humanizing effect. As one
organizer claimed, "there was no humanity in it at all." A lesbian who served as
stage manager for the speakers, many of whom were members of the victims'
families, described the experience of trying to protect the speakers from "this hoard of reporters:"

It was like standing there watching The Night of the Living Dead. All of these people with their television make-up and their microphones, kind of wandering toward you, you know? Da-da-da-da-da. It was like they weren't human either. And they de-humanized the families. They de-humanized the whole thing in their efforts to get sobbing family members on camera. The whole thing to me just seemed like, where are the people? Where are the human beings that are affected by this, that are involved in this? And it was really a disconcerting experience for me.

The vigil was a ritual that the activists created and, for the most part, controlled. It became a mobilizing point for their community and for Milwaukee's black community. Yet it was a brief, singular occurrence that took place within two weeks after Dahmer's arrest. Most of the components that became part of the event of Dahmer had yet to happen. The assault on the gay and lesbian community had just begun. The ritual could only help to heal. It could not be the vehicle to "put behind us" what had not yet taken place.

The continuation of the Dahmer event increased the fear that dominated the emotional backdrop of Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community for months. Activists spoke repeatedly of the fear generated by the killings. Many described fears of their personal safety. These fears were political in nature. The overall message, as most described it, was that being gay threatened their very lives in ways they had never before experienced:

When I came out, my mother said she was sorry she wasn't going to have a grandchild and she said, "I'm very afraid that you've made a decision that will put you in danger the rest of your life." I was twenty years old. I could handle everything - I didn't care.
The whole thing, between Jeffrey Dahmer and the school board, made me very aware that I am not safe and every day is a risk.

I think on a real personal level, there's the fear that someone who knows that I'm a lesbian will hate me and hurt me. I think it gets down to a very basic level. Someone will hurt me or hurt someone that I love.

I think it gave me a better understanding of how vulnerable we are. How easily we could be victimized. How little we'll be missed. How much people, some people, many people hate the essence of my being, just because of what I am. And it made me very much afraid. I really got scared.

I think this might have scared a lot of people, especially young people. I mean when they hear all this stuff, especially the school board, you'd hear this Jeffrey Dahmer stuff, it's like this is a gay guy. And then people go around and use Dahmer as a nickname, or a synonym for gay.

Activists also feared for the political effects of the killings on their community. Several events that followed Dahmer's arrest, such as the school board vote and the mayor's veto of funding for the pride parade, only contributed to the fear that the long-term consequences for Milwaukee's gay and lesbian movement would be severe. Calling it "the worst public relations nightmare possible," they feared that the symbolic equation of Dahmer with the gay community could continue to be used to justify political repression of their community:

Were they going to say that Dahmer did this because he was gay? Are they going to say that being gay is bad? I mean, just all this stuff, and how that was going to affect me, and if that meant I was going to have to do anything about it. Do I have to talk to any more reporters? (laugh)
Gay men and lesbians also described their fears that the Dahmer killings would increase homophobic hate crimes against members of their community and that the systems designed to ensure safety for the larger community would ignore violence directed at them. This fear was overwhelming at times, exemplified by members describing the "evil" that had been introduced into their community or by the lesbian who said she "just couldn't cope with the hate." One leader described how her fear was related to a realization that the intense homophobia of the dominant culture presented an extreme threat to their community:

I think it was an awakening, in a lot of ways. I know that it was for me personally, and I think it has been for others as well. I don't think most of us understood how much we were despised. And how real the threat is to our very existence. And I think it engendered a lot of fear. A lot of really gut fear in people. Not only could this guy, this one individual do this to us, to us as a city, us as a community, and get away with it. But then we started looking at the way the police responded. And the comments we were hearing. And the support that Dahmer got for what he did.

Many of the gay men and lesbians also expressed guilt over the killings. Typically, guilt was the emotional response that was discussed in individual terms, with activists wondering what they personally might have done to stop the killings:

I didn't know what was happening before, but I could have put this together and said, look there's all these people missing. But it's because I didn't know. I didn't know they were missing. The families didn't tell me. The police didn't let me know that they had had reports of gay people in the last three years missing. . .But it was never put together by anybody. And I felt that I should have been able to put it
together. I felt guilty. And then the families were all like, "no, no don't feel guilty. It's not your fault. It's our fault. And the police's fault. And everybody's fault." And that was kind of traumatic.

One activist was notified by police that telephone company records indicated that Curtis Straughter had called his home from Dahmer's house the night he was killed. He wondered what he might have done to prevent Curtis' murder:

And then I started feeling funny, like maybe if I could have, if he would have come over more maybe he would have been there that night, instead of being downtown, getting picked up. I started getting this guilt, that maybe I could have done something. Which is normal, but, well, like you, maybe I could have said something. . .and then a week or so, or two weeks maybe, I don't know how long, I get this call from a police officer. . .and he said, we were going through Jeffrey Dahmer's records and we noticed that your phone number, that he had placed a call to your house. . .So that was probably his last attempt at calling somebody. I mean I don't even know if he knew what was in store for him at the time when he placed the call. . .but then I thought boy, who knows, maybe if I would have talked to him. He was so. . .I could have said well where are you? You know how that shit goes through your head.

Overwhelmingly, the emotion that dominated all others was anger. During the month following Dahmer's arrest, Milwaukee's two gay newspapers published a total of 53 articles related to the case. Of these, 46 contained references to the emotional impact of the killings and the case. Thirty-one contained some reference to anger. The InStep magazine created a logo which appeared on every page that carried an article related to the killings, sometimes emblazoned in red ink: "OUTRAGE IN MILWAUKEE." Articles and activists alike described the sense of anger within the community in great detail:
Walking about the (vigil) crowd, looking at faces, overhearing words, I learned of the tremendous anger present in so many. There were those who wanted to cry. Those who wanted to shout and everywhere, people expressed the need to vent, to relieve their feelings of frustration, pain and ire. (The Light; v.4, n17:3)

But where has the emotion gone? I think most of it has gone into anger. Translated into rage and anger. And it's really hard to keep that up. It takes so much energy to be angry all the time.

A lot of anger. A lot because the community is going to go through the roof.

There was little anger directed at Dahmer himself. Instead, the anger was focused primarily on two targets -- the police and the press. The police were attacked for their conduct on the Sinthasomphone case and for creating and perpetuating the term "homosexual overkill." Many members of the gay and lesbian community also perceived that police conduct in general was racist and homophobic, reflected by the lack of investigation into the numerous missing persons reports filed on Dahmer's victims. The media were criticized for their homophobic coverage of the case and for their general ignorance of the gay and lesbian community:

I think there was more anger generated. In fact, rage. And I think it brought up feelings of outrage and fury from years and years and years of maltreatment. And I think a lot of us had just come to expect to be treated badly. And it contributes to the treatment. And we really don't, many of us don't look at ourselves and don't identify ourselves as victims of a system in terms of our sexuality. But in other ways maybe.
The grief, fear, guilt, and anger marked the emotion culture of Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists for months. The symbolic construction known as "Dahmer" shaped the meaning of these emotions for their community. The discourse about Dahmer reveals how these emotions were framed and interpreted and how they changed what it means to be gay in Milwaukee.

**Contextualizing Emotion: The Dahmer Discourse**

Imagine a society, Bath, Ohio, in the United States. Where you went to your mother and your father, and you said, "Mom, dad, I really don't know that I can be emotionally fulfilled with a woman. I want to date another man." And mom and dad said, "Great! Tommy down the street, I understand, feels the same way. Why don't you invite him to the prom?" And what if you imagined a society where you could walk in holding Tommy's hand and they'd say, "Oh, isn't that cute. Don't Jeff and Tommy look cute together!". . .And what if you dated Tommy and Jimmy and Donald and Jerry, and finally one of you asked the other to marry. And there was a big celebration. Maybe 17 people wouldn't be dead.

This activist expressed the painful battles that Milwaukee's gays and lesbians faced in providing a framework for interpreting their fear and anger. In the realm of what-if's and if-only's, Dahmer represented the intensity of homophobia, the potential result of internalizing that hatred, and the victimization of the gay community by the dominant system. Dahmer also became a symbol for the fears the community experienced about itself and about the meaning of gay identity:

You know the initial media coverage made it sound as though Jeffrey Dahmer was killing because he was gay. And so I think it did increase the homophobia, I really do. That more people felt, it sort of dug out of some people, straight, but even some gay people, their worst fantasies about what it really meant to be gay. And suddenly confirmed it.
Because the medical examiner said it. And it did give people permission to say and do things that they wouldn't have before.

