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Gay Ghetto

MARTIN P. LEVINE

We are refugees from Amerika. So we came to the ghetto.
—Carl Wittman

Gays have claimed that there exist within major cities "gay ghettos," neighborhoods housing large numbers of gays as well as homosexual gathering places, and in which homosexual behavior is generally accepted, designating as such certain sections of Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles (Aiken, 1976; Altman, 1971:42; Brill, 1976; Chicago Gay Liberation, 1970:3–4; Kantrowitz, 1975:48; Nassberg, 1970:1; Russo, 1976; Shilts, 1977:20; Whitmore, 1975:45; Wittman, 1972:167–68). Sociologists have picked up the term, repeatedly using it in homosexual research. For example, Humphreys (1972a:80–81) labels as "gay ghetto" a neighborhood characterized by marked tolerance of homosexuality and a clustering of gay residences and bars. Weinberg and Williams (1974:43) use the term "lavender ghetto" for districts with large numbers of homosexuals and their institutions.* Typically, however, these authors offer no observations to support their use of the term.

This paper analyzes the validity of "gay ghetto" as a sociological construct, limiting the discussion to the male homosexual community.

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* The color lavender has been traditionally used to symbolize homosexuality.
THE GHETTO

The term "ghetto" has been employed by sociologists in varied and sometimes inconsistent ways. Most sociologists consider a ghetto to be an area of the city housing a segregated cultural community, but there is marked disagreement about the particular features of the community that qualify it as a ghetto. The term was first used in accordance with its historical connotation, as applicable only to the Jewish community (Wirth, 1928:4). In the 1920s, sociologists from the Chicago School, notably Robert E. Park (1928:vii–ix) and Louis Wirth (1928:1–10), began to use it to describe any urban neighborhood inhabited by a people socially segregated from the larger society and bearers of a distinctive culture. Noting that the circumstances of immigrant groups often did fit these requisites, Park and Wirth applied the term to neighborhoods inhabited by Jews, Poles, blacks, and Italians. They also suggested its suitability as a depiction of areas dominated by such moral deviants as bohemians, hobos, and prostitutes (Park, 1928:vii-viii; Wirth, 1928:6, 20, 286). Disregarding Park’s and Wirth’s more general formulation, contemporary usage of the term has in some instances restricted the concept to communities inhabited by racial and ethnic groups, particularly those that are poverty stricken and socially disorganized (Butler, 1977:121; Kerner Commission, 1968:12). In other cases, the word “ghetto” is applied to any area inhabited by a minority group (Fischer, 1976:13; Theodorson and Theodorson, 1969:174). Even affluent minority communities are said to live in ghettos, these being called “gilded ghettos” (Michelson, 1970:65).

Park’s and Wirth’s notion is superior to the other formulations because it removes “ghetto” from its historical connotation and translates it into a construct useful to the study of urban ecology. Wirth (1928:6) recognizes this advantage when he notes that a ghetto epitomized ecological segregation in the sense that it is a spatial indicator of the extent to which a community is isolated from the surrounding society. Unfruitfully grounded in the ghetto’s historical meaning, the other formulations limit the
term to racial and ethnic communities, obscuring the generalizability of its features and thus hiding its important implication for urban ecology. For these reasons, I will use Park’s and Wirth’s conceptualization.

The classic exposition of Park’s and Wirth’s formulation appears in Wirth’s well-known study *The Ghetto*. In the book’s foreword, Park (p. vii) defines a ghetto as an area of the city that houses a segregated cultural community. Wirth develops the concept further by specifying as key elements of a ghetto four features: institutional concentration, culture area, social isolation, and residential concentration. Institutional concentration denotes the centralization of the ghettoized people’s gathering places and commercial establishments in the ghetto. For example, in the Jewish ghetto are concentrated large numbers of synagogues, religious schools, ritual bathhouses, kosher butchers and restaurants, and Yiddish theaters and bookstores.

Wirth (p. 286) means by “culture area” that the culture of a particular people dominates the geographic area, a dominance reflected in the spatial centralization of the ghettoized people’s cultural traits. Inside the Hebrew quarter, for example, Wirth observes a concentration of Jewish traits. He finds mainly Yiddish written on store signs, restaurant menus, and billboards; he hears mainly Yiddish spoken in conversations and speeches. The distinctive attire of the Jews also prevails in this neighborhood. Most of the men have long sidelocks and flowing beards, and wear long black coats and hats or skullcaps. Most of the women wear kerchiefs, long dresses, aprons, and shawls. Wirth also records the widespread adherence to the special customs of the Jewish people, such as the closing of stores on the sabbath and high holy days.

