Urbanism and Gay Identity

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T his paper proposes that the social, economic, and political drivers of urbanism constructed contemporary notions of gay identity. Starting around the mid-to-late twentieth century, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals transformed urban spaces into centers of social, cultural, and political utility. As middle-class Americans suburbanized, socially stigmatized and emboldened gays settled into vacated urban spaces where deviant lifestyles were enshrined by the safety and anonymous milieu of the city (Bailey, 1998; Castells, 1983). Amid the physical construction of communities around residential and commercial gay concentrations, the social construction of a gay identity based on sexual personhood emerged contemporaneously (Lauria & Knopp, 1985). Although some scholars have commented on the topic of sexual identity and space (Castells, 1983; D'Emilio, 1981; Jackson, 1989; Knopp, 1990b), little research has been done to specifically connect identity to the drivers of urbanism. This paper provides a framework for further interdisciplinary research in sexual identity and community development.

The Social Construction of Identity: Urbanism and Sexual Identity Formation

Starting around the mid-to-late twentieth century, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) individuals transformed urban spaces into centers of social, cultural, and political utility (Bailey, 1998; Castells, 1983; D'Emilio, 1981; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). Sexually stigmatized pariahs were drawn into the city by a flourishing subculture where experimentation and romantic relationships could be pursued with same sex partners. The physical boundaries that would define "deviant" spaces, however, became more than just territories for sexually repressed outcasts: they became epicenters of an international countercultural identity movement that gave definition to the "gay self" and challenged broader heterosexual assumptions surrounding sex, gender, sexual orientation, and sexual identity (Castells, 1983; Epstein, 1987; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). This paper argues that the social, economic, and political drivers of urbanism

socially constructed our contemporary notion of a "gay identity." Specifically, the analytical framework established here applies constructivist theories of human identity formation to urban space.

Before moving forward, it is important to define terms. "Gay" is an illusive word; although it is often used to describe male homosexuality exclusively, it is frequently used to describe all LGBT people. Some scholars have offered the term "queer" to more broadly recognize the community of non-heterosexuals, but "queer" is no less controversial (Khayatt, 2002). Berube and Escoffier (1991) for example, suggest that queer "[was] *meant* to be confrontational–opposed to gay assimilationists and gay oppressors while inclusive of people who have been marginalized by anyone in power" [emphasis added] (p. 168).

Scholars interested in LGBT identities have rejected "queer" precisely because it either speaks against the narrative of a single gay identity or because the suggestion of a queer identity dilutes subsidiary identities (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) (Berube & Escoffier, 1991; Harris, 1996; Khayatt, 2002). This paper employs the term "gay" precisely because homosexual males were primarily involved in the development of urban gay communities. Where appropriate, "lesbian" and "bisexual" will be distinguished to describe female-female sexual attraction and non-exclusive heterosexual attraction, respectively.

    Research into the urban geography of sexuality creates some discomfort among scholars. Lauria & Knopp (1985) describe this feeling as "squeamishness." Christopherson (1989) adds, "This squeamishness regarding sexual issues is partly homophobic and partly a justifiable fear of never being cited except in a list of interesting, albeit peripheral work" (p. 88). Emergent research in the twenty-first century needs to move beyond the cultural discomfort (or "squeamishness") that limited work in previous decades. "It is time to bring gay and lesbian geographies out into the open, in order to fully understand the role of sexuality and sexual preference in shaping social space" (Bell, 1991, p. 328). Our collective cultural aversion to sexuality cannot restrict emergent scholarly research. The implications of this work describe LGBT geographies, the manifold issues involving marginalization, and the development of communities. Academic research should "produce meaningful discussions of the relationships between erotics, communities and identities" (Knopp, 2007, p. 30). This paper connects the social influences of urbanism to community development and identity formation. It will first describe how social influences shape our cultural perceptions of sexual identity, and then discuss how cities influenced the social, economic, and political development of gay communities between 1950 and 1980. At the conclusion, important implications for future research will be offered.

Identity as a Social Construction

The idea of an identity based on sexuality is peculiar in human history. French theorist Michel Foucault (1978) notes the "homosexual person" historically has not been conceived of as a "person" per se. Rather, conceptions of the "homosexual" were linked to human sexual behavior, specifically sodomy (Epstein, 1987). Foucault, arguing from a post-modern perspective, asserted that elements of Western civilization have created social constructions around identity. These specific drivers included the increasing importance attached to sexuality in general, the widespread proliferation of social control structures, the social control that operates through sanctions against specific acts, and the growing power of professionals (specifically doctors) to define social problems and reinforce social mores (Epstein, 1987; Foucault, 1978; Knopp, 1990a; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). Epstein (1987), for example, notes that the medical categorization of homosexuality starting in the early twentieth century was one reflection of Foucault's social control theory. As psychiatrists diagnosed homosexuals with mental disorders, a typology developed around sexual personhood that stigmatized people with same sex attractions, and made them feel separate and distinct from heteronormative society (Epstein, 1987; Foucault, 1978; Knopp, 1990a; Lauria & Knopp, 1985)

    Many scholars have approached gay identity as a social construction (Epstein, 1987; Foucault, 1978; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). They posit that identity, in a broad sense, is the result of many social processes and developmental outcomes. Others, however, conceive of identity as predetermined, predisposed, and preordained. This view reflects a broader essentialist philosophy that Rahman (2000) describes as, "The common cultural understanding of sexuality as an innate and immutable identity, which is based on a model of biological sexual drives or instinct" (p. 5). Popular Western culture implicitly promotes a natural identity that suggests individuals express gay tendencies because "you're born this way" (Lady Gaga, 2011, track 2). This attitude is reverberant in some news magazines, such as this 2007 *New York* magazine cover story: "The Science of Gaydar; If sexual orientation is biological, are the traits that make people seem gay innate, too? The new research on everything from voice pitch to hair whorl" (France, 2007, p. 13). Constructivism and

essentialism question whether identity is the result of society or preordination: Is one's identity built through a lifetime of interactions, or is it predetermined from birth? Is it *nature* or *nurture*?

