

Gay Neighborhoods and the Rights of the Vicarious Citizen

Theodore Greene*

Northwestern University

Drawing on a combination of qualitative methods using data collected from gay neighborhoods in Chicago and Washington, DC, this article develops the notion of *vicarious citizenship*—the exercise of rights and claims-making by nonresidential stakeholders who personally identify politically, economically, or socio-culturally with a local community. Vicarious citizens include a diversity of self-identified community members, some of whom were former or displaced residents of the neighborhood, who draw on a variety of socio-territorial practices to mobilize against perceived normative and political threats to their visions of authentic community. At times, vicarious citizens may hold differing and even conflicting perspectives on the functions of community, challenging the claims of local residents and those with more material stakes in the local area. I argue the notion of vicarious citizenship can expand our understanding of how gay neighborhoods remain relevant among certain LGBT populations who, for a variety of reasons, select into neighborhoods outside established gay areas. Vicarious citizenship can also be found in other non-resident communities.

Drawing primarily on ethnographic and interview data collected from gay neighborhoods in Washington, DC, and Chicago, this article describes and analyzes the concept of *vicarious citizenship*—the exercise of rights and entitlements to community participation emanating from extra-neighborhood, symbolic ties to a neighborhood or locality. Vicarious citizens include a diversity of self-identified community members, some of whom were former or displaced residents of the neighborhood, who draw on a variety of socio-territorial practices to mobilize against perceived threats to their visions of authentic community. Without claims to residency (the *sine qua non* of local citizenship), these populations combine a sense of shared identity with their participation in the cultural, social, and political life of a local area to situate themselves as community stakeholders, with legitimate claims of “ownership” and investment in the affairs of the community.

Vicarious citizenship gestures to new ways of thinking about how urban participants live locally and align themselves socially, culturally, and politically to neighborhoods in the postindustrial city. While urban scholars have invariably examined extra-neighborhood participation in neighborhoods, this article connects these socio-spatial practices to meaningful forms of community attachment, identification, and investment. I demonstrate how the transformation of urban neighborhoods into sites of cultural production

*Correspondence should be addressed to Theo Greene, Department of Sociology, Northwestern University, 1810 Chicago Avenue, Evanston, IL 60208; theodoregreene2008@u.northwestern.edu.

and consumption (Clark 2004; Grazian 2008; Judd 1999; Lloyd [2006] 2010; Zukin 1995, 2010) abets accessibility to and increased participation of urban denizens in to neighborhood-specific communities of interest (Webber 1964). Additionally, while studies of the postindustrial city focus on the residential patterns and spatial practices of young, economically privileged urban cosmopolitans (Brown-Saracino 2004, 2007; Centner 2008; Clark 2004; Florida 2002; Grazian 2008; Lloyd [2006] 2010), vicarious citizenship draws attention to neighborhood-level stakeholders that have traditionally been excluded from decision-making over the production of local place, including indigenous populations that have been residentially priced out of and displaced from cultural enclaves through various strategies of urban redevelopment. Highlighting the diverse claims exercised by vicarious citizens, this article also demonstrates the various forms of resistance against the appropriation and misrecognition (Centner 2008) of a neighborhood's local character by gentrifiers and other privileged consumers of postindustrial urban neighborhoods. Ultimately, this article considers the powerful influence that extra-neighborhood residents can wield over local areas, and how that influence reconfigures notions of community membership and belonging.

Gay neighborhoods offer an ideal case for studying the processes associated with vicarious citizenship. Recent popular and academic scholarship on gay neighborhoods focus on their declining salience in an emergent "post-gay" era (Ghaziani 2010, 2011), citing the attraction of these amenity-rich communities for heterosexual cosmopolitans (Anacker and Morrow-Jones 2005; Black et al. 2002; Cooke and Rapino 2007; Florida 2002) and widespread acceptance for LGBT Americans, which has decreased the imperative for sexual communities to seek gay neighborhoods for safety and a sense of community (Brekhus 2003; Brown 2007; Collins 2004; Reuter 2008; Ruting 2008). Yet while political gains and increasing social acceptance have expanded the residential imagination of gays and lesbians beyond traditional gay neighborhoods (Gates and Ost 2004; Ghaziani 2010; Spring 2013), I show how former and symbolic residents exercise vicarious citizenship as a strategy of action to protect their visions of community from increasing threats of heteronormative assimilation (Ruting 2008). Through vicarious citizenship, I highlight how gay neighborhoods may retain symbolic relevance for certain LGBT populations in the face of their institutional and demographic transformation.