The third key element of the ghetto, social isolation, denotes the segregation of the ghettoized people from meaningful social relations with the larger community. To Wirth (p. 287), this isolation is produced by the prejudice that is typically heaped upon the ghettoized people or by the social distance different cultural practices create between the group and the larger community. Wirth (pp. 222–26) illustrates this type of social isolation by showing how anti-Semitism and/or the social dis-
tance caused by Jewish subcultural practices are responsible for the restriction of the ghettoized Jews' social lives to other Jews.

Residential concentration, the last key element, signifies that the ghetto is a residential area with a concentration of the homes of the ghettoized people. Wirth (pp. 205–10) demonstrates, with population statistics, that the majority of the people living in Chicago's Jewish ghetto are Jewish.

Following Park and Wirth, an urban neighborhood is a "gay ghetto" if it possesses the attributes Park and Wirth have put forth. It must contain gay institutions in number, a conspicuous and locally dominant gay subculture that is socially isolated from the larger community, and a residential population that is substantially gay. The rest of the paper presents exploratory research findings which show that some metropolitan subcommunities are indeed "gay ghettos." To prove this, I used a multifaceted research strategy. First I limited my inquiry to metropolises commonly reputed to have large numbers of homosexuals. Then I developed procedures to demonstrate the degree to which gay institutions concentrate in each metropolis, to measure the extent of concentration, and to determine the boundaries and the names of the areas in which the institutions cluster. Finally I carried out exploratory fieldwork in the areas of concentration to study the degree to which they fulfilled the other requisites.

PARK'S AND WIRTH'S FIRST REQUISITE: INSTITUTIONAL CONCENTRATION

This section locates neighborhoods with large numbers of homosexual institutions. My strategy for the research was the ecological method (Michelson, 1970:11). I first plotted the location of gay institutions on maps of five cities. I then studied the maps for concentrations of these institutions, and ascertained the names and boundaries of the districts in which they occur.

The data used in constructing the maps came from a national directory of gay gathering places, Bob Damron's 1976 Address Book. This directory contains the names and addresses of bars, bookstores, steam baths, churches, restaurants, and movie the-
aters catering to the gay community. It also lists cruising locations, indoor or outdoor places such as beaches, parks, or street corners where homosexuals go to meet each other, often to set up sexual encounters. Places listed within this directory are coded as to the type of patrons who frequent them (e.g., youths, hustlers, western) and as to the kinds of activities available there (e.g., dancing, entertainment, overnight accommodations). * Bob Damron's Address Book is one of several available gay directories, all of which vary in the accuracy of their listings. Bob Damron's is the most current and accurate, according to the personnel of New York's Oscar Wilde Memorial Bookshop, the nation's oldest, largest, and best-known gay bookstore.†

Cities selected for study were Boston, New York, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. They were chosen because the available literature makes reference to areas in these cities housing large numbers of homosexuals and their institutions.

Maps were constructed by plotting the location of the directory listings on city street maps. The street maps used contain street indexes and are labeled by neighborhood and house number. The plotting was done city by city, by locating with the street index and the house numbers the position of every directory listing on each map. This procedure placed each listing on its appropriate block. The institutional listings such as bars, restaurants, and steam baths are indicated by solid black dots. The cruising areas are represented by solid black lines. The street maps were then simplified and reduced into spot maps.

The spot maps (see maps) indicate a definite distribution pattern of gay gathering places in these cities.‡ They show that large numbers of these places are concentrated in small areas,

* "Western" denotes, in gay argot, that patrons dress in western attire: chaps, cowboy hats, leather vests (Warren, 1974:20).

†This opinion is shared by Weinberg and Williams (1974:41n, 58n). Warren (1974:19) is of the opinion that all the directories are out of date. Harrys (1974:241) formed a different guide, the Guild Guide, to be the most current and up to date.

