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Who Am I and Who Are We? Conflicting Narratives of Collective Selfhood in Stigmatized Groups[1]

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Identity politics arises out of conditions of systematic stigmatization and structural disadvantage, but sharing a social structural position does not guarantee that people will define themselves and their collectivity in the same way. In fact, because identity politics occupies two major points of tension, it gives rise to several alternative ways of conceptualizing the "we," the collective self. Using ethnographic material gathered on American Jews' understandings of anti-Semitism and its relationship to contemporary politics, this article inductively discerns four alternative models of collective selfhood (embattled, relating, political, and redeemed) that correspond to four alternative narratives of identity politics (reified identity, humanistic dialogue, critical solidarity, and evangelism). These narratives help explain the deep emotions sparked by challenges to people's self-definitions. A comparison to studies of LGBT movements further reveals the utility of this conceptualization and elaborates a model not apparent in the first case.

> We are very proudly Jews. We're not trying to hide that we're Jews. We use our tradition. That's why we're doing this, because the Jewish tradition says that you do justice. And so that's what our mission is.

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> We lay it out very explicitly and again, that's our line. If you're on our side of that line, okay. . . . If you don't agree with that statement, which is a very simple one, then I'm sorry, you're on the other side. You're in the tent or you're out of the tent.

The above passages from interview respondents, which we will revisit, reflect the sentiments of two American Jews who would vocally oppose each other in discussions of the Middle East. Removed from context and stripped of their specific identifiers, remarks like these may be heard in many identity politics–based movements. They reflect the passion and sense of ontological being at stake in what I call narratives of collective selfhood.[2] By recognizing the multiple narratives of collective selfhood that emerge from identity politics, we can better understand the sometimes-vitriolic infighting within groups that have been systematically stigmatized and disadvantaged.

Systematic stigmatization and structural disadvantage can produce a variety of responses, including at the level of self-definition. Yet too often, we treat "identity" as if it simply follows from particular social conditions. While scholars define "identity" and "collective identity" in numerous, sometimes conflicting, ways (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Stryker, Owens, and White 2000; Polletta and Jasper 2001), they have rarely considered how self-definitions—collective definitions of the "we" and personal definitions of the "I"—may be constituted differently, even among people in ostensibly the same social position. Rather than arguing over definitions, the time has come to investigate the different ways people practically envision what it means to be an "I" and part of a "we" and what those definitions imply for social change.

I argue that because identity politics resides at the nexus of two major tensions, large-scale, long-lived identity politics movements are precariously balanced. When a movement, in the broadest sense of the term, fails to negotiate these tensions to all members' satisfaction, some members may respond by shifting to an alternative mode of organizing, with a narrative of collective selfhood they see as more accurately reflecting their experiences and goals. I identify four alternative narratives of collective selfhood that members of stigmatized and disadvantaged groups construct in response to the tensions inherent in being stigmatized and structurally

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who made this work possible by spreading the word through their networks and being gracious enough to share their time and insights with me. I hope they may find something in this work to make their contributions feel worthwhile. Direct correspondence to Dawne Moon, Department of Sociology, Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53233. E-mail: dawne.moon@marquette.edu

[2] I use the term *collective selfhood* to refer to the product of any collectivity's ongoing processes of self-definition, which include negotiating the collectivity's boundaries and developing a consciousness of membership in the individuals defined within those boundaries.

disadvantaged. These narratives vary in how they define the self—both collective and personal—in their vision of the boundaries between self and other, in their consciousness of the self as fixed or fluid, and in their conception of how social change comes about. In practical terms, members of a stigmatized and disadvantaged group may articulate competing narratives of what it means to be part of their particular group, who belongs and who does not, what members' obligations to it are, and the best actions to take to make the world better (for themselves or more generally). Recognizing the alternative narratives actors use within identity politics helps us to understand the multiple ways in which people define themselves as individuals, as parts of marked collectivities, and as parts of larger social systems; to develop more resilient and nuanced analyses of conflicts within social groups; and to understand the visceral importance of struggles over these definitions and their implications for social action.

Using qualitative interviews and observational data from a study of American Jews' understandings and experiences of anti-Semitism and contemporary politics,[3] I detail the alternative narratives of collective selfhood that can emerge when group members begin to see identity politics as failing to reflect their view of the world. I then show how recognizing these narratives can help us to better understand conflicts within a much newer social movement, that of lesbians and gay men (and at times bisexuals and transgendered persons, though their inclusion has been a subject of the very debates that have threatened to split the movement) in the past four decades.

SOCIAL POWER AND PERSONAL MEANING

Global conditions since the mid-20th century have made defining the self a pressing concern for many (Holstein and Gubrium 2000). For Melucci (1985, 1989, 1995) the structural context of late capitalism—the intensification and increase in movements of information, money, and people around the globe—attaches power not only to material resources but to the production of meaning. Responding to the merger of power and meaning is what he identified as "new" social movements, such as the environmental, women's, and lesbian/gay movements. For Melucci these movements "fight for symbolic and cultural stakes, for a different meaning and orientation of social action. They try to change people's lives, they believe that you can change your life today while fighting for more general changes in society" (1985, p. 797). Melucci understood that these movements were viscerally compelling to their participants, but his analysis did not consider where that passion came from; he did not consider closely enough the personal-level ramifications of narratives of power and collective selfhood or the effects of these narratives within movements.

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[3] While the term "anti-Semitism" is controversial, throughout this article I use it to refer specifically to anti-Jewish sentiments and actions. I make this choice in part because that is how many of my respondents used it and in part because the term was coined in the 19th century to refer to the "scientifically" based racial hatred of Jews, in contrast to the longer-lived religious antagonism (Gerber 1986, p. 39). Linguistically speaking, Arabs too are Semites, and people (including some respondents in this study) have pointed out that neglecting this fact reproduces the ideological polarization of two peoples who have many similarities.

Somers (1994) implies that this passion emerges because ontological narratives—stories people use to define the "I" at the very level of being—are inextricably linked to community, institutional, and cultural narratives that all define the "we," what it means to be a family member, a citizen, a human being. She argues that to understand social action, we must attend to the patterns of "relationships among institutions, public narratives, social practices"; people's conceptions of who they are, as collectivities and as individuals, take shape within these relational settings (p. 625). For her, "social action can only be intelligible if we recognize that people are guided to act by the structural and cultural relationships in which they are embedded and by the stories through which they constitute their identities" (p. 624). If the available cultural, public, and institutional narratives do not accommodate one's experiences, Somers argues that "confusion, powerlessness, despair, victimization, and even madness" may understandably result; thus it can be crucial to "[construct] new public narratives and symbolic representations that do not continue the long tradition of exclusion so characteristic of dominant ones" (p. 630). While Somers focuses on scholarly representations, these concerns are addressed more broadly by identity politics.

Identity politics is the mode of social movement organizing that addresses the links between material hierarchies and systems of meaning production (Bernstein 1997, 2002, 2005). As Bernstein (2002, 2005) demonstrates, much of the literature on identity politics makes normative claims about this mode of organizing, often comparing it to more "materialist" movements in a false dichotomy. But concrete inequalities in resources and opportunities are imbued with meaning, and as Bourdieu (1989, 1991) pointed out, categorizing the world and its inhabitants is itself a privilege that comes with social power. Addressing these inequalities, identity politics involves a project of collective self-definition inextricably coupled with strategic action. It is not limited to social movement organizations, however. As Mansbridge (1995) and others point out, people can incorporate identity politics' narratives into their subjectivity, feeling a kinship with and duty to others with similar characteristics, without belonging to an organization defined by those characteristics (Taylor and Whittier 1995; Jasper 1997; Polletta and Jasper 2001; Coles 2002).

Taylor and Whittier (1992) provide a helpful definition of identity politics: a strategy for transforming the world by transforming people's consciousness, continually defining boundaries, and politicizing daily life. We can think of these elements as answering significant questions of who we are (consciousness), how we define others (boundaries), the source of our problems, and how we can make the world better (politics). These questions and their answers often go without saying; indeed, it is only in moments of challenge or conflict that they need to be articulated (Berger and Luckmann 1966; Garfinkel 1967). Explicit or wholly unrecognized, the answers to these questions coalesce into *narratives of collective selfhood*—narratives that help guide people's actions and simultaneously constitute individuals and collectivities as they answer these central questions (Somers 1994).

Identity politics does not embrace only one narrative of collective selfhood. Movements (broadly construed) that engage in identity politics make individual and collective self-definitions central, but actors within those movements may disagree with each other about those self-definitions. When sociologists have considered the origins of political infighting, they tend to do so from the standpoint of social movement organizations, treating personal worldviews as given or neglecting them altogether.[4] This article addresses in-group conflict by showing how people in ostensibly similar structural positions can employ and produce competing narratives that guide their actions and self-understandings.

THE INHERENT TENSIONS OF IDENTITY POLITICS

Identity politics emerges from stigmatization, so to understand its conflicts, we must keep in mind the paradoxes inherent in being stigmatized by a dominant social group in our society. Stigmatized persons are socialized into a culture of liberalism that maintains that full humanity is defined by uniqueness and autonomy, whereas only sometimes does it treat them or allow them to think of themselves as unique, autonomous individuals. As Goffman (1963) pointed out, to confront their impossible situation, the stigmatized must challenge the system of thought that stigmatizes them; but since stigma orders the dominant worldview, any challenge to it affirms that those who are stigmatized represent a threat to the social order. Being stigmatized as “other” at times has disastrous consequences, and for some groups at certain times the consequences have been unthinkably so, including slavery and the Nazi holocaust. When that happens, it is crucial for the oppressed to form communities to provide a safe haven and self-defense (Reagon 1983). Identity politics thus plays a central role in a society that strives for equality for individuals but whose model of “the individual” is premised on distinguishing the individual from “others” who are seen as lacking in comparison.

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[4] Robnett (2005) treats infighting as an issue of personal identity not being congruent with the collectivity's identity narratives. Whittier (1995) and Jasper (1997) see it as following from the different tastes and concerns actors bring with them into activism. Balser (1997) attributes infighting to the external environment, showing how the environment interacts with social movement organizations to produce schisms through the political opportunity structure, social control mechanisms, external resources, and association with other organizations.

