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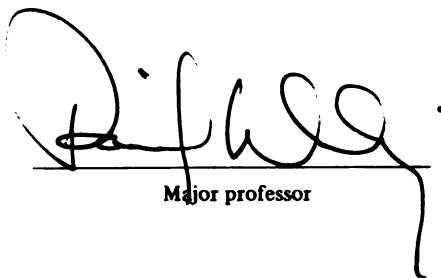
LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE GAY PRESS:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ADVOCATE, 1970-1992

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Ronald Joseph Nerio

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**LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE GAY PRESS:
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ADVOCATE, 1970-1992**

By

Ronald Joseph Nerio

A THESIS

**Submitted to
Michigan State University
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ABSTRACT

LESBIAN REPRESENTATION IN THE GAY PRESS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE ADVOCATE, 1970-1992

By

Ronald Joseph Nerio

Historically, gay institutions have been accused of underrepresenting or excluding lesbians. As a result, some have argued, gays and lesbians have developed separate institutions and have assumed widely differing social and political goals. This study examines lesbian representation in one gay institution over time: the mainstream gay press. Lesbian representation was measured by calculating simple percentages of lesbian inclusion in news and arts articles, in photographs, and on the front covers of The Advocate in proportion to gay male representation. The findings demonstrate that lesbians have been dramatically underrepresented relative to gay men. Lesbian representation has increased over time, but not as extensively as expected given developments in the lesbian and gay movement.

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INTRODUCTION

The relationship between lesbian identity, politics and culture on the one hand, and gay¹ identity, politics and culture on the other has been contested and debated since the birth of the modern lesbian and gay movement in the 1960s. During various stages of lesbian and gay organizing, and under certain circumstances, a common social experience and political purpose for lesbians and gays has been taken for granted. At other times, and under other conditions, the relationship between gay men and lesbians has been viewed as so problematic that the notion of any similarity of experience has been questioned. This uneasy association continues to be constructed and contradicted through lesbian and gay activism, academic research, and the shaping of the institutions of the lesbian and gay subculture.

Historically, gays and lesbians have felt that they share a similar position in society as members of a socially stigmatized sexual minority (Cruikshank, 1992). Lesbians and gay men have cooperated and united to a significant extent in common organizations aimed at ending discrimination and achieving social acceptance. In addition to, and often apart from, political organizing, lesbians and gays have created a number of common social and cultural institutions (Adam, 1987).

¹For the purposes of this paper, the term "gay" will be used to apply to gay men except where noted.

However, many lesbians have argued that the equation of the lesbian and gay experience is misleading, and ultimately, damaging to lesbians because it ignores the very different social positions that lesbians and gays occupy as women and men. They contend that gay men have dominated gay and lesbian organizations and created a social and political agenda which favors their interests while obscuring the distinct interests and experience of lesbians. Lesbian and gay institutions have often placed lesbians in the role of "invisible partners" by assuming common objectives while depriving women of full participation. Moreover, gay culture often has created its own versions of the sexist and misogynist—and racist and classist—practices of heterosexual society (Phelan, 1989).

Charges of exclusion have been met by three types of responses from gay men. Some have chosen to ignore them altogether because they view lesbians as irrelevant and unconnected to the gay experience. Others have urged gay men to adopt a vigilant feminism aimed at eradicating sexism in their own institutions and in the larger society (Goodman, 1983). A third response has been to assert that gay institutions have always been open to anyone, and that their dominance by males has resulted not from sexist practices but from the choice of lesbians not to participate in greater numbers (Altman, 1982).

This paper examines lesbian inclusion and visibility in one particular gay institution: the mainstream gay press. More specifically, it aims to:

- 1.) assess the extent of lesbian representation, or lack of representation, in the

gay press; 2.) examine how representation in the gay press has changed over time; and 3.) speculate on the nature of the relationship between lesbians and gays by using Epstein's concept of ethnicity.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A literature search produced no work exclusively committed to exploring the relationship between lesbians and gay men. Instead, this literature falls into two categories: that which examines the social experience of gays and lesbians as essentially unified and that which examines the social experience of gays or lesbians as independent from each other. Literature focusing on integration tends to minimize the political and social differences between lesbians and gays. Works in this category address this problematic relationship by describing it in a single chapter or subsection (Adam, 1987; Altman, 1982; Cruikshank, 1992; D'Emilio, 1983; Goodman, et. al., 1983; Marotta, 1981; and Weeks, 1991). Often these works make no more than a passing reference to the controversy over gay and lesbian homogeneity and stress only the commonalities (Blumenfeld and Raymond, 1988; Moore, 1988; Signorile, 1993; and Duberman, 1993).

Some works treating gays and lesbians as independent socio-political groups which address the gay male experience make no mention of or reference to lesbians (Brown, 1976). Others (Browning, 1993) are careful to acknowledge that their exclusive focus on gay men results from social circumstances that separate the lives of gay men and lesbians and that generalizing the experience to lesbians may be a disservice to both groups. The literature which examines the lesbian experience exclusively also comes in two varieties. The first makes distinctions between the lesbian experience and the male homosexual

movement, usually by critiquing the sexist operation or structure of the latter, but is intended primarily to develop an understanding of lesbians or lesbianism (Martin and Lyon, 1972; Phelan, 1989; and Rich, 1983). The second variety focuses exclusively on lesbians, or some aspect of lesbian life, with little or no reference to gays (Jay and Glasgow, 1991; Meese, 1992; and Wysor, 1974).

Anthologies about the "gay and lesbian" experience are instructive about the uncertainty with which lesbians and gays are categorized as a group. On the basis of their titles alone, most anthologies would be included in the unified category above. Examples include: Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past, (ed. Duberman, et al., 1989); Radical Records: Thirty Years of Lesbian and Gay History, (ed. Cant and Hemmings, 1988); and Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights (ed. Marcus, 1992). However, nearly all of the individual works contained in these anthologies treat separately either the male experience or the lesbian experience. The example of these anthologies helps to illustrate the contested categories. In each case, two groups of articles, arguably dealing with two distinct subjects, have been grouped together by editors to demonstrate a common history.

Many of those authors who treat gay and lesbian life as a common experience have been careful to note that social and economic factors which affect men and women differently have played a role in determining the contexts of gay life and lesbian life. D'Emilio writes:

Lesbian life took on forms that, although resembling those of gay men in some respects, constituted a unique social experience.

Cultural definitions of female sexuality, prescriptions about women's proper place in society, and limits upon their opportunities to earn a livelihood profoundly affected the evolution of a lesbian identity and molded the contours of the subculture in which some lesbians moved. (1983: 94).

He asserts that, historically, for a woman to publicly assume a lesbian identity "demanded a much sharper break from traditional expectations...than the corresponding choice for men" (1983: 94).

Homosexuality, male or female, cannot be equated with gay or lesbian identities. An individual may be homosexual (which may be defined briefly as possessing an erotic attraction to members of the same sex) without ever assuming a lesbian or gay identity (Cruikshank, 1992). A key factor in determining a person's ability to live as a lesbian or gay man is economic autonomy. A "commitment," as D'Emilio calls it, to lesbianism requires that a woman be financially independent. At the time that the structures of the lesbian and gay subculture were being created, from the 1920s to the 1950s, women were expected to be dependent upon husbands and were largely excluded from the workforce. Working class women, particularly minorities, were much more likely than middle class women to work outside of the home but in general were more dependent on kinship networks for economic survival (D'Emilio, 1983). These kinship networks often were based on marriage ties; a woman who rejected traditional marriage for a lesbian existence often also was rejected by the kinship network. Though women's access to employment has improved since the 1950s, women's earnings remain significantly lower than men's

earnings (Anderson, 1988).

Restricted economic resources also hampered the creation of a lesbian "commercialism" and lesbian participation in gay "commercialism." As Altman (1982) suggests, the development and growth of "gay capitalism," particularly from the 1970s onward, has been a significant manifestation of gay subculture. In large urban centers, there has been a proliferation of gay-owned businesses and enterprises including "restaurants and discos, travel agents and boutiques, lawyers and life insurers, social services and physicians" (Adam, 1987).

Consumption-oriented enterprises, such as these, served to bring large numbers of gays together and to increase the visibility and the acceptance of gays by the larger society. Lesbians, partly because of their economic position and partly because they chose to organize differently, have not participated in gay consumerism to the extent that gay men have.

In fact, lesbians have had difficulty in developing what may be the most important of all gay small enterprises: the bar. Bars occupy a central place in gay culture because they usually provide the first encounter with gay and lesbian life. In smaller cities, bars offer the only public meeting space for gays and lesbians (Cruikshank, 1992). Altman suggests that gay bars "play the role performed for other groups by family and church." He quotes one lesbian:

The bars have been and remain, even now, the focal point of the gay and lesbian community. They are the most stable institutions in a frequently unstable world. As such they shape the culture of gay life, even as they are shaped and changed themselves. They contain within them all the contradictions and weaknesses of gay life. They, nonetheless, are our territory, even with all the control that the outside

world exerts. (1982: 21).

In smaller cities with a limited number of gay bars, the clientele tend to be mixed male and female. In larger cities where there are a number of gay bars, the clientele tend to be either male or female. But in every large urban center, gay bars drastically outnumber lesbians bars. For instance, an examination of San Francisco in the early 1980s revealed 45 gay bays and one lesbian bar (Goodman, et. al., 1983).

Other writers have suggested that what separates lesbians from gays is more than the social construction of gender; it is the essential nature of men and women. Phelan (1989) argues that many lesbians have chosen to separate completely from men, whether homosexual or heterosexual, because they feel there is no "common cause" with men. Men, in this view, are seen as destructive and oppressive by nature. Phelan writes:

The portrait is of a being diseased by nature, infected with what Ti-Grace Atkinson labels "metaphysical cannibalism." This cannibalism is characterized by "the needs men have for the role of the Oppressor" in order to fill their inherent void. This is extended by Daly, who characterized men as "demons," sadists who live off women's blood. Nothing short of re-creation can change that. (1989: 61).