‡The map of New York City omits Staten Island because the directory contains no listings there.
usually in the inner city, and that none or very few are found in other city areas. Owing to the social construction of community, there is no precise way of determining the names and boundaries of these areas of concentration (Suttles, 1972). Therefore, I decided to ask this of several informants, in some cases sociologists, who had lived or were currently living in each of these cities. From the information they gave me, the names that appear on the legends of the maps were attached to the areas of institutional concentration, and two measures of the extent of concentration, based on the boundaries of the concentrated areas, were developed.*

The first concentration measure represents the proportion of gay institutions and cruising places within the concentrated areas compared to the total number of such places in each city. This measure was calculated by totaling the number of gay institutions and cruising places in the concentration areas and then calculating the percentage this sum is of the total number of such locations for a particular city. The second measure represents the ratio of the total sum of the land mass of each concentrated area to the total land mass of each city. This ratio was calculated by (1) turning each concentrated area into a rectangular form by connecting the outermost gay places; (2) figuring the area of each rectangle; (3) summing all these areas; and (4) computing the percentage of each city’s total land mass represented by this sum.

I found, using these measures of concentration, that in Boston, 83 percent of the gay locations are situated on less than 2 percent of the city’s total land mass. Similarly, in New York, 86 percent of the gay locations are situated in less than 2 percent of this city’s total land mass; in Chicago, 64 percent in less than 1 percent; in San Francisco, 64 percent in less than 1 percent; and

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* Other authors have noted similar concentrations in these areas. Newton (1972:22) observed institutional concentrations in the same areas shown by the spot maps of New York and Chicago. Weinberg and Williams (1974:41–46, 56–61) cite as areas housing large numbers of gay locations the districts shown on the spot maps of New York and San Francisco. Although Hooker (1967) and Warren (1974:20) do not specify areas in which institutional concentration occurs, they state that this happens in the cities they studied.
in Los Angeles, 78 percent in less than 3 percent. The spot maps thus clearly demonstrate that gay institutions and cruising areas are not randomly distributed but in each case are concentrated in specific city districts.

Areas of concentration revealed by these maps also tend to vary as to what kinds of establishments are housed within them. The majority of these districts are comprised mainly of restaurants, cruising areas, and bars. A few, however, shelter places that cater to a specialized interest within the gay community. Gay-oriented movie theaters and bookstores and bars or street corners frequented by male prostitutes tend to concentrate only in one of these districts, usually in the downtown public entertainment districts, e.g., Times Square or the Tenderloin. Bars catering to western or sadomasochistic gays also are centralized in a particular district, usually an industrial warehouse area, e.g., Folsom Street.

The maps demonstrate the existence of gay institutional concentration in areas of each city. This is one indicator that there may indeed be gay ghettos.

PARK'S AND WIRTH'S OTHER REQUISITES: CULTURE AREA, SOCIAL ISOLATION, RESIDENTIAL CONCENTRATION

To determine the extent to which the twenty-seven districts on the spot maps fulfill Park's and Wirth's other criteria for a ghetto, I conducted exploratory research, which entailed informal fieldwork and a literature survey. Fieldwork was carried out in New York and to a lesser degree in Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. The fieldwork was conducted in each of the neighborhoods indicated in the five cities' spot maps as housing a large number of gay locations. It included informal and formal interviews as well as observations made in the course of lengthy walks. Walks were oriented toward discovering the social characteristics of these areas by noting the types of institutions, land use, and populations within each community. The interviews were conducted with gay residents of each city. In interviews, questions were asked concerning the residence of the interviewee and his gay friends and the character of the
interviewee's social network. Observations were conducted on main thoroughfares, from a place where I could both see and hear street activity, usually a street corner or in front of the popular bars, as well as in restaurants and stores.

The survey of the literature included both the professional literature and a national publication of the gay community, *The Advocate*. The professional literature search was confined mainly to literature on homosexuality and produced material that was generally impressionistic. *The Advocate* was utilized because it is widely recognized as a leading gay publication (Humphreys, 1972a:133; Warren, 1974:178). A scan of issues dated from September 1975 to June 1977 uncovered articles on the gay community in each of the five cities under consideration, all written by local correspondents.* The results of this research are presented below, broken down in terms of Wirth's other requisites of the ghetto—culture area, social isolation, and residential concentration.

**Culture Area**

The culture of these districts was partially determined in the course of the fieldwork and literature search. The method used to ascertain this has been employed by many other sociologists (Park, 1925:6; Zorbaugh, 1929:4). This technique determines the culture of an area by examining the cultural traits that appear within it. A neighborhood's culture, according to this method, is that of the group whose cultural traits are most prevalent in the area.