THE SOCIOLOGY OF EXTRA-NEIGHBORHOOD VICARIOUS COMMUNITIES

This article contributes to the existing sociological literature on communities and citizenship by developing the notion of *vicarious citizenship*, which elaborates on and extends Hunter's (1978) notion of *vicarious community*.¹ Informed by "community saved" studies highlighting the discovery of primary community ties in nontraditional community institutions (Anderson 1978; Firey 1945; Janowitz 1952; Liebow 1967; Stone 1954; Whyte 1955), Hunter proposed the idea of vicarious community to represent the epitome of the consciously created community, in which city residents who find themselves segregated from organized social life in a given neighborhood, "symbolically transform their local world into a meaningful unit of personal identification" (Hunter 1978:148). Although lacking the local networks that emanate from shared residential ties, people may develop vicarious attachments to the local area through their participation in local institutions

(Janowitz 1952; Stone 1954), through symbols tied to the identity of a place, or through the collective memory of an area (Firey 1945). The idea of vicarious community highlights the enduring value of place communities despite the social changes introduced by rapid technological change.

However, Hunter's notion primarily focuses on *local residents*, whose vicarious community emerges from subjective meaningful ties to their residential communities, and therefore may not be recognized by others. In contrast, this article elaborates on this idea of vicarious community by proposing the term "vicarious citizenship." It considers how the specific characteristics of the postmodern city enable the accessibility and sustained participation of increasingly mobile, residential outsiders to neighborhood-specific communities of interest (Webber 1964). The idea could apply to ethnics who still frequent, go to church in, and cherish "the old neighborhood" where they grew up but left, as well as former residents of gay or other communities.

The neologism of vicarious citizenship and the extension of vicarious communities to include extra-neighborhood participants relates to the longstanding examination of non-residential forms of community attachment in urban scholarship (Fischer 2011). Much of the scholarship based on The Chicago School found the brief, anonymous contacts with commercial institutions a poor substitute for community, endemic of the instability and anxiety produced by the social and moral disorganization of the city (Burgess 1925; Cressey 1932; Park 1925; Simmel [1902–3] 2002; Zorbaugh 1929). In retrospect, however, these studies suggest myriad strategies by urban residents to imagine community through support for and participation in local neighborhood institutions and to sustain ties to former residential communities. For example, Zorbaugh (1929:183) associated the growing presence of extra-neighborhood parishioners with the declining salience of churches as reflections of local community life, overlooking the possibility that the churches may endure as institutional residues—representations of local community life for former and symbolic residents who return for weekly service. Regularly eating ethnic cuisine in restaurants or donating to social clubs in ethnic enclaves are not only commercial transactions, but also expressions of nonresidents' sustained community ties.

In addition to highlighting the persistence of community ties in various commercial institutions and nontraditional public areas (e.g., street corners), "community saved" scholars also considered how the duration of co-presence was not necessarily indicative of the intensity of community identification and attachment. Now-classic urban ethnographies from scholars like Whyte (1955), Liebow (1967), and Anderson (1978, 1990) reveal how the strong affective ties that developed around street corners and street-corner institutions (e.g., liquor stores, bars, pool halls, corner grocery stores) existed in the present moment and often proved ephemeral, reflecting the harsh economic realities and transient lifestyles of the urban men who participated in these community forms.

More recent studies on the postmodern city focus attention on how the convergence of private capital, economic restructuring, and new forms of postindustrial employment has revitalized cities, where culture and consumption become central features of cities' economic development (Clark 2004; Dear 2002; Grazian 2008; Lloyd [2006] 2010; Sassen 2005; Zukin 1995, 2010). The diversity and "placeless" quality of contemporary social networks transform city dwellers into tourists, transients, transplants, and travelers (Grazian 2008; Judd 1999; Sorkin 1992), whose pursuit of authentic cultural experiences divorces their spatial practices from the everyday lived experiences that could tie them to the communities in which they participate (Lloyd 2002). Increasingly however, scholars have

also considered how urban denizens draw on the qualities of the postmodern city to situate themselves into cultural communities anchored in and around extra-neighborhood institutions. In the absence of traditional ties—or perhaps because of the nature of contemporary social networks—urban denizens may find personal identification and solidarity through their sense of co-presence with anonymous, yet like-minded strangers (Anderson 2004; Klinenberg 2013). Moreover, forms of commercialized leisure can mitigate the effects of social and spatial isolation of poor and low-income communities, complementing the accomplishment of the “daily round” (Hunter 2010).

This article extends this research by showing how urban denizens in the postmodern city interpret their participation in extra-neighborhood institutions as legitimate claims to community membership, at times mobilizing collectively to protect their community interests against perceived external threats. Extending Hunter’s (1978) notion of vicarious community to extralocal participants of neighborhoods, I show how the absence of residential ties transforms vicarious community into a constitutive practice of place-making for those lacking the entitlements afforded through residential citizenship. Vicarious citizens may only have passing or superficial contact with others, yet they construct and preserve place-based subcultures through co-presence, participation, or shared meanings emanating from cultural and spatial practices in and around key institutional anchors. By drawing attention to the various bases of community membership in local neighborhoods, I highlight how neighborhoods encompass a plurality of diverse cultural, political, and affective communities, who may at times retain differing and conflicting perspectives on the functions of neighborhoods.