Lesbian separatists have suggested that gays and lesbians share nothing but a socially stigmatized sexuality. In her definitive work on lesbian separatism, Rich writes:

In defining and describing lesbian existence I would hope to move toward a dissociation of lesbian from male homosexual values and allegiances. I perceive the lesbian experience as being, like

motherhood, a profoundly *female* experience, with particular oppressions, meanings, and potentialities we cannot comprehend as long as we simply bracket it with other sexually stigmatized existences (1983: 193).

The debate over difference or similarity of experience is illustrated in the ambiguity of the terms "gay" and "lesbian." The term "gay" was originally applied to homosexual men but has been routinely applied to female homosexuals sometime after its first recorded usage in the 1920s. Since the birth of lesbian feminism in the early 1970s, "lesbian" has largely replaced "gay woman" to denote the different histories of male and female homosexuality (Katz, 1983). It is also used because many lesbians claim that the term "gay" tended to obscure or make invisible the existence of lesbians (Rich, 1983). Some lesbians, however, prefer the term "gay woman" over lesbian, because they feel that the use of the former term separates them from gay men (Cruikshank, 1992).

Many female homosexuals who use the term lesbian to describe themselves will use the term "gay" to apply to both gays and lesbians. "Gay and lesbian" is stylistically cumbersome to use repeatedly when writing about or discussing the gay and lesbian experience. It is also commonly accepted that "gay" can be applied to gay men specifically and to gays and lesbians generally. In her book on the gay and lesbian movement, Cruikshank explains her use of terminology:

The description "gay" applies to either women or men but most female homosexuals prefer to call themselves lesbians. "Gays" as a plural term includes both sexes. Because popular usage of "gay" sometimes conflates the term with "gay men," I often choose "gay and lesbian" to emphasize the cosexual nature of this liberation

movement. Sometimes, though, for brevity I simply say "gay" to designate both sexes. (1992: 4).

Some would disagree with Cruikshank's notion of the "cosexual nature" of the gay and lesbian experience. Browning, a gay male author, shows the complexity behind the use of the terms that Cruikshank tends to emphasize for the sake of unity. He writes:

Does the term *gay*...refer to homosexual men alone, or to homosexual men and lesbians, or, as some once argued, to all sexual dissidents? I've found that in the center of the country and in the South, lesbians and homosexual men alike—if they are over thirty—tend to embrace the word. On the coasts lesbians tend to see *gay* as a male term. And throughout the country, many women *and* men under the age of twenty-five embrace *queer* as less male oriented. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, "gay" publications, "gay" bars, "gay" baths, and "gay" bookstores ministered almost exclusively to men—and lesbians were only occasionally acknowledged, usually at political rallies. (1992: 8).

The popular usage of the terms and the perception of a common experience or separate experience have also changed over time. Altman (1992) identifies three stages through which the gay and lesbian movement has passed, each of which witnessed different levels of cooperation between gays and lesbians. The first stage, commonly called the homophile movement, lasted through the 1950s and 1960s. In this period, gays and lesbians occupied a particularly precarious position in society. Homosexual sex was illegal in every state in the U.S., and gays and lesbians were officially barred from all federal government jobs. There were few public meeting spaces for gays and lesbians, and most organizing was relatively clandestine and quietly aimed at demonstrating that the homosexual could occupy a position of respectability in society. Del Martin (1972), a

prominent lesbian leader, writes that because of their small numbers and vulnerable positions, lesbians felt a common cause with male homosexuals at this time.

Beginning with the Stonewall Riots in 1969, "gay liberation" was born. Hundreds of new groups formed in the early 1970s, and gay life became a public phenomenon in a way that had not been imagined before. Gay and lesbian organizations tended to be much more confrontational during this period than during the homophile period and often were informed by a radical ideology. Many were aligned with feminist, black, anti-war and New Left organizations, and they claimed to be working to liberate society from all forms of oppression (Adams, 1987).

Despite these lofty objectives, lesbians began to feel extremely dissatisfied with organizations dominated by gay men that claimed to be speaking for them. This was a period characterized by the birth of lesbian feminism and the extensive development of lesbian separatism. Lisa Power writes:

It was a time when many lesbians, angry at the weight given to women's issues within the mixed movement and at the continuing sexism of gay men, chose to prioritize work with the women's movement. The decision of most lesbians with any sensibility was to leave gay organizations and join the women's movement. (1988: 146).

By the late 1970s, a fierce political backlash triggered by Anita Bryant's *Save Our Children* organizations threatened to undermine the political and social gains that gays and lesbians had won. The strength of Bryant's campaign brought many gays and lesbians back together as the anti-gay initiatives that

were being proposed in many municipalities and in the state of California were aimed at both sexes. Like the New Left movement in general, "gay liberation" had faded from the scene and been replaced by a civil rights focus and special interest lobbying (Altman, 1982). From 1977-1987, during the civil rights stage, lesbian separatism had declined somewhat, and gay men and lesbians (Adam, 1987) had cooperated together to form a number of co-sexual organizations.

Beyond Altman's three stages above, a fourth stage may be conceptualized: the period from approximately 1987 to the present. During this stage, radical AIDS activism played a central role in the direction of the lesbian and gay movement. Groups such as the AIDS Coalition to Unleash power (ACT UP) began using civil disobedience as an organizing tactic. Along with ACT-UP, Queer Nation took its aggressive guerrilla theater tactics into public spaces in many of the major urban and suburban centers around the country. Both groups were organized according to vigilantly democratic and inclusive principles. Queer Nation united men and women under the singular title "queer." Queer nationalism, the ideological approach that grew from this now defunct organization, was primarily a youth phenomenon and does not reflect the stance of the majority of gays and lesbians during this stage. However, the co-sexual nature of groups like Queer Nation and ACT-UP set a tone which strongly affected both the lesbian and gay movement and subculture.²

²Included in the term "movement" are any institutions or organizations with political and/or civil rights goals. Included in the term "subculture" are any institutions or

Cruikshank's (1992) delineation of stages in the lesbian and gay movement varies from Altman somewhat. She identifies the following stages in the movement: 1.) homosexual emancipation, which was primarily a phenomenon in Germany, lasted from the 1890s to the advent of Nazism in the 1930s; 2.) the homophile movement, which existed from the post-war period to the Stonewall riot of 1969; and 3.) the period after Stonewall, which she characterizes as gay and lesbian liberation without dividing it into more than one stage. For Cruikshank, the gay movement and gay and lesbian culture have gradually become more co-sexual as each period progressed. She has constructed the model which is duplicated here:

{men {men [cosexual] women} women}

In this diagram, the men and the women on the far left and right "inhabit a single-sex world; they want a separate existence." The men in this group are primarily older men but the lesbian separatists are of all ages. The second category inward from the far left and right is comprised of "men and women whose social lives are largely but not exclusively shared with others of the same sex." In the center are gays and lesbians whose "only experience of the

organizations which may or may not have a political focus but which serve primarily as a means for lesbian and gay socializing. There is, of course, considerable overlap between the two terms.

movement is a co-sexual experience." The younger one is, the closer to the center he or she is likely to be. Of these groups, Cruikshank writes:

The men in the middle and center groups have been strongly influenced by feminism, and the women in the center group tend to be more accepting of all aspects of gay male sexuality than either of the other groups of women" (1992: 135-137).

There are authors who disagree with Cruikshank's assessment that increasingly gays and lesbians are sharing a more common experience.

Browning, as recently as 1993, has written that his book on gay culture is "an inquiry into an avowedly and unmistakable male world undertaken by a man who has always found such social exclusiveness troubling and self-limiting" (1993: 8).

In order to understand the socio-political connectedness, or lack thereof, of lesbians and gay men, it is useful to use Epstein's (1992) work on gay and lesbian identity. Epstein's central concern is the debate over whether homosexuality, or sexual orientation in general, is a socially constructed or an essential, (i.e., fixed), phenomenon. By clarifying the processes by which gays and lesbians have come to constitute a social category in contemporary society, Epstein's approach provides a framework for understanding how those same social processes might determine whether gays and lesbians are best understood as part of the same category or two different categories.

The Ethnicity Framework

Epstein addresses the subject of "gays and lesbians" as a single unit or "ethnicity." He does make occasional reference to some of the different

conditions experienced by lesbians and gays, but for the most part he examines the social construction of a gay and lesbian identity without raising the prospect that a gay identity and a lesbian identity might have been constructed differently.

"Essentialist views," he writes:

stress the "natural" dimensions of sex; and essentialist conceptions of homosexuality seek to account for such persons on the basis of some core of difference, whether that difference be hormonal, or medical, or a consequence of early child-rearing, or "just the way we are." (1990: 245).

Of social construction, he writes:

Where essentialists took for granted that all societies consist of people who are either heterosexuals or homosexuals (with perhaps some bisexuals), constructionists demonstrated that the notion of "the homosexual" is a sociohistorical product, not universally applicable, and worthy of explanation in its own right. And where essentialism would treat the self-attribution of a "homosexual identity" as unproblematic – as simply the conscious recognition of a true, underlying "orientation" – constructionism focused attention on identity as a complex developmental outcome, the consequence of an interactive process of social labeling and self-identification. (1992: 251).

Epstein finds both of these approaches to be limiting and problematic.

Essentialism fails to explain how homosexual behavior, which has existed from the time of the earliest human civilizations, was translated into a homosexual identity, or the concept of a "homosexual person," which is a relatively recent development. He asserts that constructionism may serve to explain the homosexual, or the gay or lesbian, or the heterosexual for that matter, by showing that no sexual act has inherent meaning that is essentially defined. Acts and people must be labelled and given subjective meaning for them to

assume a social significance.

But social constructionism fails on at least two counts to explain the lesbian and gay experience. First, strict social constructionism does not offer a clear or consistent exploration of the role of voluntarism versus determinism. Social constructionism,

vacillates between a certain type of libertarian individualism...in which sexual categories may be appropriated, transcended, and deconstructed at will; and just the opposite conception of the individual's identity as created for him or her by the social and historical context. In either case, the "individual" is pitted against "Society;" and what is missing is any dynamic sense of how society comes to dwell within individuals or how individuality comes to be socially constituted. Put more simply, constructionism is unable to theorize the issue of determination. This is true both on the societal level and on the level of individual lives. (Epstein, 1992: 259).