The results of this research indicate that only certain sections—those sheltering places of the local gay scene—of seven of these districts are homosexual culture areas. The districts in which these sections occur are the West Side, Greenwich Village, New Town, Polk Street, Folsom Street, Castro Village, and West Hollywood. The boundaries of the homosexual cultural areas within these districts are ambiguous because of the social

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* I was informed of this in a conversation with Mr. Joe Richards, director of public information at *The Advocate*, on June 7, 1977.
construction of community (Suttles, 1972). Generally, these sections consist of the streets housing a cluster of gay locations and the blocks proximate to them. For example, on New York’s West Side, the homosexual culture area is comprised on the blocks surrounding the concentration of gay places between Broadway and Central Park in the low West Seventies. Similarly, in Greenwich Village, the homosexual culture area consists of the blocks encircling the cluster of gay establishments in the vicinity of the West Village’s Christopher Street; in New Town, the intersection of Broadway and Clark Street; in Polk Street, Polk between Eddy and Broadway; in Folsom Street, Folsom between 4th and 12th Streets; in Castro Village, the intersection of Castro and 18th Streets; and in West Hollywood, Santa Monica Boulevard between Doheny Drive and La Cienega Boulevard.

These homosexual culture areas are typified by an extraordinarily high concentration of gays and their culture traits. This concentration is so extensive that the scene on many of the major commercial streets in these areas seems predominantly gay. Large numbers of gay men are present on the street, while women and children are conspicuously absent. Streets are lined with bars, bookstores, restaurants, and clothing stores catering to homosexuals, and many stores are gay-owned (Shilts, 1977; Thompson, 1976).

The most prevalent culture traits in these sections are those of the homosexual community. Gay language is widely used in these places.¹ For example, I frequently overheard conversations between gay men in which they referred to each other or other men with female names and pronouns. Many billboards, posters, and store signs also utilize this argot. Two oversized billboards towering over the intersection of Christopher Street and 7th Avenue South advertise a homosexual steam bath (Weinberg and William, 1975) by showing a drawing of the head of a cowboy and the message, “Come! to Man’s Country.” The billboards use knowledge common to gay men, the sexual

¹ Warren’s (1974:100–121) conceptualization of gay language is used in this paper. She sees it as the linguistic aspect of the gay world, including vocabulary, ideology, mythology, and a symbolic universe.
implications of the word "come," and the western motif (Humphreys, 1972b) to imply that sex with desirable partners is available at the steam bath. There are also bars called Boot Hill, Numbers, Chaps, and stores called Boys' Market and Spike Liquors.

Gay fashion is a ubiquitous element of homosexual culture in these sections. The vast majority of men on the streets are dressed in the fashion currently favored by gays. This style, called "butch" in homosexual argot, includes four major looks: working man, lower-class tough, military man, and athlete (St. Clair, 1976). To illustrate, one variant of the lower-class tough look entails a tight black T-shirt, faded, skin-tight, straight-legged Levis, work boots, and a black leather motorcycle jacket. All of these looks call for short hair, muscular bodies, mustaches, closely cropped beards, and such accessories as key chains and handkerchiefs. These looks are so prevalent on these blocks that for a minute one gets the distinct impression of being in a union hall, army camp, or locker room. A few men in these areas wear the attire of sadomasochists—complete black leather outfits. Gay fashion is also sold in many of the local retail establishments, several specializing in it.*

Many social conventions within these areas are distinctly homosexual. Gestures of affection are exchanged openly between men, as well as eye contact and other gestures of sexual interest. For example, two men are frequently seen walking with their arms around each other's waists or holding hands. These open displays of affection rarely evoke sanctions; for the most part, people either accept or ignore them. Even police patrols through these sections pay little attention to such behavior. In light of the societal aversion to homosexuality, this tolerance is remarkable. In other places, such behavior quickly elicits harsh sanctions.

The scene in the homosexual culture areas shifts with the time of day. On weekday mornings and afternoons, bars and streets

* In these culture areas are found stores specializing in leather clothes, work clothes, western outfits or military gear. West Hollywood's Intermountain Logging Company is an example of a store that caters to the western look; Greenwich Village's The Leather Man, the sadomasochist look.
are relatively quiet. At night and on weekends, however, streets and bars are crowded, because participation in the gay world, for most homosexuals, occurs after normal working hours (Achilles, 1967; Hooker, 1967; Warren, 1974). At such times the areas are flooded with resident gays, as well as gays from surrounding neighborhoods and suburbs who come in to participate in the scene.

