Interrogating the gayborhood: violence & the uneven geography of queer space

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Interrogating the Gayborhood

Violence & the Uneven Geography of Queer Space

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Senior Thesis
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for the Bachelor of Arts degree in Geography

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Adviser, Professor Brian Godfrey
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Chapter 1
Introduction

I do not believe that our sexuality, gender expression, and bodies can be liberated without making a ferocious mobilization against imperialist war and racism an integral part of our struggle.
Leslie Feinberg

The first time I stepped foot in a gay bar, I was 20 years old. Amstel Fifty Four sat in the heart of Amsterdam, sandwiched between nightclubs and smoke shops. It had a dark brick facade and red awnings over the doors and windows. The interior was long and thin; there was barely enough room to walk past the bar without brushing against the bench packed full of people and piles of coats on the opposite wall. The back of the bar wasn’t much more spacious, and was brimming with dancers and laughers and drinkers. The lights were dim and the music was deafening. I didn’t stay long, only guzzling down one beer before my friend and I nudged our way to the front door and hailed a cab home. It was remarkably unremarkable.

But this moment is one I will never forget. I carry it with me every time I enter a bar, a club, a restaurant – any place that isn’t deemed a gay space, and is necessarily a non-gay space. I remember it when I look around and don’t see reflections of myself. When I see reminders of my otherness. I remember it when I feel the need to apologize for my presence in a space. When I have the desire to hide and conform.

I understand the necessity of gay spaces, because I have felt what it means to be a part of one. I know the relief in your chest when you know that your presence isn’t making anyone uncomfortable. When the fear of judgment, criticism, harm, and hatred dissipate.
On June 28, 1969, the patrons of Stonewall felt the crushing weight of this necessity as well. Hostility towards the queer community in New York City was growing throughout the 1950s and 60s. Gay bars were used as a safe haven for the community, but in light of growing anti-gay sentiments, they often faced discrimination by the city. The Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, was often targeted for raids but the mafia running the bar knew that police accepted bribes, so they were typically able to pay them off.

The early morning hours of that June day, however, were different. Police showed up, unannounced, blocking the exits. They began normal raid procedures of lining up patrons when they were met with resistance. People began to congregate outside of the bar, chanting “Gay Power” and “We Shall Overcome.” Eventually, high-spirited chants turned to violence, and a riot broke out between police officers and Stonewall patrons, employees, and bystanders. The streets were cleared sometime around four in the morning. The following day, crowds again gathered in front of Stonewall, where protests would continue for four days.

Today, the Stonewall riots are understood as a crucial turning point in the gay movement. They mark a moment when the LGBTQ+ community challenged police power and institutionalized homophobia, and this paved the way for the formation and perseverance of a number of gay rights organizations and movements. It is also crucial, however, to understand that to use Stonewall as the turning point in the movement is highly problematic, as it dismisses the radical and important activism that was occurring prior to the riots. I hope to emphasize the importance of this moment as a historical marker in LGBTQ+ history, but of equal importance is a critique of the hegemonic
paradigm that erases prior movements, moments, and people. It is with this in mind that I discuss Stonewall, gay neighborhoods, and the politics of space in the coming chapters.

Throughout the thesis, I use the term to queer as an umbrella term to encompass an infinite spectrum of non-heterosexual and non-cisgendered sexuality and gender identities and expressions. I will use the term LGBTQ+ to refer to this group as well. In reference to the trans* community, I use an asterisk to signify the multitude of meanings that the word trans alone may represent, including but certainly not limited to transgender and transsexual. Thus, in this thesis, trans* functions as an umbrella term for a variety of identities across the gender and sexuality spectrums.

I will also use the term gay many times throughout the thesis. While this is a term that is often used to discuss the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, the face of this community is largely the face of white cis gay men. Therefore, in using the word gay, I hope to not only interrogate the nuances of who is included in the group, but also to remain critical of forces that define belonging within this group. When I refer to Greenwich Village and various other areas as “gay neighborhoods,” I do so with the intention of critiquing the construction of gay space, which, even through its terminology, is exclusionary.

Many gay activists and organizations that formed in the immediate wake of Stonewall were radically intersectional, centering race, class, and gender in their struggle. A fight for equality for the gay community was recognized as one that necessarily fought for equality and justice for other marginalized groups. Solidarity was felt among groups as they fought for legal rights and safety from institutionalized discrimination. Somewhere along the line, however, this shifted. Those with power outside of their queer
identity (namely white, wealthy, gay men) recognized that within the social frame in which they were operating, they would have to place themselves in a position superior to other marginalized groups in order to gain the equality they craved. By distancing themselves and their movements from race and class struggles, and even other gender and sexuality based struggles, it became easier to become a legitimate and recognized group.

Paying particular attention to this shift, this thesis focuses on gay neighborhoods as a way of exploring the role of geography and spatiality in the politics of LGBTQ+ communities. It explores the different processes that play out in these spaces, beginning with a look at the forces behind their emergences (ranging from homophobia to discrimination to police brutality), before looking at the drastic transformations that communities undergo in their transition to gay neighborhoods. Specifically, it looks at the gentrification that occurs as queer communities claim the right to a given space. In order for communities of historically “othered” people to not only claim a space, but to claim a space that is also institutionally backed and legitimized, they must necessarily place themselves in a superior position to a different and more threatening other. I will argue that the other is constituted of anyone who fails to conform to the brand of “gay” that is acceptable and consumable in American liberal consciousness.

In November of 2013, Slate Magazine published an article titled “The Latest Plan to Save Detroit: Build a Gay Neighborhood.” In the article, Ross Benes presents a case for why gay neighborhoods are frequently associated with economic development and growth in neighborhoods across the United States. He attributes this to a number of factors. He asserts that gay communities are likely drawn to “tolerant and culturally vibrant” urban centers (Benes). Moreover, he claims that because “LGBTQ individuals
are still less likely to have children” they are not drawn to neighborhoods based on the school districts, allowing them to move into less expensive neighborhoods, and then transform the makeups of those neighborhoods.

Demographics in gay neighborhoods are proliferated with young, white, wealthy, educated populations who drastically alter social geography. Changes caused by populations dictate what bodies feel the right to engage with a space and what bodies are able to live in a space. As these populations begin to dominate a neighborhood, communities of color are often pushed further to the periphery, beginning the violent process of gentrification. Violence has therefore played a central role “in defining neighborhood as one of the more prized expressions of LGBT community” (Hanhardt, 18). As gay populations move in, low-income communities of color move out for both economic and social reasons.

Before exploring this process as it occurs in gay neighborhoods, it is first important to understand that it is not a phenomenon that is unique to gay neighborhoods. Gentrification trends are pervasive in neighborhoods across the United States. One example is Bushwick, a neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York. Between 2013 and 2014, overall rents increased by 17.6%, the highest increase of any neighborhood in Brooklyn (Valli, 1198). This was a response to the opening of new restaurants, shops, and bars in the area that appealed to a young crowd seeking the latest trends.

In an effort to attract newcomers to the area, real estate agents in Bushwick termed it the “New Frontier” (Valli, 1198). By portraying the neighborhood as a ‘frontier’ of art, music, and liveliness, sellers redefined the once disinvested area as appealing. The “New Frontier” is a rebranding to attract a younger, more educated,
wealthier, and whiter demographic. Neighborhoods that were previously seen as the *other* in contrast to the stability and order provided by private property are reimagined as up-and-coming. Thus the *other*-ed space is conceptually emptied of the backwardness that was once inherent in it. However, the *other*-ed people are still there, resulting in a paradoxical situation wherein peripheral space is taken over by the hegemonic class, but the peripheral people remain outside of that hegemony.

Gentrification is not only appealing to young newcomers who are able to find the characteristics they desire in a neighborhood at an affordable price, but also for states. There is “pressure on local states to actively pursue redevelopment and gentrification as ways of generating tax revenue” (Hackworth, 464). Pushing for gentrification in the name of revitalization is a way for states to build a wealthier population, which increases overall state wealth. Further, by staying on top of gentrification trends, private developers are also able to reap economic benefits. As professor of Planning and Geography Jason Hackworth explains, “restructuring and globalisation in the real estate industry has set a context for larger developers becoming involved in gentrifying neighbourhoods” (468). Therefore, laws that help facilitate gentrification to benefit states and developers are put into place. This can include zoning laws that limit multi-family units or encourage certain businesses to move into the area. Further, it can include laws such as curfew restrictions that work to police who is able to belong in a space.