This piece assumes that identity is socially constructed. Essentialist philosophy suggests that people act certain ways *only* because of some immutable aspect of themselves. This view is dangerous because it conceives of a singular identity that may engender common stereotypes that are racial, chauvinistic, or homophobic in character. Alternatively, constructivism provides a platform for understanding the social control that drives urbanism, develops communities, and coalesces individuals around similar social, economic, and political goals. This view holds that urban gay communities formed as a response to shared meanings and stigmatization. Constructivism's subsidiary schools of thought—interactionism and labeling—are not at odds with one another, but complement each other in describing how sexual communities and their resultant identities are social constructions.

Symbolic Interactionism
Symbolic interactionists assert that sexual acts by themselves have no inherent meaning. The only meanings sexual acts do have are those ascribed to them by the larger society. Blumer (1969) established three premises to the symbolic interactionist perspective: (i.) humans act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things; (ii.) the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society; and (iii.) these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters. The symbolic interactionist perspective has particular utility in theories that aim to describe why communities are created in the first place. Cohen (1982) notes that it is, "The sense of difference [that] lies at the heart of people's awareness of their culture, and […] makes it appropriate for ethnographers to designate as 'cultures' such arenas of difference" (p. 2). Symbolic interactionists argue that meaning is derived from a process of interacting with others. Under this framework, gay identity is formed out of shared community space where homosexual conduct and romantic relationships are regarded as the normal and accepted behavior (Cohen, 1982). Gagnon (1977) demonstrated how gay communities were created by sexual interactions, as well as other cultural factors. Where heteronormative culture viewed homosexual conduct as deviant, gays created their own identity by sharing experiences and bonds that modify and create a uniform system of conduct.

Labeling Theories
According to labeling theory, individuals in society are labeled "deviant" from the mainstream culture because their stigma deviates from the norm. In order to be stigmatized an individual must undergo a complex process of behavioral action and internalization (Goffman, 1963; McIntosh, 1968; Weeks, 1998). Noting the contribution of labeling theory to gay identity, Epstein (1987) describes behavioral action as "primary deviance" and the reactions and internalization of the labeling process as "secondary deviance." Primary deviance is represented by the action itself: in the homosexual example, it is the act of physical intimacy with members of the same sex. Jenkins (2008) notes that primary deviance, however, is not enough to stigmatize: people make excuses, they apply (ir)rationality or reason to the situation, and they try to justify their activity in some higher-order plane of social values. Secondary deviance is far more impactful simply because it internalizes the individual's feeling of difference from the group or society. One of the best-known examples in the sociological literature is the Rosenthal and Jacobsen (1968) experiment. In this study, Rosenthal and Jacobsen attributed intelligence to eye color and observed that schoolchildren possessing the stigmatized eye color consistently underperformed (Rosenthal & Jacobsen, 1968).

Goffman (1963) posits that the degree to which one is stigmatized relates to the disjunction between the "personal identity" and "social identity." Personal identity is autobiographical: it is the perceived set of facts that help an individual define their own personhood. Social identity refers to a larger construct. These are "[the] means of categorizing persons [to] complement [the] attributes felt to be ordinary and natural for members of each of these categories" (p. 2). Stigma is created by

the gap between the "actual" personal identity and the "virtual" social identity. When a person internalizes an act of primary deviance, the extent of internalized stigma is related to the gap between a person's self-concept and the social construct of deviance for that behavior. Autobiographically and internally, a person may believe "this is something I would never do," but cannot reconcile it with acts of primary deviant behavior. Stigma is the mark of disgrace one feels for personally possessing or manifesting a deviant social identity.

Stigmatization is not only a process of self-actualization, as illustrated above. Stigmatization is also a culturally produced phenomenon in which members of society actively participate in the application of labels to acts of deviance. As the Rosenthal and Jacobsen experiment demonstrated, schoolchildren actively applied labels to students with stigmatized eye colors. McIntosh (1968) notes that homosexuals occupy social roles in which sexual practices are stigmatized to keep the rest of society pure. Clearly, stigma is a bidirectional, participatory process where agreed upon moral values and social labels are imposed (i.) from the society on the individual, and (ii.) internalized from the perspective of the individual. Stigma, by its nature, is a mechanism that categorizes homosexuals to their social identity and subjugates them to the larger social control structure (Goffman, 1963; Jenkins, 2008).