Perhaps more important than the issue of voluntarism is the inapplicability of constructionist theory to gay and lesbian self-understanding. Most gays and lesbians at some level believe themselves to be fundamentally distinct from heterosexuals. Particularly in the last twenty years, gay and lesbian political organizing has operated on the assumption that gays and lesbian are a distinct social minority. The political objective is to secure rights for gays and lesbians *as gays and lesbians* rather than to challenge the social construction of sexuality. Epstein writes that "from the standpoint of constructionists, lesbians and gay men must be seen as victims of 'false consciousness,' unable to see the constructedness of their identities" (1992: 254-257).

Epstein proposes that it is more instructive to conceptualize the gay and

lesbian experience as similar to an ethnicity rather than as purely socially constructed or as a purely essentialist or natural phenomenon. Epstein's ethnicity model is a modification of essentialism which incorporates aspects of constructionism. Gays and lesbians have organized around the concept of a homosexual identity which resembles, in many ways, ethnic identities. The gay/lesbian ethnic identity emerged because gays and lesbians have a homosexual orientation which is fundamentally different from the heterosexual orientation of the dominant society. The ethnicity itself was socially created as gays and lesbians constructed a subculture in response to external hostilities toward an essential nature. This is not necessarily Epstein's own conception of homosexual identity, but what he describes as the dominant self-understanding of lesbians and gays. He writes:

It should be noted that the "ethnic" self-understanding is a much looser form of essentialism than, say, a strict genetic or hormonal theory of homosexuality. Based on an analogy that is not necessarily intended literally, this form of group identification is peculiarly vague about where the essential "core" of gayness resides. Nonetheless, the notion does tend toward a reification of the category "homosexual," implying that gays and lesbians are in some fundamental sense different from heterosexuals. (1992: 257)

Epstein admits that the application of an ethnic identity to lesbians and gays could be challenged on a number of bases. Traditionally, an ethnicity is understood to be an identity conferred at birth and transmitted generationally by the family. Gays and lesbians do not assume an ethnic identity until some stage of adolescence or adulthood, and there is no mechanism for the transmission of gay identity through the family. Moreover, ethnic culture is considered to be

historically created and passed along through generations, a process also inapplicable to gays and lesbians. Lastly, gay and lesbian individuals have other ethnic, racial, class and gender identities "which may claim much greater allegiance and inhibit the secondary socialization process" (1992: 175).

However, Epstein justifies his application of the ethnic paradigm to the gay and lesbian experience after a close examination of the changing character of ethnicity in the United States. In the 1970s, the United States experienced an "ethnic revival," of the "phenomenon of white European ethnic groups manifesting a rediscovered pride in their heritage" (1992: 277). Contrasting the "old ethnicity" with the "new ethnicity," Epstein demonstrates that the new ethnicity is a means of expanding a group's social position. Given the relative ineffectiveness of class-based organizing, ethnic groups were able to make demands and secure gains by "appealing to, and manipulating, hegemonic ideologies (such as 'equal rights')." Rather than integrate into mass society, the new ethnicities are seeking to "de-assimilate" on the basis of a distinctive, localized culture or community, based often on geographic location. The revival of ethnicity among white ethnic groups in the 1970s resulted more from an attempt to duplicate the success of the black civil rights movement – and, indeed, to compete with it – than a genuine reaffirmation of pride in ethnic culture.

Lesbian and gay identity began to assume an "ethnic" character at the same time that the white ethnic revival emerged in the 1970s. The characteristics of

new ethnicities are reflected not only in gay and lesbian self-understanding, but also in gay and lesbian political organizing tactics. Gay and lesbian communities "have developed a variety of cultural forms which, despite the considerable internal variation, serve to unify those communities" (1992: 280). Gays and lesbians, particularly gay men, have utilized their ability to control particular geographic spaces as a means of influencing urban politics. Ethnic meaning and cultural symbolism have become potent organizing strategies that lesbians and gays have used to create a sense of unified purpose in the face of considerable anti-gay and lesbian organizing efforts.

The development of ethnic self-understanding, which emerged with the Gay Liberation movement of the early 1970s, has been a central means by which gays and lesbians have been able to understand their positions in society.

Epstein quotes D'Emilio on the effect of this transformation:

The gay liberation movement allowed many lesbians and homosexuals to break out of the ideological prison that confined them to a sexual self-definition. It also began the transformation of a sexual subculture into an urban community. The group life of gay men and women came to encompass not only erotic interaction but also political, religious, and cultural activity. Homosexuality and lesbianism have become less of a sexual category and more of a human identity. (1992: 283).

"Indeed," Epstein suggests:

...to the extent that the gay community has succeeded in creating new institutional supports that link individuals into the community and provide their lives with a sense of meaning, gays may now be more "ethnic" than the original ethnic groups. (1992: 281).

Throughout Epstein's work, he refers continuously to "gay and lesbian"

ethnicity. Given the problematic association between gays and lesbians, I am asking whether it is more accurate to speak of a "gay ethnicity" and a "lesbian ethnicity" as separate phenomena. What this paper is attempting to illustrate is how, given an ethnic self-identity, the gay experience and lesbian experience have been constructed in the mainstream gay press. In other words, does the gay press present the gay experience as one shared equally by lesbians, one in which lesbians play a subordinate role, or one in which lesbians are absent?

Like Epstein's ethnicity model itself, the question of shared or separate ethnicity construction as examined in this paper is not necessarily intended literally. All gay and lesbian individuals experience multiple social identities corresponding to race, class, education, age, political affiliation, place of residence, etc. Moreover, there are varying degrees to which any lesbian or gay individual can be understood to have assumed such an identity; often this degree depends upon the extent to which an individual is considered "out." Therefore, it can be assumed that there is a limitless variation in the process of the construction of gay and lesbian self-understanding. This paper is limited only to an examination of the manner in which the mainstream gay press *presents* the gay and lesbian experience to its readers and to the public; it does not claim to measure the attitudes of gays and lesbians themselves.

Central to the question of the manner in which lesbians are presented by the gay press is the role of male dominance in determining that presentation. If gays and lesbians are to be perceived as sharing a common ethnicity or as having

different ethnicities, it is important to ask to what extent a type of essentialist nature was constructed by the gay male subculture and leadership. As mentioned earlier, many gay men had the financial independence and resources to create a well developed commercial subculture and a number of important social institutions which were partly able to determine the extent to which lesbians would be included or excluded. The climate created by these institutions also played a role in the decision of lesbians either to align with gay men or to create separate institutions.

One such institution which was instrumental in determining the perception of the gay and lesbian experience as similar or dissimilar, is the large and successful gay print media. The question to be explored in the following sections is whether the gay press has presented lesbians and lesbianism as part of the gay experience, or whether lesbians have been presented as having a role in the gay experience but are underrepresented in proportion to gay men, or whether lesbians have been depicted as having no part in the gay experience.

SOURCE OF DATA

Hundreds of gay and lesbian publications have existed since 1970, some for very short periods and some for decades (Van der Veen: 1988). In selecting the appropriate publication for this study, several requirements were taken into consideration. A high rate of circulation was of foremost concern because it is assumed that the extent of circulation provides some indication of the extent of influence a publication has within the gay movement. A publication with national circulation was also deemed necessary because local publications would have only local significance and would be more susceptible to regional social and political considerations. The number of years in publication was of particular importance because only a publication that had been in existence throughout the entire length of the contemporary gay and lesbian movement would allow for a year-by-year comparison of changes in lesbian representation. Finally, it was important to select a publication which claimed to represent gays as a whole. Given these considerations, and the following limitations, The Advocate was chosen as representative of the gay press.

The Advocate has long had a national circulation far higher than any other gay publication. By 1980, The Advocate had a bi-weekly circulation which surpassed 90,000 (Altman, 1982: 165) and reached 100,000 by 1989³ (Alyson Publications, 1990: 234). Since 1991, circulation has fallen to about 85,000 due to competition from other new magazines, but The Advocate retains the highest

³Circulation figures for the 1970s are not available.

circulation of any gay press. As of 1990, BLK, a newsmagazine for black gays and lesbians, had the second highest national circulation (approximately 36,000), followed by the Washington Blade, (approximately 28,000) (Alyson Publications, 1990: 235, 242).

The Advocate is one of the few gay publications published continuously since the birth of the contemporary gay and lesbian movement, (generally defined as originating with the Stonewall Riots of 1969). This fact allows for a comparison of lesbian representation over time. Only two other publications have been in existence since that time: Off Our Backs, and The Washington Blade. The first is a lesbian-only newspaper and the second a local gay and lesbian newspaper.

Though there are many local publications with significant circulation and influence, such as The Washington Blade and The New York Native (circulation 11,000), The Advocate is the only truly national contemporary gay newsmagazine that has existed for more than three years. There are other gay publications with long-standing circulations but they tend to have narrower focusses. Examples include The Journal of Homosexuality, an academic/scientific journal; Christopher Street, a gay mens' literary journal; and the Journal of Gay/Lesbian Psychotherapy. There are also a number of national lesbian-only publications, such as Off Our Backs and WomanNews. One long-running national gay newspaper of note, Gay Community News, was launched in 1973 but ceased publication in 1990. The decision was made to exclude Gay Community News from this study because it was not in circulation during the

early or later years of the gay and lesbian movement.

A number of new nationally circulated gay newsmagazines have been launched recently: OutWeek was founded in 1989 by members of the activist organization ACT UP and achieved a significant following, but ceased publication in 1991; Out/Look is a successful academic/literary magazine published four times per year; and Genre is a widely circulated lifestyle/fashion magazine for gay men. The Advocate's most serious contender for the position as the premier lesbian and gay magazine at this time is Out magazine. Out has been aggressively marketed since 1992 as the definitive chronicle of gay and lesbian life. Its focus is more on lifestyle and culture, whereas The Advocate maintains a newsmagazine/movement focus. At 15,000, Out's circulation is considerably lower than that of The Advocate, and its impact is too recent to assess.