Once neighborhoods have been conceptually emptied and rebranded, these perceptions are concretized. States solidify the sentiments that the space has been reimagined and therefore the right to the space has been shifted. By changing, for example, zoning laws in a neighborhood, states are not directly displacing people; rather,
they are doing so through indirect methods. Limiting the number of multi-family units in an area effectively establishes that only those with the economic means of buying single-family homes can move into an area. Instituting curfew laws effectively establishes that certain bodies – those that had previously found safety or community in the public spaces – are no longer welcome. These practices necessarily create homelessness as they displace community, but simultaneously outlaw it. This is a fundamental contradiction of neoliberalism, yet another concept that is crucial to understand in order to understand gay gentrification.

Neoliberalism has been the guiding world structure, socially and economically, since the Cold War. The goals of neoliberalism are market expansion, capital circulation, and competition resulting in an efficient market. These goals are reached through privatization, deregulation, reduced role of the state, and increased private property. Given that the ultimate goal is accumulation rather than sustenance, it necessarily demands growth. This makes it a system contradictory to human survival, reliant on inevitable inequality.

Gentrification can be understood as a process by which both state and individual interests are realized. Individuals act based on their own self-interest by moving into affordable neighborhoods without considering the effects this may have. In turn, these actions are supported and reinforced by state action. The result is a process that has been institutionalized and plays such a crucial role in perpetuating hegemonic neoliberal influence that it persists largely unquestioned and unchallenged.

This thesis draws largely on the work done by Christina Hanhardt in her book *Safe Space*. Hanhardt writes:
This story underscores the utter inadequacy of interpretations of and solutions to anti-LGBT violence that are based on criminalization and the policing of gentrifying neighborhoods in a city that has a rate of HIV infection that has been termed epidemic by the World Health Organization, but that also has legalized same-sex marriage; has seen the drastic loss of black middle-class residents, along with the largest ever gap between rich and poor; and saw the closing of what had been the country’s oldest black gay bar, Nob Hill, in a neighborhood, Columbia Heights, now named as the best gay thing (Hanhardt, 229).

These discrepancies observed by Hanhardt are indicative of the selectiveness that allows a narrow group of people to benefit from gayness being seen as vogue in liberal society. Further, it reveals a targeted violence that leads to the disempowerment of marginalized groups by the very advantages that reinforce the economic and cultural power of the white gay community. Hanhardt’s extensive study is critical in understanding the politics of violence as they relate to gay neighborhoods.

This thesis will also draw on theories of private property and its inherent violence. In particular it examines work by Nicholas Blomley on the geography of violence. Blomley explores this by examining the frontier, the survey, and the grid – what he terms spatializations. These spatializations are enacted by the state in ways that produce and reproduce property and define space and the right to it. Moreover, these enactments have material and corporeal effects, either by means of implied or realized violence.

Further, this thesis uses the work of the French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre to advance claims about the right to space as it is produced and reproduced in everyday life. Lefebvre makes the important claim that “every state is born of violence, and… state power endures only by virtue of violence directed towards space” (Lefebvre, 280). Understanding this claim is central to understanding the violence of gay neighborhoods. In order for gay communities to avoid necessarily violent state action, the violence must be targeted elsewhere.
It is in light of this understanding that I describe gentrification as it is occurring in gay neighborhoods as violent. This is a strong claim to make, but in doing so, I hope to portray that the processes that combine to result in gentrification are deliberate actions. Moreover, they are deliberate actions aimed at marginalized communities. To call this anything but violent is to dismiss the targeted and coercive nature of the displacement that is occurring.

The second chapter of the thesis is a closer examination of Nicholas Blomley’s work “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence.” I will use Blomley’s work and the concepts of frontier, survey, and grid as he explains them to explore the function of private property in a neoliberal system. I will explore the ways in which violence directed at the LGBTQ+ community has been redirected along lines of class and race, allowing gay neighborhoods not only to form, but to thrive. This exploration will lay down the groundwork which will inform the claims I make about gentrification and community formation in Greenwich Village as well as Salt Lake City.

The third chapter focuses on Greenwich Village. First, it explores the composition of the neighborhood historically as a community of color, before illuminating its transformation to a queer community. Next, it looks at how the forces explored in chapter one played out in The Village. Particularly, it reveals how prevalent and damaging homophobia and police brutality were in New York City and the effects this had on the community. It then engages with the shift in institutionalized violence from a system that targeted queer bodies to one that targeted bodies of color, and the effect that this had on the makeup of the neighborhood. As the thesis will demonstrate, the shift coincides in
many ways with the shift towards painting gayness as hip and progressive in popular liberal discourse, and how it does so at the expense of intersectional inclusiveness.

The fourth chapter is a case study of gay neighborhoods in Salt Lake City, Utah. It examines the emergence of gay neighborhoods, and ways in which this follows patterns similar to those of Greenwich Village as well as ways in which it is different. Specifically, it will seek to demonstrate the substantial role that the Mormon Church played in gay community formation in Salt Lake City.

The concluding chapter will introduce the idea of pinkwashing in Israel as a way of demonstrating the sweeping influence that homonationalism in the United States has had on an international scale. It will summarize major findings in regard to the role of violence in gay neighborhoods, and the subsequent uneven geography of queer space.
Chapter 2
Mapping the Agents of Spatial and Institutionalized Violence

_Landscapes, through their aesthetization of space, may very well be texts, and they may often be texts that revel in depictions of the good life, but they are also, always, physical concretizations of power, power that the landscape itself often works quite hard to fetishize as something else altogether._

Don Mitchell

In order to understand the formation of gay neighborhoods, it is necessary to understand private property as it exists under liberal law, as this is the framework in which neighborhood creation is facilitated. Further, it is necessary to understand that “violence has a geography” (Blomley, 123). That is to say that violence is systematically targeted at vulnerable people and communities, resulting in a cyclical relationship wherein class, race, gender, and sexuality inequalities are reproduced geographically in ways that maintain neoliberal hegemonic power. Ultimately, law as it operates in a neoliberal system is a mask for wielding oppression.

In his work “Law, Property, and the Geography of Violence,” Nicholas Blomley explores the inherent and consequential role that violence plays in private property and the laws that govern it. He does so by examining three of what he terms _spatializations_: the frontier, the survey, and the grid. When these spatializations are enacted by the state, they produce and reproduce property and, moreover, define space and the right to it. Through their enactment, these spatializations have corporeal effects through means of both implied as well as realized violence.

_Frontier_

The first spatialization is the frontier. This abstract tool is used to legitimize state and other institutionalized violence. In order to be recognized as a necessary element of
control, law requires something that exists as other, or a threat to the safety provided by private property. Thus, the frontier suggests that “inside lies stability and order, outside disorder” (Blomley, 124). The image of the frontier, the pinnacle of liberal society and all of its grandeur, is used to suggest that law has created a world protected from the savagery that exists in the absence of law. Blomley argues, “without such a division,” that is the division between law and lawlessness, “the commonplace distinctions between terrorist and reasonable force, or murder and execution, break down” (Blomley, 124). When viewed in opposition to lawless violence, institutional violence is seen as necessary, and therefore, the role of the frontier it to demonstrate these antipodes.

The frontier is most recognizably conjured through the mapping of the American west. In the collective memory of the United States, the frontier signifies the moment when settlers moved west and colonized land that had previously been savage, or barbaric. In his work *New City, New Frontier: The Lower East Side as Wild, Wild West*, Neil Smith explains, “the substance and consequence of the frontier imagery is to tame the wild city” just as we once tamed the wild west (Smith, 75). In other words, by paralleling urban centers today with western cities of the past, processes of gentrification and displacement can be justified as advantageous to society.

*Survey*

The second spatialization is the survey. The survey plays a representational role, and can be understood as a tool used to demonstrate the frontier and its savage inverse concretely. It is important to understand, however, that the survey does not necessarily reflect reality. The survey, Blomley writes, helps to “facilitate a conceptual emptying of
space” (Blomley, 129). Take, for example, a map. By rendering space abstract, appearing as nothing more than colored boxes on a piece of paper, violence inherent in land ownership is obscured. The survey represents appropriated land in a way that desensitizes viewers to the reality institutions of land ownership.