Socially Constructed Communities

Closing this discussion on constructivism, it is important to note that mores, normative values, and imposed stigmas have historically varied across cultures. In some ancient civilizations, individuals were able to assuage the severity of labels when one partner in a same sex relationship would assume opposite sex characteristics (Knopp, 1990a). Same-sex unions have been documented in socially acceptable contexts throughout the world (Lauria & Knopp, 1985), including the Aborigines of Australia (Herdt, 1984), the Azande tribe of the South Sudan (Evans-Pritchard, 1970), and Native American Indian tribes in North America (Knopp, 1990a), among others. Several scholars have noted that it was not until recently in Western culture that many homosexuals began seeing themselves as culturally distinct (Foucault, 1978; Lauria & Knopp, 1985; McIntosh, 1968; Weeks, 1998). Lauria and Knopp (1985) identify the nineteenth century as this starting point and note:

> Prior to this period, homosexual behavior was conceived of as a personal transgression not unlike adultery. To be sure it was frowned upon, but there was no separate category of persons labeled "homosexuals" to which a host of characteristic personality traits was attributed. (p. 156)

Reevaluating McIntosh's work, Weeks (1998) describes two important implications for scholarship in identity and sexuality. First, the very classification of "gay" *is* cultural. In contemporary U.S. society, gay culture is precisely related to an identity built around behavioral activities and primary deviance. Borrowing from symbolic interactionism, primary deviance has absorbed a number of imposed meanings. Second, studies that seek to understand our conception of homosexuality could reveal more information about the evolution of the label, and thus the identity itself (Weeks, 1998). Evaluated over time and across cultures, variances in how societies label homosexuals could reveal similarities or dissimilarities in "gay" identities.

The transformation of sexual behavior to sexual personhood is a social constructivist critique reflective of post-modern philosophy (Foucault, 1978; Epstein, 1987). Identities are not innate, nor consistent, but constructed and dependent on culture and context. Constructivism holds that contemporary Western gay identity formed as a result of the meanings ascribed to sexual activity (symbolic interactionism) and the processes related to labeling deviant action. Instead of one's gay identity originating from a set of inborn, naturally occurring characteristics, constructivists assert that the meanings ascribed to gay individuals and subcultures are the result of many social and developmental outcomes. These outcomes are the result of socialization, labeling, and self-actualization (D'Emilio, 1992; Epstein, 1987; Maylon, 1982). In the next section, this paper will

explore how gay urbanism actually worked to construct this sense of community, and by extension, sense of identity.

Social, Economic, and Political Drivers of Gay Urbanism

The spatial movement of gays into urban spaces facilitated the social construction of communities within physically defined neighborhoods. As middle-income whites cleared the inner cities in the 1960s and 1970s, gays found residence in freshly vacated urban neighborhoods (Bailey, 1998; Castells, 1983; Knopp, 1990a, 1990b). Several important factors characterized the lesbian and gay migration into cities. Bailey (1998) notes that LGBT people were driven into the city by the desire for local political power, the need more resources, and a general sense of safety and anonymity. Sociologist Manuel Castells' (1983) prolific study of San Francisco documented many of these factors in rich ethnographic detail. He hypothesized that gays moved into urban spaces because cultural permissiveness allowed for sexual experimentation. Several scholars have since expanded upon Castells' (1983) analysis, describing the social, economic, and political dimensions behind the mass urban migration into cities (Armstrong, 2002; Jackson, 1989; Knopp, 1990b; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). Although some have commented on the topic of an emergent gay identity in specific neighborhoods (Jackson, 1989; Knopp, 1990b), the connection between urbanism and identity remains unclear.

Gay urbanism has been studied in a number of different social, economic, and political contexts. Some of these studies have included Los Angeles, New York, New Orleans and Minneapolis (Castells, 1983; Knopp, 1987, 1990b; Lauria & Knopp, 1985; Thomas, 1986). This piece uses San Francisco as a case study to base an argument for gay urbanism. Notes Jackson (1989): "[San Francisco] provides the most readily available evidence on which to base an understanding of the spatial expression of sexuality and for gauging the significance of territory in the development of gay politics" (p. 123). San Francisco's place in contemporary gay culture has made it a recognizable symbol of gay identity and community development. From a research perspective, it is a city with a rich scholarly and literary documentation of urban gay community development.

Lesbian and gay migration into cities complemented the mass exodus of white, middle-class Americans moving out of cities. In 1910, the five boroughs of New York accounted for 68% of the metropolitan area's total population; by 1970, it only accounted for 39%. Cleveland's metropolitan population fell at similarly dramatic levels, from 77% to 36% during the same period. Businesses and jobs also followed: in the 1960s, New York City lost 9.7% of jobs, while the suburbs gained an astonishing 24.9% (Thomas, 1977). Suburban migration was a general trend that defined post-World War II America.

Data relating to the extent of the lesbian and gay migration into cities is more difficult to ascertain. Evidence of the gay migration can be inferred by examining the proliferation of gay-friendly businesses and nonprofits. In San Francisco, Armstrong (2002) notes that in 1964, less than 25 gay-owned or gay-friendly nonprofits operated in the city, but by 1979 there were more than 100. Similarly, in 1964 there were 5 commercial businesses focused on sex, but by 1979 that number exceeded 230. Critics may suggest that San Francisco is a unique agglomeration of counter-cultural phenomena, but the general trend is consistent in major U.S. cities. Over the two-decade period spanning from 1960 to 1980, gays migrated into cities and came to occupy formerly abandoned urban spaces (Castells, 1983; Armstrong 2002). Although an approximation, Castells estimates that by 1980 there were 110,000–120,000 (two-thirds male, one-third female) lesbians and gays in San Francisco, among a total population of 678,000.