For these reasons, The Advocate is the best representative of the gay press. The Advocate has been described herein a "mainstream" and "gay," as two important qualifiers. Throughout most of its existence, The Advocate's focus, and presumably its readership, have been middle class, white and male. By appealing to this readership, The Advocate has established a niche for itself in the gay mainstream but cannot be considered a publication which speaks gays and lesbians, or even gay men, as a whole. Moreover, The Advocate has always been owned by, published by and edited by men. Therefore, The Advocate is most appropriately described as a "gay" press rather than a "lesbian

and gay" press despite its claims to be the latter. The findings in this paper on lesbian representation in the press must be read primarily as indicative of the white, male, middle class, or "mainstream" press.

A Brief History of the Advocate and its Treatment of Lesbians

The Advocate was founded in 1966 by Dick Michaels, a resident of Los Angeles. Michaels had been arrested that year at a gay bar, the Yukon Club, along with forty other patrons. As a means of expressing his outrage at the constant harassment of gay bar patrons by police in Los Angeles, and in cities across the United States, he joined PRIDE, a local gay rights group. This organization assisted him in printing 500 copies of the first edition of The Los Angeles Advocate at an initial cost of \$200. By the end of the year, the monthly newspaper had reached a circulation of 3500 and had already begun to attract readers far beyond the Los Angeles area (Alyson Publications, 1991).

In late 1969, the Los Angeles Advocate was renamed The Advocate and subtitled "The Newspaper of America's Homophile Community." Whether or not The Advocate had intended to represent the male homosexual community, or the male and female homosexual community, is open to interpretation. "Homophile" had been used as a euphemism for homosexuality since the time of McCarthy-inspired anti-gay "witchhunts" that involved the imprisonment and/or institutionalization of thousands of lesbians and gays. Both male and female homosexuals involved in public organizing referred to themselves as "homophiles" during the 1960s and early 1970s (Martin, 1972), but during this

period The Advocate consistently used only the male gender when referring generally to homosexuals or homosexuality. Phrases such as "the right of the homosexual to live his life free from harassment" were typical.

The period from 1969 to 1970 was a formative time for The Advocate and the gay and lesbian movement, as "gay liberation" became a public phenomenon, and gay and lesbian organizations burgeoned in number from a handful to hundreds. It was also a period during which the growing gay and lesbian movement was forced to confront the considerable tensions between gays and lesbians. A several page letter from Del Martin in the October 28-November 10, 1970 issue of The Advocate is instructive. The editor's introduction reads:

Del Martin has worked in the homophile movement since 1955, when she was one of the founders of the Daughters of Bilitis. Since 1964, she has also served on the board of directors of San Francisco's Council on Religion and the Homosexual. Here is her farewell to the homophile movement, which she is leaving to work in the women's liberation effort. Her free-swinging, candid remarks about the scene will anger and dismay many male homosexuals. But there is much to think about in what she says, and The Advocate is herewith printing her valedictory in full. --Ed. (The Advocate, #18, 1970: 21).

Martin's statement probably captures the sentiment of the time as well as or

better than any other document and would be well worth duplicating in full.

However, in the interests of brevity, the following selected remarks provide some insight:

After fifteen years of working for the homophile movement...I am facing a real identity crisis. Like NACHO (North American Conference of Homophile Organizations), I have been torn apart, I am bereft.

For I have during this week of struggle between the men and the women, the conservatives and the Gay Liberationists, been forced to the realization that I have no brothers in the homophile movement... Goodbye, too (temporarily, I trust) to my sisters who demean themselves by accepting "women's status" in these groups – making and serving the coffee, doing the secretarial work, soothing the brows of the policy-makers who tell them, "We're doing it all for you, too." Don't believe it, sisters, for you are only an afterthought that never took place... "Gay is good," but not good enough – so long as it is limited to white males only. (The Advocate, #18, 1970: 21-25).

Martin's letter continued by declaring her disappointment in the male homosexual's singular vision that assumed that the concerns of men and women in the movement were identical. Gay organizations' overriding concerns at the time were with legal reform and police entrapment and harassment: issues that had little relevance to lesbians. Legal proscriptions relating to homosexuality primarily regulated only male homosexuality and police entrapment occurred almost exclusively in bars and public parks or restrooms frequented by men. Moreover, the sexist structure of gay organizations clearly established the movement as male dominated. Like other progressive social movements at the time – the New Left, anti-war, and black civil rights movements – women were cast in a subordinate role.

In the following issue, Advocate columnist Jim Kepner wrote a response to Martin's letter which was a plea to gay organizations to recognize the ways in which they had excluded or ignored women and to work to change such practices. The following is a brief selection from his article:

It would be easy to pick angrily at little points in her letter and ignore the basic justice of her complaint. Or to say, as Dorr Legg of ONE

has, that women are always welcome in our organizations. He notes that a woman was once chairman of ONE. And half of ONE's staff until 1957 was female. But no woman has served on ONE's board since 1959 or as a voting member since 1960. The welcome mat was out, but women seemed to find the atmosphere uninviting. I don't mean to single out ONE. Most of our organizations have started mixed and ended all-male...It takes more than a welcome mat. It takes some sensitivity to the sexual antagonisms that vitiate our entire society. And it takes a program that includes the really mutual interests of male and female Gays, as well as the special interests of women. (The Advocate, #19: 25).

By the beginning of 1972, The Advocate had switched from tabloid format to magazine format and photographs of various gay men were regularly run on the front covers. Sometimes these men were the subject of a featured article inside, but often they were unidentified attractive, muscular men posing shirtless. Though the news content inside had not changed, the suggestive poses clearly offered a message about The Advocate, and its glorification of male sexuality, that the previous format had not. The message seemed to be that eroticizing the male, or homoeroticizing the male, was a newfound freedom that The Advocate was going to claim. However, there can be little doubt that front covers of this sort solidified the "Newspaper of America's Homophile Community" as a product primarily addressed to men and served to further alienate lesbian readership.

Moreover, the ad content inside from 1972 until mid-1992, had taken on a decidedly sexual focus. As a magazine addressed to a deviant sexual minority, The Advocate was not able to attract mainstream advertisers and had to rely almost exclusively on classified ads including personal ads, ads for sexual aids and sexual clubs, and ads for phone sex lines for revenues. These ads were

frequently explicitly worded and sometimes contained homoerotic photographs of barely dressed men. Though the classified section was kept separate from the news, features, and arts sections (during most years it was printed as a removable subsection), any cursory look at the ad content of the classifieds left no doubt for which gender they were intended.

The Advocate has long been criticized by many for its classified ads section because of its sexually objectifying nature (Browning, 1992), and also because as long as these ads were part of the magazine, the premier gay press could not be taken seriously by mainstream America. Browning writes of The Advocate's dual image:

...if in its editorial pages it fancies itself the Newsweek of gay journalism, The Advocate's financial base – its personals and phone-sex ads – betrays a profile of gay America just as narrow as the bronzed white-man images in Calvin Klein's underwear ads...Just as balloon-breasted blondes made megamillions for the owners of Playboy and Penthouse, which are self-conscious sex books, The Advocate ...and dozens of other papers that regularly wrap their covers in white beef are not essentially masturbation journals. They are, or claim to be, "whole life" papers that tell gay, mostly urban male readers what it means to be gay in America. They set the paradigm...And for general-interest newspapers, newsmagazines, and television news shows, even for sitcoms and films, they are the resource books that guide the straight coverage of gay life. (pp. 192-193).

The Advocate did not stop running these ads altogether until mid-1992, after Browning's book had been published.

In 1975, The Advocate was bought by David Goodstein, who changed the format and content somewhat, as well as the subtitle which by that time had become "Touching Your Lifestyle." For a several year period from 1975, the

barely dressed men still made their front cover appearances, but much less frequently. A detailed analysis of the front covers is included in the next section of this paper, but at this time it should be noted that front covers under David Goodstein's directorship of the magazine reflected a more diverse focus than previously.

Whether or not the content had changed significantly is not certain, but the following letter to the editor from reader Barry Bernstein and the response from the editor, in August, 1976 (issue #198) illustrates the perception that it had and the extent to which this was a contested matter:

What is happening to our good old Advocate? Originally this was a great magazine for *men*...why the sudden rush to run so many foolish articles on dykes?...Let them get their own publication... Give The Advocate back to the guys...A magazine for men run by men: that is how I would like to see The Advocate again.

The brief response from the editors was: "The Advocate will continue to report on the entire gay community, both men and women. --Ed."

A number of letters appeared in the letters to the editor section in subsequent issues in response to Bernstein's letter. This one from Brian Sylvia is representative:

I wish to extend my appreciation to Mr. Saslow and the entire staff of The Advocate for pursuing the policy of "total coverage" in regards to the gay movement and journalistic expertise. Of all the "gay" publications I am familiar with, The Advocate is the only paper to recognize the common humanity of its readers before social labels and individual bias. I am disgusted to read letters criticizing The Advocate for either publishing too many articles about women or handing the paper over to women. I am ashamed of sexism among men as a group and among gay men as an emotional anachronism...

Some of my fellow males entertain the illusion that gay lib is a "man's movement" born of a "man's world." (The Advocate, #201, 1976: 7).

When David Bernstein died in 1985, The Advocate was bought by Niles Merton who owned it until mid-1989. Under Merton, the subtitle became "The National Gay Newsmagazine." As mentioned earlier, the term "gay" presents an interpretive problem. On the one hand, "gay" denotes a male homosexual, as lesbian denotes a female "homosexual." But "gay" has also commonly been generally applied to gays and lesbians as a whole. The Advocate's intention to be the "national gay newsmagazine" can be seen as ambiguous and contradictory in terms of application to lesbians during this time (and any other). During these years, gay male "beefcakes" made their resurgence on the front covers. But also at this time lesbians were featured on the cover more frequently, though still as a rarity. The classified ads section maintained its male-directedness, though it did contain a smaller portion devoted to women. The Advocate regularly ran feature articles on individual lesbians or on some aspect of lesbian life in America. Lesbians were profiled in the "People" section; they were quoted as leaders in the news section; and lesbian culture, either in tandem with or separate from gays, was consistently detailed in the arts section.

