# Book Review/Compte rendu

**Amin Ghaziani**, *The Dividends of Dissent: How Conflict and Culture Work in Lesbian and Gay Marches on Washington*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 379 pp. $US 25.00 paper (978-0-226-28996-0), $US 80.00 hardcover (978-0-226-28995-3)

*The Dividends of Dissent* calls for social movements scholars to pay closer attention to infighting as a social movement process. Given that infighting is generally seen as destructive and a distraction from social movement goals, Amin Ghaziani looks for benefits that may result from arguing and side-taking by individuals or factions within social movements. In addition, the book lays out in vivid detail the history of the lesbian and gay movement's four national marches on Washington between 1979 and 2000. The book is thoroughly researched and well written, bringing to life these important moments in LGBTQ history. An awkward definition of infighting that excludes interpersonal conflict limits the book's immediate contribution to social movements theory but raises important questions about how activists accommodate disparate claims, represent diverse constituencies, and negotiate a movement's transition from local politics to a national stage.

Despite a great deal of attention to LGBTQ activism in general, the politics of bringing people together for national marches has been understudied. Ghaziani assembles a wide variety of secondary sources and dozens of interviews with activists to create a detailed, comprehensive history of the US lesbian and gay movement's national marches. The level of empirical depth in this book is impressive. Ghaziani focuses his analytical lens on the coordination of the marches, especially the debates among national and local movement leaders. It is through this study of internal debates among activists that Ghaziani's analysis of infighting emerges.

In 1979, the first lesbian and gay March on Washington was staged. At that time, the lesbian and gay movement — LGBTQ is a term that emerged later — was very strong in large cities and some smaller cities and university towns. It could not realistically be described as a national movement; although there were a few national lesbian and gay organizations, these were run on shoestring budgets and had little power. Most activism was local, coming out of the lesbian and gay communities that

had blossomed in the 1970s. However, in the wake of the efforts of the antigay movement to disrupt the gains of several local movement groups across the country, and with efforts to establish dialogues and build coalitions among these local groups already underway, the idea took hold that the March on Washington would be the event to bring discrimination against lesbians and gay men to the nation's attention. Since then, the lesbian and gay movement has sponsored three additional marches, in 1987, 1993, and 2000, all of which are carefully documented in this book.

Ghaziani's analysis focuses on the controversies that emerged in this planning process and the debates that they fostered. Planning and executing national marches required massive coordination, embedded in which was conflict. There was conflict between national movement organizations and local LGBTQ groups, there was conflict about which strategic choices were the best ones for the movement, and there was even conflict about whether to march on Washington at all. When should the march be? What should be included in the statement of demands? How will marginalized groups like transpeople and people of colour be included? Ghaziani notes that, although the tasks required for planning each of the four national marches were the same on the surface, the debates that resulted from each of these tasks was substantively different.

It is these debates about movement priorities, inclusivity, and strategies that Ghaziani calls infighting. By arguing about the details of the march, activists defined the movement, set strategies, and strengthened collective identities. Infighting in activist organizations, Ghaziani argues, is misunderstood as harmful and destructive. Rather than see infighting as threatening group, he creates an empirical project around discovering the effects of infighting, reaching a much different conclusion. Ghaziani argues that infighting is not a distasteful threat to activism; rather it is the very process through which activism occurs.

The book's definition of infighting limits its theoretical contribution, however. Ghaziani explicitly narrows his analysis to focus only on debates about issues, excluding interpersonal disputes. He defines infighting as "task conflicts, that is, disputes over the content of the work in which activists engage … rather than relationship conflicts, that is, interpersonal friction" (p. 19). By focusing on issues rather than relationships, Ghaziani not only strays from common usage of the term, but he also stacks the deck in favour of finding that these arguments are productive rather than destructive. Given that the lesbian and gay movement has a rich history of interpersonal conflict that has resulted in, for example, leader resignations and organizational restructuring, the question of whether and to what extent interpersonal conflicts are destructive

is a worthy topic of analysis. It would also be interesting to learn the extent to which interpersonal and task conflicts are intertwined. However, Ghaziani's exclusion of relationship conflicts from his data precludes the very questions that should be central to his analysis.

Ghaziani claims that infighting is a novel topic in social movement analysis, but in defining the concept to describe conflicts about movement tasks, Ghaziani is covering well-traveled ground. His analysis acknowledges but fails to incorporate the large body of scholarship that deals with internal conflicts as part of the normal processes of collective identity building, boundary maintenance, selection of protest tactics, and so on. Social movements scholars have long known that task conflicts such as these are not only productive but invaluable to activism. Scholars looking for this book to build on this literature by addressing the role of interpersonal conflict alongside, or perhaps embedded within, these central tasks of activism will be disappointed.

Nonetheless, this book's wealth of historical information on national marches in the lesbian and gay movement makes it a valuable contribution to lesbian and gay studies and to the sociology of sexualities. It provides a unique view into the process through which a movement becomes national, connects activists from disparate regions, and produces an event that inspires tens of thousands of supporters to travel far and wide to make demands on a national scale. The book produces an excellent discussion over the role of task conflicts in deciding upon strategies and building communities within social movements. In addition, *The Dividends of Dissent* raises a number of questions for future work, and challenges scholars to think about conflict inside social movements.

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**Tina Fetner** is an assistant professor at McMaster University. Her recent book, *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*, examines the dynamic relationship between these two opposing movements over their thirty-year history and demonstrates that the growth of the lesbian and gay movement was influenced by this powerful foe. Fetner's research also includes analyses of the role that structural influences such as economic inequality and social policy play in shaping people's attitudes toward homosexuality. Current projects include analyses of same-sex relationships in the era of legal marriage and youth participation in gay-straight alliances.