The pivotal moment for gay migration came after the Stonewall riots of June 28, 1969. By the late 1960s, homosexual intercourse was illegal in nearly every U.S. state. Police raids on underground gay bars were frequent. In New York City alone, police decoy practices entrapped hundreds of homosexuals each week for soliciting sexual intercourse in both public and private venues (Davis & Heilbroner, 2011). Stonewall was a catharsis for the underground and sexually repressed lesbian and gay community. After 1969, migration into San Francisco increased

exponentially (Castells, 1983). Armstrong's (2002) analysis of nonprofits and commercial sex establishments in San Francisco shows a three-fold increase in such establishments between 1964 and 1980.

Several interconnected social, economic, and political factors made cities attractive for urban migrants between 1950 and 1980. In order to demonstrate these factors, this paper will use Castells' (1983) foundational documentation of gay migration into San Francisco, and discuss other scholarly research where appropriate. First, a push/pull phenomenon fueled gay urbanism (social). Second, gentrification in the urban housing market and the emergence of an exclusive pink economy facilitated the distinctive look-and-feel of gay neighborhoods (economic). Last, the new emphasis on "coming out" identified the "gay person" as a distinct social and political entity. As gays concentrated in urban neighborhoods, political power became consolidated (political). Combined, these factors made gay spatial concentrations into real communities with identities.

Social Drivers of Urbanism
Permissive attitudes worked to attract gays into "deviant" spaces of cities (pull). However, heterosexual society often consigned gay subcultures to the fringes of the city (push). Starting around the 1950s, this push-pull mechanism opened fissures in the traditionally conservative American landscape (Castells, 1983). Peripheral urban spaces opened up as centers of condoned deviance, became more visibly sexualized spaces of gay cosmopolites, and finally were transformed into spaces of neighborhood and community organization. It was not until the 1970s that social and cultural upheaval finally erupted into the visible consolidation of urban gay sex life with broader social, economic, and political objectives. Cities were the perfect platform for emergent gay communities precisely because they were fortified from the forces of political and social opposition.

San Francisco condoned deviant subcultural spaces starting in the early 1950s (Castells, 1983; D'Emilio, 1981; Jackson, 1989). Gay bars sprung up around the North Beach area, and the Black Cat, in particular, became the center of early gay life in the city. Urban Beatnik culture was permissive of many activities U.S. society labeled "deviant" (Castells, 1983; D'Emilio, 1981). Accordingly, the City of San Francisco established informal physical boundaries for deviant activities to occur (including prostitution and drug use) (Castells, 1983). In 1951, a California Supreme Court decision barred police from raiding bars and revoking liquor licenses on the sole basis that the patrons were homosexual (Castells, 1983; Meeker, 1985). Compared to the rest of the country, gay social space was informally and formally sanctioned. The liberal culture that enshrined gay life ensured that the space was livable in the first place. More important, urban spaces were distinguished from nonurban spaces by the relative cultural acceptability of "deviant" behaviors and activities.

Throughout the 1960s, many gay men resided in less-visible, urban subcultural communes. In his ethnography of the early gay community in London, for example, Birch (1988) describes the day-to-day interactions of gay men residing in communes near Covent Garden. Like many of the early gay migrants, Birch himself was an expatriate of the English countryside who sensed the allure and freedom of the city. In Birch's analysis, the gay commune structure was very much tied to the Gay Liberation Movement in which the broader political objective of "challenging the role of the nuclear family and the ideal of monogamy […]" (p. 51) took precedence over more social objectives of local community transformation.

In San Francisco, gay social scenes and cruising locations facilitated real-estate speculation around previously underdeveloped areas (Castells, 1983). Bell (1991) calls these the "pleasure geographies of gay nightlife." From the beginning, the movement to construct an urban gay community was male dominated because "[…] male spaces [were] more numerous and frankly more sexually-oriented than female spaces" (Knopp, 1990a, p. 21). Knopp (1990b) concludes that the geography of sexuality, therefore, is primarily an urban geography. Bars, parks, bathhouses, and anonymous meeting locations—mostly located in cities—were gathering places for homosexual men.

As more men poured into cities the underground sexual geography transformed to a more social and cultural geography. Castells (1996) contextualizes the objectives of urban migratory movements as obtaining, "(i.) Urban demands on living conditions and collective consumption; (ii.) The affirmation of local cultural identity; and (iii.) The conquest of local political economy and citizen participation" (p. 60). Relating to Castells' first objective, the incoming wave of gay migrants demanded proximity to the city's many social and economic amenities for collective consumption (Lauria & Knopp, 1985). These included work, civic culture, and sex. In the early 1970s a movement was informally organized among San Francisco gays to take over an abandoned Irish Catholic working class neighborhood (Castells, 1983). "The Castro" district presented two distinct characteristics. First, the homes were traditionally Victorian and were in relatively decent condition. Second, the area was middle-income and relatively affordable for many gays. Since homosexuals were predominately young, single, and childless, many pooled their incomes to afford the cost of neighborhood rents. This purposeful effort to populate the Castro resulted in the cultivation of gay commercial and business enterprises. Income inequalities, however, forced poorer gays to populate the South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood (Castells, 1983).