Identity politics movements have produced standard narratives of collective selfhood in response to such predicaments. While the dominant system of thought may define the oppressed as individuals who somehow deserve their hardships, identity politics redefines them as undeserving of the systematic mistreatment they have collectively suffered (McAdam 1982; Morris 1990; Taylor and Whittier 1992, 1995). In identity politics, actors define their situation in political terms, as an injustice that can be changed, rather than as misfortunes ordained by God or nature. They continually develop narratives to make sense of their contradictory experiences to show that those contradictions exist in the dominant narrative and are not the product of individuals’ irrational perceptions. In other words, identity politics says that it is the world that fails to make sense, not one’s own mind that fails to see the sense in it (Taylor and Whittier 1992), and it articulates how social power works through culture, language, categories, and ideas that legitimate or call for the structural disadvantage of the stigmatized.[5] Identity politics produces figurative and literal communities of people who have experienced similar everyday effects of stigmatization and mobilizes them.

Identity politics’ narratives create what Foucault (1978) calls a “reverse discourse” that the stigmatized can use to embrace their category of stigmatization and use it to wrest concessions from culture and institutions that created and disfavored the category in the first place. But because it is from the dominant society that such actors must get concessions, identity political actions are prefigured by exclusion. This is why it can appear to Brown (1995, 2001) that identity politics depends for its very existence on continued suffering and exclusion. The reverse discourse depends on stigmatization, and it operates performatively to create a community of individuals who feel that its narratives are their own (Austin 1967; Butler 1993). But to embrace continued stigmatization is to fail to change at least some of the conditions that disadvantage those stigmatized. As Joshua Gamson (1996) argues, it is as reasonable to destroy such a category as to "shore it up." Thus the first tension of identity politics results from the paradox of stigmatization, and it confronts the stigmatized in their relationship to the dominant culture that stigmatizes them: the stigmatized group's very being depends on the dominant culture that deems their difference undesirable and treats them accordingly.

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[5] This tendency within identity politics can make it appear expressive rather than instrumental (Cohen 1985; Melucci 1985, 1989; Gitlin 1997).

Identity politics occupies a second position of tension as well, which confronts the stigmatized and structurally disadvantaged as they constitute a recognizable group and organize politically. Working politically, actors in an identity politics mode must be strategic and communicate with the dominant society in order to secure the changes they want to see. But if identity politics were purely strategic, it could not exist. Because people identify with its counterhegemonic narratives, identity politics gives people a way to organize their shared experiences into meaningful collective self-definitions. People working publicly within this mode are thus constrained by the need for sincerity; they must work in a way that those who identify with the movement deem the right way, toward the right goals, ordered by the right narratives. Social movements need to negotiate the tension between effective strategy and sincerely held, shared principles—principles that define members' subjectivity and worldview but that can come into conflict with a purely instrumental focus on winning if such instrumentality is not at the core of members' self-definition.

In spite of these tensions, as Woocher (1986) and Armstrong (2002) point out in their historical analyses of large-scale, long-lived social movements, organizers can "stumble upon" a formula for movement longevity. Historical conditions play a large role in shaping identity political movements and their possibilities for continually organizing people and for effecting their desired changes. Of course, people in these movements can define success in many ways, and movements need not be large or long-lived to be effective. It seems clear, however, that long-lived, large-scale identity politics movements organize as large a population as possible around a few principles, which need not be explicit (Woocher 1986; Zald and McCarthy 1987; Armstrong 2002). When principles are as loose as possible, the greatest possible number of people can join in and feel that the movement represents at least a part of who they are, their experiences, and their hopes for the future; they can feel that the movement's narratives encompass and articulate their own.

Large-scale, long-term identity politics movements tend to allow members the flexibility to focus on the aspects of the collectivity that they see as significant, as long as everyone adheres to some central organizing principles. However, when conditions change—opportunities or resources become or seem scarcer, or something shifts the political terrain, for instance—dominant movement narratives can begin to conflict with the experiences of those who once embraced those narratives. Movement leaders' strategies can run afoul of some members' sincere beliefs; those members then come to see it moving in the wrong direction, as selling out on one or more of the principles they thought it had always stood for. When that happens, they may respond by articulating an alternative narrative of identity politics with a new way of negotiating the paradox of stigmatization (possibly forming a new movement in turn), as follows.

1. To sustain a long-term, large-scale program of action, it is often helpful for movements to embrace as many contributing members as possible (Zald and McCarthy 1987). But if a movement is too capacious, outsiders could join, tainting or diluting its principles, even to the point of negating them completely. A common response is for members to perpetually police the boundaries between insiders and outsiders, shoring up their category with a narrative of *reified identity* that posits the self as *embattled*.

2. Movements defend group members. But if a movement is too defensive, it risks escalating a cycle of exclusion or violence that endangers group members as well as outsiders. In response, some actors can emphasize human connections, focusing on transcending group boundaries. Such actors espouse a narrative of *humanistic dialogue* that envisions all selves as *relating*.

3. Movements may highlight members' deservingness of social advantages; but if a movement does so too much, it can tend toward chauvinism, reproducing a hierarchical political logic that can alienate potential members and allies. In response, some actors may work to build *critical solidarity*. Guided by a narrative that posits selves as defined in relations of power, and thus necessitating self-transformation in the pursuit of social justice, actors envision the self as inherently *political*. Rather than destroy their category, proponents of this approach challenge the system that denies power to anyone on the basis of stigma.

4. Movements need to focus on concrete gains and the strategies to achieve them; but if movement actors do so too much, they may appear to lose sight of the big picture, the metanarratives that members see as giving life meaning. In response, members may seek to draw others to the bigger truth by its own virtues, to *evangelize*.[6] In the narrative of evangelism, people may become *redeemed selves* if they dedicate themselves to the truth and let go of the evil that once defined them. They build their group by transforming others' self-definition and worldview.

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[6] While the term "evangelizing" captures this combination of views of boundaries, consciousness, and social change, it unfortunately risks being confounded with the Evangelical movement in Protestantism. It is crucial to note that it is not limited to that particular religious movement. Furthermore, Evangelical Protestants are not limited to this mode of organizing and may employ any of these narratives.

These narratives, with their attendant practices and models of the self, are not mutually exclusive: individuals or groups may employ multiple narratives, blurring the boundaries or shifting among them. But this typology can help us to analyze inter- and intragroup conflicts in any number of cases.

The four alternative narratives of identity politics can be envisioned on a 2 × 2 table, varying by how they envision the self's boundaries with others (focusing on absolute differences or on eternal similarities) and participants' model of the self (fixed or fluid). The diagonals create a third dichotomy varying by how they "politicize" everyday life—whether they see the source of social problems (and therefore change) to reside at the individual or social level (see fig. 1). Each corresponding model of collective selfhood—*embattled, relating*, *political*, and *redeemed*—reflects a set of normative operating assumptions about the commonalities that unify a particular stigmatized group and what it means to be a good group member in that context. When members of a movement adhere to different narratives of collective selfhood, they can conflict because their narratives provide mutually exclusive but compelling, viscerally felt answers to the questions of who "I" am and who "we" are, while promoting different understandings of the group members' place in—or outside—the workings of power and privilege.

METHODS

At least three factors make the case of American Jews a helpful one for understanding how people define the collective self: the long history of Jewish collective self-identification in the face of stigmatization and oppression, the success of secular Jewish organizing in the United States, and the wide range of American Jewish groups and organizations. As part of a group with an unfortunately long history of collectively responding to slippery and often self-contradictory modes of stigmatization,[7] American Jews have well-developed narratives to answer the question of "who are we?" as well as critiques of such narratives; this group thus helps us to examine processes of collective self-identification and begin to name its different forms. Furthermore, this case makes clear that identity politics has a much broader reach than simply "social movements" narrowly defined by their organizations; any stigmatized and historically disadvantaged group can evince the intragroup dynamics associated with identity politics. To make clear how this typology applies more broadly,

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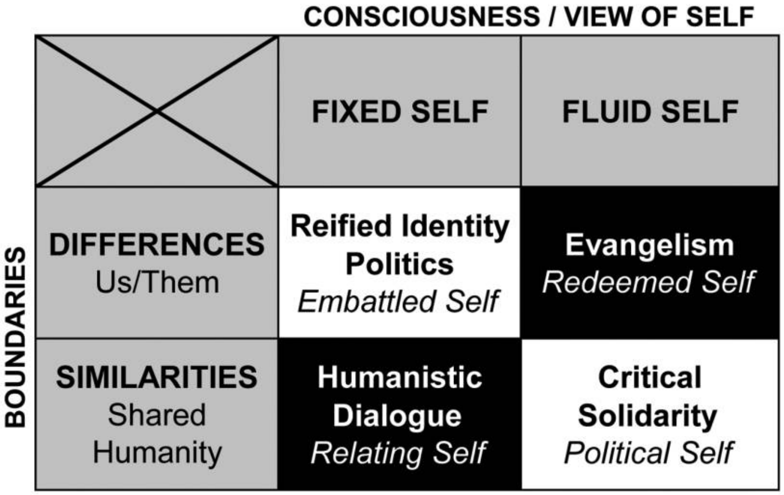
[7] Examples of what I mean by "slippery" and "self-contradictory" include the anti-Semitic claims that an international Jewish conspiracy is responsible for both capitalism and communism or the stereotypes of Jews as both "insular" and "nosy."


CONSCIOUSNESS / VIEW OF SELF
BOUNDARIES

	FIXED SELF	**FLUID SELF**
DIFFERENCES Us/Them	**Reified Identity Politics** *Embattled Self*	**Evangelism** *Redeemed Self*
SIMILARITIES Shared Humanity	**Humanistic Dialogue** *Relating Self*	**Critical Solidarity** *Political Self*

FIG. 1.—Alternative models of collective selfhood: politics. Light cells represent a primary focus on societal/structural change; dark cells represent a primary focus on individual change.

I compare this case to a brief discussion of secondary sources related to the lesbian and gay movement, a much newer movement of a much more newly defined group.

I have explored these questions about politicized identity in qualitative, semistructured interviews with 59 American Jews (32 in individual, intensive interviews and 27 distributed across two focus groups). In the interest of including the perspectives of people with memories of World War II and the Nazi holocaust, two focus groups were conducted in a Jewish retirement and nursing home. Interview subjects ranged in age from 19 to nearly 100, with a mean of 58 overall and 52 outside the focus groups, and the pool included members of a wide range of organizations as well as unaffiliated individuals.[8] It is crucial to keep in mind that my respondents do not constitute a representative sample of American Jews, and this study does not answer the question of what it means to be an American Jew in general.