Focusing on how vicarious citizens transform personal attachments to communities into material claims and subsequently enact those claims on the ground, this article also draws on an expanding body of literature in urban studies that connects the spatial practices of individuals in cities to emergent forms of national citizenship (Harvey 2003; Lefebvre 1996; Lepofsky and Fraser 2003; Purcell 2002; Rose 2000; Sassen 1999, 2005; Soja 2000). Scholars have increasingly highlighted the importance of urban space in shaping emergent forms of social, political, and cultural claims-making by a diversity of actors who make their “presence” known in the postmodern city. These claims take on a variety of forms to reflect a “large array of particular interests, from protests to police brutality and globalization to sexual preference politics and house-squatting by anarchists” (Sassen 2005:81). Building on this scholarship, this article demonstrates how vicarious citizens rely on a range of socio-spatial practices to reinforce, protect, and defend their visions of community, from public displays of affection to organized forms of collective action. This article describes two categories of vicarious claims: *normative vicarious claims*, cultural claims which apply to routines and interactions in everyday life acting to monitor behavior and reinforce norms consistent with an area’s perceived local character, and *political vicarious claims*, which often extend normative claims into individual and collective action on local, state, and national issues.

GAY NEIGHBORHOODS AND VICARIOUS CITIZENSHIP

Gay neighborhoods have become emblematic of postmodern urban redevelopment, as scholars underscore the role of gay urban consumers as harbingers of gentrification and of gay neighborhoods as amenities for cosmopolitan consumption (Anacker and

Morrow-Jones 2005; Cooke and Rapino 2007; Florida 2002). However, in many important ways, gay neighborhoods have always represented nonresidential vicarious communities. Throughout the twentieth century, extra-neighborhood spaces like bars have traditionally served as anchoring institutions for gay communities, who relied on these spaces to create and sustain social networks, to stay abreast of community-related events, or to mobilize politically against external threats to the broader LGBT community (Achilles [1967] 1998; Beemyn 1997; Bérubé 1990; Chauncey 1994; D'Emilio 1983; Johnson 2004). The Stonewall Riots, the “spark” that ignited the gay rights movement (Ghaziani 2008), exemplifies an exercise of vicarious citizenship. Precipitated by gay patrons from across New York City, the appropriation of the Stonewall Inn and Christopher Street as gay community anchors in late June 1969 evinced a spontaneous response to state-imposed sanctions that denied gays and lesbians the right to visible communities (Carter 2004; Duberman 1993; Truscott IV 1969).

The proliferation of discrete gay neighborhoods in the post-Stonewall era largely draws attention to the participation of working and middle-class gay white men in urban land markets (Castells 1983; Knopp 1990; Lauria and Knopp 1985; Weightman 1981). Identifying a gay residential concentration in neighborhoods became part of a distinct project for sociologists like Levine (1979) and Murray (1979, 1996), who analyzed the sociological validity of gay neighborhoods as spatial communities akin to cultural ghettos and ethnic enclaves. Acknowledging the participation of extra-neighborhood gay residents in neighborhood institutions, these studies overlook these forms of participation as expressions of community investment, which accelerated by the late-1970s as the economic transformation of neighborhoods like the Castro (Boyd 2011; Israels 1979; Shilts [1977] 1994) and the French Quarter (Knopp 1990) forced priced-out and displaced gay populations to seek affordable housing in surrounding communities. Studies in the last decade have highlighted how gay and lesbian residential enclaves often do not overlap with LGBT social areas (Gates and Ost 2004; Kelly et al. 2014). Hayslett and Kane (2011), for example, show how the concentration of same-sex households drives lesbian and gay residential choice more than the presence of lesbian- and gay-specific institutions.

Vicarious citizenship adds to existing scholarship pertaining to the demographic, socio-cultural, and political diversity of LGBT communities in the United States (Barrett and Pollack 2011; Brekhus 2003; Gates and Ost 2004; Ghaziani 2011; Pew Research Center 2013). While not all LGBT citizens desire community in gay neighborhoods (Barrett and Pollack 2011; Brekhus 2003; Davis 1995; Kinsman 1995), this article uses vicarious citizenship to explain how certain LGBT populations still find gay neighborhoods symbolically important to their sense of identity and community despite evidence signaling their decline (Collins 2004; Ruting 2008; Spring 2013). Moreover, this article complicates studies predicting the partial (Ghaziani 2010) and full integration of gay neighborhoods (Collins 2004; Florida 2002; Ruting 2008). Whereas much of this scholarship continues to privilege gay neighborhoods as white, male, middle-class spaces, this article draws attention to the multiple and oftentimes-contradictory meanings of integration to include nonresidential actors who participate in the social, cultural, and political lives of gay enclaves. These actors encompass LGBT populations who are priced out of, or economically displaced from booming housing markets in gay neighborhoods, from former LGBT residents and community participants with longstanding ties to the local community, to and black and Latino LGBT youth who come to gay neighborhoods to escape

discrimination and persecution found in their own residential communities. As they perceive their visions of community threatened—whether through the appropriation of gay space by heterosexuals and families or the displacement of businesses due to rising property values—these vicarious citizens engage in a variety of spatial practices to protect their interests as legitimate community stakeholders.