In every interview, both formal and informal, activists were eager to discuss Dahmer himself. They wanted my insight into his psyche and offered their own theories about his crimes. Although none of the activists knew Dahmer, many expressed support and empathy for me and wanted me to talk about my relationship with him. The activists were constructing their own relationship to Dahmer and in doing so constructed him symbolically. The central issue in the discourse over Dahmer was whether he is gay. Immediately after his arrest, the debate over Dahmer's sexual identity dominated the discussion over Dahmer's motives. An article appearing in *The Light* contained a subsection titled, "Is Dahmer Gay?" The article presented evidence from members of the gay community that Dahmer was not one of them. Gays and lesbians repeatedly discussed Dahmer's sexual identity, raising questions about what it means to be gay. Some early press accounts denied that Dahmer was gay:

[The psychologist] said the obvious fact that he was unable to relate to women does not make him [Dahmer] a homosexual by default; and that his sexual orientation had nothing whatsoever to do with what he did. (*InStep*, v8,n16:16)

Others analyzed Dahmer's sexuality by making a distinction between gay as a political identity and gay as behavior and desire:

I don't know if you've talked to a lot of people about this, but to me, someone who is gay is someone who can handle it, deal with it, and kind of an emotional/spiritual thing to them about sexual orientation. Whereas a homosexual is more a
person who acts out, does the behavior, who isn't comfortable with it, who doesn't want to deal with it or acknowledge it.

Most activists believed that if Dahmer were gay he had internalized the homophobia of the dominant culture in extreme ways:

Was Jeffrey Dahmer gay or not? I don't know... I don't know if he was or if he wasn't... Then maybe if Jeffrey Dahmer is gay, even if that is his sexual orientation, had he not been afraid and had he had society's acceptance and support. That it doesn't mean you're mental or deranged. It is who you are, and that's a part of you. And it's no different than any other part of you. Maybe it wouldn't have happened.

I'd like to know if he ever considered himself an accepting homosexual or not. I've heard conflicting stories. I kind of agree with some of what the judge said when... he said that he thought Dahmer was a self-loathing homosexual who killed the sources of his desire. And I've always felt that maybe is the case, from the beginning on. And then I wonder if it's not, and I wonder if it's just his sexual kick, you know the things he did with the bodies after they were dead, it was his sexual kick... Did he hate blacks, did he hate gay people? Was he accepting of his sexuality? Wasn't he accepting? Those questions never really came out. And that's where my interest has always laid and that's never come out in the case.

The discourse over Dahmer and gay identity repeatedly focused on a victim/perpetrator dichotomy. If Dahmer wasn't gay, he could be defined as an evil perpetrator who, with malicious calculation, preyed upon a vulnerable community. The gay community was thus a victim of homophobia on multiple levels, beginning with Dahmer's killings and continuing through the press, police, and dominant community. Yet if Dahmer was gay, the distinctions of the
victim/victimizer dichotomy blur. If Dahmer was one of "us" -- if he shared the collective identity -- he betrayed his own people, both personally and politically:

We went out to the bars (to talk with people about the verdict). And it was, "oh, I'm tired of the Dahmer thing." And then without a break or a pause or a hesitation, they would spend the next 20 minutes on the subject. And the universal opinion, well, almost, to avoid a generalization, was that Dahmer had betrayed the gay community. He was one of us, and he had betrayed, hurt, brutalized, etc. the gay community. Therefore, he should suffer grievously. How could he have done this? To us? He was one of us.

Lack of acceptance of him as one of the community. "Don't say he's one of ours!" I've heard that more than once. Yeah, I've said it. We don't want to claim him... We didn't want to be associated with him either. And I think that's the way a lot of people feel.

The nature of the debate over Dahmer had been defined by the dominant culture's focus on homosexuality and the gay "lifestyle." This framework had been established from the moment of Dahmer's arrest. The gay and lesbian community, therefore, had no choice but to engage in this discourse. While there was considerable controversy within the dominant culture, especially within the Black community, over whether the victims were gay, the assumption from the very beginning of the case was that Dahmer was gay. The dominant culture defined Dahmer's deeds as specifically gay. His actions were not the result of homophobia but the logical extension of a sick and evil gay lifestyle. The term "gay" was used to define him and his crimes. The gay community was portrayed by the larger society as the cause of the killing spree by, not the victim of it.

Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community had to defend itself against these charges. If Dahmer were not truly gay, the community could more easily
claim for itself a legitimate status as victim. Within the gay community, the controversy was not focused on the sexual identity of the victims. Many of the victims were known within the community, and the assumption was that most, if not all, of them were gay. The focus of the gay activists was on whether Dahmer was himself gay -- whether he shared their collective identity.

Gay men and lesbians struggled with the evidence that Dahmer was in fact gay. This became an arena where they struggled with a sense of identification with him. Since a gay identity was defined as politically oppositional to the homophobia of the dominant society, identity became a common point of understanding. Many believed they could relate to the internalized homophobia which they surmised Dahmer had experienced, as expressed by a recognized leader in the community since the 1970s:

> What I've told people, like with different reporters and the papers and such is that to me he represents the ultimate tragedy of homophobia, of a society putting pressure on people as they're growing up, forcing them to come to grips with themselves, and keeping people in a position of being forced to hide, being forced to not deal with their identity. So that's society's pressure. And then just the fear and the internal homophobia that we have of not wanting to deal with it, and coming to grips with it and getting the needed resources and help. And have a healthy gay or lesbian psychological, spiritual, emotional development. And so when you have that you basically have, what we basically have is a holocaust where Jeffrey Dahmer was the ultimate effect of that. The ultimate tragedy.

The experience of a gay identity is assumed to be shared; this is, in effect, what it means to consider being gay a collective identity. Repeatedly, community members discussed their need to view Dahmer "with compassion" or as a "brother." Many expressed an empathic bond with Dahmer:
I think Jeffrey Dahmer was motivated by things which you almost have to be a gay male to understand. I think he chose those that in his dreams he could have made a lover. And he had no idea - he was so desperate, that he felt, I suppose, a lot of self-hatred that he tried to incorporate by horrible means. He killed them, he did terrible things to them. But now at 31 his life is over. In our society there's no rehabilitation. There's no, we talk about reform and rehabilitation, but the justice system has one end, and that is establishing vengeance. . . . And I sat in front of those families for day after day. How they sat through it, with all those gruesome details, I don't know how they did it. And it's something that they went through that I can't even begin to imagine. But neither can I hate Dahmer. I do not find it in my heart.

I've tried to look at Jeffrey Dahmer from the experience of what does it mean to be a homosexual in society. In terms of being disenfranchised. At being able to affirm my relationship in public. Or not being able to do the same things with my significant other that married people can do. . . . I am trying to see what there is that could have caused Jeffrey Dahmer in this society of ours.

A paradoxical process was occurring here. In the process of constructing Dahmer as a symbol of homophobia and political repression, gay men and lesbians focused on Dahmer as a gay man. To many, he too became a victim, a symbol of the difficulty of growing up gay in American society. One man described how Dahmer was a victim of a system of values about gender, sex, and sexuality embedded in the history of American culture, beginning with Puritanical notions of sexuality. This community leader described Dahmer as "the eighteenth victim," a victim of religious and sexual "bigotry:"

Love is supposed to be gender-oriented. Love is not gender-oriented and never has been. Love is supposed to happen in perfectly defined ways. And it doesn't. It will be. Jeffrey Dahmer suffered because of that. All of us have been through it. Day
after day. America is uncomfortable, hideously so, with diversity. America wants the homogeneous society. In a country that was founded by a pack of religious bigots who wanted freedom for themselves and nobody else. And then proceeded to try and rule it over everybody else who showed up. Henry Miller was right. You don't understand American history unless you understand the Puritans. Jeffrey Dahmer is as much a victim of the Puritans as any of those poor souls who were in 1692 in Salem. I think that's what he symbolizes. He is as much, it would be horrible to say this in certain circles, but in some ways, he is as much a victim as any of the people he killed. Because as he killed them, so he died.

Other activists described him as a victim of internalized homophobia, resulting in loneliness, confusion, and isolation. Many gay men and lesbians believed they could empathize with Dahmer. He symbolically encapsulated aspects of homophobia commonly shared by gay men and lesbians:

He took it all on himself. . .and he's not able to bear it. He's not a Christ figure, but he tried to be one. . .Oh, Jeff. Geez, what if somebody had hugged you? What if somebody had said I love you? Would you have known how to handle it? I don't know, I don't know.

I hurt for Jeffrey Dahmer. I would give my eye teeth just to sit down with him and say to him, "Can you tell me what went on inside your head? What did you think? What did you feel?"