I began this project with an interest in people's everyday definitions of collective selfhood and how those definitions shaped understandings of politics. Because respondents disagreed strongly about what constituted anti-Semitism, it quickly became apparent that differing understandings of the nature and salience of anti-Semitism would need to be central to this study. My goal was not to generalize about American Jews or members of Jewish organizations but to understand the different ways respondents understood collective selfhood in a politicized context. Since developing a clear picture depended on the insights of participants who thought a great deal about these matters and had an interest and experience in articulating them, I circulated an invitation to participate in “a study on American Jews’ experiences and understandings of anti-Semitism and how it relates to contemporary culture and politics” among local Jewish organizations, including political and other groups, congregations, and institutions. This announcement was distributed through e-mail and in-person networks, and my pool of respondents was thus nonrandom and defined by self-selection—respondents selected to participate on the basis of having experiences with and insights into the topic and wishing to share them. My approach to gathering respondents ruled out whole categories of American Jews, including those not touched by these networks of organizations or their members and those who either did not see anti-Semitism as significant or did not wish to discuss it. As a qualitative researcher interested in the processes by which social groups define their boundaries, I see it as important to study a variety of groups with which I have differing levels and kinds of experience, but my interviews were limited to those who felt comfortable talking to a non-Jew about these sensitive topics. My respondent pool included several who had been involved in recent local controversies over what some saw as anti-Semitic policies or actions, and it included several who expressed criticism of what they saw as inappropriate applications of the term and may have elected to participate in order to make these views heard. Respondents all identified as Jewish; they all shared an interest in organizing as Jews and a desire that Jews safely thrive in the world; and they all opposed what they saw as anti-Jewish sentiments, policies, and actions.

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[8] Six participants were under 40 years of age, eighteen were 40–59, and seven outside the focus groups (as well as all those in the focus groups) were over 60.

These data provide rich and reflective material to help us begin to map out the different models people use to define collective selfhood when they think about issues related to social power. In addition to these interviews, I also conducted or supervised participant-observation in nine public or semipublic discussions, conferences, retreats, and workshops addressing anti-Semitism and/or the Middle East conflict, ranging from one-evening events to a four-day retreat. Some of these workshops have included both Jews and Palestinians, and further research will include interviews with Arab-Americans and others.

Interviews were semistructured and open ended, guided by general questions such as “How did you come to be in [group]?” “Have you ever experienced anti-Semitism?” and “How did you come to your present views?” In many cases, respondents independently brought up the explosive controversies relating to the Arab-Israeli conflict.[9] That many of these respondents belonged to organizations that focused on the state of Israel and engaged regularly in discussions of anti-Semitism makes this connection unsurprising. These respondents' reflections help us to remember the visceral level at which the processes of self-definition occur as we examine inductively the different ways people envision answers to questions such as "Who are we?" or "What does it mean to be *us*?"

THE DOMINANT AMERICAN JEWISH NARRATIVE

It has long been a truism that American Jews support and identify with the state of Israel. Since Louis Brandeis first showed that it was possible to support a Jewish state without forgoing American citizenship or patriotism, many Jews have looked to Zionism and Israel as a source of Jewish meaning (Woocher 1986, p. 30). Gans (1979, p. 9) suggested that this identification was part of American Jews' "nostalgic allegiance to the culture of the immigrant generation, or that of the old country," part of a "symbolic ethnicity" that people could choose to express in ways convenient to them. But "nostalgia" does not capture the meaning the state of Israel holds for American Jews. Rather than a nostalgic homeland, modern Israel has been central to what Woocher (1986) calls the American Jewish civil religion, or civil Judaism. For Woocher, the network of mainstream Jewish organizations, including local federations, the American Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Committee, and others, grew to define American Jewish civil values, though not religious ones, increasingly from the 1930s through the 1980s. Given the religious and ethnic diversity among American Jews, Woocher argues that this civil religion helped to build and maintain unity as well as the continued existence of Jews as a distinct group in the United States.[10] In Woocher's analysis, these organizers worked strategically to focus on seven tenets on which a preponderance of American Jews could agree:

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[9] Naming the conflict is itself politically loaded; Gamson (1992) finds this term to be the most general and least loaded of the many possible options.

[10] According to many observers of American Jewish life, the problem for American Jews in recent decades has been to maintain a common identity in the relative absence of the ghettoization and discrimination that have been so predominant in Jewish history outside the U.S. context. With nonstate discrimination at a historic low in this country and Jews represented in the higher levels of the occupational and income structure, these scholars see no wide-scale institutionalized discrimination against Jews in the United States and random instances so few as to be almost negligible—ranging from unpleasant to terrible for those who experience them but not defining or structuring American Jewish life (Eisen 1983; Gerber 1986; Liebman and Cohen 1990; Goldberg 1996; Cohen and Eisen 2000).

1. The unity of the Jewish people
2. Mutual responsibility
3. Jewish survival in a threatening world
4. The centrality of the state of Israel
5. The enduring value of Jewish tradition
6. *Tzedakah*: Philanthropy and social justice
7. Americanness as a virtue (Woocher 1986, pp. 67–68)

In his analysis, the state of Israel has been "central" to mainstream American Jewish organizers because it represents a spiritual homeland, a source and symbol of Jewish pride, vitality, and hope, and a place of refuge (p. 77). Others have described Israel as symbolizing to American Jews "redemption" and survival in spite of the Nazi holocaust and subsequent attacks (Rapaport 2005, pp. 196–97), "religion in progressive action," and "a Middle Eastern outpost of American values" (Rosenthal 2005, p. 212).

We can see civil Judaism as a large-scale, long-term identity politics movement. While identity politics does not provide the only narratives of Jewish selfhood in the United States (religion, tradition, and family, e.g., provide other narratives), it provides useful narrative formulations for much of mainstream American Jewish organizing by reinforcing and helping to maintain Jews' sense of duty to facilitate Jewish survival in a number of ways, including defending themselves and each other in the face of persecution (Woocher 1986; Goldberg 1996). Its central narrative draws from Jews' long history of living in environments that can be relatively welcoming for a time, sometimes for centuries, only to turn anti-Jewish on a dime—with the death of a friendly leader and installation of a hostile one or with an economic or political crisis in which a dominant party scapegoats Jews in order to preserve existing arrangements of power. For instance, in 1939, the Cuban, U.S., and Canadian governments all rejected the mostly German Jewish refugees aboard the SS *St. Louis*, sending most of them back to Europe; this event and many others showed that even "New World" countries, without histories of state-sponsored, official anti-Semitism and with relatively secure and organized Jewish populations, could not be counted on to provide a haven for Jews when the need arose (Wyman 1984; see also Breitman and Kraut 1986).

In Woocher's seven tenets of civil Judaism, we see what Taylor and Whittier (1992) call the defining features of identity politics: organizers sought to create a shared *consciousness* of American Jewishness in the face of multiple competing perspectives; that shared consciousness included defining the *boundaries* of Jewishness by maintaining Jewish tradition and principles in the face of "a threatening world." References to the threatening world, social justice, and the centrality of the state of Israel reflect a sense of *politicization*. The civil Judaism Woocher analyzes can be seen as what Bernstein (1997) calls "identity for empowerment," as it cultivated a perception of common interests and experience to build support for organizations and movements that worked for those interests.

Mainstream American Jewish organizations have adhered firmly to the tenets of civil Judaism to this day, but surveys and intensive interview studies of American Jews have conflicted findings with regard to respondents' support for and identification with Israel (Goldberg 1996; Cohen and Eisen 2000; Rosenthal 2001, 2005; Woocher 2005). The National Jewish Population Survey of 2000–2001 found relatively stable identification with Israel among its adult respondents, with 35% having visited Israel, almost two-thirds (63%) saying that they are emotionally attached to Israel, and 72% saying that the United States and Israel share a common destiny (United Jewish Communities 2001, pp. 11–12). In their own nationwide study of American Jewish outlooks, Cohen and Eisen (2000) found that Israel rated relatively low among respondents' ideas of what it means to be Jewish. They found, for instance, that the percentage of respondents who rate their emotional attachment to Israel as "extremely attached" or "very attached" decreased from 37% in 1988 to 27% in their 1997 survey. They write that although "most American Jews by all accounts see themselves as pro-Israel, . . . with respect to their ideas of 'the good Jew,' just 20 percent in our survey thought it essential for a good Jew to support Israel. Even fewer (18 percent) had similar views regarding visiting Israel in the course of one's life. For most respondents, these behaviors were at least desirable, but about a third, in fact, found them entirely irrelevant to their concept of what a good Jew does" (Cohen and Eisen 2000, pp. 145, 144). In Cohen and Eisen's analysis, one of the two factors leading to what they call American Jews' "cooling ardor" for Israel was ambivalence about the 1990s peace process with the Palestinians.[11] Because of this trend, Woocher (2005) expresses doubts that the Jewish "civil religion" of mainstream organizations can unite American Jews of the 2000s as it united those of the 1970s and 1980s. Indeed, controversies over U.S. support for the state of Israel have raged in recent years, with some Jewish-identified organizations vocally criticizing Israel in its relations with the Palestinians and others seeing such criticism itself as a form of anti-Semitism, singling out the Jewish state for offenses many countries commit to a far greater extent (Chesler 2003; Dershowitz 2003; Foxman 2003).

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[11] See also Rosenthal (2001). The other factor Cohen and Eisen (2000) identify was ultra-Orthodox Israelis' refusal to recognize the legitimacy of non-Orthodox Judaism. With the recent trend toward individualism in American religious life, among Jews as much as everyone else (Bellah et al. 1985; Roof and McKinney 1987; Roof 1993; Lazerwitz et al. 1998; Cohen and Eisen 2000; Belzer et al. 2006; Pew Research Center 2008), it is even less surprising that some American Jews would "pick and choose" aspects of Jewish identification that make them feel personally "fulfilled" rather than conflicted or ambivalent.

Identity politics movements sustain long-term wide support by being open to negotiation. According to Woocher (1986), civil Judaism maintained that religious views did not define Judaism; Jews could be Reform, Orthodox, Conservative, atheist, socialist, Zionist, or anything else as long as they observed the tenets of civil Judaism. As the state of Israel started to prove itself a military and economic power and the struggle of the Palestinians gained visibility, some began to question whether civil Judaism should require uncritical support for Israeli policies. For those who saw a strong state of Israel as a crucial haven for Jews given the persistent reality of anti-Jewish sentiments and violence, allowing debate over the meaning of civil Judaism's central principles became profoundly threatening. To such individuals, including some of my respondents, the boundaries of the collective self, the "we," started to seem too open to negotiation.