METHODS AND SETTING

This article derives from ethnographic and interview data collected from gay neighborhoods in Chicago (Lakeview/Boystown area) and Washington, DC (Dupont and Logan Circles, Shaw/U Street area). While these sites do not represent a random sample, they do offer valuable points of comparison in terms of population and ecological characteristics, political economy, and cultural representations. For example, both Boystown and Dupont Circle are distinguished as historically commemorated gay neighborhoods (Chibbaro 2010; Papadopoulos 2006; Reed 2003). Both areas have recently experienced a steady influx of heterosexual residents and their families, leading popular and academic scholars to question their salience as gay neighborhoods. Yet while Boystown remains the commercial, political, and cultural hub of Chicago's LGBT community, the institutions that anchor Washington, DC's LGBT communities are now dispersed through the city.

This project originated as a study of three adjacent neighborhoods in Washington, DC, at various stages of urban (re)development: the historically commemorated gay neighborhood (Dupont Circle), the "current" gay neighborhood (Logan Circle), and a historically African American neighborhood experiencing an influx of gay and lesbian residents (Shaw/U Street).² I moved to Washington, DC, in the fall of 2010, where for ten months I collected ethnographic and interview data while living in Shaw. I paid particular attention to how respondents expressed stronger personal identification with Dupont and Logan Circles than their own residential communities and how these attachments were expressed to defend against threats to respondents' construction of community. After returning to Chicago in the summer of 2011, I immediately noticed similar patterns in Boystown, as a string of violent crimes in the neighborhood sparked battles between gay and straight residents and black and Latino queer youth who congregated around a number of gay institutions during the summer months (Meyer 2011; Sosin 2011; Trice 2011). I moved to Boystown and collected 18 months of ethnographic and interview data while returning to Washington, DC, periodically over the next two years to conduct more focused observations of community events, town hall and zoning meetings, and community festivals.

For each neighborhood, I recorded field notes from my daily and nightly rounds, in addition to neighborhood-wide events: festivals, church services, zoning board meetings, community town halls and block association meetings. The town halls, in particular, provided useful forums to elicit community feedback on a wide range of issues, from local concerns such as Pride Festival planning, crime prevention, and supporting LGBT Youth, to larger state and national concerns such as HIV/AIDS advocacy and legalizing same-sex marriage. I also spent considerable time observing interactions in gay institutions, such as bars, restaurants, community centers, and bookstores.

Additionally, through a multi-point snowball sample, I interviewed a total of 85 individuals: 20 Chicago residents and 65 Washington, DC, residents. Respondents represented

a variety of actors who lived, worked, and socialized in their respective gay neighborhoods: gay and straight residents, community leaders/activists, religious leaders, business owners, local politicians, and neighborhood bloggers. Interviews focused on subjects' gender, racial, and sexual identities, residential histories, recreational and political involvement in community, the qualities of places they most and least value (recreational and residential), and changes they have witnessed in their local communities and (in the case of extra-neighborhood residents) the city's gay neighborhoods. I also posed questions related to the areas where respondents felt the strongest connection to community and the spaces and activities that fostered those attachments. Interviews varied in duration from thirty minutes to two hours, with most lasting at least an hour. Drawing on these data, I now turn to the institutional anchors upon which vicarious citizens construct their personal identification with the local area. Institutional anchors represent the socio-territorial bases upon which vicarious citizens enforce community norms and pursue community interests.

CONSTRUCTING COMMUNITY THROUGH EXTRA-NEIGHBORHOOD INSTITUTIONS

When Deacon Maccubbin and his partner announced their retirement in 2009, they decided to close their gay-themed bookstore Lambda Rising over selling it off to someone with a potentially different vision. "We had people that wanted to buy the business and continue to run it," Maccubbin stated in a radio interview, "but they were mostly investors. They didn't share the same community connection that we had always had. And I just decided that I couldn't stomach walking down the street and seeing my store in the hands of somebody else running it a different way" (Raz 2009).