In his work, Blomley is exploring the particular role that the specializations play in colonialism and the appropriation of Native lands. His argument is supported by examples of colonizers surveying Native land, and mapping it as vacant space (the opposite of the frontier) so as to justify its being co-opted. However, as Neil Smith notes, “it is not just the Indian wars of the Old West that have come home to the cities of the east, but the global wars of the New American World Order” (Smith, 92). In effect, strategies that were once used to erase Native peoples from lands are now used in urban centers to erase any people that do not fit the ideal of the “New American World Order” from certain neighborhoods.

*Grid*

The final spatialization is the grid. The grid is a spatial ordering executed by some hegemonic power (which in Blomley’s understanding is the state, but as I will later argue, various institutions may hold this power) that puts the survey into action. The grid, synonymous with such things as property law or local ordinances, facilitates the illusion that power lies within property, rather than those who own or control the property. That is to say, “property itself is imagined as the relation between an owner and an inert space, rather than a politicized and perhaps violent set of relations between owners and others”
The grid is the physical enactment of strategies that neutralize the violent processes involved in land ownership.

The grid can be as simple as the formal right to a parking space in front of an apartment complex, or an ordinance that requires public parks to “close” at a certain hour. Essentially, the grid is enacted when social meaning is given to space that is otherwise meaningless. That is to say that private property, as well as private control over public property, is socially constructed, making it inherently political and exclusionary.

**Targeting the Gay Community**

An understanding of the three spatializations illustrated by Nicholas Blomley helps to illuminate the geography of anti-gay violence in the United States in the mid- to late-twentieth century.

**Frontier**

The creation of a frontier by the state came in the form of the creation of a culture of fear, which dominated the national discourse. Gayness was equated to otherness, just as Native peoples were in the frontier of the American west. Homosexuality was purported as a disease or a perversion, making it a threat to the American geopolitical order. Understanding gayness as a threat to civilized society allowed for the subsequent exclusion of homosexuals from the American hegemony.

In his book *Gay New York*, George Chauncey writes, “gay uses of the streets, like other working-class uses,” were attacked “because they challenged bourgeois conceptions of public order, the proper boundaries between public and private space, and the social
practices appropriate to each” (Chauncey, 180). The idea of the frontier is a way of giving social meaning to space in a way that defines the right to that space. So, as Chauncey points out, any use that differs from the norm, or the “bourgeois conceptions” of space, is seen as a threat, and therefore fought against.

Survey

There are a number of ways in which the “survey” was used to concretize the anti-gay frontier. For example, studies were often conducted and published to illuminate the negative effects of homosexuality to individuals and to society. Anti-gay propaganda plagued popular media, making it nearly impossible to avoid.

![Image](image.png)

Figure 1: Article published in *Confidential Magazine*, 1957 (Peterson)
Figure 1 shows an article published in Confidential Magazine, a tabloid based in New York that began circulation in 1952. The title reads “The Proof that Perversion is a Mental Illness: Homosexuality Can Be Cured.” It goes on to say that a “famous psychiatrist” has proven that the “third sex” theory, which validated homosexual desires and behavior, is a myth. Rather, he has found a way to treat homosexuality, thus marking it as a curable disease. The article states that the psychiatrist, Dr. Edmund Bergler, has documented more than 100 cures “from his own personal practice” which include treatments for “Lesbians as well as male homos” (Peterson).

This article is of interest because it shows the ways in which the state’s agenda of social exclusion of others, in this case homosexuals, was enacted through the survey. The concept of gayness as otherness was propelled through the national consciousness, supported by medical and legal reports that attempted to reduce homosexuality to a quantifiable and treatable condition. Those ideas were then concretized through mediums such as news outlets and various other vehicles of culture.

Figure 2: Article published in The New York Times on April 19, 1950 (“Perverts Called Government Peril”)
Figure 2 depicts an article from *The New York Times* titled “Perverts Called Government Peril.” This article, published on April 19, 1950, recounts comments made by the Republican National Chairman, Guy George Gabrielson surrounding “sexual perverts.” Gabrielson states, “perhaps as dangerous as the actual communists are the sexual perverts who have infiltrated our government in recent years” (“Perverts Called Government Peril,” 25). This *New York Times* piece reveals two things: first, the way in which the state and its actors used the frontier to their advantage, and second, the ways in which that frontier was concretely reinforced in popular media. By equating “sexual perverts” to communists, a group that had already been nationally embraced as the antithesis to neoliberal law, Gabrielson is tactfully othering what he views as a threat to hegemonic power.

*Grid*

The grid is enacted using a variety of tactics targeted at the gay community. For example, the State Liquor Authority of New York criminalized the serving of alcohol to homosexuals, and would revoke licenses of bars that were caught doing so (Chauncey, 19). Further, police raids were common throughout the early to mid twentieth century, during which anyone participating in any type of homosexual activity could be arrested. Legal restrictions existed on nearly every aspect of gay life, from gay assembly to gay bars to male prostitution to sodomy.

The spatializations are complicated by the fact that while there is always a hegemonic power, it is not always defined in the same way. Power never ceases to exist completely, but it shifts over time. Thus, the role that Blomley’s spatializations play in
gay communities has also shifted over time. Looking to early periods of urbanization, we can see spatializations being utilized in ways that exclude gays from neighborhoods and property-ownership as demonstrated above. However, it becomes apparent through the proliferation of gay neighborhoods across the nation today that this exclusion is no longer existent in quite the same way.

This reveals the contradictions of a neoliberal capitalist society. Capitalism necessitates urbanization. For example, as the agricultural sector has declined largely to be replaced by factory farms and outsourced production, more workers are forced to migrate to urban centers to seek economic opportunities. The United Nations reports that the world’s urban population increased from 746 million in 1950 to 3.9 billion in 2014 ("World’s Population Increasingly Urban").

Urban centers produce the optimal business environment for capitalism to prosper, wherein a large number of people are completely dependent on goods and services that exist in a small geographic area. Urbanization also allows for the production of gay identity that is often repressed in rural landscapes. This is because urban centers tend to be more liberal and allow for greater freedom, both in terms of physical movement and from societal constraints. But, as the spatializations demonstrate, queerness threatens the patriarchal hegemony of capitalist society, meaning there is an increased need for policing and control over queer people and bodies.

Thus, we find two paradoxes. First, that capitalism demands urbanization, but urbanization necessarily brings a threat to capitalism. Second, urbanization allows for increased visibility and a sense of openness for queer and other marginalized
communities, but increased visibility also means increased risk of oppression by means of policing and violence.

**Re-Targeting the Violence**

Due to these contradictions, as LGBTQ+ people gain the freedom of community building, camaraderie, and openness that they desire, they also subject themselves to institutionalized violences. However, while these violences were designed to keep LGBTQ+ communities out of power (or property-ownership), they also facilitate the thrust necessary for the gay community to propel itself into hegemonic acceptance.

The spatializations of the frontier, the grid, and the survey were targeted at gay communities. Consequently, there was a need for gay neighborhoods to provide a sense of safety for that targeted community. In order to establish these neighborhoods, however, the spatializations needed a new target because, as Blomley points out, “violence needs a space” (Blomley, 132). It is in light of this understanding that we begin to see the appropriation of Blomley’s spatializations by the gay community, into violence targeted on the basis of class and race, rather than sexuality. In effect, the gays who have the class and race privilege to do so become the gentrifiers themselves.

*Frontier*

In order for gay communities to form enclaves and subsequent neighborhoods, they must first include themselves within the frontier narrative, and in doing so, exclude communities of color, even those that are LGBTQ+. Neil Smith writes:

> Insofar as gentrification obliterates working-class communities, displaces poor households and converts whole neighborhoods into bourgeois enclaves, the
frontier ideology rationalizes social differentiation and exclusion as natural and inevitable (Smith, 75).

If people of color are understood as the “other” to the frontier of a gayborhood, white gay communities are able to gain a greater sense of societal acceptance. They have been able to do so because gayness has not only been accepted into the mainstream, but has even come to be a signifier of trendiness in urban space. Gay neighborhoods are associated with centers of art and fashion. Because of these newly formed and accepted associations, neighborhoods advertise themselves using these characteristics.

Survey

![Amtrak advertisement](image)

Figure 3: Amtrak advertisement as part of their “Ride with Pride” campaign (Amtrak, 2012)

Thus, rather than creating an image of gayness as perversion, the survey establishes gayness as hipness. Figure 3 shows an Amtrak advertisement boasting affordable family prices. The couple featured in the advertisement is gay. Amtrak is strategically using this couple to represent their company as liberal. However, they are
cautious in selecting the couple. The men are white and dressed sharply, implying they belong to a certain class. This same technique is used in bars and shops and restaurants and real estate throughout gay neighborhoods.