REIFYING IDENTITY: MAINTAINING THE *EMBATTLED SELF*

When members of a stigmatized group see its dominant narratives as too capacious—open to the point of self-destruction—they can respond by defining and defending explicit, fixed boundaries, foreclosing negotiation and thus reifying the boundaries of the group. In doing so, they produce a model of collective selfhood I call *embattled* selfhood. Actors engaged in reifying identity politics create a sense of security by defining the boundaries between "us" and "them" as fixed in eternal opposition, positing that "we" are virtuous, "they" are evil; "they" are oppressors and "we" are oppressed. Embattled selfhood emerges from a narrative of the collective self in constant danger from oppressors and their potential collaborators. It is Manichaean: opposing forces come to mirror the fixed and eternal struggle between good and evil, so that when actors envision the collective self as embattled, they neither tolerate dissent from within nor adapt their analyses to accommodate dissenters.[12] Rather, members who fail to conform to the narrative are cast out, defined as either willful dissenters—

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[12] We could characterize the feminist "sex wars" of the 1980s as being between those who insisted that earlier decades' feminist conclusions on sex, pornography, and gender expression defined feminism once and for all and those they sought to shut out, who saw these things differently and still identified as feminist (Vance 1984; Hirsch and Keller 1990; Stein 1993). Similarly, a reified identity perspective would argue, e.g., that African-Americans are "not really black" if they do not support particular policies (Gamson 1996).

traitors—or ignorant ones—the falsely conscious, the naïve, the brainwashed, the wannabes, the closeted. Lichterman (1999, p. 134) observes that when people work to prevent the definition of the self from changing, "a degeneration of civility" can follow. Of course, it is not necessarily a sign of reification when members of a political organization exclude those who disagree with their political goals or strategies, but as the boundaries of the collective self become reified, the "we" can be beset by internal boundary conflicts to the neglect of action targeted at social change.

In contemporary American political culture, social movement organizations often strive, and purport, to represent entire categories of people (Zald and McCarthy 1987); this condition makes it easy for participants in identity politics to reify group boundaries. For instance, 49-year-old Rick,[13] a children's legal advocate, devoted a great deal of time to chairing Americans for Israel, an organization that advocates for Israel to remain a strong, Jewish state in order to maintain a safe haven for the world's Jews. Given this bottom line, he explained that his group was open to negotiation:

> I can have a discussion with someone who says, "I agree that [Israel] has a right to exist as a Jewish state but it should withdraw from all the territories [of the West Bank and Gaza]," whatever. Fine. There's room for discussion. . . . I mean our group, we have a very broad political position which I more or less summarized to you. Anything after that's details. We don't get into the details. Because the people that we are confronting, other people do not accept Israel's right to exist, period. So therefore that's the line that we draw, and we have some people in our group that can be fairly left wing, one person in our group who's virtually anarchist in terms of domestic politics, other politics, and very left wing. But very strong pro-Israel. We've got a lot of people in our group that are very right wing and think Bush and the Iraq war are great things, okay. We don't discuss this sort of stuff because it will only distract us and take up time and all that.

In this political ecumenism, Rick maintained the tenets of civil Judaism: as long as one recognizes the centrality of Israel to American Jewish existence, variation is fine.

However, Rick's approach became more reified when he used that stance to define membership in the Jewish community as a whole. He remarked:

> Do you accept Israel's right to exist in peace as a Jewish state, free from attacks? If you accept it, that's fine. You can criticize the government, I mean, Israelis do it all the time, but they don't say we should turn the whole

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[13] I use pseudonyms for respondents and small organizations and disguised or omitted identifying details, but I use the real names of large national organizations (such as the Anti-Defamation League) since they are difficult to disguise and membership in such organizations does not identify respondents. Quotations from respondents are transcribed from recorded interviews unless otherwise noted.

> country over to the Arabs. Just like *we* can criticize our *own* government's conduct, you know, and many Americans do very vigorously, that doesn't mean we want to go ahead and have a revolution and destroy the system, at least most of us don't. So that's the difference between criticism and existential denial. . . . We lay it out very explicitly and again, that's our line. If you're on our side of that line, okay. . . . If you don't agree with that statement, which is a very simple one, then I'm sorry, you're on the other side. You're in the tent or you're out of the tent. And that line is the entrance to the tent.

As he explained his group's stance, he equated his organization with the Jewish community in general; his group's stance on the state of Israel became a litmus test for membership in the Jewish community. He mentioned a local organization called Jews for a Just and Lasting Peace (JJLP), which publicly refused to take a stand on any particular future state arrangement between the Israelis and the Palestinians, thus allowing, for instance, for the possibility of a binational state of Jews and Arabs. Rick explained why JJLP was barred from a mainstream Jewish umbrella organization, remarking, "JJLP's not in the tent. JJLP, for example, has tried for years to become a member of the Jewish Community Organization [JCO]. And they've not been allowed to do so because they won't accept [Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state], and that's a fundamental tenet of the Jewish community. And they're not allowed in. And they're ticked off at that." I asked him whether he saw it as problematic for some Jewish groups to be barred from the local organization for Jewish groups, and he replied, "No. I see certain things—like JCO won't let Jews for Jesus in either. Because there are certain lines you just don't cross. And that's one of them." Given that the JCO was an umbrella organization for the vast majority of local Jewish organizations, Rick used it as a proxy for the Jewish people as a whole; the JCO's refusal to recognize JJLP enacted that group's exile from the Jewish people because membership in both was bounded by lines that Jews cannot rightly cross: Jews do not believe that Jesus was the Messiah, and Jews do not question the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. In either case, such perspectives amount, in his view, to "existential denial," a denial of the very foundations of the self. The ontological fixity of the self—that Jews by definition support the existence of a strong Jewish state—equates to the policing of boundaries, conceived in Manichaean terms.

In any form of identity politics, actors perpetually define the group's boundaries, and sometimes they must maintain them vigilantly for very clear, demonstrable reasons. The threat of destruction and/or cooptation is or has been very real for a number of groups. But when the narrative's proponents foreclose differing analyses and strategies and regard those who voice these alternatives as traitors, it is a sign that the narrative has become reified. Their treason can feel viscerally threatening because the collective self impinges on one's own sense of selfhood. For example, a congenial man in his early 40s, Bill was active in local Democratic politics and fund-raising and was a board member of national organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League and the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. Bill made it clear that he saw the present-day United States as one of the best times and places ever to be Jewish, and like Rick, he echoed civil Judaism's insistence on the centrality of the state of Israel to American Jews. Given the human rights records of countries such as Saudi Arabia and Syria, Bill found it hypocritical for anyone—most of all Jews—to neglect their abuses and criticize Israel's human rights record. Bill was both angered and baffled by JJLP. Trying to explain their existence, he reasoned, "So JJLP is the element of Jews who believe, 'I can prove my leftist credentials by standing up for what I see is wrong, and if that means standing up against my own people, aren't I a more just person?' It's the only way I can get [a handle on it] or understand what their position is. I have put my finger in their chest and told them that I think they're disgusting, and I think they don't understand, and it doesn't go anywhere. I think they should be ashamed of themselves." Given his analysis that no place on earth—except Israel—could be counted on to provide refuge for Jews when they need it, Bill found a Jewish group that publicly criticized what he saw as Israel's efforts to protect itself from Palestinian attack to be so infuriating, shameful, and disgusting as to be nearly inexplicable. When actors reify identity politics, they define the self as fixed and closed to negotiation, and they define the relationship between self and other in Manichaean terms such that dissenters must be accounted for.

Identity politics responds to structural hierarchies, so when its proponents adhere to one unchanging narrative, they risk defining the collective self by its oppression.[14] They may then fix the virtue of insiders and treachery of outsiders into a moralizing sense that power itself is evil rather than something to seek out and use in ways consistent with the group's politics (Brown 2001). The reified identity politics narrative can make oppression a condition of belonging, to the extent that outsiders' oppressive deeds and desires help to define the meaningfulness of belonging to the group. None of my interviewees defined Jews as necessarily or inherently oppressed. But when a letter printed in the national Jewish magazine *Moment* espoused Orthodoxy as the form of Judaism with the most promise for maintaining Judaism into the future, another letter writer responded, “Intolerance of any Judaism that is not Orthodox can only lead to more anti-Semitism. A Jew is a Jew, period. Hitler did not care what kind you were” (Kimmelman 2004, p. 20). In Feher’s (1997) study of Messianic Jews, a speaker responded to their rejection by traditional Jews, saying, “No one is going to tell me I’m not Jewish. I’m going off to the gas chamber with everybody else if that day ever comes” (1997, p. 30). Similarly, during the course of this research, I attended a panel discussion at a regional meeting of a mainstream Jewish organization on the subject of whether universities needed government oversight to curb their growing “anti-Israelism and anti-Semitism.” One speaker, who saw such a proposal as a right-wing attack on intellectual freedom, said that “people tend to assume that the tiniest anti-Semitic remark means that the Brownshirts are coming” and remarked that erroneous claims about anti-Semitism fanned paranoia. His copanelist, who supported government oversight of universities, replied, “Just because someone is paranoid doesn’t mean they don’t have enemies,” which garnered loud applause and cheers from many in the audience with an enthusiasm the other never received (reconstructed from notes). Observers have found the Nazi holocaust to be central to many American Jews’ sense of what it means to be Jewish and have criticized this focus as part of what has been called “the lachrymose conception of Jewish history,” one that, in Lipstadt’s words, risks robbing Jews of “the joy and replenishment that Jewish tradition has always offered” (cited in Rapaport 2005, p. 203; see also Cohen and Eisen 2000). While Jews often unite around factors other than oppression, under this general model, the less insiders have in common, the more oppression itself risks becoming a defining principle in the way Brown (1995, 2001) elaborates.

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[14] Embattled selfhood's tendency to define the self by its oppression is what can make identity politics appear (or become) essentialist (Epstein 1987; Riley 1988; Fuss 1989; Nicholson 1990, 1995; Mohanty 1992; Appiah 1995; Prakash 1995; Seidman 1996; Bernstein 2002; Meeks 2002) or neglect the power and privileges that members do possess (Carby 1982; Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Mohanty, Russo, and Torres 1991; Mohanty 1992; Morrison 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1992; Brown 1995; Collins 2000; Sandoval 2000).

The feelings of anger, disgust, and betrayal Rick and Bill expressed emerged when their conceptions of what it means to be Jewish, and what are Jews’ obligations to each other, conflicted with other Jews’ answers to those questions. Actors like Rick and Bill represent the urge to establish and “shore up” (J. Gamson 1996, p. 396) a particular conception of Jewish collective selfhood with the goal of protecting Jews from what history has shown to be a very real threat of anti-Semitism. From their perspective, the alternative seems to be to demolish Jewish identity. But if increasing numbers of American Jews question mainstream organizations’ support for Israeli state policies, reification may both grow and become more problematized. My interviews and observations revealed two other alternative ways to build collective selfhood, promoting *humanistic dialogue* and building *critical solidarity.* People engaging in these alternative practices of collective identity shared Rick’s and Bill’s desire to protect Jews, but they worried that the embattled narrative created more danger than it mitigated. They sought to use what they saw as Jewish wisdom and values to redefine the boundaries and consciousness of "us" in more universalist terms. Their narratives challenge, to an extent, William Gamson's (1992) claim that identity politics must posit a "them" against which to define the "us."