Although respondents lamented the bookstore's closing, many understood and agreed with Maccubbin's rationale for not selling. For many, Lambda Rising had become synonymous with gay life in Dupont Circle, providing an initiation and a means of staying plugged into Washington's LGBT community. "Going to Lambda Rising was one of my rites of passage as a young gay man in Washington, DC," local author Louis Bayard reflected in *Metro Weekly*. "It was one of those places you could go where you felt safe to explore the gay world and learn things, and it makes me sad that it won't be around for the gay men coming up in the next generation" (Najafi 2009). Virtually every respondent shared a personal "Lambda experience," where the bookstore provided the backdrop for a panoply of experiences—coming out, starting relationships, finding roommates, and even buying condoms. Many described Lambda Rising as more than a bookstore; it was also a community center, cruising site, bulletin board, meeting place, and hub for political and social engagement for the LGBT community. "If you wanted to know what was going on," Mark (48, white, gay) reflected, "you'd stop into Lambda on your way home from work. If you were going on a first date, you'd rendezvous in front of the bookstore. If that date didn't work out or you were feeling a little horny, you'd head to the back of Lambda to check out guys checking out porn rags."

Lambda Rising epitomized the qualities of an *institutional anchor*—a neighborhood institution providing official and unofficial amenities that satisfy many of the functions associated with community. Certain organizations play a key role in grounding the material culture of a community in a particular locale, "seal[ing] the area's character and

collective identity into the local imagination” (Ghaziani 2014). Institutional anchors are enduring settings imbued with symbolism and collective memory, providing the bases upon which vicarious citizens make membership claims and participate in community activities within the neighborhood. Institutional anchors vary by the culture and community in question, ranging from commercial and cultural places that once have operated or are currently operating within the area (Hunter 1978), to public monuments and street iconography (i.e., Boystown’s neighborhood streetscapes (Reed 2003)), to social institutions (rituals and celebrations) that cement solidarity (Durkheim 1995). While often highly visible in the local community, institutional anchors differ from other local institutions in terms of the feelings of personal identification and attachment to community that vicarious citizens ascribe to them. Not only do vicarious citizens generalize from institutional anchors to the local neighborhood, but their frequenting and participation in institutional anchors also form the bases upon which vicarious citizens identify as community members and measure their sense of community satisfaction.

Often, vicarious citizens develop deep, personal identification with institutional anchors by transforming secondary relationships (Wirth 1938)—like market encounters—into more meaningful relationships (Stone 1954). Despite living an hour outside of Washington, DC, Michael (56, black, gay) identified the pharmacy where he picks up his monthly supply of HIV-medication as the main reason he has felt symbolically tied to Dupont Circle. During the early days of his diagnosis, Michael revealed that the staff there kept him connected to a sense of community. “These are the people who helped me face a life of being positive,” he said. “They held me up when I couldn’t hold myself up.” Transforming market relationships into more intimate social ties helped mitigate the sense of social and spatial isolation Michael felt after his HIV diagnosis (Hunter 1978). Similarly, Robert (48, white, gay), who has also tied himself symbolically to Boystown through his pharmacy, counted the pharmacy staff among his closest friends. While the staff has turned over quite a bit in the 15 years since his first diagnosis, he revealed that he often confided more with his “family” at the pharmacy than people he has known for most of his life. “No[ne of the staff has] ever made me feel strange about having [HIV],” he recalled. “The more I went there, the more I found myself opening up and sharing my life with them. Seriously, they know more about my sex life than some of my closest friends do.”

Robert and Michael’s interactions with pharmacy staff emulate the kind of kinship ties that scholars have long associated with community (Fischer 1975; Gans 1962; Wirth 1938). These ties likely result from the kind of intimate performances and emotion work that service professionals engage in to create a sense of belonging for their customers/patrons (Grazian 2008; Hochschild 1979). Luka (34, white, gay), a manager at Robert’s pharmacy and a local Boystown resident, acknowledged that developing relationships with customers had always been part of the pharmacy’s culture. “I remember when I first came here, and one of the employees told me that he was hired specifically to flirt with the customers. It surprised me at first, but I realized that it was important to take the focus off the disease and place the emphasis on the patients and their health.” Because of the stigma associated with an HIV-positive status, Luka emphasized the mutually constitutive relationship between building trust among his patients and expanding his business. That trust required a kind of openness on the part of Luka and his staff. “Doctors would send their patients to us because gay men could identify with us or with me. They feel like they can bring up issues that they otherwise can’t with, say, a straight

woman who may still be gay-friendly . . . we can talk about our sex lives or whatever comes to mind.” While Luka acknowledged that the nature of these performances meant a loss of privacy in his neighborhood, he also valued the opportunity to work in an institutional anchor of the gay community, as it afforded him access to the local community that he might not otherwise had. “A lot of times, I see patients from the pharmacy,” he explained. “It’s great seeing them outside the workplace. I always say hello, give them a hug, and it’s a chance of being reminded of everybody in this community.”