I empathize with Jeffrey Dahmer. . .We all grew up, gay men, with the horrible burden of a macho society which severely defines masculinity. Coming to the realization of one's sexual orientation at the very time when you want to conform desperately with your peers. . .And you also know that it is, what you are feeling, what you are thinking, which you cannot help, is beyond the pale. . .And most of us get through. We're scarred, but we get through it. Scars have their effects, and I think most of us, to avoid a generalization, are suffering to one degree or another. . .So you internalize it. And you hurt. And there are no support systems. And there are not
ways to learn about relationships. And there is no way to learn about love. So what do you do? You turn it in on yourself. You collapse it on yourself, sometimes, I think. Whatever happens to you, you get hurt. And you, most of us eventually figure it out. And we live our lives and we form our relationships. And like Thornton Wilder said, sometimes we come through by the skin of our teeth. Jeffrey Dahmer did not come through.

As the significance of Jeffrey Dahmer's gay identity was constructed, community members increasingly discussed implications of this for the gay and lesbian community in Milwaukee. One lesbian tearfully discussed the effects of recognizing Dahmer as a member of the gay community:

I think it's really in some ways lowered everybody's sense of self-esteem, because he was a part of our community. And nobody wants that to be true. But it is. And because we know that, sometimes as illogical as it is, I think it still is a very personal thing. Partly because people in minority groups tend to identify that minority community as part of themselves, as part of their family. So on a real basic level Jeffrey Dahmer was my brother. And it's a pretty awful thing to think about that.

Other activists discussed the reluctance of gays and lesbians to see Dahmer as gay and, therefore, as a member of their community. Yet many felt a need to accept Dahmer as a member of the community specifically because of the change in identity and politics that he could represent. An article in InStep (v8, n16:17) argued that with the Dahmer case, "we could feel a loss of identity and wonder "what about the future?" We'll try and figure out what the whole thing 'means,' ponder our society's loss of values." Activists described the issues involved in constructing Dahmer as part of their community. Dahmer represented the most extreme consequences that internalized homophobia:

Whether he wants to accept the fact or not, if he says he's gay or homosexual, we have to. He was a part
of us. He was not a representative element. But I think he was representative of the fact of the torture that people go through, of the many of us that can never deal with it or openly accept it. But I think we have to accept him as, yeah, I mean I think we have to accept him as part of this community.

Accepting Dahmer as part of their community also raised questions about the meaning of community for Milwaukee's lesbians and gay men. He represented the struggle within the community to define its own parameters and, as one gay man illustrated, the need to include extremely diverse factions:

Not saying because he was bad or good. I mean we always want to accept good people. But I think as part of our community we have to accept him, just like we have to accept the weird people, we might think, who are into leather, the drag queens, the street hustlers, the homeless gay and lesbian people, the black lesbian and gay people, the bisexuals, the ones who are married. I mean they're part of our community. And he's a part of our community. And I think we have to accept that.

The activists felt empathy with Dahmer that resulted from their perception that they shared with him the experience of homophobia. This created a tension in the subject/object dichotomy of constructing Dahmer as a symbol for the gay community. If Dahmer's actions were in part a reflection of the devastating effects of internalized homophobia, what were the implications of this for a gay identity? In trying to understand Dahmer both as a symbol and as a gay man, gay men and lesbians expressed a kind of insidious fear about the implications of this for their own identity. Many expressed apprehension over sharing an identity with Dahmer. If his crimes were in fact related to the extreme consequences of internalized homophobia, was anyone who had also experienced such oppression capable of committing such crimes?
As a community we really don't know each other, and we can't find each other, and we don't have a lot of role models. As soon as someone is in the public eye who's gay, I think the first thing you do is think, am I like that person? And I think a lot of people are going around saying, "am I like Jeffrey Dahmer? Could I do this? Is that what it means to be gay?" And I think that, I think a lot of people are worried about that. I don't know that they even necessarily can articulate it, but I think that's out there.

Ironically, the fear that lesbians and gay men felt over the consequences of internalized homophobia served to increase the internalized hatred and self-doubt. Gay pride was disrupted with the secret fear that perhaps the daily messages heaped upon gay men and lesbians by the dominant society were true. What if gay really did represent an evil and sick perversion? Many activists expressed the resulting fear of their own desire:
That same fear. That same identification with him. Of maybe I'm like that. Maybe they're going to say something about gay people that is new or that I didn't know, and that I'm really not the person that I think I am.

I don't want to feel bad about being who I am. And a lot of what Jeffrey Dahmer's whole case did was start to make me question, is it OK to be who I am?

Jeffrey Dahmer symbolized the fear over gay identity constructed by the hegemonic homophobic culture within which Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community lived. By defining Dahmer and his crimes as specifically "gay," the dominant system had sought to denigrate gay identity. For the people who claimed a gay identity, gay pride was shattered. Self-doubt, fear, and frustrated rage took its place. For many in the community, "Dahmer" represented a shifting of what it means to be gay.

Mobilizing Through Emotion

The discourse within Milwaukee's lesbian and gay community on the emotional reactions to the Dahmer crisis reflected a sense that community members were engaged in a war with the homophobic powers of the larger society. Community leaders repeatedly emphasized that these emotions needed to be channeled into fighting back. They focused on anger as the primary vehicle for mobilizing political participation. The need to link anger with action was constructed in three major ways. Activists portrayed anger as a way for the community to give meaning to the deaths of Dahmer's victims. A column in The Wisconsin Light defined activism born of the intense anger in the community as a testament to the dead men:
The city pulses with anger and one stream of anger currently being felt by some visible members of the Lesbian and Gay community is directed back to those who remain invisible. . .To turn our backs to their deaths is to turn our backs on our right to life. In our silence no voices will be heard. No cries of pain, no cries of help, no cries of dignity, no cries of hope. There will be no visible tears. There will be no remembrance. The graves of these men will be nothing but a void to be filled in by our enemies. (The Light; v.4, n. 17:6)

Milwaukee's gay and lesbian leaders also stressed the threat that gay anger could present to the dominant community. The out-rage represented in their community's activism was portrayed as a powerful weapon against homophobia and for creating political change by Milwaukee's gay press:

Anger can be a wonderful motivator for change and many share it. It also helps to channel our other emotions. . .NOVA also suggested we use this period of confusion to "demystify homosexuality" and educate the population on how similar our lives are to everyone else's. The Dahmer case and its aftershocks could be devastating to the Gay community in Milwaukee, but we CAN turn it to our advantage. (InStep; v8,n16:16)

So here's a word to a few politicians: election time's coming next year for a lot of you, and those of you who think you can ignore us, I'll tell you this. If I have to go out and drag every Gay and Lesbian I know or can find to the polling places, I'll do it. Believe me, believe me very hard, that I and we all will remember in November when we vote. (The Light; v.4, n.17:4)

The third way that community leaders focused on linking emotion with political activism was using the anger generated by the Dahmer crisis to provide a rallying point for preexisting problems and issues. The community had experienced harassment and abuse from police and the media prior to
Dahmer's arrest. Yet, as one lesbian describes, the anger generated by
"Dahmer" provided a renewed impetus for mobilizing around these issues:

There was a lot of anger, but it really wasn't at Dahmer. It was at the press, and it was at the police. Fury. Absolute Fury. But controlled in a way and directed in a way. Very calculated moves. And we needed to do that. Somebody had to do it, and I guess it was good that we were in there. But later on, I was interviewed by someone on a radio program out of D.C. And they said, "we understand that everybody's using this to their own political advantage." I said, "well, using it how? What do you mean by political advantage? You mean political advantage to be for equal rights? The right to equal protection under the law? As it says in the constitution? Do you mean the right to equal representation and police services? Do you mean the right to walk safely in the streets? Yeah, in that sense, absolutely. We are using this. What else could we do?" I mean, it was an accusation that was thrown around. At the time I really didn't take it to heart. But I'm thinking about it more now. And I do wonder sometimes if we weren't just as much vultures as the media was. but we were also like under siege, in a way. It was a very difficult time. Horrible time.

The targets of the activists' anger became the initial focal points of activism. The press conference held by community leaders both attacked the media for their coverage and educated the press on non-homophobic language and approaches. Activists reported the general feeling that their effort had been successful. Coverage of the case was discernibly better, from their perspective, after the press conference. Anger toward the police also quickly became a point of activism for Milwaukee's lesbians and gays. Committees were formed, meetings were held, reports were written. Yet members of the community still described anger toward the intense homophobic "siege" that they were experiencing that had no specific targets. They expressed their frustration at
feeling such intense rage toward a system they could barely name, let alone confront directly:

What we end up, sort of digressing into anger at one another, and anger at the, at these systems. It's so impossible to have emotions surrounding a system. You can't find a way to express that. You can't sit down eye to eye and talk with the police department.

The frustration, sadness and the sick feeling inside that you don't know what to do with. The whole problem with him has been that he has been up there, and you can't do anything about Jeffrey Dahmer -- you just can't. You can hope that he gets a sentence and hope that he know stays in prison. You can hope all those things. But it doesn't do anything. There's no way to direct this. . .there's no way to put the blame somewhere.