PROMOTING HUMANISTIC DIALOGUE: ENACTING THE *RELATING SELF*

While people with an embattled model of collective selfhood guard an impermeable-seeming boundary between insiders and outsiders, others focus not on constant vigilance but on the shared humanity of all. Seeing embattlement as reproducing rather than overcoming the sometimes violent divisions between people, proponents of the narrative of *humanistic dialogue* posit social differences as accidental, apparent dividers that dissolve when people can communicate and understand the deep similarities that unite them. These actors see lasting political transformation as possible only when people from opposing sides of a politicized boundary develop a consciousness of the deeper values this movement posits that people all share. They see these commonalties becoming evident when individuals relate to each other, listening to and "really hearing" each other, in various models of dialogue or mediation. They share identity politics' focus on creating a shared consciousness, but they see too great a focus on self-preservation as counterproductive. While those who reify politicized identity tighten the boundaries of the "we," proponents of humanistic dialogue seek to expand those boundaries until there is no more "they" at all.

Advocates for this humanistic approach to social change focus on breaking down boundaries between the self and the other. In his late 60s, Ken is an organizer of the Palestinian/Jewish Reconciliation Circle, which facilitates dialogue between Jews and Palestinians in his locale. His views of the self came out in his discussion of anti-Semitism. He remarked:

> And so, I think, anti-Semitism can best atrophy by not breeding contempt for others. By not elevating ourselves by diminishing the other. By joining the human race. And by . . . teaching our kids and ourselves to listen to *everybody's* story and excluding no one. And this is in the tradition of our, *all* of our teachings. In the Shema, which is our greatest teaching: "Hear, O Israel," *Hear. Listen.* It's our foremost prayer for a very good reason. . . . I'm telling you that there is a lot of projecting of the dark side of ourselves onto the other. Palestinians project the worst onto Jews and Jews project the worst, and the only way to get rid of these projections is to meet one another, finally. And when you do, you transform enemies into partners, into wonderful partners. And that's the way we really are. It is my experience, that everybody

> has a soul, and that the soul's deepest memory, oldest memory, is of union. And its deepest longing is for reunion. [Emphasis spoken in original]

For Ken, the self is a core of compassion and connection, sometimes hidden beneath layers of fear and defenses. Dialogue can penetrate these defenses, humanizing the other. His logic was echoed by many of his elders whom I spoke with, such as the focus group of people in their 70s through late 90s, whose members, when asked what it would take to get rid of anti-Semitism, were unanimous that education was the key. Julia seemed to articulate the group's sentiments when she remarked, "I think one of the things we have to do is to continue to educate our children. . . . But also they have to learn to travel among different types of people and groups. Open their minds to different types and groups of people. . . . People that are more open minded and that express themselves in general to whole humanity are those who have traveled. And more open minded to ideas. So I advocate education." While Ken's program involves a concerted effort often absent from traveling, both are talking about the deep, transformative experiences that can happen in such endeavors.

In the narrative of humanistic dialogue, the self has a fixed core that need not, and should not, be defined in opposition to the other. In Ken's analysis as in those of the focus group members, social change happens when individuals come to understand at a deep level that those they deem other or stigmatize may differ in faith or heritage but share the essential, unchanging things about being human. Similarly, facilitators at a workshop sponsored by Listening with Love, an international organization with local training sessions, emphasized that each person has a core of goodness, wisdom, and love—facilitators called these "values we all share"—that can become buried under layers of fear and defensiveness. The practice of Listening with Love emphasizes techniques for listening "beyond" statements that reflect the speaker's fear and defensiveness and that might trigger defensiveness in others, "reflecting back," or articulating to the speaker the good intentions the statement reveals from within the speaker's core self. Humanistic dialogue proponents thus employ a *relating* model of the collective self, echoing Buber's ([1923] 1996) distinction between instrumental, *I-it* "experiences" of others from transformative, *I-thou* "relating" and insisting that to actually relate to another person can dramatically change how one views the world.[15] This model's proponents posit that relationship can lead to a change in consciousness, which in turn can facilitate a change in boundaries. They do so while reassuring people that they will not lose what is central to their self-definition when they learn to relate to those they deem other, insisting that boundaries are not what make us who we are.

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[15] Unlike dialogue proponents, however, Buber argued that when people relate, each transforms at the core. See Moon (in press) for a more thorough analysis of these dynamics.

Members of these groups have seen that listening with compassion to each other's stories has helped to break down the mental and emotional barriers that divide people and perpetuate or rationalize cycles of violence. For example, Dave was invited to join a Reconciliation Circle by a Palestinian-American woman he worked with. He remarked:

> She started talking about, back in the day, the stories she used to hear from her grandmother. Everybody used to get along. "We'd go to the Jewish neighborhood for this, the Armenian neighborhood for that. We all used to get along. It was fine." And I started connecting with people who had older memories of when things were fine. And one thing I have learned about people, working at a residential program for all these years, that will happen. A third party can come in and force a wedge and create all kinds of resentments that don't have to be. So . . . would I say that Palestinians are anti-Semitic? Not the ones I know.

Listening to each other's stories and understanding that the tension between Jews and Palestinians resulted from very recent events rather than timeless hatreds, proponents of this process were convinced that peace is entirely possible, but only if antagonists can relate to each other at the individual level. Therefore, dialogue proponents organize by producing opportunities for these relationships to form.

Many members of the Palestinian/Jewish Reconciliation Circle and Listening with Love disavowed what they considered "politics" and tended to describe policy and avowedly "political" approaches as the world's problem rather than a potential solution; they saw social hierarchies and inequitable distributions of material resources as following from policies that fed on individuals' feelings of fear and contempt. Thus, at a four-day retreat the Reconciliation Circle organized, facilitators assigned participants to small dialogue groups consisting of American and Israeli Jews and Palestinian citizens of Israel, the United States, and Jordan as well as residents of the West Bank. Facilitators asked these groups to discuss such highly charged terms as "Jerusalem," "suicide bomber," "Zionism," and "right of return" and to "try not to talk about politics. Just focus on your feelings" (reconstructed in notes). Talking casually with a friendly man I met on an organized hike, I asked what he thought about the organizers asking people to talk about such things as Zionism and suicide bombing without discussing politics. Later he approached me, saying, "I was thinking about what you said and I had a conversation with a woman named Bobbie. She had a communication problem with a man, that left her feeling misunderstood. They talked about it later and cleared it up. I think it's good that we leave politics aside and focus on just trying to *understand* each other" (reconstructed in notes; emphasis spoken).

Promoters of humanistic dialogue find discussions of "politics" to be counterproductive, but a form of politicization—wholly grassroots—often seems present just beneath the surface. Advocates argue that helping each individual to relate to others across conventional boundaries transforms individuals' consciousness and leads them to support new approaches to group politics. Ken and his fellow organizers of the retreat thus sought to reach as many individuals as possible, allowing numerous reporters and documentary filmmakers (and, of course, a sociologist) to attend the event, and organized a "speak-out" for news media on the day following the retreat that they billed as a crucial part of it.

Although it resolves certain tensions in identity politics, this model has its own inherent tensions. Since participants generally come to it only voluntarily, one might wonder to what extent such programs change large-scale social patterns. In response, proponents cite Gladwell's (2000) *The Tipping Point* to suggest that momentum will build rapidly once the movement reaches a critical mass. More profoundly, while practitioners' goal is to transform social attitudes, their attempts to connect with the other risk, in certain manifestations, slipping into sentimentalizing, patronizing, objectifying, or neglecting objective inequalities (Samuels 1992; Connolly 1995; Moon 2004). For instance, at the retreat described above, only about a quarter of the participants were Arab or Arab-American, which created problems when participants were divided into discussion groups of four or eight people and some groups lacked Arab participants. Other participants' desires to learn about Palestinians' perspectives by forming intimate, *I-thou* relationships easily slipped into instrumental cries of "We need an Arab!" and "You two Arabs need to split up; some groups have no Arabs at all" (reconstructed in notes). Undeterred by imperfect implementations, people active in the dialogue movement cite thousands of interactions facilitating intimate connections between Israeli Jews and Palestinians, for instance, or Germans and Jews, to support their claim that the potential of human connection either transcends or lays the groundwork for political change.

A narrative that posits the self as *relating* differs markedly from one that posits it as *embattled* in that the latter works within an us-versus-them worldview dominated by social-structural hierarchies whereas the former posits people as fundamentally similar and neglects social structure altogether. But both narratives posit the self as similarly fixed, envisioning a core or "true" self that can be obscured to individuals by false consciousness or a shadow self's fears and defenses. They thus differ from narratives that center on an image of the self as fluid.

BUILDING CRITICAL SOLIDARITY: PRODUCING THE *POLITICAL SELF*

At the Reconciliation Circle retreat, another form of politicization worked alongside the individualist model the retreat organizers advocated. While retreat organizers aimed to help participants to relate to each other as individuals, many participants brought strategic political goals to the event, hoping to connect with other organizers to promote justice as well as peace. This undercurrent of political networking was so strong that facilitators rearranged the event's schedule to provide a time and space for the organizers and activists present to learn about each other's activities and to find ways to synchronize or pool their efforts. Drawing from the social system–level focus of identity politics, as well as humanistic dialogue's relational, compassionate view of the other, many of these organizers seemed to practice a third alternative mode of identity politics, building *critical solidarity.* Critical of any reification in the definition of the self, they respond to identity politics' tendencies toward essentialism or chauvinism; they see political processes at work in the very definition of the self. Furthermore, some proponents of this approach seek to delegitimate any strategy that capitalizes on the privileges group members may have in spite of being stigmatized, seeing those privileges as coming from the flawed overall system of stigmatization and structural disadvantage that they see as oppressing many groups.

I borrow the concept of critical solidarity from Ellis (1990), a Jewish theologian who developed it as an ethical perspective. Drawing from Christian theologians' efforts to develop a theology that can account for and create a future beyond injustices Christians have committed or permitted (such as the Nazi holocaust and U.S. actions in Latin America), he formulates an ethical approach that, in his words, "carries with it a knowledge of power that seeks to transform injustice, to remember as a way of creating a future beyond injustice, to confess in order to acknowledge wrong relations, to repent as a commitment to stop the injustice, and to provide solidarity with the victims of injustice" (p. 183). Ellis defines critical solidarity as "a solidarity that moves beyond frightened silence or paternalistic embrace," outcomes that can map onto certain manifestations of the embattled and relating models (p. 184). Proponents of this approach to identity politics share humanistic dialogue proponents' call to relate to the other and see common humanity and add to it the concept of objective social hierarchies and strategic struggle so central to most identity politics.