In 1989, The Advocate was bought by a consortium of investors, which changed the subtitle to "The National Gay and Lesbian Newsmagazine." It could be speculated that this development represented an acknowledgement that The Advocate in the past had done a poor job of including lesbians and a new policy

would be pursued in the future. Or perhaps it was merely felt that such a subtitle was a more accurate reflection of what The Advocate had always been. Lesbian representation in various section of The Advocate during this particular stage of its development or at any other is the focus of the following analysis.

METHODS

One of the objectives of this study was to examine the gay press from the birth of the contemporary lesbian and gay movement. Therefore, issues of The Advocate were reviewed starting with the first full year (1970) of publication after the Stonewall riots. Only even numbered years were selected from 1970 to the most recent full even year of publication, 1992. For each even numbered year, three editions were selected for content analysis by choosing every eighth edition. Approximately twenty-four editions were published each year; therefore, I began with the final edition of 1992 and selected every eighth issue dating back to 1970, excluding odd numbered years. During those even numbered years where four issues would have been included by this method because more than 24 editions were produced, I eliminated what would have been the fourth of the selected eight issues.

The Advocate is typically divided into seven sections: 1.) front covers; 2.) editorials and letters to the editor; 3.) news; 4.) features; 5.) columns by regular contributors; 6.) arts; and 7.) classifieds. Front cover photographs were chosen for analysis because they are the first item encountered. The news section and the arts sections were chosen for analysis for a number of reasons. The features section is not a clearly defined section but a collection of mostly random articles that occasionally have been numerous and at other times nonexistent. Likewise, regular columns have changed in style, focus, and content as contributors have come and gone. The arts and news sections have

been relatively consistent in form throughout the magazine's history. Moreover, these two sections combined comprise the majority of The Advocate's non-ad content.

The news and arts sections reflect The Advocate's coverage of two basic aspects of the gay and lesbian experience. The news section can be seen as depicting the gay and lesbian movement (or at least the gay movement), by which is meant any aspect of social or political organizing and any part of the broad effort of lesbians and gays to define their position in society. The arts section, which includes book, theater, and film reviews, as well as featured profiles of lesbian and gay artists, actors, writers, and other performers, is a reflection of The Advocate's coverage of lesbian and gay popular culture.

Each of the sections analyzed has been examined for content focus by year and then by groups of years reflecting stages of development of the lesbian and gay movement. These stages reflect my adaptation of the stages identified by Altman (1982) and Cruikshank (1992). Altman has shown that after the homophile stage,⁴ the lesbian and gay movement experienced two distinct periods which are described in the preceding sections. The first period, gay liberation, (from approximately 1970 to 1976), was dominated by street level activism and by ideological alignment with the New Left. This was also a period during which lesbian separatism was at its peak. The second stage, the gay

⁴The homophile stage (1950s and 1960s) has been excluded from this study because it predates the contemporary lesbian and gay movement.

rights movement (the late 1970s to the present), followed the general decline of left ideological activism in all major social movements from the mid-1970s and was predominantly focused on gay and lesbian legal and civil rights. Gay and lesbian civil rights organizations took on a professional character and had mobilized to counter the well-organized anti-gay drives that had proliferated nationwide. The gay and lesbian movement had primarily abandoned street level activism and counter culture, looking instead to the state for legal protection.

Though the gay and lesbian civil rights focus continues to the present day, a third stage that is an extrapolation from Cruikshank (1992) has been included for the purposes of this analysis. From 1987 onward, the gay and lesbian movement has been heavily influenced by a distinct phenomenon: radical AIDS organizing combined with "Queer Nationalism." Though queer nationalism was primarily the domain of younger gays and lesbians and may never have claimed more than a small portion of the overall gay population as adherents, it has profoundly altered the way that gay men and lesbians view each other. Queer nationalism was an ideological, or as Epstein might say, an ethnic outlook which insisted that homosexuals were a people distinct from the rest of society with a unique culture, history, and political experience. Inherent in this view is the insistence that gays and lesbians share more in common with each other than with other elements of society in general. Ultimately, queer nationalism was the product of radical AIDS organizing and the brand of civil disobedience

engendered by the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP). I have called this period, from 1987 to the present, "queer nationalism" not because this outlook necessarily dominated this stage, but because Cruikshank asserts that it resulted in a new generation of gays and lesbians who have never experienced subcultures separate from each other (1992: 133-135). Table 1 displays the periods of the gay and lesbian movement and the characteristics associated with them.

TABLE 1. Stages of the Contemporary Lesbian and Gay Movement.

STAGE	YEARS	DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS
Gay Liberation	1970-1976	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ideological association with New Left 2. Confrontational street Activism 3. Broadly committed to ending all forms of oppression 4. Rise of lesbian separatism
Gay Rights	1977-1986	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Appeal for state prevention of discrimination 2. Greater cooperation between lesbians and gays in response to anti-gay campaigns
Queer Nationalism	1987-1992	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Growth of "queer" ideology 2. Confrontational AIDS organizing 3. Increased participation of lesbians and gays in shared organizations

(Sources: Cruikshank, 1992; and Altman, 1982).

THE FRONT COVERS

Perhaps nothing about a magazine is more indicative of the way it chooses to

present itself to its readership, and society at large, than the image it portrays through its front cover pictorials. An examination of lesbian inclusion on the front covers demonstrates the extent to which the editorial staff of The Advocate has chosen to portray lesbians as being a part of the gay experience.

Unlike the approach to the other sections sections, for which three samples per year were chosen, all front covers for each issue during all years selected were examined (every year from 1970-1992). This was done because a sampling of front covers could not possibly be representative in a way that a sampling of articles in the news section could be: there is only one front cover per issue whereas there are numerous news and arts articles per issue. The proportion (percentage of total for the year) of each of the following categories of front cover photographs was calculated: 1.) those depicting a human subject or subjects; 2.) those depicting women only; 3.) those depicting lesbians⁵ only; 4.) those depicting men only; 5.) those depicting gay men only; 6.) those depicting both men and women; 7.) those depicting both gays and lesbians. The total measure of lesbian representation for each year was found by combining categories three and seven: the total proportion of issues depicting lesbians only *and* the total proportion depicting lesbians and gay men together.

⁵Only those women identified as lesbians on the cover or in the contents of The Advocate are included here. The numerical difference between group two (women only) and group three (lesbians only) includes heterosexual women and women whose sexual orientation has not been identified. Likewise for groups four (men only) and five (gay men only); and groups six (men and women) and seven (gays and lesbians).

To compare the representation of lesbians in The Advocate by period of lesbian and gay organizing, the mean proportional representation was calculated for each value by adding the proportions of each value for all years in a particular stage and then by dividing by the number of years in the stage. For example, lesbian representation during the first stage of the modern lesbian and gay movement (gay liberation, 1970-1976) was calculated by adding the proportion of lesbian representation during each of the four years analyzed and dividing by four.

THE NEWS SECTION

Articles in the news section were divided into two groups: those about individuals, and those about general aspects of the gay and lesbian experience or movement. Nearly all articles in this section fell into one of these categories. The remaining articles were omitted from this study.⁶ It was important to separate the news articles into these two categories because of the differing focus of each group of articles. Lesbian representation in articles about individuals demonstrates the extent to which individual lesbians are profiled in news articles in proportion to individual gays. Lesbian representation in articles about general aspects of the movement demonstrates the extent to which

⁶Omitted articles primarily tended to be about health issues, usually AIDS. Articles concerned with the effects of AIDS on the gay community or movement were included in the "general experience or movement" group, while those which treated the purely medical aspects of AIDS were excluded. Obituaries, which had become a regular part of the news section from 1982 onward as AIDS began to claim the lives of thousands of gays, were also excluded.

lesbians are depicted as being involved in the gay experience.

Included in the category "articles about individuals" were articles that in some way focused on one or more individual gay men or lesbians.⁷ These articles ranged from gay men and lesbians who were identified leaders in the movement, to lesser known gays and lesbians who were involved in events that were in some way related to the movement; examples of such events include groundbreaking legal cases or situations involving anti-gay violence. Articles were judged to belong in this category if the central focus of the article appeared to be on one or more individual(s) and if the all information included in the article was related to the particular individual concerned. For this group of articles, the proportion of articles about lesbians per year was determined by dividing the number of articles about lesbians in all three issues selected for each year by the total number of articles about individuals in the same three issues. The same was done for articles about gay men.

The category "general focus on the gay/lesbian experience or gay/lesbian rights" included articles related in any way to lesbian and gay organizing or to events related to the gay and lesbian movement or subculture (but not focused on individuals). In other words, all articles not included in the category above and not omitted from the study were included in the "general focus" category. To determine the extent of lesbian representation, two key factors were

⁷The occasional articles about a heterosexual (usually a celebrity) that was not related in some way to the gay/lesbian experience was excluded.

examined: 1.) use of the term "lesbian" and 2.) quotes of or references to lesbians.

Inclusion or exclusion of the term "lesbian" in news reports on developments in the lesbian and gay movement is one measure of the extent to which The Advocate has portrayed lesbians as included in the gay experience. For this analysis, all articles in the "general focus" category which used the term "gay" (almost all articles in this category) were examined for their use of the term "lesbian." Articles were divided into the following: 1.) those that never used the term lesbian; 2.) those that used the term lesbian once but used the term gay more than once; 3.) those that used the term lesbian only when referring to the title of an organization (e.g., the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force); 4.) those that used the term lesbian more than once but not as frequently as the term gay; and 5.) those that used the term approximately as many times as they used the term gay. Approximate equality was based not necessarily on exact calculation but on the researchers' judgement; 6.) those that only used the term lesbian. The proportional use of each of these values during each year was calculated by dividing the total number of articles in each group in each set of three editions per year by the total number of articles in the three issues selected for each given year. The same calculations were completed for the terms "gay woman/women" and "homosexual woman/women." Though these terms have been used much less frequently than lesbian, particularly since the mid-1970s, it is important to include them because their usage in some cases

can account for the absence of the term lesbian. Ultimately, three measures of lesbian representation through the use of terminology were devised: 1.) the proportion of articles which used the term lesbian in any way, including all but the first value "never" above; 2. the combined proportion of articles which used the term lesbian more frequently than once; used the term lesbian approximately as often as the term gay; and only used the term lesbian; 3.) the combined proportion of articles which used the term lesbian, gay woman/women, and homosexual woman/women.