**Grid**

In order to fully legitimize their right to the space, gay property owners utilize enactments of the grid. This includes such tactics as curfew and anti-loitering laws that ensure that their neighborhoods are only occupied by property-owners, and restricting the space from use by anyone else. In her book *Safe Space*, Christina Hanhardt outlines a number of neighborhood-based strategies that were put into place in Greenwich Village in New York City. Ultimately, Hanhardt terms these strategies “violence in the pursuit of safety,” which puts at risk “those who are not legible within certain racialized modes of sexual or gender identification” (Hanhardt, 183).

Pier 45, often referred to as the Christopher Street Pier, is a pier in Greenwich Village. The pier was an early site of queer community building in Manhattan. It was a popular cruising spot, as well as a sanctuary for homeless LGBTQ+ youth. Recalling the days when the Christopher Street Pier was still a bustling queer hotspot, author and transgender rights activist Janet Mock writes:

> It was in the Village, on Christopher Street and the nearby piers, where many trans and queer people first shared space with others like them. For generations, these places provided mirrors for those who rarely saw reflections of themselves. On Christopher Street, there were multitudes of potential selves: transgender, transsexual, non-binary, genderqueer, femme, butch, cross-dresser, drag king or queen, and other gender identities and sexual orientations that challenge social norms (Mock, 46).

This portrait that Mock paints of the Christopher Street Pier – a place of acceptance, freedom, and self-awareness – is not reflective of the contemporary image of the pier.
Today, the pier is a part of the Hudson River Park, a 550-acre waterside park stretching 4.5 miles from 59th Street to Battery Park. It is a well-maintained, family-friendly destination. For this reason, it is also heavily policed, meaning it is no longer a viable location for the kinds of activities that once took place there.

Somewhere along the line, between the moment that Mock describes, when the pier served as a crux of cruising and gay community life in New York, to now, where the heavily policed pier sits in what we will see in Chapter 3 is one of the richest and whitest neighborhoods in Manhattan, something changed. In this transformation, we can trace the employment of the grid by the white gay community.

The makeup of gay neighborhoods in the United States from New York City’s Greenwich Village to San Francisco’s Castro has been drastically altered by violent processes of and related to gentrification. It is important to understand that displacement from these communities does not always equate to spatial dislocation. That is to say, even without forced removal, violence is often at work in gentrifying neighborhoods. Long time occupants of certain spaces, whether they be residents or not, often move away from neighborhoods without being forced to do so simply because the demographics and regulation of the spaces shift in ways that conflict with the previous composition and use of the space. Further, they may not move at all, but may nonetheless feel a sense of emotional displacement from the area.

The transformation of the Christopher Street Pier exemplifies the dislocation of a community due to a shift in the sense of belonging in a public space. Thus, we see that even absent of forced physical dislocation, violent displacement is occurring. In her study of Bushwick, a heavily gentrified neighborhood in Brooklyn, New York, Chiara Valli
notes, “the same advantages (ethnic, economic, cultural) empowering certain groups to take (physical) space in the neighborhood are the ones that cause emotional loss of place for disempowered groups” (Valli, 1195).

Additionally, it is important to understand the implications of using a term as powerful as “violent” to describe the patterns we observe in gay neighborhoods. My purpose in doing so is to convey that gentrification is a deliberate action – not only systemically reinforced, but also perpetuated on an interpersonal level. To call this anything but violent is to dismiss the oppressive and targeted nature of displacement. As Blomley notes, “there is an intrinsic and consequential geography to law’s violence as it relates to private property” (Blomley, 120).
Chapter 3
The Exclusionary Evolution of Greenwich Village

The fact that... fear and strategy...circulate in gay enclaves like New York’s Greenwich Village and San Francisco’s Castro demonstrates the central role violence has played in defining neighborhood as one of the most prized expressions of LGBT community
Christina Hanhardt

Greenwich Village is a neighborhood on the lower west side of Manhattan.

Dubbed “NYC’s neighborhood of artists” by Timeout Magazine, it is not hard to believe that the Village’s character has consistently been defined by its distinctive bohemian culture (Fontana). Alongside The Castro in San Francisco, Greenwich Village is considered one of the first gay neighborhoods in the United States.

Strolling through The Village today, one would pass countless specialty shops, restaurants, bars, and cafes that combine to cultivate an atmosphere of trendiness. It is home to two private colleges, New York University and The New School, giving it a young and vibrant character. White-collar residents, who contribute to a mean household income of $127,367 in the area, balance this youthful energy out (U.S. Census Bureau).

In 2014, Forbes released a list of “America’s 500 Most Expensive ZIP Codes.” The four zip codes that make up Greenwich Village (10011, 10012, 10013, and 10014) were all among the top ten (Carlyle). In case that fact sounds preposterous, the way it did when I first read it, I will repeat it. Of the top ten most expensive zip codes in the entirety of the United States, four of them are in Greenwich Village. Today, the “neighborhood of artists” is rich.

Additionally, and ultimately inseparable from its richness, The Village is overwhelmingly white. According to the 2015 American Community Survey released by the U.S. Census Bureau, 97.6% of Greenwich Village residents are white. This is a stark contrast to New York City as a whole, which is 44% white (U.S. Census Bureau). In
2015, 1,885 people lived in Greenwich Village and 1,840 of those people were white; that leaves only 45 people who were not (U.S. Census Bureau).

The Village’s historically artistic culture coupled with its current affluent population makes the neighborhood the pinnacle of hip, urban life.

A Historical Look at The Village

The white and wealthy Greenwich Village we find today is not an accurate portrayal of The Village historically. In his book Race and Real Estate, Kevin McGruder notes that in 1850, more than one-third of all African Americans in New York City lived in Greenwich Village (McGruder, 22). McGruder writes, “from Five Points, to Greenwich Village, to mid-town, blacks had entered each neighborhood in the nineteenth century when that neighborhood was declining, seemingly confirming the theory that the black presence led to depressed real estate values” (McGruder, 56). Thus, we see that not only was the neighborhood predominantly non-white, but also that the non-white character of the neighborhood associated it with poverty. Nevertheless, the presence of a black community in the area introduced the “bohemian” character that has embodied the neighborhood since.

By the 1920s, immense social, political, and economic changes swept the nation and drastically altered the American lifestyle. People across the nation increasingly found themselves connected through a consumer-based society. More and more people were moving to urban centers, and, for the first time ever, the majority of people lived in cities rather than on rural farms. Despite a massive increase in national wealth and the rapid spread of technology throughout the country, the Roaring Twenties didn’t bring about exclusively positive changes.
In fact, “many Americans were uncomfortable with this new, urban, sometimes racy ‘mass culture’” and therefore, “for many–even most–people in the United States, the 1920s brought more conflict than celebration” (History.com). Due to the conflict and repression that the 1920s sparked in many communities, counter-movements frequently emerged in urban areas. Greenwich Village, a neighborhood that already housed an artistic and liberal community, was the perfect place for these counter-movements to materialize. Thus, as Andrea Weiss describes in her book *Before Stonewall*, “a ‘homosexual underground’ flourished” in The Village (Weiss, 22).

Weiss also points to the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s as a cultural moment that fostered the realization of a cooperative LGBTQ+ community in New York City. In describing the atmosphere surrounding this realization, Weiss writes:

Centered in the Harlem neighborhood of New York, this prolific wave of Black poets, musicians, artists, dancers, photographers, and singers, as well as of Black-owned businesses, included many gay men and lesbians. While Blacks were prohibited by law and custom from entering white establishments across the country, whites were welcome in Black clubs, which were much more accepting of difference – racial or sexual (Weiss, 26).

Early on, the bars and clubs in Harlem and Greenwich Village were not explicitly gay. Rather, they were open. The communities had formed by necessity as refuge for people of color who were both implicitly and explicitly barred from other communities. It was the accepting atmosphere that drew LGBTQ+ individuals and prompted their own community formation in these areas.
Figure 4 depicts an advertisement for a “Costume Ball and Carnival” at Webster Hall in Greenwich Village in the 1920s. These types of events were popular at the time, and reflect early versions of drag shows. Historian David Chauncey writes, “the history of the dances, or balls, held at Webster Hall… illustrates how gay people used the opening created by bohemian culture to expand their public presence” (Chauncey, 235).