The focus of the anger of the gay and lesbian community was on a homophobic system that was exemplified by the actions of the police and the press. Dahmer in many ways became a symbol of that system. He had been constructed as the embodiment of internalized homophobia and external oppression, of sexual politics and the perils of the gay community. The symbolic construction known as "Dahmer" shaped the meaning of a gay identity within Milwaukee. The discourse about Dahmer that occurred within the lesbian and gay community reveals how its emotions were framed and interpreted and how they changed what it means to be gay in Milwaukee.

Gay Identity: Safer Sex, Safer Spaces

Gay identity is unique. An identity that is "defined by its common sexuality" (Goldstein, 1993:22) questions assumptions about sexuality, gender, and politics. Lesbians and gays have developed a movement filled with a complex terrain of symbols for politics, body, and community based on the
assumption that sexuality -- itself a complicated web of constructed symbols -- is political (Rich, 1980; Phelan, 1989; Sedgwick, 1990; Nestle, 1987; Califia, 1982; Browning, 1993; Epstein, 1987; Fuss, 1991; Bersani, 1987; Foucault, 1988; 1986; 1980; Crimp, 1987; Gough, 1992; Patton, 1991). In a recent article in "The Queer Issue" of the Village Voice, Richard Goldstein argues that "no other group in America is so devoted to symbol formation." Goldstein notes that from sign language to ritual to bodies, gay identity is replete with symbols. The issues of the queer movement -- marriage, military service, gay bashing -- are themselves politicized symbols for greater issues centered around what it means to be gay - to be queer - in American culture.

Beyond a belief in the politics of sexuality and the body, there is little agreement over what constitutes a gay identity. Feminist theorists have argued that a lesbian feminist identity is significantly different from a specifically gay male identity (Rich, 1980; Krieger, 1983; Taylor and Whittier, 1992; Phelan, 1989; Rupp and Taylor, forthcoming; Fuss, 1991) and that lesbians and gay men constitute a "community" only in the sense of forming political coalitions necessary to fight the generalized homophobia of the dominant culture (Sedgwick, 1990). More recently, the emergence of a queer culture defines sexual identity based on both embracing traditional symbols of sex trade. It also paradoxically creates new sexual symbols that, while oppositional to the traditional heterosexual model, are still "not necessarily gay sex. This queer way of being takes shape outside the bedroom" (Powers; 1993:24).

This complex landscape of collective identity served as a backdrop for the lesbian and gay community of Milwaukee as it struggled to understand how "Dahmer" -- both as man and as symbol -- had affected gayness in their culture.
Activists described the symbolic significance of this event for embodying the blame they placed on the dominant social system:

Up there with Jeffrey Dahmer in the dock should have been homophobia, glaring red-eyed across that court. Jeffrey Dahmer will no longer walk our streets, but homophobia is still walking our streets. The demon that participated in his causation is still out there. We didn't exorcise it. And it will be back. What we did was to exorcise what we thought was a devil. We left ourselves empty, and it will be back. It always is.

Gay identity is a continuously emergent and evolving process (Cohen, 1991; Browning, 1993). Goldstein (p. 22) has described gay identity as "becoming...because gayness is anything but a static concept." While identities are on-going constructions of the self (Pratt, 1984), there are landmark events that crystallize shifts in conceptions of identity. The Stonewall riots constituted a shift in identity from homosexuality as a psychoanalytic category to gay as a center of political activism -- the development of gay pride (D'Emilio, 1983; Adam, 1987; Herdt & Boxer, 1992). More recently, AIDS has shifted gay identity to new constructions of sexuality and of the body as locality (Herrell, 1992; Yingling, 1991; Ellis & Heritage, 1989; Crimp, 1989; Bersani, 1989).

For Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists, the parallels between the symbolic construction of AIDS and of Dahmer were striking in their implications for shaping identity. Both were defined as the inevitable consequence of the exotic perversion of homosexuality by the dominant culture. Both resulted in the deaths of gay men that the dominant system refused to recognize or act upon. Both were used as justification for a wave of homophobic backlash and gay bashing. Both raised questions about sexuality, the body, and safety. The emotions evoked by the AIDS movement were in many respects identical to the
emotions experienced in Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community: "issues of mourning and mortality, fear and guilt. It has forced the community to confront the very source of its odium: the ancient equation of death and deviant sexuality" (Goldstein, p.29). For Milwaukee's activists, the mourning and mortality, fear and guilt translated into expanding notions of safer sex. Gay bodies were not just in danger from disease; gay men risked death at the hands of prospective sexual partners. Safer sex meant more than simply using condoms and dental dams. It meant knowing all participants in potential sexual encounters, being aware of the physical dangers of anonymous sex, and helping to one another safe. Latex and Nonoxynol-9 do little good if the man you go home with intends to kill you:

The bar life is where you see most of it, that kind of anonymous or frequent sex. And the alcohol has a large part to do with it. Cause you tend to lose your inhibitions and lose your sense of safety too. You don't worry about whether you know someone well enough to go home with them. How many times have I heard people say they woke up in a house and they didn't even know where they were. Oh, my God, honey, you're lucky you're still alive!

It isn't that out of the ordinary. People try to place all this as out of the ordinary. How could this monster be roaming the streets? I mean he wasn't some hunchback of Notre Dame, snatching people away. He was just a regular normal looking guy who blended into the community. That's what makes it so terrifying. That it could happen again... People don't want to deal with that fact. We want to make it as something other than human or other than the ordinary, so that we can say this doesn't happen everyday. We can feel safer knowing that this won't happen again.

Activists described the impact of this expanding concept of safer sex. A report released by the Milwaukee AIDS Project seven months after Dahmer's
arrest indicated that the use of safer sex practices had decreased among gay men in the previous year. Community leaders described a collective sense of despair that was developing based on that element which distinguishes gay identity - sexuality. One lesbian labelled this depair as "a collective sense of no worth. We're all going to die anyway, so what the hell? Might as well have a good time." Another lesbian noted these feelings in response to the dominant cultures attitude towards Dahmer's victims: "They were some Black queers. So what? Who's that? Nobody. Literally, nobody. No BODY." An AIDS educator compared the unsafe behavior developing from this "collective sense of no worth" to similar responses he had seen to AIDS:

To maintain, start up again, or initiate unsafe behavior sexually. Because of the bad way of feeling about themselves. So I can see where the connection can be made in that sense, if you take it as Jeffrey Dahmer being a gay or homosexual person. Society jumping on that. Homophobia. This is the result. This is the ultimate result of sexual perversion. Society voicing that. People hearing that, integrating that, and saying oh my god, we're scum. We're not worthy. We're bad. And then manifesting that in promiscuous, unsafe sex activity, unsafe behavior. Health habits and other things like that. So I think there's a connection.

Many lesbians in Milwaukee's community believed that gay men were experiencing what they had felt all along, that the arena of sexual desire can be a dangerous place. They sensed that the body, while a point of celebration, can also be a target of violence. Lesbians frequently expressed anger that the men in their community had not "learned this lesson before:"

Safer. Really, no kidding. No kidding. Because you know women have known this for a long time. That it's not usually a good idea to go to some strange
man's apartment. We've known that because we've been victimized by that over and over and over. But why didn't they know that? Why wasn't there some movement afoot years and years and years ago, when AIDS first started cropping up, to really examine what are we doing with our lives? What's happening to our souls in this anonymous sex? What happens to a human being when you're used as a whole in the wall? When you're really using one another in the basest sense of the word.

Lesbians described their anger at gay men for what they believed to denial about the potential dangers associated with casual sexual encounters. Anonymous sex, more prominent in gay male culture, typified the unsafe behavior described as "the epitome of everything lesbians DON'T want in their lives." Many lesbians believed that the ubiquity of casual sex indicated both an unwillingness of gay men to form committed relationships and a reluctance to acknowledge the risk that "our gay brothers" may be encountering:

As a lesbian, I know that a lot of lesbians really turn that outward and are really angry with gay men for this happening. They're very angry that the gay men in the bars let this happen. And that how could so many of these guys have disappeared from the same bar and no one noticed it. Nobody paid any attention, nobody made the connection. And I think there's a lot of anger about it.