Gays recognize the culture areas as their quarters. These sentiments are reflected in the special names they give each area, names that are part of gay argot. For example, the homosexual culture area in West Hollywood is called Boy's Town (Stone, 1977). They are also reflected in the following statements made by gay residents of these areas (field notes):

I feel like an alien in other places. But in the Castro, I feel like I belong because I do.

For me, leaving the Village means pulling myself together and straightening up my act.

Social Isolation

The literature on homosexuality reveals that most homosexuals are socially isolated (Gagnon, 1977:244; Hooker, 1967; Humphreys, 1972a:13–41; Leznoff and Westley, 1967; Warren 1974; Weinberg and Williams, 1974:18–30). Americans, strongly prejudiced against homosexuality, perceive it as a loathsome deviation (Levitt and Klass, 1974; Weinberg and Williams, 1974:19–21). This societal antipathy creates an “intolerable reality” for gays, a reality in which homosexuals are confronted with a host of stringent sanctions (Humphreys, 1972a:13). Gays are discriminated against in employment and often fired upon discovery of their sexual orientation; they are criminals under various laws and thus subject to police surveillance; and they are frequently treated by those with whom they interact with ridicule, condemnation, ostracism, and even violence (Humphreys, 1972a:13–41; Weinberg and Williams, 1974:17–30). This prejudice and accompanying sanctions make it extremely difficult for homosexuals and heterosexuals to be socially and emotionally
involved with each other. Gays, whether their condition is known or hidden, are always aware that most heterosexuals regard them as socially unacceptable. As a reaction to this, many homosexuals have withdrawn from meaningful social relations with members of conventional society and have restricted their social life and primary relations to other homosexuals (Hooker, 1967: 180–81; Leznoff and Westley, 1967: 193–95; Saghri and Robins, 1973: 170; Warren, 1974). Thus, gays are socially isolated from the larger society.

My research indicates that this is the case for many of the homosexuals I encountered. Some of my informants told me that their interaction with heterosexuals was restricted to their jobs or sporadic family visits. Aside from this, social relations were confined mainly to other homosexuals. Their friends and acquaintances were usually gay residents of the district in which they lived. Roommates, if they had them, were also homosexuals. A few informants told me they had even less contact with the heterosexual world. These individuals managed to live within an almost exclusively gay world by limiting their social relations to fellow homosexuals and working in either stereotypical gay jobs or businesses catering to gays. The extent of some gay men's social isolation is underscored in the following remarks (field notes):

The people at work are real friendly, always asking me out for drinks or inviting me to parties. I never go. It's too much of a hassle. They don't know I am gay, so I avoid seeing them outside of work. I'd much rather spend my free time with other gay men, hanging out on Polk Street.

I live on the West Side with two gay men, work in a gay restaurant, and spend my summers on Fire Island. I never relate to straight people.

Residential Concentration

Normally, the determination of residential segregation patterns is a relatively simple affair. Data are collected, usually from the census, on the addresses of all the members of the
LEGEND:

a  North Beach
b  Polk Street
c  Tenderloin
d  Downtown
e  Folsom Street
f  Upper Market
g  Castro Village
group under consideration. The residential location of the group is then ascertained by analyzing data through one of three possible methods: spot maps, social area analysis, and factorial ecology (Timms, 1971). These procedures cannot be used for homosexuals because the data upon which they are based are lacking, namely, the addresses of all homosexuals. The census does not supply such information because it fails to ask questions about sexual orientation. Other potential sources of homosexual addresses (e.g., police files, psychiatrists’ records, homophile organizations) are inadequate because they are patently misrepresented of gays (Kitsuse and Cicourel, 1963:9; Weinberg, 1970). My inability to approach this problem with traditional measures prompted utilization of informal fieldwork and literature search.

The information obtained from the research indicates that only certain of these districts house significant numbers of homosexuals. In *The Advocate* articles of gay life in the cities under consideration, references are made to the large gay populations in a few of these districts. The article on Boston, for example, asserts that large numbers of homosexuals live in Beacon Hill, Back Bay, and South End (Brill, 1976). Similarly, articles on New York imply that substantial numbers of gays reside on the East Side, West Side, Greenwich Village, and Brooklyn Heights (Kantrowitz, 1975:48; Russo, 1975; Stone- man, 1975; Whitmore, 1975); on Chicago, Near North Side, Old Town, New Town (Aiken, 1976); on San Francisco, Castro Valley (Shilts, 1977:21); and on Los Angeles, West Hollywood (Stone, 1977).

