and pressure groups have been able to combat stereotypes. In a few American cities cable television has permitted gay programming, in part as a response to public access legislation.

Special-Audience Applications. In communications, a general rule is that the larger the audience, the greater the filtration of the content. The other side of this principle is seen in works intended for small audiences—as the private-press book trade, with its expensive, under-the-counter editions, undoubtedly was. Almost as old as the cinema itself are **porno** movies, which were generally shown clandestinely until the 1960s, when Andy Warhol and others achieved a breakthrough to public acceptance. By the 1980s, when a repertoire of hundreds of gay-male examples had been built up, these films became widely available on VCR, where they are enjoyed by adults in the home. Such taped films are sold by mail, in porno bookstores, and also sometimes in special sections of general video stores.

The availability of mail-order items is noted in the advertisements in the gay **press**. Arising out of the "underground press" of the hippie 1960s, there are now hundreds of gay and lesbian papers worldwide. In North America these papers are, in many instances, given away free in bars so that they reach a wide segment of the socially active gay population. Most of the papers contain "personal" columns, with **advertisements** in which readers can learn of others who share their sexual tastes.

To some extent this function of meeting has been taken over by personal computers linked by modems. A number of services make available gay lines which, however, are more commonly used for chatting than for making sexual assignations. As such they are a great boon for those living in remote areas or who are otherwise social isolates. In France computer dating is even facilitated by a government-sponsored service, the Minitel. Activists have also found that the word-processing functions of computers

facilitate letter-writing campaigns to protest bigoted or demeaning treatment in the major media.

The 1980s saw a fashion for receiving recorded sexual messages by telephone, which was partly fostered by fears of actual sexual contact engendered by the AIDS crisis. In the United States the **phone sex** user dials a 976-prefix number and listens to a brief "canned" message. Precisely because it is not communication in the sense of one person talking to others, the future of this custom would appear to be limited. The telephone had been, of course, the one electronic channel open during the times of oppression, when it served as a "grapevine." Today it is used by some activist groups to form a telephone tree allowing the group to mobilize its members quickly for a demonstration.

As indicated, the tendency toward "massification," with its pressures toward conformity and potential for centralized censorship, is inimical to minority expression in communications. The microchip age, however, has seen major countertrends toward diversification and fragmentation, witness cable TV, satellite transmissions, VCRs, and desktop publishing (typically of books, but also of tapes). These changes would seem to bode well for richer and more varied communication to serve the special needs of gay men and lesbians.

Wayne R. Dynes

COMMUNITY

Debate over the existence of "gay community" stems in part from the lack of consensus about what a "community" is, and in part from a separate standard for "gay community" in contrast to other kinds of urban communities. North American gay (male) communities fit all the criteria suggested by sociologists to define "community" as well as or better than urban ethnic communities do, and lesbian communities exhibit the same features, albeit to a lesser extent.

Territory. The first, common-sense component of "community" is territory. The mythical "traditional" rural village is supposed to have been geographically distinct, internally homogeneous and harmonious, and without important external influences. Yet nowhere are rural villages entirely isolated from each other. Demands for taxes, soldiers, and labor are levied from outside, and even in extremely mountainous regions, there are usually some persons oriented beyond the immediate locale to larger entities. Internal variability and conflict are more common than anthropologists once supposed.

To make communities out of geographical aggregates, people must experience spatial boundaries as important, and differences which occur as dividing kinds of people. That is, geography must be supplemented by endogamy, restriction of trade, local cults, and other such social creations to make socially salient boundaries. Isolation and propinquity alone do not automatically produce solidarity, while seemingly trivial commonalities (such as living in a gray housing project rather than a green one) may come to symbolize distinction salient to collective action.

There are no walled-in ghettoes in North American cities, nor checkpoints to prevent the flow of persons between perfectly segregated areas. Thus, one can travel from a predominantly Italian territory to a predominantly Chinese one to a predominantly gay one to a predominantly black one in San Francisco. None of these areas is inhabited exclusively by Italians, Chinese, gays, or blacks; yet residents of a city are able to report where such communities are—at least to report where the centers are, the boundaries often being fuzzily conceived.