Determining the extent of lesbian inclusion through the use of terminology is somewhat problematic. Though the term itself has existed since The Advocate's first date of publication (it was used in the first year of publication, 1967), preference for the term has not always been the same over time. In the early 1970s, female homosexuals variously called themselves lesbians, gay women, or homophiles (Martin and Lyon, 1972). Though the term lesbian became the predominant label for a female homosexual by the early 1970s, some consider it appropriate to use the term gay when referring to both gay men and lesbians (Cruikshank, 1992). Thus, it is difficult to assess The Advocate's intent in the use of the word gay and simultaneous exclusion of the term lesbian. For instance, The Advocate has, over time, published a number of articles about "gay relationships," some of which included both lesbian and gay relationships, and some of which included only gay male relationships.

Therefore, an analysis of terminology can be considered only a partial

indicator of lesbian representation. A second indicator of lesbian inclusion was used as a cross-check: references to, or quotes of individual lesbians. For this analysis, those articles which referred to or quoted any gay or lesbian individual were counted to determine the proportion during each given year which:

- 1.) referred to and/or quoted a gay man/men but not a lesbian/s;
- 2.) referred to/quoted one lesbian but refer to/quote more than one gay man;
- 3.) referred to/quoted more than one lesbian but referred to/quoted fewer lesbians than gay men;
- 4.) referred to/quoted approximately as many lesbians as gay men;
- 5.) referred to/quoted only lesbians.

The measure of lesbian representation in this case is the combined proportion of values two through five above. Only those articles which referred to or quoted only men were excluded from this measure.

THE ARTS SECTION

Only those articles in the arts section about lesbian and/or gay individuals (authors, actors, etc.) or about artistic products (plays, films, books, etc.) depicting the lesbian and/or gay experience were included in this analysis. Those articles about a film, play, or book with no lesbian or gay content were excluded. Each of the following proportions were calculated:

- 1.) articles about a gay artist (or artists) or a gay-themed artistic product;
- 2.) articles about a lesbian artist (or artists) or about a lesbian-themed artistic product;
- 3.) articles about a group of lesbian and gay individuals in which gay men and lesbians are approximately equally represented, or about a gay and lesbian-

themed artistic product that treated the gay and lesbian experience approximately equally; 4.) articles about a group of lesbian and gay individuals primarily composed of gays, or about a gay and lesbian-themed artistic product primarily about the gay experience; 5.) articles about a group of lesbian and gay individuals primarily composed of lesbians or about a gay and lesbian-themed artistic product primarily about the lesbian experience.

Photographs featuring lesbian and gay artists and lesbian and gay oriented works are an important part of the arts section and demonstrate the extent to which The Advocate has portrayed lesbians as a part of gay culture. The proportions of photographic coverage for each of the following values for each year were calculated: 1.) photographs of gays only; 2.) photographs of lesbians only; 3.) photographs of both lesbians and gays together, with approximately equal representation; 4.) photographs of both lesbians and gays but with gays outnumbering lesbians; 5.) photographs of both lesbians and gays but with lesbians outnumbering gays. Photographs of people not identified as lesbian or gay⁸ and photographs of inanimate objects were excluded from this study.

The measure of lesbian representation in photographs was calculated by adding the proportions of photographs during each year which portrayed lesbians only, and both lesbians and gays equally, and both gays and lesbians but primarily

⁸Including people identified as heterosexual and any individuals whose sexual orientation was not identified.

lesbians.

FINDINGS

THE FRONT COVERS

Lesbian representation on the front covers during each year selected is shown in table 2.1. Column seven depicts the measure of lesbian representation, which includes front cover photographs of lesbians only and of gays and lesbians together. For all years examined, there is a proportionate lack of lesbian representation on Advocate front covers. During two years, 1972 and 1984, lesbians were completely absent from the front cover. The highest proportion of lesbian representation (28% in 1976) is lower than the lowest proportion of gay only representation (38% in 1980). During more than half of the years examined, photographs of gay men exclusively were on 80%, or more, of the front covers. The proportion of lesbian representation has risen and fallen with no apparent trend toward greater or lesser inclusion.

Table 2.2 shows the extent of lesbian representation in The Advocate during each stage of the lesbian and gay movement. Mean percentages of representation of lesbians, gay men and gays and lesbians are given in the corresponding columns. The most significant column is column four which shows the total lesbian representation in each stage, including the combined mean percentage of covers with photographs of lesbians only and of photographs showing both lesbians and gay men.

Table 2.1: Front Cover Photographs.
Percent during each year that feature the following:

YEAR	N	Human Subject	Lesbians Only	Gays Only	Gays and Lesbians Together	Lesbian Representation (gays and lesbians together and lesbians only)
1970*	--	--	--	--	--	--
1972	24	.83	.00	.83	.00	.00
1974	24	1.00	.04	.96	.00	.04
1976	22**	.78	.00	.96	.00	.04
1978	25	.84	.08	.56	.12	.20
1980	24	.50	.04	.38	.04	.08
1982	27	.75	.04	.56	.15	.19
1984	24	.87	.00	.83	.00	.00
1986	26	.93	.08	.81	.04	.12
1988	26	1.00	.00	.92	.04	.04
1990	25	.88	.00	.80	.08	.08
1992	25	.99	.08	.44	.04	.12
Mean	--	.85	.03	.73	.05	.91

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

*During 1976, The Advocate was published in tabloid format. There were no photographs on the front cover.

**All issues for both January and February of 1976 were missing from the microfilm compilation of The Advocate.

Table 2.2 shows that lesbian representation on Advocate front covers during all three stages of the lesbian and gay movement has been considerably lower than gay male representation. The proportion of front covers depicting gays only

was never less than fifty percent of the total during any period, while the proportion depicting lesbians ranged from a low of seven percent during the first stage to a high of 18% during the second stage. During no stage were lesbians completely absent from the front cover. What might be concluded is that if the front covers can be taken as an indication of The Advocate's depiction of the role of lesbians in gay life, lesbians have been present but to a negligible degree in at least the first and third stages. However, an analysis of the news and arts sections reveals a somewhat different picture.

Table 2.2 Front Cover Photographs.
Mean percent during each stage that feature the following:

Stage	N	Lesbians Only	Gays Only	Gays & Lesbians Together	Lesbian Representation (gays and lesbians together and lesbians only)
Liberation (1970-1976)	72	.01	.55	.06	.07
Rights (1978-1986)	126	.09	.62	.09	.18
Queer Nat. (1988-1992)	76	.03	.72	.05	.08

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

THE NEWS SECTION

Articles about individuals: Table 3.1 reveals the extent of lesbian inclusion in articles in the news section that were focused on individual lesbians or gays during each year selected. The findings in this table show that, in all years, the proportion of articles featuring lesbian individuals was lower than the proportion of articles featuring gay individuals. Lesbian representation ranged from a low of eight percent in 1974 to a high of 44% in 1984. In eight of the 12 years examined, articles about lesbians comprised less than one-third of the articles about lesbian or gay individuals in The Advocate. Lesbian individuals were not excluded entirely from the news section during any year examined. No articles were found that focussed on lesbian and gay individuals together.

In table 3.1, there are increases and decreases in representation which do not delineate a clear or consistent pattern. For instance, the proportion of news articles focussing on lesbian individuals decreased from 1970 to 1974, increased from 1976 to 1982, and then increased dramatically in 1984. The surge in 1984 was followed by a decline in 1986, and a drastic decline in 1988. Finally, 1990 and 1992 registered a considerable increase from the previous four years. It is possible that changes in editorship in 1975 and again in 1985 account for some of the differences. Future research should examine the influence of the changes in editorship on lesbian representation in order to determine its relative impact.

Table 3.1. Articles in The Advocate News Section About Individuals.
Proportion during each year focused on the following:

Year	N	Gays	Lesbians	Lesbians and Gays Together
1970	21	.81	.19	.00
1972	24	.88	.13	.00
1974	39	.92	.08	.00
1976	18	.78	.22	.00
1978	13	.77	.23	.00
1980	24	.75	.25	.00
1982	17	.71	.29	.00
1984	9	.56	.44	.00
1986	12	.67	.33	.00
1988	17	.82	.18	.00
1990	10	.60	.40	.00
1992	10	.60	.40	.00
Mean		.74	.26	.00

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

Grouping the years into stages of the lesbian and gay movement demonstrates the extent to which lesbian inclusion in The Advocate's news section has increased over time. It also enables speculation on the extent to which the mainstream gay press has presented lesbians as being part of the lesbian and gay movement during each period. Table 3.2 shows that in the first stage (gay liberation) articles about lesbian individuals comprised 14% of the total number of articles about lesbian or gay individuals in the news section. In

the second and third stages (gay rights and queer nationalism), articles about lesbian individuals represented somewhat less than one third of the total number of articles about individuals. These findings demonstrate that lesbian individuals have always been included in The Advocate's treatment of the lesbian and gay movement, but to a dramatically lesser extent than gay individuals. If we accepted Cruikshank's position that the lesbian and gay experiences are converging, we would expect the third stage to include a higher proportion of articles about lesbians than the second stage. However, because there is very little difference between the second and third stages, we might assume that lesbian representation in the mainstream gay press has not necessarily increased with the impact of queer nationalism.

Table 3.2. Articles about Individuals in the News Section.
Proportion during each stage focused on the following:

Stage	N	Gays	Lesbians	Gays and Lesbians Together
Liberation (1970-1976)	105	.86	.14	.00
Rights (1978-1986)	75	.71	.29	.00
Queer Nat. (1988-1992)	37	.70	.30	.00

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

Articles about general aspects of the gay and lesbian experience or movement: This group of articles was analyzed for their usage of the term "lesbian" and for their inclusion of or references to lesbians. Table 4.1 shows the extent to which inclusive terminology was used in the general focus news articles that used the term "gay" in The Advocate during each year. Articles in this general focus category were divided into six exclusive groups: 1.) those that never used the term lesbian; 2.) those that used the term lesbian once but used the term gay more than once; 3.) those that used the term lesbian only when referring to an organization but used the term gay more than once; 4.) those that used the term lesbian more than once but not as frequently as the term gay; 5.) those that used the term lesbian approximately as often as the term gay; and 6.) those that used the term lesbian but never used the term gay. Articles in this category were also examined for use of the terms "homosexual woman/women" or "gay woman/women" to account for common earlier references to lesbians.