Advocates of critical solidarity treat boundaries, politics, and consciousness, and they address the imbalances they see in other forms of identity politics. They begin from politics by focusing on objective inequalities, but they stave off embattled selfhood's paradoxical tendency to depend on inequalities to give the collectivity meaning. Rather than defining the self as perpetually powerless or as separable from social power, they see social power in contextually specific terms and define it as something that may, and should, be deployed ethically to change society to overcome oppression. They conceptualize boundaries as porous by developing a politicized consciousness that drives them to root out injustice and organize strategically to promote their vision of justice. Like proponents of humanistic dialogue, they prevent reification by stressing compassion for others rather than viewing them as fixed timelessly in their ways. Rather than allying with policy makers against other groups, proponents of critical solidarity work to act in solidarity with other groups, to change the structure of policy making. At the same time, they maintain that if dehumanizing ideologies about the other contribute to conventional definitions of the self, then group members need to rethink their self-definition as they work in solidarity with the other.[16] They envision all selves as political; they cast relations of power and privilege as intimately connected to people's feelings and understandings about who they are, who they want to be, and with whom they identify.

I heard this narrative when I talked with people like Karin, who grew up in the American South in the 1950s and 1960s and has written extensively on anti-Semitism. She had worked for decades as an organizer for a wide range of social causes and belonged to JJLP, to which Rick and Bill both referred. Karin's description of her group's advocacy work offered a view of Jewish selfhood that addresses the exclusion JJLP has experienced from the mainstream Jewish community. She said:

> We are very proudly Jews. We're not trying to hide that we're Jews. We use our tradition. That's why we're doing this, because the Jewish tradition says that you do justice. And so that's what our mission is. And to do that as Jews and feeling good about who we are as Jews [means] being critical of a government that happens to be Jewish, that gets more tax dollars than any other government, U.S. tax dollars, that is working against what we see as Jewish values, that is reaping injustice. Some of us definitely also have the analysis that I do of having compassion, feeling like the Occupation is a manifestation of the past trauma of Jews. It doesn't excuse it, it just says that explains it, and therefore to end the Occupation we also have to speak out against anti-Semitism because . . . Jews feel unsafe. . . . Sixty years ago our relatives were killed. And so it's complicated. You have to look at both pieces.

Karin understood the boundaries between self and other to be forged in relations of power, and she posited engagement with social and institutional power—including that which productively defines the self—as the means to achieving justice. While Rick and Bill saw the persistence of anti-Semitism throughout history as a reason for Jews to defend a strong Jewish state, Karin saw the same history as leading to the injustices of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. She did not dismiss the reality of Jews having been persecuted, but by invoking psychological trauma, Karin advocated compassion for her fellow Jews while maintaining that something in them might need to heal, grow, or change—a politicized transformation of consciousness. While she challenged one tenet of civil Judaism, Karin focused on the things that made her approach distinctly Jewish. Like dialoguer Ken, who defined his efforts in Jewish terms by focusing on a prayer and his own genealogy, Karin echoed the Jewish principle of *tikkun olam* (healing or repairing the world) and such biblical references as the words of the prophet Micah. In both cases, we see definitions of Jewish selfhood following from things that have traditionally defined Judaism rather than a sense of embattlement. Like the "pro-change" Catholics Dillon (1999) studied, these speakers used the larger group's terms to assert their own membership while validating analyses some see as anathema.

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[16] This manifestation of critical solidarity thus echoes Connolly's (1995) concept of critical responsiveness.

For humanistic dialogue proponents, understanding and relating to others would form the bonds necessary for political change to happen, though they tended not to articulate what those changes should be. The benefits of this form of listening and relating could be incorporated into critical solidarity's overtly politicized approach as well. While a 42-year-old JJLP member named Lisa felt hurt and betrayed by what she saw as overt and symbolic racism on her trips to Israel and in the remarks of American Jews who support Israeli policies regarding the Palestinians, she refused to simply dismiss other Jews as "racist." In her experience as a public speaker, she found that hearing the concerns of others and finding common ground with them helped her to find understanding even with hostile speakers. She recalled:

> I was speaking to a mixed audience, politically mixed. And the first woman who spoke was a woman who, I think she had gotten out of Germany in the *kindertransport.* And she told this story, and she [said to me], "I have nothing to learn from you. Israel was the place that was safe, so I have nothing to learn from you." . . . And I was so happy that she spoke. I was just literally, I [said], "Thank you, so much. Thank you for sharing that story. Thank you so much. Because your family's story is my family's story too." In my case, that's true and I could say that. . . . So I was able to actually emotionally [say], "Let me tell you my family's story, which was yours, which was that Israel was this safe place, we had nowhere to go . . ." and really emotionally connect and show that I know, I *feel*, I *know* that story. And then I was able to say, "And let me tell you if one of our Palestinian friends were standing here, and they were standing holding their key to the house that they left with their bags packed that night, and they were terrified but they left because they knew they could come back in five days, with their

> kids' toys, you know, and here it is 40 years later, and they still can't go [home], but they were able to knock on the door and a family was living in their house." I mean, to tell that story, equally and people really, people connected. They could hear that.

She thus borrowed insight from the dialogue movement but embraced rather than eschewed political analysis and strategic action to work in solidarity with those she saw as suffering at the hands of those who themselves had suffered. When I commented that her approach seemed similar to the approach of such groups as the Reconciliation Circle and Listening with Love, she remarked:

> Well, yeah, it is. . . . And . . . just trying to talk to people in your family, just trying to get through that—the barrier is emotional. But of course what you need to get it to is the actual political analysis of how we can make it better, as opposed to, you know. My hope would be, . . . with the reconciliation groups, [that also] people realized we need some more, real, fair peace negotiations, [and so on]. That it's actionable, instead of, you know, a warm and fuzzy feeling. But yeah, I think all that has to happen.

In her view, without an understanding of shared humanity, any analysis of history and power will be partial and perpetuate injustice. At the same time, she maintains that an analysis that focuses on what is shared but fails to acknowledge and engage concrete relations of power may lead to good feeling but not necessarily justice. Many people in this movement told me that they had engaged in one or both of the other ways of organizing and that their dissatisfaction with those models propelled them into this one.

Like the other modes of organizing, building critical solidarity has its weaknesses. For instance, it can draw the criticism that it is too all-embracing to be effective, that it negates the group's struggle (Armstrong 2002; Ghaziani 2008). Furthermore, while a narrative of critical solidarity does not depend on oppression or sentimentalize political inequality, focusing on one's own group's power and privilege can lead to foreclosing negotiation, as in embattled selfhood. While Karin and Lisa saw a need to be vigilant against anti-Jewish ideas or actions, their movement can be beset with reification, particularly in positing that dehumanizing Israelis is necessary to express solidarity with Palestinians. For instance, when an Israeli film festival came to the city in which one critical solidarity-building group was active, some members advocated a boycott on the grounds that any Israeli cultural production constituted a form of Israeli state propaganda. A participant at the Reconciliation Circle retreat suggested that he had seen Israelis dehumanized when he encountered what he called "apologists" for Palestinian suicide bombings, Jews who saw such tactics as justified and above reproach without considering the human and political tolls such violence took. Incidents such as these suggest the ease with which efforts to build critical solidarity can slip into their own version of reification and embattlement.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT EVANGELISM: RECRUITING FOR THE *REDEEMED SELF*

In these American Jews' understandings of stigmatization, politics, and the collective self, we have seen three alternative practices of identity politics, all emerging to address what different actors see as shortcomings in the narratives of civil Judaism. The critical solidarity narrative shares reified identity politics' focus on societal and structural change, as well as humanistic dialogue's focus on shared humanity; but unlike both, it focuses on the fluidity of the self by politicizing self-definition. Another alternative mode of identity politics posits the self as fluid, but it sees social change happening at the level of individuals rather than social structure. Furthermore, this fourth mode shares the embattled narrative's Manichaean view of us and them, good and evil. This combination of features lends itself to the name of "evangelizing," though it should not be equated with Evangelical Christianity. For my purposes, *evangelism* refers to any process of teaching others that there is good and evil and recruiting them to the side of good. A group may, for instance, see the teachings of Mao or Trotsky as the truth that redeems people from the evils of capitalism and define outsiders as those lost to that truth. A narrative of evangelism seeks to transform individuals, creating *redeemed* selves in the process.

With its combination of a consciousness of the self as fluid, a Manichaean understanding of boundaries, and a focus on individual-level transformations, this mode of organizing rounds out the 2 × 2 table in figure 1; but in my investigations, I did not encounter a group of American Jews who used it as their main narrative as I encountered the others. Polletta (2002) argues that certain movements have an affinity for certain means of taking action; for instance, it would be illegitimate for a pacifist group to use violent means. Similarly, I argue that while in theory any group could employ any mode of organizing, in actuality, some modes seem more legitimate to a particular group at a particular time than others. For instance, when a group's self-definition depends heavily on fixity or fluidity, fortified boundaries or wide embrace, a societal- or individual-level vision of social change, a narrative that lacks the key element will be deeply threatening to collective and personal self-definitions. Legitimacy might explain why we do not see an evangelistic mode of organizing much among American Jews, who have historically had unhappy experiences with Christian efforts to evangelize to them and who have historically seen any form of proselytizing as un-Jewish.

However, I did hear echoes of this narrative in my research, for instance, when Palestinian-Jewish dialoguers occasionally referred to themselves as a type of person, converted from but now unlike those others who prefer to dehumanize others and fight rather than listen and make peace. Ken of the Reconciliation Circle, for example, shared his view of policies during the George W. Bush administration:

> And you can see what happens in America. If you use the method of violence, you can depend on the result. Now everyone thinks violence is the thing to do. Statesmanship is—you can't even find it. There's no diplomacy. We're throwing violence at everything. The *new* power is story. People. Story. You hear somebody's story and you see they're human, they're equal, and the big change that happens in the human being and that I have experienced in myself, in my wife, in hundreds of people, you begin to want the best for the other. And not just for yourself. And that cannot happen without meeting face to face.

As a matter of course, the Reconciliation Circle tended to focus on fixed identities, for instance, by positing certain core values as universal and helping people to define themselves by investigating their genealogy rather than focusing on boundaries with the other. However, here we see Ken describing the process of reconciliation as changing people, redeeming them, and inspiring them to spread the good news to others.