Economic Drivers of Urbanism
Physical neighborhood transformation was mostly driven by changes in the urban housing market. Castells (1983) observes that a second wave of more affluent gay professionals soon replaced poorer gay migrants. These professionals moved into the community, formed collectives, and pooled their incomes to purchase and renovate inexpensive buildings. Castells (1983) notes that this movement both improved the overall aesthetic quality of neighborhoods and inflated home values. Many residences in the adjoining Western Addition, Haight Ashbury, Potrero Hill, and Bernal Heights neighborhoods were similarly in declining condition when gays arrived. Lauria and Knopp (1985) collapse this process of urban redevelopment and gentrification into the umbrella term "urban renaissance." The increasing valuation of homes in the Castro had the effect of pushing up neighborhood rents beyond the reach of many lower income minority groups (Castells, 1983; Jackson, 1989). Violent clashes with neighboring black and Latino communities became frequent as the demand for new housing expanded into working-class neighborhoods, such as San Francisco's Mission district and Haight Ashbury (Castells, 1983).

Knopp (1990b) reconsiders the specific drivers behind urban housing redevelopment in emergent gay neighborhoods. In his study of the gay community in New Orleans, Knopp found that gentrification is more related to changes on the supply-side than the demand-side. Gay communities did not necessarily gentrify because the demand for housing grew exponentially. Rather, Knopp found that wealthy (often gay) land developers bought many residential and commercial properties and sold (supplied) them to gay middle-class professionals. Knopp (1990b) states that even nongay land speculators often had to make a difficult choice "[between] allying themselves with an unpopular social movement, or sacrificing their economic self-interest in order to avoid such an alliance" (p. 338). Gay urban redevelopment, therefore, is more of an income driven-phenomenon than an identity-driven phenomenon. Although Knopp's perspective describes the availability of housing to a discriminated class at the time, it is more likely that a combination of identity and income-related variables influenced shifts along the supply and demand curves in urban housing markets.

The role of gays in these markets did not go unfettered by the larger social and economic structure of the city. Gay housing and community development was spatially bounded by several socioeconomic variables. Castells (1983) examined several factors including the spatial proliferation of gay commercial and business enterprises, votes for gay candidates, the locations of multiple-male occupied homes, and maps generated by key informants. He found that gay concentrations tended to evolve along similar neighborhood lines and concluded, "The old triumvirate of social conservatism," property, family, and high class, restricted gays from spreading across the city and into the suburbs (Castells, 1983, p. 199). According to Castells (1983), gays did not concentrate in or around areas with (i.) high proportion of property ownership, (ii.) high proportions of family

concentrations and/or (iii.) at or above an income threshold. High land value by itself did not restrict gays from moving into higher class residential neighborhoods, but they did exclude poorer gays. Although gays gentrified lower income neighborhoods, gay concentrations hit a spatial wall when they came up against any of these forces (Castells, 1983).

Curiously, lesbian women concentrate differently than gay men, and therefore do not gentrify. Castells (1983) argues that this difference is more natural than social. According to Castells, men are instinctually driven to conquer territory, whereas women are more familial and emphasize intimate social networks. Some urban geographers have concurred with Castells' assertion that the physical signs of lesbian concentrations are absent, but note that the absence of physical signs of subculturization does not imply the absence of lesbian concentrations altogether (Adler & Brenner, 1997; Bell, 1991; Jackson, 1989). Adler and Brenner (1997) applied Castells' methodology to lesbian concentrations in a major Southwestern city. Unlike gay men, Adler and Brenner conclude that lesbian women confront a number of issues that are salient to them *as women*. First, the authors argue that lesbians do not have the same access to capital that men have. Second, lesbians are more likely than gay men to be primary caretakers of children. Last, lesbians are particularly vulnerable to acts of male violence. These issues describe the unique concerns of women in U.S. and world society. With regard to spatial concentration, lesbians reside in "hidden neighborhoods" that blend into communities but lack the physically obvious signs of subculturization. Only gay men gentrify for these reasons.

Gay involvement in the urban housing market is a popularly cited, and often controversial, component of the urbanism discussion. Gay gentrification, particularly, is "continually us[ed] in such a way as to reflect gay cultural values and serve the special needs of individual gays vis-à-vis society at large" (Lauria & Knopp, 1985, p. 159). More than any other form of economic influence, gentrification changed the look and feel of urban neighborhoods. Elucidating a subcultural theory of urbanism, Fischer (1976) proposes that the distinctive traits of urban subcultures are intensified by the city's size, density and heterogeneity. As cities increase in density and size, individuals are more likely to feel different from one another and bind together around shared identities. Applying this framework, "gay space" is distinguished by the many racial, ethnic. and class-defined compositions of adjacent urban neighborhoods. Subcultural theory suggests that gentrification is one way space amplifies distinctions. It has been argued, however, that this amplification was not inclusive of the broader LGBT community. Hemmings (1997), for example, notes that bisexuals often feel like tourists in gay neighborhoods.

It may be true that gays increased the aesthetic quality of urban neighborhoods, but these physical transformations did not go unfettered by prevailing heterosexual society. In fact, housing structures may have even acted *against* the growth of an organic gay identity. Watson (1986) observes, "Housing exists not simply as a means to satisfy a need; it also embodies a set of social relations" (p. 8). Adds Bell (1991): "Housing is primarily designed, built, financed, and intended for nuclear families—reinforcing a cultural norm of 'family life' with heterosexuality and patriarchy high on the agenda" (p. 325). In this new urban territory, gays transformed homes insofar as the physical structure of urban housing market allowed. In a postmodern sense, gay urban redevelopment may have appeared to affirm the emergent local cultural identity, but inevitably, this identity was neither completely original nor unbounded by the current structure of social relations. The old Victorian homes of the Castro were originally built and intended for traditional families, but gays had to make do with the existing physical structures that occupy urban space. Therefore, the homes gays came to occupy and renovate were not organic cultural representations of gay identities, but constructions based on predetermined social realities.