As indicated in table 4.1, the term lesbian was used less frequently in all years in the news section than the word gay, though the usage of the term lesbian has increased markedly over time. A proportion of 1.00 in the "use of lesbian" column during any given year would indicate that all articles in this category in the news section had used the term lesbian. However, the proportion of articles which used the term lesbian ranged from a low of six percent in 1970 to a high of 77% in 1984. It is important to keep in mind that

many of the articles included in the calculations in this column use the term lesbian only once or only when mentioning an organization's name, while using the term gay frequently. Such articles were eliminated in column five which shows only the proportions of articles during each year which used the term lesbian either more than once, or as frequently as the term gay, or exclusively. In that case, the proportionate use of the term lesbian ranges from a low of three percent in 1970 to a high of 6% in 1992. Because The Advocate sometimes referred to lesbians as "gay women" or "homosexual women" in the early 1970s, column six shows the annual proportions of articles which use all three terms. Using this measure of lesbian inclusion, the proportions ranged from a low of 11% in 1974 to a high of 81% in 1984.

Although this table does not show a consistent pattern, Cruikshank's claim that lesbian and gay social worlds have begun to coalesce over time seems to be borne out. The term lesbian was used in 10% or less of The Advocate's news articles in the early and mid-1970s. In the late-1970s and early 1980s, the proportion of articles using the term lesbian had increased to approximately one third. In 1984, there was a dramatic increase in the number of articles using the term (77%) followed by a sudden decrease (16%) in 1986. By the end of the 1980s, approximately one half of the articles in the news section used the term lesbian in some way. In 1992, about three quarters of the news articles used the term lesbian. Perhaps the general increase in the term lesbian may be attributed to changes in the lesbian and gay movement, such as the heightened

impact of feminist thought on gay men (Cruikshank, 1992).

Table 4.1. General News Articles. Proportion of those articles which use the term gay that also use the term lesbian during each year:

Year	N	Never use the term lesbian	Use the term lesbian at least once	Use the term lesbian more than once, equally or exclusively	Use the term lesbian and/or gay woman and/or homosexual woman
1970	33	.94	.06	.03	.24
1972	77	.86	.10	.04	.33
1974	74	.89	.09	.04	.11
1976	35	.91	.09	.06	.14
1978	42	.69	.31	.24	.40
1980	42	.67	.33	.21	.36
1982	68	.68	.32	.21	.34
1984	22	.23	.77	.59	.81
1986	45	.84	.16	.07	.16
1988	40	.45	.55	.30	.58
1990	38	.55	.45	.37	.45
1992	42	.28	.71	.67	.71
Mean	—	.63	.33	.24	.37

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

Table 4.2 illustrates the changes in the inclusion of the term lesbian in The Advocate's news articles corresponding to stages in the lesbian and gay movement. If terminology is an indication of the inclusion of lesbians in the

news section, we can conclude that as the gay and lesbian movement progressed The Advocate increasingly portrayed lesbians as occupying a central role in the gay experience. This is true whether The Advocate referred to lesbians as lesbians, gay women or homosexual women. However, even in the most recent stage, only somewhat more than half of all general focus articles used the term lesbian in any way; slightly more than half used one of the three terms; and somewhat less than half used the term lesbian more than once, equally or exclusively.

Table 4.2. General News Articles. Proportion of those articles which use the term lesbian during each stage:

Stage	N	Never use the term lesbian	Use the term lesbian at least once	Use the term lesbian more than once, equally or exclusively	Use the term lesbian and/or gay woman and/or homosexual woman
Liberation (1970-1976)	219	.91	.09	.20	.21
Rights (1978-1986)	219	.62	.38	.45	.41
Queer Nat. (1988-1992)	120	.43	.57	.45	.58

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

An analysis of terminology in the news section is problematic because it is

difficult to assess the exclusion of lesbians solely by calculating the proportion of articles which used the term lesbian. Some articles that used the term gay were implicitly *intended* to include lesbians. In such cases, "gay" means all homosexuals, male or female (though many lesbians would object to such a classification). Other articles in The Advocate using only the term gay applied exclusively to gay men. Given the ambiguity of such terminology, it is instructive to examine the same articles in tables 4.1 and 4.2 to determine the extent to which they refer to or quote individual lesbians, regardless of terminology. Individuals who were mentioned in general articles about the lesbian and gay movement include leaders of organizations and participants at events.

Table 5.1 shows the extent to which lesbian were referred to, or quoted, in those general focus articles in the news section which quoted or referred to a lesbian or gay individual or individuals. These articles were divided into four groups: 1.) articles which referred to, or quoted, only one lesbian but quoted more than one gay man; 2.) articles which referred to, or quoted, more than one lesbian but referred to fewer lesbians than gays; 3.) articles which referred to, or quoted, approximately as many lesbians as gay men; 4.) articles which referred to, or quoted, only lesbians.

For most of the years in this study, lesbians have been underrepresented in quotes or references in general focus news articles in The Advocate, according to table 5.1. Column four shows that lesbians were referred to or quoted in only approximately one fifth of the articles which referred to individuals during four of

the 12 years. Less than 40% of the articles that referred to individuals referred to lesbians during eight of the 12 years. However, lesbian inclusion as measured by references or quotes increased steadily during the time frame (1970-1992). During four of the 12 years in this study, approximately half of the articles which referred to individuals referred to lesbians. Comparing column three (gays only) to column six (lesbians only), we can see that references to gay men only far outnumber references to lesbians only in all years. However, column seven shows that articles which refer to lesbians only or to lesbians equally are in approximately equal proportion to articles which refer to gays only during the last two years of the study.

Table 5.1. General News Articles. Proportion referring to or quoting lesbians during each year:

Year	N	Quote/ refer to gays only	Quote/ refer to at least one Lesbian	Quote/ refer to lesbians and gays equally	Quote/ refer to lesbians only	Quote/refer to lesbians only or to lesbians and gays equally
1970	30	.80	.20	.03	.10	.13
1972	32	.79	.21	.06	.06	.12
1974	33	.79	.21	.09	.06	.15
1976	19	.74	.26	.21	.05	.26
1978	18	.56	.39	.17	.11	.28
1980	15	.53	.47	.13	.33	.46
1982	17	.71	.29	.00	.29	.29
1984	20	.60	.40	.05	.30	.35
1986	17	.65	.35	.18	.00	.18
1988	32	.53	.47	.19	.22	.41
1990	24	.50	.50	.25	.25	.50
1992	24	.50	.50	.25	.25	.50
Mean	—	.64	.35	.13	.17	.30

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

Table 5.2 shows the proportion of articles which refer to or quote lesbians during each stage of the movement. From this table we can conclude that lesbian representation in the gay press has increased during each stage of the lesbian and gay movement. Nearly half of all general focus news articles which refer to individuals refer to lesbians during the most recent period. Forty-four percent of the news articles refer to lesbians only or to lesbians approximately

as many times as they refer to gays.

Table 5.2. General news articles. Proportion which refer to or quote lesbians during each stage:

Stage	N	Quote/refer to gays only	Quote/refer to at least one lesbian	Quote/refer to lesbians only or lesbians and gays equally
Liberation (1970-1976)	114	.78	.22	.17
Rights (1978-1986)	87	.61	.37	.31
Queer Nat. (1988-1992)	72	.53	.47	.44

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

THE ARTS SECTION

An analysis of lesbian representation in the arts section demonstrates the extent to which The Advocate portrayed the lesbian experience as integral to the gay experience. Both articles and photographs in this section were examined. Articles in the arts section include articles about individual lesbian and/or gay artists (writers, actors, dancers, etc.) and articles about artistic works detailing the lesbian and/or gay experience (books, plays, films, etc.). Table 6.1 shows the considerable disparity between articles about gays and articles about lesbians in the arts section. Articles about lesbians, or the lesbian experience, never totaled more than a third of the articles in this section. Articles about gays, or the gay experience, totaled more than half of the articles in this section

for all years but one. From the year 1976 onward, lesbian representation increased, but not consistently or considerably. Articles about gays and lesbians together, or about works focused on the gay and lesbian experience, also increased after 1976, but never comprised much more than one fifth of the total number of articles in the arts section during any year.

Table 6.1. Articles in the Arts Section. Proportion during each year which focused on the following:

Year	N	Gays only	Lesbians only	Gays and lesbians equally	Gays and lesbians, but primarily gays	Gays and lesbians, but primarily lesbians
1970	6	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1972	14	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1974	21	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1976	19	.74	.05	.16	.05	.00
1978	29	.70	.10	.10	.10	.00
1980	25	.64	.24	.12	.00	.00
1982	29	.69	.17	.14	.00	.00
1984	33	.58	.33	.06	.03	.00
1986	14	.43	.14	.21	.21	.00
1988	23	.70	.22	.09	.00	.00
1990	23	.52	.22	.13	.13	.00
1992	28	.64	.25	.07	.04	.00
Mean	—	.72	.14	.09	.05	.00

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

The extent of lesbian representation in photographs in the arts section parallels the representation in articles as shown in table 6.2. However, photographs depicting lesbians were generally in higher proportion to their male counterparts than were articles about lesbians or the lesbian experience. Column 4 shows that no photographs of lesbians appeared in the arts section during the first three years selected for this study. The proportion of photographs depicting lesbians in later years ranged from a low of three percent in 1978, to a high of 50% in 1980. During eleven of the twelve years included, photographs depicting gays, as shown in column three, represented more than 50% of the total; during several years, photographs of gays represented more than 80% of the total. During seven of the study years, no photographs depicting lesbians and gays together were included in the arts section. In each of the remaining years, photographs of lesbians and gays together comprised only a negligible proportion of the total.