This echo of an evangelistic mode of organizing does not fully reveal the contours of this narrative's approach to boundaries, consciousness, and politics. This mode's significance as a response to tensions in identity politics becomes clearer when we think of a family of movements with whose history it resonates, such as lesbian and gay movements. Furthermore, by comparing my findings to another group of movements, we can begin to see how the typology of alternative narratives of identity politics can shed light on any movement addressing stigmatized and disadvantaged collective selfhood.

COLLECTIVE SELFHOOD IN LESBIAN AND GAY MOVEMENTS

While it has been suggested that American Jews were among the first to confront the tensions that identity politics addresses (Biale 1998*a*, 1998*b*), the lesbian and gay movement has been called the quintessential identity politics movement (Melucci 1989; Bernstein 1997). Like Jews and many others, lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, and transgender people (LGBTs) have faced opposition at the cultural level, based on widespread cultural narratives of what it means to be a member of such categories—narratives that have been internally incoherent and, at times, have had or threatened to have ramifications for individual and collective self-understandings and material well-being. I will show briefly how conflicts within what can be loosely construed as the lesbian and gay or LGBT movement can be rethought in light of my typology while helping to elaborate further its key concepts.

Just as Woocher (1986) describes the 20th-century American Jewish consensus as allowing for differences within unity around the seven uncodified principles of civil Judaism, scholars of lesbian and gay (or LGBT) movements have observed similar principles corresponding to successful periods. For instance, Armstrong (2002, p. 106) details how the San Francisco LGBT movement's success, and that of the national LGBT movement, has depended on a principle of "unity within diversity" similar to what Woocher describes. In Armstrong's case, gay and lesbian organizers stumbled into a formulation for embracing and demonstrating the diversity of gay men and lesbians by marrying identity to function: beginning with the first pride parade in San Francisco in 1972, a "gay-plus-one" formulation (lesbian dog owners, bisexual librarians, gay and lesbian Roman Catholics) has allowed for difference—in hobby, religion, politics, occupation, and the like—as long as certain sameness is recognized.[17] Similarly, Gould (2009) details the early success of ACT UP, which "allowed sentiments of solidarity to develop across perceived differences," including the highly charged differences of race, gender, and HIV status. Early on, ACT UP members agreed that an antigay state and society were responsible for the AIDS crisis and that confrontational direct action was how they were going to challenge those institutions (p. 333). This agreement allowed women and men of different races and HIV status to each focus on what they found most pressing while supporting the efforts of others within the group; Gould points out that there could be strong disagreements, but they were met with a sense of trust and openness to learning from each other that was missing in later years, after the political climate changed.

Previous scholars of LGBT movements have discussed expressions of each of the models of collective selfhood that emerge from identity politics when historical conditions or group dynamics change. We see a model of embattled selfhood, leading to reified boundaries between us and them, for instance, in Joshua Gamson's (1997) discussion of the conflict over the inclusion of transsexuals in the lesbian-feminist Michigan Womyn's Music Festival in the 1990s. Defending festival organizers' insistence on admitting only "womyn born womyn" (a status that it would be impossible to actually verify), Gamson quotes a writer to the lesbian-feminist magazine *Lesbian Connection*, who argued, "One of the benefits of festivals is that we can fully explore—even glorify—our identities as women, without the trappings and traps this culture imposes upon those of us born with the XX chromosome. To argue that anyone who decides to become a woman has undergone the same oppression, and has the same bond of common experience as those born to it, is to flatten the experience of those who came to it by birth, and who have lived it since" ("Festival Responses" 1992, p. 8; quoted in Gamson 1997, p. 190). Here, we see womanhood defined as fixed (by the "XX chromosome" and the oppression that supposedly comes with it) and in rigid us/them terms (those united by the bonds that emerge from being burdened by cultural "trappings and traps" and those not born into that oppression). Indeed, as Brown (1995, 2001) would argue, this writer virtually defines womanhood as oppressed. Similarly, Ghaziani (2008) finds what I would call a reified definition of gay selfhood, quoting Mendelsohn's 1996 article in *New York Magazine*, which explicitly compares gay culture with an embattled definition of Jewishness: "In the 1990s, gay culture suffered 'a classic assimilationist' ailment (c.f. Jews): You can't take away what was most difficult about being gay without losing what made gay culture interesting in the first place. . . . You realize that, at least culturally speaking, oppression may have been the best thing that could have happened to gay culture. Without it, we're nothing'" (Ghaziani 2008, p. 233). Here, a clear boundary between "us" and "them" promotes a fixed definition of the self, one that paradoxically depends on oppression by "them" to give the self meaning.

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[17] Armstrong (2002) discusses the unspoken white and male assumptions behind this vision of commonality, along with some of the critics who raised these points in an effort to build critical solidarity.

LGBT movement actors have relied heavily on a narrative of humanistic dialogue as well, pairing a fixed sense of the self with a focus on similarities between "us" and "them." For instance, actors in the homophile movement of the 1950s and 1960s relied on their one-on-one conversations with elites to decriminalize and depathologize homosexuality, a strategy that depended on a respectable, relatable image of homosexuals. In the 1970s, organizers developed the politics of "coming out," calling for a large-scale movement of people to capitalize on existing relationships, guided by the assumption that making one's sexual orientation known to heterosexuals will help them to see gay people as "like" them in spite of their difference rather than as strange, evil, others (Armstrong 2002). Armstrong shows the power of relating in her discussion of San Francisco's response to AIDS early in the disease's life, saying, "Mayor Dianne Feinstein herself had gay male friends. Peter Nardoza, who worked in the mayor's office at the time, explained that 'in [Feinstein's] mind, it wasn't a matter of "*they* are dying." It was "*we* have a problem"'" (p. 164; quoting Andriote [1999]). Conceptualizing the self as *relating* invites actors to seek empathy across differences, and such bonds can promote social change. In Bernstein's (1997) account, Vermont activists working in the 1980s for a lesbian and gay rights bill use "relating" strategically; they "chose to 'put a face on lesbian and gay rights' by fostering personal contact between constituents and their legislators. . . . [In meetings] they called 'coffee klatches,'" in which participants "capitalized on personal relations (rather than social science studies) to dispel myths about homosexuality" (p. 550). When they promote humanistic dialogue, LGBT actors rely on the metaphor of ethnicity, organizing "around a notion of 'gayness' as a real, and not arbitrary, difference" (Epstein 1987, p. 12). They posit the self as distinct from the other but united by the possibility of relating, which can in turn precipitate change.

Some organizers in these movements have also employed a *political* conception of selfhood—one that shares humanistic dialogue's focus on similarities between "us" and "them" while also maintaining that changing the definition of the self is needed in order to effect social change. Since the early 1970s, people marginalized within the movement have pressed those dominant within it to consider actively what it means to be "us" and how that definition might depend on others' continued oppression or marginalization (Armstrong 2002). Mainstream "gay" organizers have constantly struggled over the place of such groups as women, bisexuals, transgendered people, racial or ethnic others, and poor people in this movement. Ghaziani (2008) shows how conflicts have been played out in each of four national marches on Washington, D.C., between those who favor a narrow "gay" platform and those who see sexual justice as impossible to attain without simultaneously seeking racial, gender, and economic justice, tasks that may demand critical consideration of the question of what it means to be "us." He quotes an organizer of the 1993 March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay, and Bi Equal Rights and Inclusion saying, "The task of producing a platform that is acceptable to everyone in a community as diverse as ours [is] almost impossible. . . . Growing and expanding our consciousness is not always an easy or painless process" (p. 182; see also Moraga and Anzaldúa 1983; Smith 1983). Actors seeking to build critical solidarity, then, deny the possibility of any fixed definition of the self if the movement can hope to better the world for more than just a relatively advantaged subset of the stigmatized group: most often, it targets the larger system that allocates social advantages on the basis of conformity to a narrowly conceived ideal of deservingness. Epstein (1987) deploys this narrative when he writes, "It would be unfortunate to reduce the politics of gay liberation to nothing more than the self-interested actions of an interest group, in competition with other such groups for various resources; such a model would imply that gays have no interests in common with other oppressed groups, and would almost entirely abandon any notion of a broader role for the gay movement in radical politics" (p. 22).

Critical solidarity's focus on fluidity not only lends itself to boundary questions in terms of who defines "the" lesbian and/or gay subject position but also challenges the idea that "gayness" itself is a fixed characteristic. On the left column of figure 1, the models of the self as *embattled* and *relating* posit the nature of the self as fixed, and proponents of these models insist that sexual orientation should be outside the realm of moral debate, as people simply are constituted with a fixed sexual orientation. The corresponding narratives of selfhood posit that lesbians and gay men (and, at times, bisexuals and transgender people) are unthreatening to heterosexuals because sexuality is fixed, so "recruitment" is impossible. In contrast, the narrative of critical solidarity lends itself to a fluid model of the sexual self, positing that the self is defined in a political context and therefore needs to be open to changing its definition. This *political* model of collective selfhood, articulated since the Gay Power movement of the early 1970s and labeled "queer" since the 1990s, insists on the fluidity of the self. For instance, gay activists of the New Left actively sought racial, gender, and economic justice as they sought to end homophobia and defined "gay, in its most far-reaching sense, [as] not homosexual, but sexually free" (Young 1977, p. 28; Armstrong 2002). Distinguishing Gay Power activists (critical solidarity) from gay pride (reified identity politics, humanistic dialogue), Armstrong argues that "Gay power activists did not see the affirmation of gay identity as the end goal of sexual politics. Gay power saw the creation of gay identity as merely a step toward the goal of getting rid of sexual identity categories altogether. Gayrevs [gay power] believed that 'everyone is gay, everyone is straight,' and that gay liberation should lead to 'a far greater acceptance of human sexuality and with that . . . a decrease in the stigma attached to unorthodox sex and a corresponding increase in overt bisexuality'" (Armstrong 2002, p. 85; quoting Altman [1993] and Young [1977]). In a climate in which sexuality is seen as biologically fixed, such a position challenges everyone to consider his or her own self-definition and possibly even to reinterpret past experiences or feelings. As Gamson points out regarding the more recent effort to build critical solidarity, "Queerness in its most distinctive forms shakes the ground on which gay and lesbian politics have been built, taking apart the ideas of a 'sexual minority' and a 'gay community,' indeed of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and even 'man' and 'woman'" (1996, p. 395). This position asserts that sexual fluidity is inherent in everyone, while politicizing the context that necessitates and defines sexual and gender identities.