It is interesting to note that despite Harlem being an early center of gay life in New York City, it is neither remembered nor celebrated today in quite the same way as Greenwich Village. In his book *Gay New York*, George Chauncey analyzes this discrepancy. He writes:

> Among outsiders, Greenwich Village’s reputation as a gay mecca eclipsed Harlem’s only because it was a white, middle-class world – and because Harlem’s singular reputation as a black metropolis took precedence over everything else (Chauncey, 245).

Because Harlem had, and continues to have, a predominantly black population, this has remained its defining characteristic. The reason Greenwich Village is celebrated by the mainstream gay community today is the very reason that Harlem is not.
Moving forward to the 1930s, The Great Depression led to social and political unrest in the United States that greatly restricted the openness that permeated the 1920s. Weiss writes:

In America, the attitude of tolerance that characterized the 1920s gave way to a less generous atmosphere focused almost exclusively on survival and self-preservation. For gay people in the 1930s, the closet door that had opened a crack in the previous decade was closing once more (Weiss, 28).

Largely as a backlash to the “cultural experimentation” of the 1920s, an anti-gay attitude arose full force in the 1930s (Chauncey, 331). As Chauncey notes, “a powerful campaign to render gay men and lesbians invisible – to exclude them from the public sphere – quickly gained momentum (Chauncey, 331). For those who had moved to urban areas, “a certain freedom remained,” but the LGBTQ+ community overall was forced to remain underground in a subtle and cautious existence (Weiss, 29).

The 1940s brought about a new tolerance, this time by necessity. By entering World War II in 1941, the United States was forced to abandon the restrictiveness that had infiltrated the previous decade. “The very definition of ‘able-bodied’ was transformed,” Weiss explains, “from white men to embrace women and men of all races and colors, as well as sexual persuasions” (Weiss, 31). Because the war required a surplus of soldiers, nurses, engineers, cooks, and more working in congruence, those who had previously been excluded were rewritten into the definition of “American.” An overall need for nationalism trumped internal intolerance.

Further, the segregation of men and women during the war years, as well as their deployment to major cities and ports, gave many people their first glimpse into the possibility of a queer lifestyle. Small town people were sent to cities like New York that housed neighborhoods like Greenwich Village where gay communities existed. George
Chauncey notes that men were freed from familial supervision in small towns, placed in same-sex environments, and mobilized throughout the country, increasing the chances of meeting other gays and “explor[ing] their homosexual interests” (Chauncey, 10). The same went for women. Ultimately, “the war made it possible for gay bars and restaurants to proliferate and for many gay social networks to form” (Chauncey, 11).

In the 1950s, a period of time known as the Cold War Era emerged, infiltrating American consciousness with anti-Soviet and pro-homogeneity sentiments. During this time, “homosexuals were deemed to be security risks and unstable personalities and were systematically investigated and fired from their jobs” (Weiss, 43). There was no longer a necessity for able-bodied citizens to come together. Instead, there was a need for the American ideology of neoliberalism to spread, and that required a homogenous population that fit the American standard – a standard that aligned with the white, heteronormative American dream.

The oppression of the 1950s led to an important recognition among the LGBTQ+ community. Due to the systemic persecution they faced, there was a shift in “consciousness among gay people – from despair and self-hatred to minority group identification” (Weiss, 53). After having tasted a glimpse of tolerance in previous decades, the community was hesitant to return to a fight for legitimacy. They demanded recognition as a valid demographic.

By the 1960s, community silence began to break. Pressures rose throughout the community as the desire for acceptance grew to a boiling point. Various marches, demonstrations, and riots took place throughout the decade, advocating for gay rights. In some cases, certain rights were secured. For example in 1966, it was illegal to serve
drinks to homosexuals in New York because they were considered “disorderly” (Bausum, 20). Members of the Mattachine Society of New York staged a “Sip-In,” in which they sat in at New York bars and restaurants and ordered drinks, “declaring themselves to be orderly homosexuals” (Bausum, 20). The subsequent “publicity and scrutiny” resulted in the ruling that homosexuals could not be refused alcohol (Bausum, 20).

However, alongside this increase in recognition was a simultaneous increase in overt homophobia and homophobic policies and practices. Police brutality, gay bashings, and discrimination became prevalent. Therefore, even to exist in gay space was a risk.

Police raids of known gay bars became common in the 1960s, threatening what little space the LGBTQ+ community considered safe. However, as historian Ann Bausum notes, “the ongoing repression of the gay community created opportunities for corruption” (Bausum, 16). Notably, the Mafia in New York began to open gay bars “using a wink-and-nod system” with certain members of the police force (Bausum, 16). So, gay bars were often illegal or unlicensed but were able to stay open by paying off police officers and thus avoiding raids.

**The Stonewall Riots**

The Stonewall Inn is a bar on Christopher Street in the heart of Greenwich Village that was run by members of the mafia. Because the owners paid off police officers, the bar was able to avoid raids, or the owners were tipped off prior to raids. The bar itself was far from luxurious. The alcohol was often watered down. The bathrooms were never clean. It was dark and had barricaded windows. There wasn’t even a place to wash used glasses.
But, it typically offered a safe place for the LGBTQ+ community to gather and to dance, and therefore, it was a haven.

In the early hours of June 28, 1969, the police arrived at The Stonewall Inn, unannounced. It was part of an elaborate plan by Seymour Pine, a New York police officer who had been ordered to close down the bar (Bausum, 23). After sending in a number of undercover officers to ascertain which people were employees and which were patrons, Pine and his team stormed the bar, and secured the exits.

The police lined up the patrons, and began checking identification, as was routine in a raid. Anyone who was breaking the law, either by underage drinking or by wearing clothing of the opposite gender, would be arrested, along with all employees. However, it quickly became evident to the officers at the scene that this raid was different. Patrons began gathering outside the bar, observing as their friends were loaded into vans and squad cars. Eventually, a lesbian woman who had been harassed and handcuffed “fought being marched to a police car, refused to stay put in the car, and repeatedly exited it” (Bausum, 42). The woman finally shouted out “Why don’t you guys do something?” to the crowd, which caused tensions to reach a tipping point, and a full riot broke out.

People began calling friends to come down and join the protests, which had escalated to pennies and nickels being thrown at retreating and outnumbered officers. As the crowd reached upwards of 2,000 protestors, the police were forced to escape into The Stonewall Inn, where they blockaded themselves until reinforcement could arrive. When more police sirens finally began blaring through the streets, many protestors fled. Just after 4 a.m., “the night’s unrest wound down of its own accord after fatigue, satisfaction
and even boredom overtook the fragmented forces of the mob” (Bausum, 63). Protesting and demonstrations would continue outside the Stonewall Inn for four days.

**Greenwich Village in the Wake of Stonewall**

Andrea Weiss writes, “the Stonewall riots signified the end of a long era of fear and intimidation. With the speed of a prairie fire, a highly visible and vital movement for gay and lesbian liberation emerged as an important social and political force” (Weiss, 67). In popular American consciousness, the start of the LGBTQ+ liberation movement and the Stonewall riots are synonymous. When Weiss and countless others recount the history of the gay movement in New York and subsequently nationwide, they look to the events in the early hours of June 28, 1969 and they see a moment of transition – a moment of progress.

However, it is important to note the language used by Weiss. She writes that a movement emerged for “gay and lesbian liberation” (Weiss, 67). This sentiment expressed by Weiss is indicative of the narrowing scope of vision through which we view LGBTQ+ movements and moments in history. These events are reduced to consumable versions that include almost exclusively white, cis, gay male characters. Even though the Stonewall Riots were spearheaded by black trans* women, they are nonetheless understood to represent the spark that ignited the “gay and lesbian liberation” movement, a mainstream movement that has done very little to liberate trans* men and women, or people of color.

In his book *Stonewall: The Riots That Sparked the Gay Revolution*, historian David Carter writes that “all available evidence leads us to conclude that the Stonewall
Riots were instigated and led by the most despised and marginal elements of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community” (Carter, 262). Specifically, Carter points to Zazu Nova and Marsha P. Johnson as two trans* women who played a major role in the riots that night. Marsha Johnson went on to form the Street Transvestite Action Revolutionaries (STAR) and was an active AIDS, gay, and trans* activist for the remainder of her life. However, many of the numerous books and websites I read about the Stonewall Riots didn’t mention her name.