The fear invoked and evoked by the event known as "Dahmer" became associated with sex, bodies, and a gay sense of self and helped to shift the collective identity of Milwaukee's gay community. Goldstein (p.29) argues that AIDS did not eliminate sex. Instead, it only expanded notions of sexuality, since "not sex, but an attitude toward sexuality is what makes people gay." Similarly, Dahmer as a symbolic event did not change notions of sex. It expanded concepts of safer sex and safer places. AIDS symbolically constructed the need
to define the body as a safe space (Crimp, 1987; Bersani, 1987), overcoming "the terror of touching" (Browning, 1993) engendered by a dominant culture frightened of sex, bodies, and disease. For Milwaukee's gay and lesbian activists, the notion of a truly safe place for sex was muted, for, as Browning (p.104-5) asserts:

the new activist demand for sexual "safe space" is little more than a silly oxymoron. On the one hand, "safe space" denies the darkness and violence humans face in nature, and on the other it concocts a language of banal, "redemptive" sexual management that would suppress the inherently transgressive nature of desire. .. We actively contrive to inoculate ourselves from one another, struggling to deny that in the messiness of human affairs the only genuinely safe space exists in an urn of ashes. We forget the simplest truth: To be alive is to be at risk.

Milwaukee's activists repeatedly emphasized that "Dahmer" reminded them just how "at risk" a gay identity made them. For these gays and lesbians, "community" became something more than a common ground for coalition politics. Community now represented the safest place possible -- never completely safe, but infinitely safer than being gay without a community. They discussed how notions of community now were interwoven with their very survival:

I believe what I do in my activities and my organizing is directly connected to the life struggle that I face as a lesbian. I've never felt that before. I've had friends that have been beaten. I've had friends who've been killed. I've been a bartender at a bar where a man came in to specifically hurt people in my bar. And yet it was always - even AIDS - a horrifying thing, and yet still I always remained unflappable. And when this happened, it struck me that as a lesbian, I am not safe and my safety come when people understand who I am and acceptance and willingness to allow me to be. ..What this whole thing has taught me is
that optimism only gets you so far and that there's a very harsh reality out there.

Activists described a growing sense within their community that they were engaged in a war with the homophobic forces within the larger culture. They expressed how the events surrounding Dahmer's killings made them understand for the first time how much "they really hate us. I don't think we ever understood that before." They discussed an increasing need to identify themselves as a community. A lesbian leader described the need for community members to learn about one another: "We don't know each other. We don't know who we are. . .and it WE don't, believe me, THEY don't!"

Community members expressed a growing need to build trust within their community. One leader again emphasized the ways that their very survival depended on this:

And I have an underlying fear and belief that if we don't learn how to build coalitions, if we don't learn how to work together, if we don't start reaching out and getting support and supporting other oppressed minorities and working as a block, we're done for. Because the lesbians and gays are the first line of attack. We're very easy to target. We're very easy to get rid of. And I envision concentration camps. I envision, if we don't do this work, bad bad bad times ahead.

The sense that gay identity requires community for its survival defined community as a safer space in two interwoven ways. The first was a need for physical safety that required community -- a physically structured group of people -- to sustain it. Lesbians noted the ways women look out for one another's physical safety as an everyday aspect of being gendered female in a sexist society. Similarly, a leader in the men's leather community noted in an
interview that the killings would not have gone undetected in the leather community since that is a community organized on extending principles of safer sex beyond disease prevention into a physical/social concept of sexual safety. The second realm in which identity became linked to community was in the concept of community as a cultural entity, bound not by space but by shared values, symbols, and political agendas. Physical survival was interwoven with political survival, and individual and collective safety became interlocked with cultural identity and activism:

[Dahmer] symbolizes the fact that we haven't got a safe community, that we do have a culture and maybe we don't really know what it is ourselves, but we've got one. Maybe we don't like it. . . . Somebody said, well now things will return to normal. I said well, what normal do you want? Do you want the normal of July 20th? If that's the normal you want, I don't want THAT normal. I want a normal with learning having taken place. . . . Maybe we will never be just the same since Jeffrey Dahmer. I don't know. But I think there are going to be some grand attempts to be just the same. As what's-his-name said, the band is playing on. ¹

Identity and Activism

This emergent conception of identity -- that "gayness" requires community and culture for its very existence -- created a resurgence of activism in Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. Leaders of gay and lesbian organizations reported an increase in phone calls and renewed interest by their membership. Additionally, some people who previously had not been a part of the activist community now became involved in the Lavender Network. One lesbian who had never participated in any social movement quickly rose to a leadership position within the community in the months that followed Dahmer's
arrest. A third way that activism was increased was among the community's leaders. Many reported that although they had been experiencing burnout, the events surrounding Dahmer's arrest reawakened their own sense of activism. Some of these leaders had been involved in the cultural organizations in the community and had never participated in specifically political activities. These leaders discussed how they now believed they needed to be leaders politically as well as culturally:

It's politicized me to the point where, I had always said I'm busy enough... I didn't have time for anything else, for more involvement in the community. I said my whole life is gay anyway. I have a gay roommate. My work is gay. And all my socializing is in the gay community, cause if I ever go out it's to attend a gay event. So I said, "who needs anything more gay in my life?" But since then, I'm active in the Milwaukee Lavender Network. And so it's gotten me more involved with activism again. And it's made me realize that I had, it's part of my responsibility to try and get people more involved, and it's our community too.

The editor of one of the gay newspapers discussed how his own personal sense of renewed activism had contributed to the resurgence of activism within the community. His role as a "cultural producer" interacted with the community's anger to help create a reawakening of political activism within the press:

There's definitely a resurgence of activism in this city. And it's on more people's minds now, at least. And I made it more so, because I made it more a part of the magazine too. And so I think maybe I have a part to do with that. It's been my own re-awakening also, in reality. And so the magazine has become more aggressive on local issues because of all of this too. It's not just the community. I think a lot of it is me and
the use of the paper may be riling some people up (laugh). The power of the press, you know.

Activists reported feeling a growing sense of urgency for the increased politicization of gay identity, linking activism with personal and political survival. They described their political awakening as necessary because "we get killed because of who we are." These leaders repeatedly discussed how often they just didn't like the work involved in being an activist -- it was time-consuming, exhausting, and conflict-ridden. Yet they believed they simply had no choice but to engage in this work. They frequently described a sense of doom if their political organizing was unsuccessful. One lesbian laughingly discussed how she felt "if I don't do my part, it's a sin. I'm going to hell or something like that. I'm going to live in hell...this nation is going down a drain." This sense of urgency that connected activism to survival had two distinct but interrelated sources. Milwaukee's gay men and lesbians fear that both physical and political attacks against their community would increase unless they fought back. Yet the battlegrounds of this war were internal as well. The activists feared the ways that members of their community would continue to internalize the dominant messages presented by the culture at large. Dahmer had been a symbol in the larger community of the dangerous evil that permeated the gay lifestyle. In their own culture he represented the devastating consequences of internalized homophobia. Activists again articulated the link between identity and activism as necessary to their survival, focusing on the need to fight against internalizing gay as a shame-filled and sick identity. One gay man describe the relationship between the need to fight against the system on both levels, using the self-blame that rape victims commonly experience as an analogy:
I saw it as a sense of urgency. Not just for our community, but because it was a matter of life and death. If the community retaliates against us because of this, we're going to be in for some hot trouble.

Well, because first of all, the people who get retaliated against -- are gay bashed -- are more likely to be people who are victims who are not going to, who are they going to report it to? . . . So if they do get bashed because of it, they're going to internalize that. Well, I must have done something, or it's because I was gay. I shouldn't have been at that bar. I shouldn't have been walking down that street. And so I probably deserve in some form what I got. It's like a woman who gets raped. If she wasn't wearing that dress or those pants or that skirt or talking to that guy or had that drink, that wouldn't have happened. So she contributed to her own, the behavior, the victimization.

One of the major ways that the changes in identity shaped activism was its effects on the meanings associated with the coming out process. Coming out is considered key to establishment of gay identity and has been a central strategy within the lesbian and gay movement (Adam, 1987; D'Emllio, 1983; Epstein, 1987). Within the lesbian and gay movement, coming out can refer to at least four different arenas: 1) an individual's first same-sex sexual experience; 2) an individual's self-acceptance of a gay identity; 3) an individual telling others, especially heterosexuals, that she or he is lesbian or gay; and 4) an individual declaring a gay identity politically. Within the gay and lesbian movement there is no linguistic distinction between coming out as an individual act and coming out as a political statement. Coming out can be seen as a political strategy where "individuals themselves become a site of 'political activity'" (Taylor & Raeburn, 1993).

In the same ways that an increased politicization was reported by activists, the events surrounding the Dahmer case similarly affected views about
coming out. Activists again reported a sense of urgency. Coming out as a political act was seen as necessary to surviving coming out as an individual behavior. Although she had extremely high visibility in the community, one lesbian activist described her need to extend her coming out process even further:

One thing is that it definitely made me resolve, not necessarily the murders themselves, but the community reaction to it, has definitely made me resolve to be more out. You know, I'm a woman who wears skirts and high heels to work every day. And so a lot of...people don't know that I'm a lesbian. And so I guess really I started to put myself in more positions where I'm out...And I think it's made me really resolve that I'm not going to stop myself from talking to someone that I need to talk to about making changes in our community because I'm afraid of being a lesbian, that I'm afraid of having them know that I'm a lesbian. It's not that I don't think about it still, but it really has made me resolve to be more out.