Community Institutions. There may be several neighborhoods with lesbian and/or gay residential concentrations in a large city. Clustering of recreational facilities, particularly nocturnal ones, such as bars, foster in-group perception of a gay

or lesbian territory. The existence of distinctive institutions is more salient to identification of a community—both for insiders and outsiders—than residential segregation or concentration. Over the course of the 1970s, gay men in European and North American cities developed a fairly complete set of basic social services beyond gay bars. These included bookstores, churches, travel agencies, periodicals, political clubs, charities, a savings and loan, and whole Gay Yellow Pages directories listing gay businesses and services.

Gay Endogamy. In contrast to relatively impoverished immigrants speaking an alien language, whom sociologists expect to form distinct (ethnic) institutions, gay men were relatively integrated into a full range of occupations, and mostly had native command of the official language before the gay institutional elaboration began. Most gay persons could and did "pass." They chose to interact with their "own kind," rather than being restricted to those who spoke the same language. Given a previous homosexual exogamy (a preference for straight "trade" rather than for "sisters," or for boys rather than adults, as sexual partners), sexual endogamy (self-identified gay men coupling with other self-identified gay men) was crucial to the formation of gay pride, consciousness, and collective action. Lesbians may be relatively less affluent than gay men, but, like gay men, lesbians of all strata patronize distinctively lesbian/gay facilities, are likely to be in lesbian networks, and tend to endogamy in choosing sexual partners and to homosociality in choosing friends.

The Role of Stigma. Not everyone engaged in recurrent homosexual behavior chooses to recognize a sexual orientation as defining their **identity** or as providing a criterion for friendship and non-sexual interaction. Gay consciousness is no more automatic than class consciousness or ethnic consciousness. Some individuals fight the expectation to be part of any such "us," while others eagerly seek a

sense of community. Consciousness of kind is not innate, but emerges. This is true of ethnic consciousness as much as of gay consciousness. Stigmas inhibit identification, but when a critical mass develops to challenge the stigma, either by proclaiming "We are not like that," or "The ways we are different are fine, or even valuable," societal stigmas become badges of honor and stimuli to collective organization and action challenging discrimination and affirming the value of the group's stigmatized characteristics. For lesbians and for gay men, challenging societal valuations may be more difficult than it is for some ethnic communities to affirm the value of their lifeways. However, there is also considerable ambivalence to the lifeways of previous generations within ethnic communities. In a pluralistic society, ethnic identification is an achieved status, not automatically and irrevocably established at birth or in primary socialization.

Expectations of others "that you are like us" and should therefore behave in certain ways, and societal definitions used by opportunistic politicians either to advance minorities or to organize against them, help to crystallize identification with a group, so that people defined categorically come to see themselves as having a common history and destiny distinct from others. Advocates and adversaries both foster collective identification, which is a necessary (but not sufficient) prerequisite to collective action. Gay leaders have pressed economic boycotts, political coordination, and mass demonstrations. Anti-gay leaders have promoted legal discrimination and harassment, as well as criminalization of homosexual behavior. In response to police raids and the legal acceptance of assassinating one gay leader (Harvey Milk), there have also been gay riots. Nonetheless, it bears stressing that even those who have the feeling of being part of a group may still not join in collective action. Collective action is rarely—if ever—characteristic of any population.

Sporadic action by a self-selected vanguard is more common for class-based or ethnic-based groups, as well as for lesbians or gays.

See also **Geography, Social; Subculture, Gay.**

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CONSCIOUSNESS RAISING

This expression gained wide circulation in the 1970s to designate the practice of forming small groups of persons (usually from five to ten) to work collectively to increase their members' awareness of the political and ideological significance of their actions. The consciousness-raising (CR) trend, often accompanied by the slogan "The personal is the political," seems to have first emerged in the Women's Movement in the late 1960s, whence it migrated (with much else) to gay liberation circles.

The expression, which has been traced to Chinese Communist (Maoist) usage in the 1930s, reflects the Marxist contrast between true consciousness of one's situation and powers versus "false consciousness," a set of obfuscatory beliefs fostered among oppressed groups in order to preserve ruling-class interests. Only when the oppressed discard the blinkers of false consciousness, the theory goes, will they be in a position to wage a successful struggle for their rights. This discarding, and the complementary advance to higher levels of group awareness, constitute the "work" of consciousness raising.

In the gay movement, the formation of consciousness-raising groups was often promoted as a means to an end: a phase of strengthening and toughening in a supportive atmosphere of comradeship in preparation for more active interven-