An evangelistic narrative of collective selfhood is also represented in movements around sexual and gender orientation. This model derives from a tension that can be found at times within LGBT movements, around a tendency some have noticed for people who value LGBT liberation to slip occasionally into hedonism; having had “morality” used to deny the legitimacy of same-sex sexual intimacy, people may become suspicious of all sexual ethics (neglecting where that may lead) or have an undeveloped set of ethical assumptions (Minkowitz 1998; see also Seidman 1995). An evangelistic narrative, like the critical solidarity narrative, posits the self as fluid. When it is coupled with beliefs that ethical lapses result from same-sex sexual expression itself being immoral, it can lead people to see gay identity politics as celebrating a false and hedonistic “freedom.” This view is typified by supporters of the ex-gay movement, which teaches that particular religious practices and faith can help people to embrace the truth of conservative Christianity, leave homosexuality behind them, and encourage others to do the same.[18]

Since this mode of organizing was not clearly articulated in my conversations with Jews, looking at the case of the ex-gay movement helps to illuminate this narrative’s conceptions of boundaries, consciousness, and politics. The narrative begins with a Manichaean sense of good and evil, us and them, which is critical of what it sees as the this-worldliness of LGBT identity politics. It stresses the possibility of crossing from the side of evil to that of good through self-transformation. For example, in Erzen’s (2006) study of an ex-gay group, the leader expresses a fluid conception of selfhood that shifts from lost (gay identified) to a redeemed (not gay identified) self very gradually: “If you’ve submitted, the Lord will put you through a period where you don’t know who you are. You lose your identity for a while. Then, finally, your heterosexual identity begins to emerge and you think, I could do that. I could have a relationship. You really want somebody who is going to be yours. You can have it in [heterosexual] marriage” (p. 116). Similarly, in a testimony published by the ex-gay group Exodus International, Thomas (2007) affirms a rigid boundary between “us” and “them,” expressing disdain for a fixed model of the self as he discusses his earlier life as an “out and proud gay identified man” to whom “being gay was the only way I thought possible of knowing and being known. According to everyone around me . . . being ‘gay’ was my only option. I had moved out of the closet only to find myself living in a pigeonhole." Having learned to "give up my self," he remarks, "I want you, dear reader, to walk away encouraged to know that God knows you and all you have done, and He loves you regardless. I want you to discover what I have discovered: that self-sufficiency never works; the only real freedom is a selfless approach to all of our relationships. By living this way, the Lord releases us to live up to our potential for which He created us." Using the narrative of evangelizing, insiders describe their own transformations in order to inspire others to transform as well; each self may be opened to the truth, becoming a redeemed self. Like proponents of humanistic dialogue, actors guided by this narrative focus on touching individual hearts as a means to revealing what they posit as a transcendent truth.

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[18] Programs to “cure” people of homosexuality have been discredited by the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and many other large-scale professional medical and mental health associations (Just the Facts Coalition 2008). Nonetheless, since many of the movement’s adherents take issue with the large-scale LGBT identity politics movement and have developed a counternarrative that treats boundaries, consciousness, and politics, it is related to the LGBT movement, without which it would not exist. In theory, a progay movement could use this narrative as well, but given the movement’s history of struggle, “recruitment” is generally regarded as illegitimate; this illegitimacy follows, in part, from accusations of recruitment coming from antigay movements, which do “recruit.”

With its focus on individuals, this mode can draw criticism for being too rigid or authoritarian in its vision or for neglecting material social conditions in its recruitment efforts.[19] But in spite of its seeming apolitical nature, it can serve a role in policy making as well. As Erzen (2006, p. 185) argues, "Since the early 1990s . . . anti-gay legislation is no longer supported simply by anti-gay rhetoric but through the message that there is hope for healing. Christian Right activism now directly relies upon the personal testimonies of ex-gays to oppose any local, state, or national attempts to secure rights for gay people in the realm of marriage, gay-positive school curricula, partner benefits, and adoption policy. Using the testimonies of ex-gay men and women, the Christian Right promotes wider anti-gay activism cloaked in the rhetoric of choice, change, and compassion." Erzen shows that ex-gay people themselves may object to such campaigns on political grounds or because these campaigns misrepresent the constant struggle that ex-gay conversion entails. Given both the ex-gay and Christian Right movements' insistence that homosexuality falls on the sinful side of a Manichaean boundary, however, the resonance is unsurprising. Those who insist on sexual fixity as a rationale for equal rights for LGBT people may worry that allowing for sexual fluidity validates the ex-gay movement, but not to allow for fluidity can result in silencing the insights that come from critical solidarity narratives as well.

RETHINKING BOUNDARIES, CONSCIOUSNESS, AND POLITICS

Identity politics has emerged as a way to make sense of, engage, and change the social conditions of stigmatization and material disadvantage from which it emerges. Because those conditions are inherently self-contradictory, it occupies two related positions of tension: the paradox of stigmatization and the tension between sincerity and strategy in organizing. When people who identify with a movement find that its narratives fail to reflect their own experiences and sense of self, they can respond by organizing to promote alternative narratives of collective selfhood. These narratives vary with respect to how they define the boundaries between "us" and "them"—with absolute opposition or a focus on similarities. They vary with regard to their consciousness of the self—as fixed or fluid. And they vary with regard to how they envision the source of social change—one individual at a time or at the level of social systems. "Identity politics" is not simply one mode of organizing. Table 1 summarizes those alternative narratives, practices, and models of the self.

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[19] Emerson and Smith (2000) make this point regarding an "evangelizing" reformulation of the critical solidarity narrative of racial reconciliation.

The world provides ample evidence to support each narrative: it is not difficult to find examples of the dominant society, in particular times and places, wanting to destroy Jews, LGBTs, and many others. Equally compelling evidence demonstrates that when people of the dominant society truly relate to Jews, LGBTs, and others, discrimination and stereotypes come to seem to them both implausible and profoundly unfair (Moon, in press). It changes people's lives profoundly when they realize how their own self-definition is tied up in concepts that come from and legitimate dominant, unjust, social arrangements: stories of such realizations evoke stories of religious conversion and build momentum for solidarity and liberation movements that focus on eradicating the categories (of sexuality, nation, and the like) that constrain everyone and legitimate injustice. Similarly, the self-transformations that happen when one recognizes an eternal-seeming truth and how it impinges on one's life can inspire such certainty and serenity in a chaotic-feeling world that it seems unethical not to share it.

When we consider that different narratives of collective selfhood define what it means to be part of the group at the level of ontology, it becomes clear why certain conflicts are as heated as they are. Impinging on implicit self-definitions, a conflict can threaten the very existence of the self and the group, as Rick articulated when he spoke of considering the possibility of a binational state as "existential denial." A model of the self that challenges any of these can feel viscerally threatening because it can threaten to eradicate the very basis of one's self-definition.

Many groups and movements have versions of these alternative narratives; the most compelling and successful may be those that can effectively balance more than one, to speak to members' own ambivalences and varied experiences. However, movements can confuse and alienate members when they slip between narratives. For instance, the ex-gay movement's acceptance of fluidity for gays and lesbians but insistence on

TABLE 1
Alternative Narratives of Identity Politics

Alternative Narrative	Reason for Altering Identity Politics Narrative	Mode of Organizing	Mode's Emphasis	Model of Collective Selfhood
Narrative of reified identity	Too capacious	Reifying boundaries and self-definitions	Boundaries	Embattled
Narrative of humanistic dialogue	Too defensive	Creating opportunities for relating	Relationships	Relating
Narrative of critical solidarity	Too chauvinistic	Advancing critique and acting in solidarity	Alliances, self-transformation	Political
Narrative of evangelism	Too petty	Recruiting to the side of truth	Conversion	Redeemed

heterosexual fixity allows it to be co-opted by the more “reified” narrative of the religious right, in spite of some ex-gays’ disagreement with its political programs. Likewise, solidarity with “embattled” Palestinian groups can move members of a Jewish critical solidarity group to neglect the humanity of Israelis as they seek to affirm that of Palestinians. Organizations have dissolved when members confounded narratives of embattlement and critical solidarity (Gould 2009). Considering such slippages can help us to make sense of a great deal of contradiction and conflict in social life.

This framework may shed light on conditions outside of movements conventionally defined as “identity politics.” As Morris (1992), Calhoun (1995), and Bernstein (1997) have pointed out, materialist politics are not in reality dichotomous with identity politics. Since elements of instrumentality and identification are present in both categories of movements, we may well expect to find similar tensions in movements not usually characterized as identity politics, such as the labor movement or any political party.

This framework also offers to shed light on collective selfhood in conditions without stigma and structural disadvantage. For one reason, some scholars have argued that identity politics now provides one of increasingly few sets of scripts for participating in public life at all, inciting people who wish to have a public voice to define themselves as part of a group that is stigmatized and disadvantaged in order to deploy identity politics’ narratives (Berlant 1997; Brown 2001). To the extent that that is true, identifying the models of collective selfhood that emerge from identity politics can help us to understand a great deal about contemporary social life.

Furthermore, the conditions of globalization have brought to light the concrete political effects of meaning systems that stigmatize certain groups of people, but they have also made self-definition a perpetual concern in general. Gergen (1991) argues that late capitalism’s increasing and intensified technologies for communication and travel create “partial identities” and “a *multiphrenic* condition, in which one begins to experience the vertigo of unlimited multiplicity” (p. 49; emphasis in original). While pragmatists would point out that the self has always been multiple, some people may feel that they have lost footing relative to earlier in their lives. By acknowledging both the increasingly widespread experience of fluidity and the feelings of existential danger that feeling can evoke, my framework may provide a foundation for conceptualizing how people experience selfhood as it jumps among contexts of intelligibility.

By disaggregating the concept of collective identity into ideal-typical models that vary in their treatment of group boundaries, consciousness, and politics, we can clarify our thinking about what people mean when they define themselves as part of any imagined community (Anderson 1983). Attending to these different narratives and models of collective selfhood may help us to better understand not only intragroup conflicts and the successes and failures of social movements but tensions in any effort—artistic, spiritual, political, or otherwise—to speak to and mobilize a specific population. We open the door to thinking about how different ways of envisioning a collective self can shape individual selves—as people discipline themselves and as they discipline, or police, each other in everyday interactions and broader programs of collective definition.

Rather than making totalizing claims about "identity," what it is and how it works, we need to look inductively at the ways people come to share understandings of who "we" are, who "we" are not, and what "we" need to do to make the world safer, fairer, or more peaceful. Understanding different narratives of collective selfhood attunes us to the processes by which people come to define themselves, as well as to the processes by which they come to feel, amid the social complexity of the 21st century, that they make sense—that they *belong* somewhere.

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