It could be speculated that the total exclusion of lesbians in the arts section during the first several years of this study may have been a result of the underdevelopment of the commercial aspects of lesbian culture relative to gay culture at this time. By the early 1970s, gays in large urban areas had the resources and the critical mass to support gay theater, films, publishing, etc. The lesbian commercial subculture was not as well-developed at that time, nor at any other. However, this explanation fails on several grounds. The early 1970s were a period during which lesbian feminism generated an abundance of

artistic works on the lesbian experience. The fact that much of these works were produced in a culture of lesbian separatism may account for their lack of exposure in the gay press. But separatism offers only a partial explanation as other aspects of the lesbian experience, such as lesbian involvement in the gay and lesbian movement, were explored with greater frequency at that time as shown in tables 5.1 and 3.1. Lesbian culture was not explored in the arts section with any significant frequency in The Advocate until 1980, after which lesbian inclusion in the arts section seemed to rise and fall without any clear pattern.

Table 6.2. Photographs in the Arts Section. Proportion during each year which displayed either lesbians or gay men:

Year	N	Gays only	Lesbians only	Approx. equal group of lesbians and gays together	Group of lesbians and gays, but primarily gays	Groups of lesbians and gays, but primarily lesbians
1970	5	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1972	3	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1974	11	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1976	13	1.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
1978	32	.94	.03	.03	.00	.00
1980	8	.38	.50	.13	.00	.00
1982	17	.82	.18	.00	.00	.00
1984	15	.60	.33	.00	.07	.00
1986	27	.81	.15	.04	.00	.00
1988	32	.26	.16	.00	.00	.00
1990	29	.59	.41	.00	.00	.00
1992	35	.52	.48	.00	.00	.00

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

Table 6.3 displays the measure of lesbian representation in both articles and photographs in the arts section during each stage of the lesbian and gay movement. The measure of lesbian representation is the combined mean proportion (for each stage) of the following values: 1.) articles (or photographs) of lesbians only; 2.) articles (or photographs) of gays and lesbians equally; 3.) articles (or photographs) of gays and lesbians, but primarily lesbians. Columns

two and four show that lesbian representation was minimal in articles and was nonexistent in photographs during the gay liberation stage.

**Table 6.3. Lesbian Representation in the Arts Section During
Each Stage of the Lesbian and Gay Movement:**

Stage	Lesbian representation in articles ⁹	N	Lesbian representation in photographs ¹⁰	N
Liberation (1970-1976)	.09	60	.00	32
Rights (1978-1986)	.32	130	.27	99
Queer Nat. (1988-1992)	.38	74	.44	96

(Source: The Advocate, 1970-1992).

During the gay rights period, lesbians were represented in approximately one third of the articles and somewhat less than one third of the photographs.

Lesbians were represented in one third of the articles and nearly one half of the photographs during the queer nationalism phase of the movement. Gays were overrepresented in comparison to lesbians in both articles and photographs during all three stages of the movement.

⁹Includes articles about lesbians only, gays and lesbians equally, and gays and lesbians but primarily about lesbians.

¹⁰Includes photographs featuring lesbian only, and equal group of lesbians and gays, and a group of lesbians and gays but primarily lesbians.

CONCLUSIONS

When Epstein (1992) asserted that lesbians and gays are best considered as part of an ethnicity that is based on an essential trait which has been socially constructed, he treated lesbians and gays as part of a single social category. Though a number of authors have made a similar categorization, Epstein did not consider the factors which may have led to differences in the social construction of male and female homosexuality. The findings in this study suggest that as the gay and lesbian experience(s) was(were) constructed in the gay press, there has been a sharp disparity between the representation of lesbians and gays.

One of those factors is the disparity in resources (D'Emilio, 1983) which allowed gays to create a successful, commercial gay press fueled by advertising for gay commercial activities. Though popular gay newspapers and magazines, such as The Advocate, have repeatedly claimed to represent gays and lesbians, lesbians chose to create smaller, non-commercial presses of their own.

Separate lesbian and gay presses exist for several reasons:

1.) lesbians have been dissatisfied with their lack of visibility in the gay press (Martin and Lyons, 1972); 2.) many lesbians have objected to the commercial and masculinist nature of the gay press; 3.) many lesbians identified more with feminist content than with gay rights content (Phelan, 189); and 4.) there had been a tradition of lesbian feminist publishing long before commercial gay presses such as The Advocate existed (Adam, 1987).

In this paper, The Advocate has been referred to as a gay press, rather than

a gay and lesbian press, because it has been published, edited, and written primarily by men throughout its existence. During most of The Advocate's history, there were no permanent lesbian staff members and the advertising base was directed almost exclusively at gays (Browning, 1993). Given these considerations, and the tradition of separate organizing for lesbians and gays, it is not surprising that lesbians have been underrepresented in the content of The Advocate. Indeed, given the assertions of lesbian feminist scholars such as Rich (1983) and Phelan (1989) that gays and lesbians share no common objectives, the most remarkable finding in this study might be that lesbians have been included to any extent in the content of The Advocate.

During the early and mid-1970s, when there were no lesbian staff members of The Advocate, and when most lesbian and gay organizing was done separately, seven percent of Advocate front covers contained some lesbian representation; 14% of news articles about individuals were about lesbians; 21% of articles in the news section used the term lesbian, gay woman, or homosexual woman; 22% of news articles quoted, or referred, to women; and nine percent of articles in the arts section represented lesbians (see tables 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2 and 6.3 respectively). These numbers suggest that lesbian representation was considerably lower in proportion to gay representation. As constructed in the pages of The Advocate, lesbians were not a consistent or equal presence in the gay experience. However, even during this period, lesbians were represented to an extent too high to suggest that the lesbian experience was portrayed as a

phenomenon completely separate from the gay experience.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, when several of the regular contributors to The Advocate were lesbians, and when gay and lesbian organizing was much more likely to be done in tandem than in earlier periods (Cruikshank, 1992), eight percent of front covers contained some lesbian representation; 40% of news articles about individuals were about lesbians; 58% of articles in the news section used the term lesbian, gay woman or homosexual woman; 47% of news articles quoted, or referred to, lesbians; and 38% of articles in the arts section represented lesbians (see tables 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, 5.2 and 6.3 respectively). These findings also reveal a disparity between lesbian and gay representation. But they demonstrate that lesbians were consistently present, and considerably represented, during this period in the content of The Advocate.

The inclusion, however disparate, of lesbians throughout the period examined in this study suggest that the modern gay press has consistently portrayed lesbians as having a role in the gay experience. Unequal representation can be explained not by concluding that the mainstream gay press has depicted the gay ethnic experience as one completely separate from that of lesbians, but that the gay press has consistently operated according to sexist assumptions. If, during any period, The Advocate had presented itself as the newsmagazine for and about gays only, then a construction of "separate ethnicities" would be a more plausible explanation for the exclusion of lesbians. Because lesbians have always been represented, but to a lesser extent than gay

men, we must assume that lesbians were portrayed in the gay press to be a part of the gay experience in some way but as having a less significant role than gays. The tendency of male-dominated social movements to make generalizations about the experience of a social group by focusing on the experience of the men in that group is well illustrated by the focus of The Advocate.

The construction of the gay experience in The Advocate was reflective of the gendered nature of gay organizing in general during each period of the modern lesbian and gay movement. The great disparity in representation between lesbians and gays in The Advocate's news section during the gay liberation stage supports Martin and Lyon's (1972) assertion that lesbians were viewed more as secretarial accomplices in the gay movement than as leaders in their own right. Lack of representation in the arts section during this period suggests that lesbian culture was viewed as irrelevant or insignificant. During the gay rights and queer nationalism periods, increased lesbian representation suggests that gay and lesbian organizing was beginning to coalesce to a greater extent. Lesbian representation in the news section can be seen as reflective of the growing number of lesbian leaders in gay organizations (Adam, 1987) and an increasing awareness of feminism within gay institutions (Cruikshank, 1992). Lesbian representation in the arts section during these periods may reflect a growing sensitivity to lesbian issues as gay and lesbian culture began to converge during the onslaught of the anti-gay and lesbian movement led by

Anita Bryant and elements of the religious right. However, the lack of significant lesbian representation on the front covers, even during the most recent period, shows that lesbians are still excluded from what might be the most prominent feature of The Advocate.

Despite the disparity in lesbian and gay representation in the gay press, the contemporary gay press depicts a common ethnicity rather than separate ethnicities for lesbians and gay men. In 1992, the most recent year examined in this study, 40% of all articles about individuals in the news section were about lesbians; 71% of all news articles used the term lesbian; 50% of all articles in the news section quoted, or referred to, lesbians; and 25% of articles in the arts section included some lesbian representation (see tables 3.1, 4.1, 5.1 and 6.1 respectively). Clearly, the gay press has created the image of a common lesbian and gay experience, though men are still over-represented. Lesbian inclusion in The Advocate has increased, but it is apparent that the gay press continues to generalize about the lesbian experience from the experience of gays.

FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was undertaken to explore issues of lesbian representation in the gay press. Because the focus was exploratory, there were a number of limitations to this study. The findings reported were based on numerical calculation of lesbian inclusion in The Advocate. A qualitative analysis of the gay press would be helpful to understand not only whether and how often

lesbians were represented, but in what ways they were represented and how such representation changed over time. A qualitative analysis would reveal the extent to which lesbian-specific issues such as pay equity, access to employment, women's health, and violence against women have been treated in the gay press.

This study focused on only one gay newsmagazine. An analysis of several gay presses would provide insight into the considerable variety of ways in which the gay media has portrayed lesbians. Comparisons between new presses and established presses, regional presses and national presses, and mainstream/commercial presses and specialized/political presses would expand the more limited focus of this paper. It would also be instructive to examine the ways in which lesbian feminist presses have treated gay issues.

Finally, this paper was confined to gender analysis. A similar study focused on race would make a contribution to understanding the extent to which the gay press documents the diversity of experience in the gay community. Economic, social, and political differences between black, Hispanic, and white gays and lesbians presumably have led to differences in ability to create a commercial press and the extent to which the mainstream gay press depicts black, Hispanic and other gays and lesbians.

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