Coming out, while central to gay collective identity, can also be seen as a form of high-risk activism (Taylor & Raeborn, 1993). The risks associated with coming out can be tremendous, including loss of job and family. For Milwaukee's gay men and lesbians, the risks associated with coming out again took on life-and-death meaning. While a refusal to come out could have life-threatening consequences, the act of coming out also meant risking survival. The same fears that led to increases in activism and a sense of urgency in coming out for some paradoxically produced a reluctance to come out in others. Some members of LAMM in powerful positions in city government came out to city officials and tried to educate them individually on lesbian issues. Other members called LAMM's administrative offices with instructions to never publish their names in LAMM's newsletter. Of course, there is no way to measure politically inactive people remaining politically inactive, yet no activist doubted
that it had created a profound impact. Milwaukee's activists described "having a sense" or have "a gut feeling" that the Dahmer event had increased the numbers of people coming out while driving others further into the closet:

I know for a fact, not necessarily just the Dahmer murders, but, although things related to it, have definitely brought more people out. But I also know probably as many people that it's pushed further into the closet. So I think it's really had kind of a polarizing effect, that I think probably people who are tempted to come out use this as their excuse to do it, and people who are really afraid, it just gave them a reason not to come out.

A man who works with gay and lesbian teenagers worried that, while adults were increasingly hesitant to come out, the consequences on gay youths would be even greater. He feared that young people would not simply be more reluctant to come out, but that the intensity of the hatred that Milwaukee's community was experiencing would make it nearly impossible for them break down closet doors while they were still young:

It doesn't just lock the door, it puts the steel door in front of it. And maybe a nice 3-inch metal door in front of that, like a safe. So I think it just, and then I think later on down the line because you've fortified that door of that closet, that it's going to take a little longer to open those doors. Because they're stronger doors, and more fortified doors, it's going to be harder to come out of that closet.

Many lesbians and gay men viewed the renewed politicization of their community and of gay identity as one of the few positive results of the "onslaught" they had experienced. Activists reported excitement and hope for change, as reflected in one gay man's assessment of this impact on the community:
We've learned a lot in the last year. But we will have some fundamental things to change. It's hard to say. There's been a tremendous amount of growth, but there a lot of (sigh), I don't know. Expectant. Hopeful. Really expectant over what's going to happen. I have good feelings for the future. I don't think things are ever going to go back to the way they were before. I think we're going to continue to see a resurgence, building on the changes that have been occurring in the community. And building on the activism... I think there's an aura of expectancy, and of hope. And of positive change.

While many activists expressed a sense of optimism for the changes that had occurred within their community, they simultaneously detailed their sense of fear and despair that any permanent change which would empower their community could occur. While they described hope that "we can hang onto these few little threads that we have," their despair was grounded in three major concerns. All of the community members that I interviewed discussed how exhausted they felt. The series of events following Dahmer's arrest -- "it's been one hell of a year," as one man noted -- had taxed the resources of their community in ways that could not have anticipated. Secondly, many of these leaders worried that the in-fighting occurring within their already fragile coalitions would splinter their community. While they identified the coalitions as necessary to their survival, they had also, as one lesbian described, "seen more resistance to that... than I've ever dreamed of. It's disheartening. I despair, I really do." Finally, most activists reported that simply the numbers and intensity of the personal and political attacks that their community had experienced in six months were overwhelming. They feared they would not be able to fight against both the external assaults and the internal conflicts. One gay man described this effect:
The people who are scared and running off to the suburbs are just going, "I told you so. I told you so." And people who look at gays as evil, "I told you." It just confirms all the worst things in people. And in ourselves. I mean we're homophobic as hell. And our community is quite racist. I think it just strengthened those things. I think on the surface there's some community building and coalition work. But I think at this point, it's really just a tiny thin layer on the top and there's no real base for believing that it's going to do any good to anyone. I'll keep pushing. But I don't have a lot of faith in it.

While much of the despair focused on the factions within the community and the difficulties in forming coalitions that endure, activists also discussed a despair that arose from their re-shaped definition of gay identity. Gay had become linked to physical survival, and the gay community had suffered severe attacks from the dominant culture. Many activists believed the symbolic relationship between Dahmer and gay identity that had been constructed by the larger homophobic forces would endure:

And I just wish, I don't know. I'm feeling pretty, pretty unhopeful at the moment.

Historically, I think if I were writing 50 years from now. . . I would be writing about the right-wing's growth that continued through the 90's and into the 21st century and finally took over. I would write about the fact that Jeffrey Dahmer would still be remembered in Milwaukee as the symbol of what gays really are, the logical extension of homosexuality, which they're still talking about, even now. And why we have to be put away. To repair centers or something like that.

Gay identity is not a static entity in Milwaukee. The concept of what it means to be gay is continuously evolving for this community, just as it is for all
gay communities. Nor did this change occur outside the context of the ways that
gay identity is evolving throughout the rest of the country. The events which
occurred surrounding Jeffrey Dahmer's serial killings became a point where
emerging identity was crystallized. As Goldstein (1993) has noted, gayness is
no longer a set of political agendas or issues. It has grown beyond concepts of
orientation or community. The new concepts of queer present new models of
being, as Foucault noted in a 1982 interview, "To be gay...is to make a sexual
choice the impetus for a change of existence" (Goldstein; 1993:22). One
activist in Milwaukee described this unique aspect of the politics of sexual
identity:

I remember when I was a kid, my grandfather would
tell me stories of when he worked in the union, some
men would get their skulls cracked open. To be able
to be and to do something they believe in is their
right. And to me, this is reality and not just a cause.
It's not my right to vote. It's my right to be. That is a
connection that runs from my head to my toes.

The concept that sexual identity involves unique aspects focused on
"being" instead of "doing" (Taylor & Whittier, 1992) presents the paradox that is
at the heart of politicizing gay identity (Browning, 1993; Goldstein, 1993): how to
create a culture in which identity is based on the marginality of sexual desire
while maintaining a political agenda based on inclusion and acceptance? How
does a culture which defines itself by desire and oppression survive hegemonic
attempts to destroy it? The event known as Dahmer intensified this paradox for
Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community. Both Dahmer and his victims
symbolized the most extremely marginalized elements of culture - based on
sexuality, race, and class. The gay community had to both embrace these men
as its own while trying to survive an onslaught of political attacks and physical violence brought on by the cultural perception that to be sexually marginal is sick, evil, and dangerous. As one community noted:

If we weren't oppressed, if being gay, being lesbian were accepted as a manifestation of human orientation, there probably wouldn't be a gay/lesbian community. Everybody would be in their own little areas. Oppression has made us a people. Now we have to deal with it.

Browning has asserted that the creation and destruction of the symbols of identity are at the forefront of an emerging gay identity. The nature of the new gayness -- queerness -- requires that sexual symbols be always transitional, that the arena of desire be risky. He argues that:

the paradox of queerness is that it survives by continually collapsing and recreating itself. Traditional cultural separatists...secure their tribal meaning through the immutability of their codes, rites, and rituals. Queer culturalists recognize and realize one another through disruption and sabotage of their inherited tradition...that is the essence of desire in the queer paradox. To persevere is to disappear. The community of desire exists only in the state of transformation. In the culture of desire, there are no safe spaces. (p.229)

Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists were fighting a battle filled with paradox. The construction of emotion and the development of the symbolic discourse to give that emotion a form and a forum within the gay and lesbian community for the six months following the discovery of Dahmer's killings were center stage in shaping the new meanings of gay. There were paradoxical processes that marked nearly every aspect of the construction of emotion and the shifting of identity. Activists struggled with a sense of responsibility for
embracing Dahmer's victims as their own and empathizing with Dahmer's inability to accept his own sexuality while trying to create a distance between the crimes and their community in the eyes of a homophobic culture. They were experiencing a resurgence of activism linked to gay identity while attempting not to internalize the messages from the dominant culture which defined gay identity as sick and evil. They were trying to forge a new identity that would propel a resurgence of activism within a backlash of homophobic violence and political assaults that made being gay more dangerous than before. They were attempting to create a safe community within a framework where true safety can never exist. These contradictions were at the heart of the schism of the emerging gay identity.
Notes

1 A reference to Randy's Shilt's analysis of the politics of AIDS, And the Band Played On.
Chapter VI

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

I thought this was going to be different now. We finally got to meet with the mayor, and I'm on the task force for this police thing. I actually physically worked on things that will make changes, and I still feel this way. All the anger, hurt, frustration, and the sickness. When exactly is this going to go away? When is it not going to be there anymore?