Not all institutional anchors cultivate the close, binding relationships that Luka described above. In fact, respondents often characterized some of the most enduring institutional anchors, such as large gay bars and nightclubs, as anonymous and impersonal spaces where individuals can experience solidarity by performing identity among like-minded strangers. Raoul (38, Latino, gay, symbolic Dupont resident) believed he felt most connected to community when he participated in “Showtunes Night” at his favorite Dupont bar. Despite attending regularly, Raoul emphasized that he did not necessarily attend “Showtunes Night” to make new friends. Rather, what kept him returning to “Showtunes Night” weekly was the energy of the crowd and the sense of camaraderie generated through a fleeting, yet consistent shared experience—the kind of experience he did not necessarily find on alternate nights. “‘Showtunes Night’ is totally different [from other nights],” he answered. “Everybody’s singing and reciting lines . . . and it’s infectious. . . . No matter what mood I’m in when I get there, I somehow always find myself with an arm wrapped around some stranger singing ‘Oklahoma’ by the end of the night” [*laughs*].

Much of what anchors the material culture in gay neighborhoods (bars, bathhouses, bookstores) are age-restrictive and depend economically on their patrons. This often means that many gay institutional anchors are limited to those with the economic resources to participate and consume. Yet many vicarious citizens who eschew or cannot afford access to the community in gay commercial institutions may rely on public spaces and the area’s street culture to anchor their attachment to community in gay neighborhoods. William (33, Latino, gay), a resident of Washington’s Shaw neighborhood, described himself as a “non-scene gay.” He has never liked drinking, nor has he ever enjoyed the cramped and noisy environments in gay bars and clubs. Yet he still identified Dupont Circle as his community, where he enjoyed “being surrounded by gayness” in places like the park around the Dupont Circle fountain. “I love going to the [Dupont Circle] fountain on Sundays to read *The Washington Blade* (the city’s gay newspaper),” says William. “It’s a way to re-connect with my gay identity — my gay community.”

Others who have been traditionally excluded from participation in gay institutional anchors often appropriate and reconfigure public areas situated around key institutional anchors, drawing on familiar socio-spatial practices to establish meaningful ties to the cultural area. In recent years, Boystown has attracted many black and Latino LGBT-identified youth from the south and west sides of the city, who come to the neighborhood to utilize many of the free programs provided by LGBT community centers like the Center on Halsted and the Broadway Youth Center. However, after these establishments close for the evening, many are left with few “safe spaces” to congregate. Many are too young and/or lack the economic resources to frequent the gay commercial establishments, and some are completely homeless, turned out by their families because of their sexual/gender identities. Those who remain in Boystown “after hours” tend to cluster on street corners around their hangout spots and along Halsted, Broadway, and Belmont Streets, where many of the gay institutions are located.

While such a reconstitution of public space is not unlike the use of street corners, sidewalks, and other public space by youth in predominantly black and Latino neighborhoods (Gotham and Brumley 2002; Jacobs 1961; Venkatesh 2000), many local residents have expressed concern over their use of space in the area, which represents a potential threat to neighborhood safety (Barlow 2011; Sosin 2011). “Sometimes there are 50 kids,” a Boystown bar owner explained in a 2009 interview with *The Chicago Tribune*. “But it’s only a handful that doesn’t have the social skills regarding sidewalk etiquette, so [their presence] intimidates customers and residents” (Trice 2009). Despite feeling unwelcomed in the area, many black and Latino LGBT youth maintained their right to community based on Boystown’s reputation as a gay area. And, like the vicarious citizens in the examples below, many of these youth are willing to protect the safe space where they believe their gender and sexual identities are affirmed and supported.

NORMATIVE CULTURAL PRACTICES AND VICARIOUS CLAIMS ON SPACE

On the last Tuesday of October, thousands of gay and straight people crowded the sidewalks of DC’s 17th Street to watch a large group of men dressed in drag run two blocks in stiletto heels. Although the High Heel Race lasted only a few seconds, patrons arrived up to two hours in advance to watch the “drag racers” transform the street into a catwalk, showing off their elaborate costumes and interacting with enthusiastic onlookers. During the ersatz fashion show, a gay white couple in their early twenties stood among the crowd, holding hands, hugging, and playfully kissing each other on the lips. As the couple continued to display affection toward each other, a tall, scruffy, white man who appeared in his late 30s with a young girl perched on his shoulders tapped one of the men on his shoulder and asked if they could refrain from kissing each other. “There are children present,” he said. “So what?” the gay man replied. “What’s the big deal if she see us making out. After all, this *is* a gay neighborhood.” “This is our neighborhood, too,” the father answered back, “and there is a time and place for you to do that. There are certain things that are better kept off our streets and away from our children.” From there, the verbal sparring escalated between the two men. As their voices grew increasingly louder, the gay man’s partner jumped into the argument. “If you’re so worried about your daughter,” he said, “then why the hell are you here watching drag queens in the first place!” A tall white woman, who appeared to be the man’s wife, then jumped into the conversation. “We are here to support this community and expose our daughter to some diversity. You should be lucky that we are here to support you, and that this event has the support of so many of us here in Dupont.” “Nobody gives a shit whether you support us or not,” the second gay man spat back. “This is *our* space, honey, and if you don’t like what we are doing, then you shouldn’t be here.” Another straight couple jumped into the conversation, and the arguing continued until the gay couple proceeded to make out more aggressively. Defeated, the two straight couples and the child pushed their way through the crowd and away from the gay couple. Their departure elicited cheers from surrounding spectators.