The development of a parallel economy further marked urban spaces as distinctive neighborhoods. In San Francisco, the pink economy "took its name from the pink triangle […] Hitler forced homosexuals to wear in Nazi concentration camps" (Heger, 1994, p. 127). Jackson (1989) notes that gays employed one another, patronized gay-owned stores, sought gay professional advise (therapists, doctors, and lawyers), and took advantage of a variety of gay services—from plumbing to furniture removals. Both Jackson (1989) and Castells (1983) also describe the

prominence of the Golden Gate Business Association, which became an extensive network for gay business professionals. Gays not only used their cultural power to transform residential neighborhoods in the urban housing market, but they also used their economic prowess to build an alternative economic infrastructure. In essence, they constructed cities-within-cities where inhabitants never had to leave to satisfy their sexual, recreational, cultural, or commercial desires (Epstein, 1987).

Political Drivers of Urbanism
Throughout the 1950s, the stigmatization of lesbians and gays internalized feelings of difference with heterosexuals (Epstein, 1987). It was not until the 1960s that an urban-based LGBT movement was organized around the notion of radical liberation. "Liberation" was the countercultural reaction to the widespread oppression of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people. The purpose of liberation was to emancipate oneself from internalized stigmas, and to embrace sexuality as part of a natural order. Stated an organizer in the Gay Liberation Movement, "The reason so few of us are bisexual is because society made such a big stink about homosexuality that we got forced into seeing ourselves as straight or nonstraight" (Epstein, 1987, p. 18). Writing about the impact of radical liberation, D'Emilio (1983) notes:

> The gay liberation movement […] began the transformation of a sexual subculture into an urban community. The group life of gay men and women came to encompass not only erotic interactions but also political, religious and cultural activity. Homosexuality and lesbianism [became] less of a sexual category and more of a human identity. (p. 243)

During the 1970s, the movement shifted: "Gone were the dreams of liberating society by 'releasing the homosexual in everyone.' Instead, homosexuals concentrated their energies on social advancement *as homosexuals*" (Epstein, 1987, p. 21). This moment in the 1960s was important because, amid the tumult and disorganization of society, lesbians and gays started to organize around their common feelings of differences with the heterosexual majority. Thomas (1986) describes what it meant to become part of a gay community in the 1960s. Unlike other identity movements, the gay movement was unique because it required individuals to "come out" first. Coming out is a public proclamation of sexuality: it is both an affirmation of selfhood and a pronouncement of difference. By coming out, lesbians, gays, and bisexuals can enjoy the cultural institutions of urban gay spaces with some impunity from social reprisals (Jackson, 1989; Herdt, 1992; Bell, 1991). Following Stonewall, hundreds of thousands of men were attracted to the city because they too wanted to liberate themselves from stigma. In San Francisco, gay civic associations and communes were organized to unite lesbians and gays around common values and lifestyles. One of the earliest associations, the Society for Individual Rights, was established to protect the legal rights of gay men. Similarly, the Daughters of Bilitis was also founded in San Francisco to educate and support lesbian women who were afraid to come out. Cities provided lesbians and gays with a platform to organize, publicize, and consolidate. Coming out was as much of a self-affirming act as it was a political declaration.

Urbanism provided a platform for political power to consolidate around this newfound identity (Brown, Browne, & Lim, 2007). When confronted with a hostile popular culture, gay men turned to the political apparatuses of cities to defend their urban sexual, recreational, commercial, and residential spaces (Lauria & Knopp, 1985). This was primarily facilitated through concentrating in certain residential neighborhoods (Castells, 1983; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). The consolidation of political power at the neighborhood-level allowed gays to define the issues most salient to them and press for their attention locally (Thomas, 1986).

In San Francisco's Castro neighborhood, the movement toward a more diffuse power structure enabled gay concentrations to organize politically (Castells, 1983). The disintegration of pro-growth coalitions around 1974 opened up an opportunity for liberal Mayor George Moscone to win election. Former Mayor Joseph Alioto pacified many minorities and labor activists by working with

the business community in the city to create more service-sector jobs (Thomas, 1986). By 1974, however, President Richard Nixon defunded the federal Model Cities and urban renewal programs, effectively depriving the pro-growth coalition of the patronage that fueled it (Castells, 1983). Moscone's coalition included organized labor, black leaders, several middle-class neighborhood associations, and (for the first time ever) an organized gay community. In November 1976, San Francisco voters approved a referendum that would elect city supervisors at the district level. Previously, the city's board of supervisors comprised 11 citywide positions, which tended to disproportionately reflect the conservative orientation of suburban voters. Castells (1983) notes that the 1976 referendum changed the composition of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors. The referendum caused the election of "two pro-labor Black women, two progressive White women, a socialist gay leader, and a well-known civil rights lawyer" (Castells, 1983, p. 137).

Harvey Milk, who lost the race for city supervisor in 1973 and 1975, won in 1977 under the more diffuse, pluralistic, district-wide power structure. Although Milk attracted more support running under a refined "straight image" citywide in 1975, his 1977 district included the Castro, Haight-Ashbury, and Noe Valley. These neighborhoods were considered prime turf for the Milk campaign (Castells, 1983; Thomas, 1986). Writing about the ascendency of Harvey Milk, Thomas (1986) notes that he gave meaning to "gay politics." Before Milk, there was no formally organized gay political movement. "Gay politics," if it existed, exerted only limited influence from outside the political system. In the short 11-month period that Milk served as a city supervisor, he was instrumental in forming a gay voting bloc. As supervisor, Milk worked with groups such as the Chinese-American Democrats, the Teamsters, and the Fireman's Union, who were all improbable interests to coalesce around political and policy issues (Castells, 1983; Thomas, 1986).