This activist expressed the sentiment that many members of Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community shared: that the emotional and political fallout of the event known as Dahmer would never go away. Although they reported that they could only guess at the long-term implications of Dahmer, most activists believed that they and their community were changed forever. They wondered if the mayor's office would continue to undermine efforts of the Gay Pride Committee and if the new community-oriented police programs would truly increase protection of gays and lesbians and decrease police harassment at gay bars and community events. They feared that the dominant system would always hold their community responsible for the killings, equating "Dahmer" with "gay," and that the homophobic attacks and discrimination against community members would not abate. They discussed changes within their own community and wondered whether the new coalitions that had so
successfully helped them to cope with the crisis would be destroyed by factions and in-fighting. In short, Milwaukee's lesbians and gays feared the legacy of Dahmer for their community.

As the above quote also indicates, the emotional meaning of Dahmer provided the context in which the questions over potential political consequences were raised. The grief, guilt, fear, and anger that marked the responses of the lesbian and gay community were not merely individual reactions to the unexpected upheaval caused by Dahmer's arrest. They reflected the shared experiences of a community whose members always framed individual feelings within a collective construction. The emotions engendered by the Dahmer event in turn profoundly affected the meaning of gay identity in Milwaukee.

Symbolic codes are central to the processes of emotion and collective identity construction. They provide a framework in which emotion is labeled and defined and offer a contextual interpretation for giving emotions meaning. Symbolic codes also outline avenues for appropriate responses to emotion that can serve to shape identity, strengthen commitment, and increase activism. The gay and lesbian community and the dominant culture each created a system of symbolic codes that helped to define the emotional responses to Jeffrey Dahmer's killings and to shape the formation of gay as a political identity.

Jeffrey Dahmer became the central icon of both systems. In the dominant culture, he became a symbol of the gay community. He was constructed as sick, evil, and, as repeated so many times by the lesbian and gay activists, the logical extension of the homosexual "lifestyle." In many ways, the construction of Dahmer manifested the discourse on homosexuality as a whole: the perceptions that homosexuality is a result either of an unavoidable biological
predestination or is a chosen, and therefore evil, lifestyle. This same dichotomous structure defined the dominant culture's perception of Dahmer - either that he was sick and therefore not culpable or that he willfully chose to kill and thus evil. This dichotomy marked the discourse within the community on Dahmer and became the focal point for his trial. In the end the jury's decision reflected community sentiment. It decided Dahmer was evil.

Dahmer became the central symbol for Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community in a vastly different way. He was representative of the multifaceted levels of homophobia. On one level, he illustrated the danger permeating the lives of gay men and lesbians for simply being who they are. One by one, poor young gay men, mostly men of color, disappeared, yet there was no alarm sounded by the police or by the community at large. No one was looking for Jeffrey Dahmer. In this way Dahmer also symbolized the indifference of systems in the dominant culture to the safety and well-being of the gay community. Activists spoke repeatedly of their horror at realizing how little the culture cared about their lives. Dahmer represented the onslaught of political attacks the community had endured in the wake of his arrest, attacks that most activists believed would continue far into the future. Finally, Dahmer symbolized the result of internalized homophobia in its most extreme, alienating and isolating form. This last symbolic construction was perhaps the most painful for the lesbians and gay men of Milwaukee. It was difficult to incite pride, spark activism, and strengthen community bonds when Dahmer could only represent, in one activist's words, "the worst nightmare possible."

These symbolic constructions were not simply different from the ways the dominant culture had defined Dahmer. They were occurring within a hegemonic system; both constructions represented the competition to define
social discourse on the Dahmer killings and on sexuality as a whole and reflected opposing political interests and agendas. Both the gay and lesbian community and the dominant culture attempted to construct an emotional framework that would shape gay identity in competing ways. While the gay community wanted to construct emotional responses to this event in a way that would strengthen gay identity, the dominant culture sought to construct emotions in a manner that would portray gay as an evil and sick identity and that would advance a specifically anti-gay political agenda.

With the creation and use of the term "homosexual overkill," the dominant culture had established the discourse of Dahmer by constructing gayness as the central issue in understanding the horror of his killings, including the dismemberment and cannibalism of the bodies. Milwaukee's gay men and lesbians were forced to compete in an arena of discourse whose parameters had already been defined by the larger homophobic culture. From press coverage of the case to television news portrayals of gay life, from the school board vote to the mayor's veto of gay pride funding, Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community had to continuously defend itself against what activists perceived was a growing wave of assault whose focal point was called Dahmer. These lesbians and gay men were forced to engage in a kind of re-activism, always responding to new crisis situations forced upon them by the larger culture. Many reported longing for the days when a pro-active activism was possible, but doubted that their community could ever return to a politics-as-usual approach.

Within this context, Milwaukee's lesbian and gay activists could only be partially successful in constructing emotions that would re-empower gay identity. The dominant culture had defined the gay community as the
perpetrator of the crime, not only because it had equated Dahmer with gayness but also because it maintained that the gay "lifestyle" - via the gay community - had provided Dahmer with, according to one account, his "feeding grounds." The gay and lesbian community could only respond by working to portray itself as the victim of the crimes, not the cause of them. Through news conferences, press releases, and hearings, activists worked to illustrate both to their own community and to the city at large that their members had been victimized and that the true culprit was homophobia. Because the attacks that became part of the "Dahmer" event lasted for nearly seven months, they had to continuously reassert this victim status. Yet as the AIDS movement and anti-rape groups in the women's movement have demonstrated, the status of victim does not readily translate into activism. These movements have constructed emotional frameworks that shift the fear of being a victim into the anger of being a survivor and have been successful in mobilizing around identities based on a survivor status. Yet Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community, faced with overwhelming attacks by the dominant system, could not within this time period construct a survivor identity. A new gay identity did emerge, yet it was filled with paradox. The new "gayness" placed physical survival at the center of its identity. Gay community was not necessary merely for political gains. It was required for survival of gay and lesbian individuals and gay identity as a whole. People believed their very existence was threatened and felt a sense of urgency for mobilizing, resulting in an upsurge of activism. At the same time, activists reported being overwhelmed by their fear, anger, and despair. Gay identity was reshaped to endure the wave of homophobic personal and political assaults. Gay pride took a back seat to gay survival.
While Milwaukee's activists symbolically constructed a politicized context for interpreting and shaping emotional reactions to the killings, their ability to provide avenues for activism was limited. The press and the police were the two main targets for the fear and anger generated within the community. Lesbians and gay men were very successful in organizing around these targets. Coalitions and task forces mobilized quickly and efficiently. Press releases, news conferences, testimony at hearings, and policy recommendations were all well-orchestrated and well-executed. Yet as the weeks progressed and as the homophobic backlash took on new forms, Dahmer became constructed as the symbol of the devastating personal and political danger that the dominant system presented to the gay community. This generalized system --while the object of the anger felt by the lesbian and gay activists -- presented a difficult target around which to mobilize. Social movements need specific targets -- those that have both a form and a physical place --for organizing activist responses. Milwaukee's activists had few such opportunities. One lesbian echoed the feelings of most activists: "My anger is amorphous. It doesn't have a form. That's what makes it so hard."

Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community established the Milwaukee Lavender Network, a coalition of lesbian and gay organizations and individuals, to respond to the series of crises that began with Dahmer's arrest. As the crises continued, activists discussed maintaining the Lavender Network as a permanent organization. Yet they quickly experienced the fragility of coalition politics. The loosely-structured organization that had served them so well in responding to the immediate crisis became a source of contention and controversy. The differences which had enriched their ability to respond quickly when Dahmer was arrested -- differences based on gender, class, race,
and political generation -- were proving too great to sustain an organizational structure. The Pride Committee, the other major coalition in their community established to organize the Gay Pride March, experienced similar factioning and in-fighting. Most activists believed that the coalitions were necessary to the survival of their community and yet doubted their collective abilities to sustain them. As long as there were specific, well-defined targets for activism, the coalitions worked well. As the ability to organize around specific targets diminished while the need for long-term planning to accompany the upsurge of re-activism grew, the frustration and anger that defined their emotion culture was turned inward. One lesbian observed that "a lot of what I see is people turning their fear and anger on each other, rather than where it belongs." Another activist lamented that "what we end up, sort of digressing into anger at one another, and anger at the, at these systems. It's so impossible to have emotion surrounding a system. You can't find a way to express that." Still another activist noted sardonically (and in light of Dahmer's killings, ironically), "the community eats its leaders alive."