In the above example, all of the parties claimed rights to space based on competing understandings of what that local gay community represents. As local residents of Dupont, the straight couple’s participation in the High Heel Races epitomizes the kind of cultural tourist consumption characteristic of urban cosmopolitans in the postmodern city

(Florida 2002; Rushbrook 2002). However, their reaction to the gay couple revealed the limits to their acceptance of “authentic” culture in gay neighborhoods, and thus, they relied on their residential ties not only to monitor and prevent behavior they deemed inappropriate to their vision of local community, but also to underscore the importance of their support as straight residents of gay cultural traditions like Pride and the High Heel Races. Conversely, the gay couple drew on a *symbolic* ownership of space to make a *normative vicarious claim*, predicated not on residential ties (past or present), but rather on shared identity and beliefs about the rules of the predominant group in the local area. Their defense emanated out of a shared claim that gay neighborhoods are safe spaces for LGBT citizens to publicly show affection, which for many LGBT citizens represents an important reason that gay neighborhoods came into existence in the first place.

In fact, many informants insisted that gay neighborhoods were still the only spaces where they felt comfortable publicly expressing affection toward members of the same sex, despite the degree of acceptance they felt in their local communities. While neither Robin (40, white, lesbian) nor her girlfriend had ever experienced any open hostility from their African-American neighbors in Shaw (Washington, DC), they both remained reluctant to express affection openly around their home or in their neighborhood. “I’m a little conscious of that walking down the street and holding hands, and kissing [my partner],” she explained. “I don’t imagine that anything would happen, but . . . I feel very conscious that we are taking over a space that . . . you know, where . . . you know, we try to be respectful of that and try to ease into the community and not be in your face.” For Robin and many of her white lesbian and gay neighbors, limiting public displays of affection in Shaw constituted deference to their African-American neighbors, whose presence and culture represented the “authentic” character of the neighborhood (Brown-Saracino 2004, 2007). However, she expressed no problem with being affectionate with her partner in Dupont or Logan Circles, where she believed they wouldn’t draw as much attention. “It wouldn’t be as in-your-face as it would be [in Shaw],” she explained.

Robin’s comments also reflect a choice typical among many LGBT people to circumscribe certain practices to specific areas of the city. In observing street life in the Logan neighborhood, I often noticed the way gay couples distinguished neighborhood boundaries through the practice of handholding. Gay men conspicuously held hands as they walked along P Street toward Logan Circle; however, they immediately separated as they crossed the traffic circle into Shaw. Typically no words were exchanged about their separation, nor were conversations interrupted; however, these actions reflected an implicit understanding that they were no longer in an area where public displays of affection among same-sex couples were acceptable.

The belief that safe gay space is limited in cities propels many vicarious citizens to fiercely protect the spaces they symbolically claim from heteronormative threats. In the interest of protecting the identity of their space, gay participants have not been afraid to voice openly their disapproval of heterosexual behavior. Informants like Damion (27, gay, African American) were particularly vocal about the presence of straight women in gay bars, describing a variety of strategies to minimize contact with drunken straight women and their unwanted attention. “Oh, I grope them back,” he commented. “They think they are safe from unwanted attention, so I’ll give them unwanted attention, and maybe then, they’ll be discouraged from coming back.” Damion attributed the inappropriate behavior to the sense of safety women derived from being in a gay space, and the only way to curtail their inappropriate behavior was to challenge their notions of safety. In doing so, Damion

responded to an appropriation of space by those whose presence fundamentally alters the way of life in his vicarious community.

Some respondents justified aggressive responses to homophobic behavior in gay neighborhoods by expressing faith in the protection of the community. When a man mumbled homophobic comments at him and a date while they were walking arm-in-arm on 17th Street (Dupont Circle), Stanley (33, white, gay, symbolic Dupont resident) confronted the man on the street, attracting attention from the crowds standing in nearby bars and restaurants. Rationalizing his response, Stanley admitted that he probably would not have antagonized his attacker had the incident occurred outside of the gay area. However, what made this incident different for Stanley was the fact that he felt surrounded by others who would understand and support his stand against a homophobic threat. “I yelled loud enough where people around us knew what was going on,” Stanley explained. “If we got ourselves into a situation that we couldn’t handle, I felt — at least I hoped — that somebody would’ve had our backs.” By drawing attention to the offending behavior in public, Stanley believed he activated a symbolic support system of gay strangers, whom he believed would intervene out of solidarity and a sense of shared fate.