A 1980 ballot measure reinstated citywide elections following a wave of conservative resurgence. Nevertheless, the San Francisco experience illustrates how gay spatial concentrations influenced local politics. San Francisco may seem unique for the simple reason that Harvey Milk was the first openly gay elected politician, however, gays influenced local politics in other U.S. cities, as well (Jackson, 1989; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). Bailey (1998) describes the gay influence in New York City's 1981 mayoral election. Lauria and Knopp (1985) indicate that, "openly gay candidates have been elected to mayoral positions, city councils, and state legislatures in San Francisco, West Hollywood, Minneapolis, Boston, Laguna Beach, and Key West. Straight mayors, councilors, and even statewide candidates have actively courted gay votes in virtually every major city in the country […]" (p. 159). The local impact of urban gay concentrations may have been a phenomenon unique to the United States (Knopp, 1990a). In comparison, organized gay concentrations could not exert similar local influence under a more centralized power structure, such as in London (Bell, 1991). Around the time of Lauria and Knopp's writings, LGBT political influence was in its infancy; it is now clear that gay political influence transcends national and even international boundaries (Contreras, 2007). It all started in neighborhoods.

Culturally distinct neighborhoods appeared in major U.S. cities in and around the early 1960s. Underground gay subcultures were not new, but the cultural self-identification with "being a gay person" was new. San Francisco is but one example of how the city could provide social, economic, and political utility to emergent local cultures. As Castells (1983) identified, urban migratory movements first make demands on the urban living conditions, then bond over shared cultural identities, and finally utilize these elements to broker for political power at the local level. In many major U.S. cities and across the Western world, social, economic and political drivers of urbanism transformed how the broader "gay community" identifies itself. Despite these changes several criticisms have been surfaced against the prevailing gay identity. In the following discussion, this paper will conclude with remarks on urban identity formation, and the emergent global competition for gay capital.

Discussion: On Identity and Urban Space

> *Places are more than locations on maps […] They are cultural creations with varying meanings to the different people that experience them. (Hodge, 1995, p. 43)*

As white, middle-class Americans depopulated cities after World War II, urban space became available for lesbian and gay migrants. Cities offered many amenities for lesbians and gays. For one, they liberated a stigmatized class of repressed people by allowing them to publically express their sexual preferences. Urban space also allowed lesbians and gays to concentrate in residential neighborhoods, create their own unique space, and organize politically. As gay communities were shaped in urban centers, so too was the cultural conception of a gay identity.

Social constructivists of either interactionist or labeling persuasions can agree that actions manifest meaning: gays created community space precisely out of the need to escape cultural stigmatization. In traditional suburban, middle-class American families, homosexual practices were reviled. "Coming out" was often met with family disownership at its worst or disapproval at best; acceptance was rare. Cities offered boundless opportunities. In Goffman's (1963) parlance, the internalized gap between "primary deviance" and "secondary deviance" could be reduced, if not fully eliminated, by moving to the city. Downtown districts offered early gay migrants the opportunity to lead free and expressive lifestyles. Many bound together in residential neighborhoods to protect themselves under the fortified fabric of the city. As gays migrated, concentrated, and even gentrified, the social construction of an identity followed the physical construction of a community. In the chaos and disorder of the city, it was almost necessary to distinguish oneself socially, economically, and politically in space. Urbanism allowed for individuals to represent their community in real, physically distinctive ways. Borrowing from symbolic interactionism, this construction of a shared identity was informed by the meanings collectives ascribe. In the gay community, these include shared values, norms, and mores. In creating a more concrete urban identity, gays inadvertently created a universally recognizable identity: "[A] shift from Gemeinschaft to Gesellschaft, from gay community, to gay culture nationally […]" (Herdt, 1992, p. 11).

This piece did not address whether the identity that resulted from urbanism was *representative* or even *authentic* of the entire gay population. Jackson (1989) advises readers to view what comes across as gay identity with extreme caution: "What usually passes for the 'gay community' is actually a minority of a minority—its most politicized and vocal fraction" (p. 128). Lauria and Knopp (1985) emphasize that urban gay identity is white, middle-class, and male. Knopp (1990b) later asserts, "[I]t is easier, economically and otherwise, for middle-class White males to identify and live as openly gay people than it is for women, non-Whites, and non-middle class people" (p. 339). Indeed, it has been argued that white, middle-income males generally have more discretionary income, and thus a greater allocation of resources that would enable them to move to a gay neighborhood in the first place. Therefore, we should view the shared norms, values, and mores that constructivists assert created an identity with extreme caution.