The exclusion of certain groups from the narrative of gay liberation is consequential and deliberate. By turning again to Nicholas Blomley’s Law, Property and the Geography of Violence and the spatializations he lays out, we begin to see the processes behind and effects of this exclusion. In order for Greenwich Village to become the place it is today, its gay residents had to find a way to avoid spatializations being targeted at them, essentially by finding a new target.

Therefore, they first had to create a new frontier – a frontier that included a gay population in its definition. Christine Hanhardt writes “ongoing patterns of reinvestment in central cities would call for neighborhood cleanups that concentrated on the removal of low-income people of color – including those of LGBT identity – while naming white, middle-class gay men as beacons of the future” (Hanhardt,115). Following The Stonewall Riots, Greenwich Village began to witness a process of “gay gentrification.”

Today, Greenwich Village is predominantly white and wealthy, but it is also very much defined by its gay character. It is home to Big Gay Ice Cream, a small ice cream shop easily recognized by the rainbows and unicorns adorning its windows; countless gay bars and clubs; The Center, New York’s LGBT community center; The Gay Liberation
Monument; and of course, Stonewall Inn, a popular tourist destination. These sites are able to exist because they have been integrated into mainstream acceptance. Sometime after the Stonewall Riots, we witnessed a transformation of the frontier, both in New York and nationwide, and in this new frontier, gay is okay.

In fact, more than okay, gayness (or at least a certain kind of gayness) is a signifier of a liberal population and a robust economy. “Gay space is,” Christina Hanhardt argues, “an index of economic competitiveness in a global marketplaces for business location” (Hanhardt, 186). Gayness, so long as it remains socially docile and undisruptive, is equated to liberalness which attracts younger populations which makes the area trendy and therefore stimulates economic activity and growth.
Blomley writes that the survey serves “as a form of organized forgetting” (Blomley, 128). Those who benefit from the Stonewall Riots today conveniently forget the black and trans* people who spearheaded the riots. They do so because allowing those marginalized groups to have a face or a voice in their movement would risk losing the wide acceptance gayness has gained in urban areas. While gayness has become vogue in many contexts, blackness and trans*-ness have not. Therefore, the gay community manipulated the narrative, representing itself in a way that excluded those that are still a threatening other to the frontier they were building.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the grid is a spatial ordering executed by a hegemonic power. In Greenwich Village, the white gay community successfully integrated themselves into the hegemony. Therefore, the grid worked in ways that benefitted them, even while it negatively impacted the queer community of color. The ownership and right to physical spaces in Greenwich Village, both public and private, were redefined. Christina Hanhardt writes:
Power is figured as the ability to claim permanence in place while moving forward, rather than existing in a contingent present – dynamics that take form in an uneven geography of profit and punishment (Hanhardt, 199).

As the white gay community gained legitimacy and therefore power, they gained permanence in their possession of Greenwich Village.

To better understand the effects of the grid, let us revisit Pier 45 from Chapter 2. In 1998, Governor George Pataki signed the Hudson River Park Act. This act created the Hudson River Park Trust, part of which aimed to renovate piers in Greenwich Village to include “recreational space” as well as “retail uses,” both of which would “increase the value of neighboring residential zones” (Hanhardt, 191). The Greenwich Village Community Board adamantly opposed repurposing the piers for commercial use, as the felt this would take away from the open space, which, as we saw before, were valuable spaces for queer communities. Construction began nevertheless, closing off the piers.

Sylvia Rivera, one of the drag queens present on the night of the Stonewall riots, explained “it was only when the piers were transformed into a social gathering place for people of color, rather than an anonymous sex spot, that residents began to complain” (Hanhardt, 197). The renovation of the piers, as well as the subsequent curfew, loitering, and noise ordinances that were instituted in the neighborhood are physical enactments of the grid. They take space that was once a central and defining characteristic of queer community and transform it into an area that is policed. Hanhardt states that “poverty is named as the price tag of privatization of the piers” (Hanhardt, 199). Poverty is a necessary byproduct of revitalization projects such as The Hudson River Park Act.

Greenwich Village has undergone a transformation. From Pier 45 to the storefronts in Figures 5 and 6, the physical landscapes and structures have been altered to
reflect a cultural and demographic shift based on the redirection of spatial violence. This racial and class based violence occurs within a vertical framework, where power dynamics situate white, wealthy, gay men above low-income queers of color. This violence is complicated and compounded by the ways in which the violence is operating in a horizontal framework as well, where all people across the LGBTQ+ spectrum experience certain gender and sexuality based oppressions.
Chapter 4
Translating Spatializations in Salt Lake City: A Case Study

*Queer space is not one place: it is an act of appropriating the modern world for the continual act of self-construction.*
Aaron Betsky

In 2015, Gallup released a ranking of the 50 largest metropolitan areas in the United States with the highest percentage of LGBT population between 2012 and 2014. The results are based on the response to the question “Do you, personally, identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender?” Over 374,000 responses were recorded between early 2012 and late 2014. According to the website, “this is the largest ongoing study of the distribution of the LGBT population in the U.S. on record, and the first time a study has had large enough sample sizes to provide estimates of the LGBT population by Metropolitan Statistical Areas” (Newport).

San Francisco ranks number one, with 6.2 percent of the population self-identifying as LGBT, followed by Portland, Austin, New Orleans, Seattle and Boston. Coming in at number seven, with 4.7 percent of the population self-identifying as LGBT, is Salt Lake City, Utah (Newport). As Salt Lake is nestled into one of the most conservative states in the nation, this comes as a surprise at first glance. Especially given that the majority of people in Utah belong to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which openly condemns homosexual behavior.

Trace is a man who knows this all too well. He grew up in Salt Lake City where he and his family were active members of the Mormon Church. Today, Trace lives in a beautiful home with his two dogs and his partner, Ron, who has spent the past three years remodeling the house that once belonged to Trace’s parents. From ceiling to tile, there’s not a single place in the house that hasn’t been finished with intricate details. It’s breath-
taking to say the least. “When we first moved in here, I know we were the talk of the neighborhood,” Ron admits. Trace’s parents had belonged to the neighborhood ward up until their death, so word no doubt spread like wildfire when their gay son and his partner showed up in a U-Haul. “I said, ‘you know what, Trace? It is what it is,” Ron continues, “We’re here, we’re queer” (Corona).

Trace grew up in the Mormon Church and, despite knowing he was gay in grade school, didn’t come out until he was 26 years old. Coming out anywhere in the late 1970s posed certain risks, but especially in Utah, and especially in a Mormon family in Utah. When Trace’s mother passed away, he was a trustee and was left to sort through all of her belongings. He recalls:

When I… was getting rid of all of the stuff in the house, my mother’s stuff had never been touched. When she died, she died 8 years before my dad, it was all left. And so I was trustee and I’m going through it and I find these folders of all this gay propaganda bullshit from the Church and such. Just saying just horrid, horrid, horrid, nasty things about the gays. And so my mother’s getting this, reading them, and it made her very, very unhappy. It’s one of the things that I have a hard time looking at the Church and forgiving them [for]…There was a man in the church that was an authority…and he came out, went off the teleprompter at conference and said that gays are gay because they’re raised in unhappy homes and they’re raised so unhappy they don’t want to have children, and so it’s the parents’ fault for raising their families unhappy, and that’s why they have gay children. And my mother heard this and locked herself in the bedroom for 3 days (Sweeten).

In Salt Lake City, the Mormon Church has the power and influence to define socially acceptable behavior. Essentially, the Mormon Church is able to define the “frontier” of the city. For members like Trace’s mother, what the Church says goes.

The Church’s monopoly on defining standards is expounded by their ability to disseminate information on a massive scale. Further, the information they propagate to members comes from an authority, and is therefore rarely challenged. Thus, they are able to spread information, or the “survey,” to reinforce their anti-gay frontier.
Figure 7: “To Young Men Only.”
A pamphlet published and distributed by the LDS Church (Packer)
Figure 7 depicts a pamphlet distributed worldwide by the Church based on a speech given by Apostle Boyd K. Packer in 1976 (O’Donovan). The pamphlet discusses the dangers of homosexuality, naming it an unnatural perversion. “There is a falsehood that some are born with an attraction to their own kind, with nothing they can do about it,” the pamphlet states, and “that is a malicious and destructive lie… It is of the devil” (Packer). It wasn’t until 2016 that the Church finally retired this pamphlet, removing it from their website (Stack). For nearly 40 years, young men were given information that equated homosexuality to the devil. Trace and his mother likely received this very pamphlet.