Several sociologists concur with these observations (Bell and Weinberg, 1978:233–35, Newton, 1972:22; Starr and Carns, 1973:282). In addition Weinberg and Williams (1974:46, 60) find similar concentrations in New York’s East Midtown and Jackson Heights, and on San Francisco’s Polk Street. Similar results were found in the fieldwork. The overwhelming majority of my informants stated that they and most of their friends lived in these neighborhoods.

Greenwich Village’s subarea the West Village, Castro Village, and the Boy’s Town area of West Hollywood seem to have the
largest concentrations of homosexual residents. In fact, judging from the available material, the latter two areas may even be predominantly homosexual (Shilts, 1977; Stone, 1977). The gay concentration in all these areas is so extensive that entire blocks and buildings are inhabited exclusively by gays, many of whom own the buildings in which they live (Shilts, p. 21; Stone, 1977).*

Almost everyone in the West Village Houses [a large housing development in Greenwich Village's homosexual culture area] is gay, my neighbors across the hall, upstairs, downstairs [field notes].

CONCLUSION

This paper examined the validity of "gay ghetto" as a sociological concept. I have argued that its validity is contingent upon the existence of urban homosexual communities that meet Park's and Wirth's requisites for a ghetto.

Three communities in the cities studied, the West Village, Castro Village, and Boy's Town, fulfill all these requisites. All communities are characterized by large numbers of gay institutions and cruising places, a marked gay culture, socially isolated gay residents, and a substantially gay population. The West Village, Castro Village, and Boy's Town are thus gay ghettos. Their existence, in turn, validates "gay ghetto" as a sociological construct.

Twelve communities are partially developed gay ghettos. These communities partly satisfy the ghetto requisites. Three of them (West Side, New Town, Polk Street) house a concentration of gay locations, a homosexual culture area, and socially isolated gay residents. Their lack of a markedly gay population prevents them from being fully developed ghettos. Nine of the communities (Beacon Hill, Back Bay, South End, East Side, Brooklyn Heights, East Midtown, Jackson Heights, Old Town,

*I noted this in my fieldwork in Castro Village. My informants and Roy Tacker, owner of Paul Langley Real Estate, a major real estate agency in the area, concurred with this observation. Hooker (1967:172) and Warren (1974:20) also discovered predominantly gay blocks but they fail to specify their location.
Los Angeles

LEGEND:

a  San Fernando Valley
b  West Hollywood
c  Hollywood
d  Downtown
Near North Side) are marked by large numbers of gay institutions and socially isolated residents. These communities are not fully developed gay ghettos because they lack a salient homosexual culture area and a substantially gay populace. The remaining twelve spot map districts are probably not ghettos because they meet only one requisite—institutional concentration.

When considered together, it is possible that these communities represent different stages in ghetto development. Societal antipathy toward homosexuality sets the stage for their formation. Conditions of total suppression and zealous persecution inhibit ghetto development, but with a modicum of tolerance, the process begins. At first gay institutions and cruising places spring up in urban districts known to accept variant behavior, resulting in a concentration of such places in specific sections of the city, as shown on the spot maps. This concentration attracts large numbers of homosexuals, causing a centralization of gay culture traits, turning the districts into homosexual culture areas. Tolerance coupled with institutional concentration makes the areas desirable residential districts for gays. Many homosexuals, especially those publicly labeled as gay or open about their orientation, settle in these areas. At this point, the areas have become partially developed gay ghettos.

Recent modifications of social attitudes toward homosexuals explain the transformation of the West Village, Castro Village, and Boy’s Town into fully developed gay ghettos. A growing acceptance of homosexuality in the more liberal parts of the country signifies that gays can now practice an openly gay lifestyle without fear of penalization. Once out of the closet, gays may be drawn to the partially developed ghettos, to be near others like them and the places of gay life, increasing the number of gay residents in such districts. In cities like New York, San Francisco, and Los Angeles, with large gay populations, this increase coupled with a possible “heterosexual flight” (withdrawal from the community) may turn the areas into markedly gay neighborhoods, that is, fully developed gay ghettos.

This discussion of the development of gay ghettos is speculative. The actual process by which gay ghettos evolve can only be
ascertained through longitudinal research of fully developed ghettos. Further research is thus needed on the West Village, Castro Village, and Boy's Town.

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