Implications for Social Movement Research

This research has several significant implications for social movement research and theory. This analysis was conducted on a crisis event within a social movement community. While vastly different in their approaches to social movements, both resource mobilization theory and new social movement theory tend to focus on routine aspects of social movements. When other studies on specific social movement events have been conducted, they have primarily examined activist events such as marches and demonstrations. These events,
often researched historically after their mobilization significance has been established, are typically created by activists for activists. This research on Dahmer's serial killings looks at the effects of a crisis over which activists had little control while it was occurring. It looks at the ways that the unanticipated crisis that became known simply as "Dahmer" shaped identity politics for Milwaukee's gay and lesbian community.

Emotion has been virtually left out of both resource mobilization and new social movement models of movement culture and community. Yet Taylor (forthcoming) has argued that emotions are significant in mobilizing activists and in shaping the nature of activism and has presented a theoretical analysis of how emotion has impacted social movement cultures. The Dahmer event presented a unique opportunity to empirically assess this assertion and to expand conceptions social movement culture to include emotion as a major component. This study presents the first empirical analysis of the role of emotion in constructing collective identity and how emotions are shaped by social movement culture within a crisis framework. For Milwaukee's gay and lesbian movement, emotion was central to framing the discourse on this event. While activists believed that new coalitions and forms of collective action were necessary, they believed the changes in identity created within parameters defined by their emotional responses would outlast changes within organizational structures.

While research natural and human-made disasters within the collective behavior tradition has examined the emotional consequences of a crisis on a community (see Taylor, 1976; Erikson, 1978; Gleser et al, 1981), this approach has focused primarily on the responses of elite organizations that act as agents of the dominant culture. The study on the effects of Dahmer in Milwaukee
focuses on the responses of a challenging culture, a culture with few of the resources that are available to elite organizations. The previous research on the emotional consequences of disasters have defined disasters in specifically physical forms -- tornadoes, floods, or toxic chemical spills. Dahmer's killings presented Milwaukee's gay and lesbian movement with a crisis of culture and community. While the initial upheaval of lives seemed to some activists akin to a natural disaster, specific forms for defining the Dahmer crisis were elusive. This disaster involved identities and symbols, not decimated houses or broken power lines.

This research also looks at the ways that the competition to define cultural perceptions and interpretations of a crisis shapes community responses to that event. I was able to analyze both the dominant and the challenging cultural interpretations of Dahmer and his killings and to examine the ways that Dahmer was constructed as a symbol by both groups in vastly opposing ways. These competing constructions shaped how emotional responses were framed and, in turn, marked a shift in the meaning of gay identity and community. This research was able to analyze how the on-going processes involved in collective identity formation affect mobilization and the meaning of activism.

Finally, this study presents unique methodological implications for how as sociologists we view ourselves and our lives in the research process. Ironically, I began this research with no specific research agenda in mind. In many respects, my own experiences exemplified those of the lesbian and gay activists in Milwaukee. The crisis that presented itself to their community was my crisis as well. My emotional responses paralleled theirs, and I too searched for an outlet. While Milwaukee's activists found new coalitions and task forces to be viable avenues for action, I found an opportunity for research which I was
in a unique position to conduct. I have offered an analysis of the ways that this unexpected event in my life continuously paralleled the methodological and theoretical themes in this study. Moreover, my relationship to Dahmer and my involvement with the press allowed me to gain an insider's perspective into the construction of the discourse of this event and the central role that the media played in that process. As I was interviewed about Dahmer and the case by news organizations around the country and around the world, I too became a media-constructed image and, in turn, became one of the voices competing to construct Jeffrey Dahmer. I was able to conduct this research from inside the arena of discourse and images. I had entered the realm where the creation of Dahmer as a symbol was occurring and became one of the producers of those images. My relationship to Jeff, my training as a sociologist, and my identity as a lesbian activist coalesced. Life experience and research experience combined. This study illustrates the ways that research on the complexities of the social world can be shaped and enriched by the lives of those who engage in it.
APPENDIX
PRIMARY NEWS SOURCES

Gay/Lesbian Publications:

I. In Step. Volume 8, Issue 15, August 1-14, 1991:
"Community cringes as massacre details unfold," by Jamakaya, p. 4-11.
"Need someone to talk to?" p. 12.

II. In Step. Volume 8, Issue 16, August 15-28, 1991:
"Vigil warms hearts of nearly 1,000," by Ron Geiman, p. 4-8.
"Discussion group to help heal," p. 12.
"Bringing about a 'healing process'," by Ron Geiman, p. 15-17.
"Tri-Cable spotlights Dahmer case," p. 38.
"A call for a 'Lavender Ribbon Panel,'" by Ron Geiman, p. 50.
"Notes on police homophobia, Part I," by Paul Varnell, p. 50-51.
"Steppin' Out," by Ron Geiman, p. 54-56.
"We don't need this..." by Joan Lawrence, p. 60-64.

III. In Step. Volume 8. Issue 17. August 29-September 11. 1991:
"G/L groups review post-Dahmer actions," p. 4-5.

"Your testimony on police needed September 17," p. 4-5.
"Belling loses Colders as sponsor," p.18.

"Dozens testify before Blue Ribbon Panel," p. 4-5.
"Natl. demo in Milwaukee Oct. 7" p. 8-10.

"Blue Ribbon Panel: include Gays and Lesbians," p.4-8.
VII. *In Step*, Volume 8, Issue 22. November 7-20, 1991:
"Milwaukee Lavender Network issues own proposals," p. 4-6.

VIII. *In Step*, Volume 8, Issue 24. December 5-18, 1991:
"Arreola seeks 'Sensitive Crimes' division" p. 10-14.
"Gays accuse WISN-TV of exploitation for profit," p. 4-16.
"School Board 'guts' Gay proposals," p. 5-16.

IX. *In Step*, Volume 9, Issue 1. January 16-29, 1992:
"Two upcoming dates could set tone for 90's" p. 3-7.

X. *In Step*, Volume 9, Issue 2. February 13-26:
"MLN here to stay, seeks diverse vision," p. 4-5.
"Updates" p. 28-55.

XI. *In Step*, Volume 9, Issue 4. February 27-March 11. 1992:
"Mayor meets with community reps" p. 8-24.
"Dahmer faces nearly 1,000 years" p. 46-49.

XII. *The Wisconsin Light*, Vol. 4, no. 16:
"Thousands Expected for August 5 Candlelight Vigil and March."
"Homophobia Backlash Against Gays Intensifies in Wake of Murders."
"Judge Issues Restraining Order Against East Side Harassment."
"G/L Coalition Seeks Task Force Members"

"Investigate the Police Department, End Racism and Homophobia"

"Bars Urged to Close During August 5 Candlelight Remembrance"

"Breier Mentality Making Comeback in Arreola's Police Department," by Bill Meunier.

"Gay, Lesbian Community Leaders Issue Demands to Police, Media"

"Reverend Buck Attacks Classism, Racism, and Homophobia"

"Fear, Shock, Paranoia Expressed By Apprehensive Community"

"Victim Assistance Experts Meet With Traumatized Citizens"

"Gay Youth Leader Remembers Victims and Mourns Their Loss"

"PERSPECTIVE: No Satisfaction in One Man's Confession," by Maytee Aspuro.

"Milwaukee Police Chief to Consider Gay/Lesbian Liaison"

XIII. The Wisconsin Light, Vol. 4, no 17:

"Support Groups Offered in Wake of Mass Killings"

"Shock and Skepticism Greet Mayor's Blue Ribbon Panel," by Terry Boughner and Jamakaya

"Rev. Jesse Jackson Offers Support to Gay and Lesbian Community," by Terry Boughner

"Colders Asked to Drop Belling Sponsorship"

"Prayers, Memories and Demands Aired at Somber Candlelight Vigil" by Jamakaya

"City Seems to Bow its Head During Beautiful Memorial Vigil," by Terry Boughner.

"Lavender Ribbon Panel Required to Address Gay, Lesbian Issues"

"From the Editor's Desk," by Terry Boughner
"OPINION: Militant Struggle Urged in Response to Murders," by Thomas J. Rondy

"PERSPECTIVE: In Our Silence, No Voices Will be Heard," by Maytee Aspuro

"NGLTF Releases Statement on Murder Case in Milwaukee"

"Charges of Police Harassment, Negligence Are Voiced Throughout the Nation," by Jamakaya

XIV. The Wisconsin Light, Vol. 4, no. 18:

"Queer Nation Plans Shopping Trip at Milwaukee Colder's Store"

XV. The Wisconsin Light, Vol 5, no. 4:

"Dahmer Imprisoned for Life; Community Expresses Relief," by Terry Boughner.

"Mayor Norquist Receives Unique Valentines from Queer Nation," by Terry Boughner.

"A Hate Crime that Wasn't: Racism, Homophobia in the Dahmer Case," by Jamakaya.

"Society's Homophobia Contributed to the Horrible Dahmer Nightmare"

"Owner of Gay Club in Arizona Defends 'Dahmer Diner' Promotion"
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