The LDS Church is institutionally engrained into the very fabric of urban structure in Salt Lake City. Public schools offer seminary classes; in Salt Lake County alone, there are 1,278 wards; the Church owns The Desert Management Corporation which runs various insurance and real estate companies, a bookstore, a radio station, a newspaper, and more. Being in Salt Lake, whether you are a member or not, it is impossible to avoid the influence, the “grid,” of the Church.

In the introduction of this thesis, I explained that the grid, acting to concretize the frontier and the survey, is put into place by a hegemonic power. In Blomley’s understanding, as well as in Greenwich Village, that hegemonic power is the state. The spatializations are enacted through governmental institutions: police, law, property ownership. In Salt Lake City, the overwhelming influence of the Church allows it to fill the role of the state. The Church dictates the anti-gay frontier imagery. The Church distributes anti-gay propaganda. The Church institutionalizes anti-gay violence. As Trace
points out, “their PR department is really powerful. Probably has as much voice as the Prophet” (Sweeten).

On August 13, 1975, The Advocate published an article titled “Outside the Temple Gates- The Gay Mormon.” The article was written by Robert McQueen, a gay Mormon from Salt Lake City. In the article, McQueen tells of five gay men in their early twenties who were students at Brigham Young University (BYU), a private college in Provo, Utah owned by the Mormon Church. At the time, BYU officials had taken it upon themselves to seek out gay students, who they would then require to undergo treatment, as well as aid officials in locating other gay students. Four of the boys in McQueen’s story had been “trapped in the on-going homosexual witch hunts at BYU and subjected to the Church’s disciplinary program (McQueen, 14). The fifth, perhaps out of fear or guilt, had voluntarily ousted himself to the Church. All five boys were made to undergo counseling for their transgressions.

The first step of the counseling process that the boys were required to endure was an interview by Spencer W. Kimball, the counselor for homosexual problems. McQueen writes:

The interviews with Kimball reeked of moral blackmail. After all, he was ‘an apostle of the Lord’ and, Mormons believed, spoke with direct authority from God. When he, with uncompromising precision, robbed them of their dignity, their sense of self-worth, their hopes for happiness in this life, and the dream of eternal salvation in the presence of God, they believed him. Although the interviews were couched in the same ‘loving’ terms one finds scattered through the documents of the Inquisition, they became a waking nightmare to my friends (McQueen, 14).

The students were told that in order to continue their education at BYU and to remain members of the Church, they would have to commit to “complete repentance” as well as agree to provide names of other gay students. McQueen recalls that after their interviews,
“each of these men changed subtly,” becoming less and less cheerful (McQueen, 14). Eventually, all five boys were expelled from BYU and excommunicated from the Church. Their student records marked them as homosexuals, which prevented them from transferring or finding a job. Their lives were destroyed.

At the time when McQueen is writing his article, ten years after meeting the boys he calls his friends, all five of them have committed suicide. “My friends from 1965 were good people,” McQueen says. “They wanted to be better people, but they believed in the Church more than they believed in themselves” (McQueen, 14).

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So how is it that a city that faced, and continues to face, such a major obstacle to gay neighborhood formation nevertheless houses one of the nation’s largest gay populations?

In an interview conducted in January 2017 with Trace and Ron and three of their close friends, I tried to answer that very question. To start, I simply asked if there was a gay neighborhood, a Greenwich Village so to speak, in Salt Lake City. At first, the men listed a couple of neighborhoods that they considered gay. “Amazon Alley,” “9th and 9th,” “The Avenues.” However, it quickly became apparent to both them and me that the areas they thought of as “gay” were also areas that are considered non-Mormon. Brad, who has been a realtor in Salt Lake since 1992, noted, “there is a definite correlation between what was perceived as a gay neighborhood being the polar opposite of a Mormon neighborhood” (Dundas).

Tony is a flight attendant who had to relocate to Salt Lake City after the Delta base in San Francisco closed. He said that when he moved, he “just wanted to be
downtown” because he perceived it be “safer or liberal” (Hurtado). Tony admits that he didn’t want to move to Salt Lake originally. “None of us did,” adds Ron, who is also a flight attendant (Corona). Tony said that he was reluctant “because of the Mormons. It’s more of a religious thing than it was a gay thing,” he explained. “I just did not want to be in the suburbs with all these kids and all these people asking me ‘Why aren’t you married? Why are you alone? Why are you… who’s that man coming into your apartment?’” (Hurtado).

Before ever arriving in Salt Lake City, Tony and others have a preconceived notion of what they will find. This is the effect on the frontier the Mormon Church has painted. Many of the preconceived ideas are untrue. I know this based on the questions I am asked when I reveal my home state. Nevertheless, true or not, these ideas originate from the Church’s branding of itself. In Salt Lake, the Mormon Church created a division between us and them in the same way that American Old West Frontier imagery constructed an uncivilized other in contrast to the lawful pioneers.

The creation of a Mormon frontier dictated the creation of gay communities. As people move into Utah, they have certain preconceptions about the area and the prevalence of Mormons, and based on those thoughts, they often seek out more liberal, urban areas.

They [newcomers] hated suburbia, they hated the whole idea of that and they equated suburbia with being LDS in Salt Lake City so they would seek out what the perceived to be the gay neighborhoods. And so it was almost a self-fulfilling prophecy, you know. They would build a… gay neighborhood (Dundas).

People seeking a non-Mormon neighborhood in Utah ask realtors, like Brad, for gay neighborhoods, because they assume these will be the liberal areas. In doing so, they are effectively creating gay neighborhoods. “It [is] almost a self-fulfilling prophecy,” Brad
explains (Dundas). People seeking non-Mormon communities move into urban core areas in Salt Lake (referring to them as gay neighborhoods, but really meaning non-LDS neighborhoods), and in doing so, they create the conditions necessary for an actual gay neighborhood to form.

However, just as in Greenwich Village, the concept of a gay neighborhood as a safe haven (from Church or State oppression) is complicated. “I guess what confuses me is when you are saying a ‘Gay Neighborhood,’” Trace says. “I guess what are you describing as gay? Because it is kind of a generalization, because there is only certain kinds of gays that would have been in that gay neighborhood” (Sweeten). Trace points to a number of factors that would have limited access to living in a “gay neighborhood.” These include being out, being comfortable with living an openly gay lifestyle, and having the financial means to do so. Therefore, as gay neighborhoods form in Salt Lake, the population represents a very limited segment of the LGBTQ+ community, similar to Greenwich Village.

Describing they subset of the LGBTQ+ population that moves to gay neighborhoods in Salt Lake, Trace says:

They didn’t have kids that they had to spend their money on, so their whole income could go towards a home and finishing it and fixing it and putting money into a home. And then I think what also you’ll find is that they move into areas that have some kind of historic charm. They do not move into an area that doesn’t have that. They’re looking for kind of these old blighted areas and they get drawn to them because it’s where the old charm is, the prices are a little lower, they’re not afraid that it’s not a nice neighborhood according to the families that are raising kids or whatever. So they move in and they start fixing up homes, and it does, it kind of snowballs from there (Sweeten).

Trace is describing the beginning of a process of gay gentrification. The gays in Salt Lake moved into “blighted areas,” but had the financial means to renovate the homes,
increasing the property value. Therefore, the right to the neighborhoods is redefined. As the neighborhoods transitioned, white, property-owning gays were subsequently integrated into the landscape of the city, alongside other white, wealthy non-gay homeowners.

Christopher Castiglia explains that “instead of developing rich possibilities in the idea that sexual identities could find expression in the built environment (and vice versa), when queer theory turned to architecture, it was to continue to insist on invisibility. Betsky asserted ‘By its very nature, queer space is something that is not built, only implied, and usually invisible’” (Castiglia, 92).

In Salt Lake City, the desire for invisibility was paramount. To be openly gay was to risk gay bashing, employment termination, outing to the community and subsequent ostracization, and, for those who belonged to the Church, excommunication. Even if there was a desire for a gay community, there was not a desire for a public gay community. For gays in Salt Lake, the safety that was achieved through neighborhood formation such as that in New York’s Greenwich Village and San Francisco's Castro could not be achieved in the same way. A gay neighborhood would have necessarily created more visibility, and in Salt Lake’s case, visibility did not equate to safety. In fact, it did just the opposite.