Several scholars contend that the gay identity is a cultural manifestation heavily driven by white, middle-income men (D'Emilio, 1983; Hodge, 1995; Jackson, 1989; Knopp 1990a, 1990b; Lauria & Knopp, 1985). In his study of suburban homosexuality outside of Sidney, Australia, Hodge (1995) finds that it is inappropriate to only look at sexuality and space through the lens of urban gay communities alone. If we exclusively scrutinize the most visible, we completely miss the invisible. What does *authentically* gay space look like? Of the estimated 25 million lesbian and gay Americans in 1989, Jackson (1989) notes, "[There were] 3.5 million [lesbian and gay] people below the federally-defined poverty line; 4 million malnourished people, many of them children; and 400,000 homeless people" (p. 128).[1] Straight space is easy to define because it is ubiquitous and so too are

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[1] Jackson's (1989) figures are based on Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin's (1948) contention that 10% of the U.S. population is non-heterosexual.

its inhabitants. Gay space is limited to those *other* neighborhoods, where the majority of the people who identify as lesbian, gay or bisexual, or have same sex attractions, do not live.

Another invisible group, often overlooked in academic discussions of the LGBT community, are bisexuals. Hemmings (1997) notes that the prevailing "monosexual" cultural narrative does not acknowledge the existence of bisexuality (p. 152). Bisexuals lack physical spaces of their own, which prevents the shared bonds and experiences that create identities in the first place. A recent report out of the Williams Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles found that bisexuals are the "most closeted" group in contemporary U.S. society, even though they are the largest of the LGBT community (Gates, 2011).

Moving forward, urban gay communities confront a number of internal and external challenges. For one, lesbians and gays are increasingly leaving urban villages in favor of the suburbs and even rural areas. Kirkey and Forsyth's (2001) study on rural gay men revealed that many of the social amenities such as tolerance, free expression, and safety are now also available in rural areas. Doderer (2011) points out that many of the sexual amenities that once drew gays into the city have been phased out by new technologies, namely the Internet. Writing about gay suburbanization, Lynch (1992) notes that homeownership primarily drives lesbians and gays to relocate to the suburbs. However, Lynch also notes that lesbian and gay lifestyles are not always accepted in the suburbs. Looking at gay suburbanization internationally, Hodge (1995) calls for more research into this area. The process of deconcentration and attraction to the suburbs may be a subject for further research.

Another threat to gay culture and identity comes in the form of urban commodification and the "Disneyification" of gay space. Brown, Browne, and Lim (2007) note that several "wanna be world cities" are engaged in a global competition to attract capital (p. 126). One way to bring money into a city's coffers is to market a vibrant gay community. Examples of this include Manchester and Newcastle, United Kingdom, and Melbourne, Australia. Richard Florida's (2003) seminal piece describing the "creative class" of post-industrialized cities underscores the importance of the gay community to urban economic development strategies. Florida found that areas with high gay concentrations correlate strongly with areas of future economic growth. As cities work to attract high tech capital in the twenty-first century, marketing to potential gay constituencies attract creative professionals who seek a diverse and tolerant city culture. Several criticisms have been levied against these urban promotional strategies. First, these initiatives are unauthentic to the gay experience. A citywide strategy of nonorganic gay branding heightens the artificiality of gay neighborhoods. Second, cities that intentionally market a thriving gay culture may have more creative control over the forms of expression in these urban spaces. These controls conflict with the sexually expressive nature of many gay communities, as Castells identified. Finally, in de-sexualizing these communities, Brown, Browne, and Lim (2007) are concerned that gays have been inadvertently forced to display more heteronormative lifestyles to appease the often-straight tourists who visit.

Today, cities embrace and promote gay civic culture to attract creative capital. In contemporary U.S. society, it seems, having a vibrant and active gay community is associated with urban redevelopment and panache. This is a far cry from the relegation of gay sexual behavior to the periphery of the city. Between 1950 and the present, gay identity has undergone a significant transformation. Before 1950, there was no "gay person" so-to-speak, only deviant sexual behavior. After the Stonewall riots of 1969, however, thousands of migrants found social, economic and political empowerment in the city. Concentrating in residential neighborhoods not only bore local cultures, but local identities—and from those identities, a degree of freedom and self-affirmation.

The social construction of a gay identity draws many caveats. First, gay neighborhoods are arguably unrepresentative of a true identity (if there is one). One reason urban economic development offices regard gay civic culture so highly is because gays are thought to represent a monolithic demographic group that is characterized by medium-to-high wealth attainment and social status. This characterization is highly generalized. In 2010, an estimated 4% (8 million) of American adults identified as being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgendered, and a full 11% of

Americans (25.6 million) are estimated to acknowledge some same-sex attraction (Gates, 2011). If these proportions are correct, they seem to indicate that Kinsey, Pomeroy, and Martin's (1948) hypothesis (claiming that 10% of the population is non-heterosexual) is not that far off. Does the identity that emerges from gay neighborhoods represent all individuals with same sex attractions, or is it an urban-based identity? As Jackson (1989) describes, what would a poor gay identity look like? How about a black gay identity? Surely the identity of white, middle-income males cannot be the only version of what it means to be "gay." Second, the clustering of gay concentrations reinforces popular conceptions of gay identity, which are easily amplified by media portrayals of gay people in popular culture. These images support the notion that the people who reside gay neighborhoods represent all LGBT people. Last, and most abstractly, if we ignore the social processes that construct identity, we risk the blind assumption that "gay identity" is itself biologically innate.

Geographers, gender and queer theorists, and urbanist scholars need to more broadly recognize that identity, and gay identity in particular, is socially constructed. At a minimum, prevailing social science research in this area should examine the shared norms and cultural values that allowed for the creation of gay spaces and identities to flourish. In this new era of post-industrialized competition for global capital, it would be easy to forget about the link between gay identity and the social drivers of urbanism. Failure to do so could further engender stereotypes of LGBT transgender people.

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