Castiglia goes on to claim, “the invisibility of queerness in the built environment is celebrated as evidence of the triumph of assimilation” (Castiglia, 94). The success of a thriving gay community in Salt Lake City is directly related to the ability of that community to remain discreet throughout its stages of formation. Reflecting on the community today, Trace noted that lack of gay bars in Salt Lake. “But that’s assimilation,” Brad responded, “That’s what we wanted all along” (Dundas). The
institutional influence on the community results in a great contradiction: a successful 
community relies on diffusion of the community. “Yeah,” Trace acknowledged, “that’s 
what we wanted, and so actually, where we were forced to be like this before, it’s… 
spread out” (Sweeten). The secrecy and invisibility that gays in Salt Lake wanted in the 
1970s and 1980s has manifested itself as assimilation today.

Whereas initially, the diffusion and invisibility was paramount to ensure the 
safety and endurance of the community, over time, that diffusion has been embraced as a 
signifier of successful assimilation. Unlike Greenwich Village, where gay residents used 
their integration into the frontier to form their own community, when gays in Salt Lake 
were accepted into the liberal frontier, they assimilated into already existing liberal 
communities. This allowed for a legitimized existence while retaining a sense of safety 
and invisibility from the Church.

While the white gay community in Salt Lake assimilated into other communities 
rather than forming a space of its own, the same type of social exclusion occurs within 
the community as in Greenwich Village. Members of the LGBTQ+ community who are 
trans*, non-white, or lack the financial means to assimilate into the liberal hegemony are 
not part of accepted gay community in Salt Lake. They remain on the periphery both 
society at large, as well as the assimilated community.

The men I interviewed observe that the queer community in Salt Lake in the past 
was much tighter and well defined, because it had to be. There were no places where it 
was okay to be gay, so they had to stick together in underground communities. However, 
today, it is okay for certain subsets of the gay population to exist within liberal Salt Lake 
society. Therefore, their gayness becomes less of a factor in their inclusion or exclusion
from society. When gayness becomes part of the mainstream community, it is factors such as race, class, and gender that are used to exclude members of the LGBTQ+ community. Brad concludes “I think going back to what you said, the not having a gay neighborhood or a gay community [in Salt Lake], maybe that’s part of assimilation and maturing into the greater part of the population… It’s everywhere” (Dundas).
Chapter 5
Conclusion

The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.
Audre Lord

In October 2006, The Jerusalem Post featured an article titled “Foreign Ministry Promoting Gay Israel,” written by Tovah Lazaroff. In the article, Lazaroff recounts comments made by David Saranga, the Senior Foreign Affairs Advisor to the President of Israel at the time. Lazaroff writes:

The gay culture is an entryway to the liberal culture, he [Saranga] said, because in New York it is that culture that is creating “a buzz.” Israel needs to show this community that it is relevant to them by promoting gay tourism, gay artists and films. Showing young, liberal Americans that Israel also has a gay culture goes a long [way] towards informing them that Israel is a place that respects human rights, as well (Lazaroff).

These comments represent the pervasive role that American homonationalism has played in global power geometries. When I say homonationalism, I mean to emphasize the ways in which homosexuality has been embraced into American nationalism as a signifier of neoliberalism and its successes within the United States. By purporting its open and accepting attitude towards homosexuality, especially in contrast to repressive cultures and nations, the United States furthers its liberal hegemony. Thus, the assimilation of homosexuality into mainstream acceptance has become a tool embraced by nation-states as they attempt to gain global recognition as agents of neoliberalism.

However, only a small portion of the LGBTQ+ population is able to benefit from American (and subsequent international) homonationalism, making it an inherently sexist and racist tool. Homonationalism essentially works in a way that furthers the marginalization that occurs as a byproduct of neoliberalism. “It is through imaginative geographies produced by homo-nationalism,” Jasbir Puar explains, “that the
contradictions inherent in the idealization of the US as a properly multicultural heteronormative but nevertheless gay-friendly, tolerant, and sexually liberated society can remain in tension” (Puar, 68).

Puar’s explanation of imaginative geographies helps to illuminate the reality of uneven gay geographies in neighborhoods in the United States and beyond. Puar explains:

This mapping or geography is imaginative because, despite the unevenness, massively evidenced, of sexual and racial tolerance across varied spaces and topographies of identity in the US, it nonetheless exists as a core belief system about liberal mores defined within and through the boundaries of the US (Puar, 68-69)

Imaginative geographies are constructed through narratives that rebrand the frontier.

Throughout this thesis, I discussed the ways in which the American frontier has been re-branded to include white, gay males as part of the dominant social class. The successfulness of this rebranding becomes apparent when viewed in an international context. The sentiment expressed by Foreign Affairs Advisor David Saranga is indicative of institutionalized processes of pinkwashing that have been embraced by the Israeli government in recent years. As a contentious nation regularly accused of human rights violations, Israel uses pinkwashing as a way of garnering positive attention as a liberal nation. The use of the term pinkwashing in an Israeli context was first used in April 2010 by Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (QUIT) “as a twist on ‘Greenwashing’ where companies claim to be eco-friendly in order to make profit” (Schulman). Essentially, Israel highlights gay-friendly aspects of its society to bolster its image as an advanced, liberal country.

In an article titled “A Documentary Guide to ‘Brand Israel’ and the Art of Pinkwashing,” Sarah Schulman explains, “what makes LGBT people and their allies so
susceptible to Homonationalism and Pinkwashing is the emotional legacy of homophobia” (Schulman). As I hoped to portray throughout this thesis, attempts by the queer community to gain legitimacy, to gain assimilation, were not unwarranted. The “emotional legacy of homophobia” refers to decades and decades of maltreatments and injustices endured by the community. It refers to fear. It refers to pain. It refers to the loss of hundreds of thousands of lives. In critiquing the community and its evolvement to what it is today, I do not wish to minimize these factors.

The oppression faced by the LGBTQ+ community historically warrants the desire for a collective community, or a gayborhood, to provide safety and acceptance. Thus, in interrogating gayborhoods, I hope to underscore the institutionalized violences targeted at LGBTQ+ communities and the role this plays in subsequent racially and socio-economically based violences within the community. When a subset of the LGBTQ+ population began to find a place in the mainstream frontier, they distanced themselves from members of the community who were trans* and of color and any other identity that was still not legible in that mainstream because it was the only way to bring their own liberation to fruition.

Therefore, my critique is largely of the neoliberal system and the ways in which it necessarily demands social inequality. The LGBTQ+ community ostracized a portion of the population because the system requires someone as other. Because the community is trapped within this system, they use the tools provided by the system. While this is unjust, it is a necessity of their conditioning within the system, and therefore culpability lies first within the system and then within the community.
Throughout this thesis, I focus my argument on the actions of the wealthy, white, gay community and critique the violence they direct towards non-white, trans*, low-income, and otherwise compoundingly marginalized members of the community. As Christina Hanhardt writes, “I do not mean to suggest… that low-income or of color communities are never homophobic, or that LGBT organizations should not fight various forms of anti-LGBT violence” (Hanhardt, 14). My intention is not to ignore homophobic violence perpetrated by marginalized communities, nor to suggest that the LGBTQ+ community not centralize their own narratives in their collective fight for liberation. However, I choose to focus my critique on the white gay community because their actions exist in a longer and more powerful legacy of targeted violence, which has much deeper historical and contemporary implications. Additionally, white gay community members have the power to gain traction within the system, because their whiteness affords them tools to make an impact.

While my primary critique focuses on institutionalized violences within the system of neoliberalism, this system cannot be dismantled without first recognizing interpersonal violences within the system. It is important to recognize individual agency that members of the queer community participating in gay neighborhood formation have and the active role their personal choices can play in perpetuating white supremacy and other violent systems of oppression.

I opened my thesis with a quote from Leslie Feinberg. In a speech given at the Al-Fatiha Retreat in 2002, Leslie said “I do not believe that our sexuality, gender expression and bodies can be liberated without making a ferocious mobilization against imperialist war and racism an integral part of our struggle” (Feinberg). The freedom that the
LGBTQ+ community found in the United States and their subsequent neighborhood formation is valuable, but until the community as a whole is collectively liberated through a fight against intersecting and compounding systems of oppression, the community remains complicit and subjugated.
References Cited