Exercises of normative vicarious claims often succeed not only because the claims are often consistent with the production of gay community space, but also because these claims play out through the routines of everyday life. There are times, however, when efforts to enforce cultural norms and protect community traditions require a more organized effort on the part of vicarious citizens. While increased access to information has led to greater involvement in the local political sphere, vicarious citizens face greater challenges when exercising political claims, as many local and municipal institutions often limit the rights associated with local community decision-making to those with residential ties.

MOBILIZING NORMATIVE CLAIMS FOR VICARIOUS POLITICAL CLAIMS

In 2007, the manager of a U Street drug store kicked out a Maryland gay couple for showing affection in the store. Two weeks later, approximately 50 gay men and supporters, which included the area’s gay city councilman, convened at the drug store and staged a “hug-in,” where same-sex couples lined up in front of the check-out lines and hugged each other on cue for about a minute. Organizers promoted the event through Facebook and local neighborhood blogs after reading about the incident in *Metro Weekly*. None of the organizers knew the couple before the incident, nor was the drug store considered a gay institutional anchor. Rather, organizers mobilized to challenge exclusionary claims on the use of space, which they found inconsistent with the character of the community.

“I’m not one to sit around and say, ‘Oh well’ when I hear about people’s rights being violated,” one organizer, a gay-identified local resident, told *The Washington Blade*, “especially when it happens to gay couples and especially in my neighborhood” (Cavanaugh 2007). One of the evicted men participated in the protest, expressing pride and disbelief in the community’s response. “It was a bit of a shock for the most part, since I didn’t realize that I had a support system. I didn’t know that the incident reached a lot of people . . . I was more than glad to see that . . . people in general were standing up for our rights, and it’s about time” (Cavanaugh 2007).

The above example illustrates how vicarious citizens mobilized a normative claim to make a *vicarious political claim*, by which vicarious citizens pursue community interests through local political and institutional channels. Because electoral enfranchisement is often limited to local residents, vicarious citizens as community stakeholders make political claims that draw attention to a legal issue or political problem. In the case of the “hug-in,” protest organizers measured their efficacy by the amount of media coverage they received for the event and by the support they received from the area’s councilman, who promised to investigate the incident and work with the pharmacy’s corporate offices to ensure that this incident would not happen again (Najafi 2007).

Despite limited access to participation in local decision-making arenas, vicarious citizens find a variety of ways to insert themselves into the neighborhood’s political process, relying on the support of local residents to defend their political interests and enact their visions of community. Esteban (31, Latino, gay) has lived in Northern Virginia since he moved to the area in 2006. While unable to afford living in Dupont Circle or Logan Circle, he expressed a deep attachment to community there, where he has spent much of his leisure time. “I try to spend as much time as I can there,” he explained. “Sometimes, I just come to the city and grab a cup of coffee and *The [Washington] Blade*, sit on a bench in [Dupont] Circle, and watch the people chilling on the lawn or hanging out at the fountain.” After hearing Maryland residents state their opposition to a same-sex marriage bill that was up for a vote by the D.C. Council at a D.C. Board of Elections and Ethics hearing, he realized that he, too, could lend his support to the cause. “I was like, if this dude could say that discriminating against gays was ‘good discrimination,’” he said, “then I could get my ass out there and have my say, too.” He joined a volunteer organization based in Dupont Circle and canvassed local residents to sign a petition supporting same-sex marriage in the District. Although as a nonresident he could not sign the petition himself, he found great satisfaction in engaging local residents on an issue he profoundly believed in. “Some people thought I was kinda crazy for standing out in the rain, drumming support for a law I would not benefit from, living in Virginia,” he explained. “But I didn’t care. I’d tell them that this is my community, too, and even though I can’t vote or anything, I’m out here doing what I can to help. I think I guilted a lot of people to sign that way [laughs].” By focusing on his limited capacity to effect change on the referendum, Esteban reminded local residents of their right and obligation to participate in the political process.

In the last decade, the proliferation of neighborhood blogs and social media has enabled the sustained contact of vicarious citizens to communities of interest (Driskell and Lyon 2002; Kidder 2014; Webber 1963; Wellman and Giulia 1999). Many respondents, like Brian (37, white, gay), rely on social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter) to keep themselves abreast of local and national news: “These days, I actually just look for people to post things on Facebook. I’m not a huge blog follower, but I know a lot of people who follow blogs and other things that will post news of the community, so I kind of just rely on them to feed it up to me.” In contrast to more traditional news outlets, these platforms create avenues for vicarious citizens to participate in local community affairs, allowing them to engage in debates on issues of importance to them.

Following a string of violent crimes in Boystown during the summer of 2011, local residents created a “Take Back Boystown” page on Facebook, aimed at drawing attention to community concerns around crime and providing a venue for brainstorming “ideas and thoughts on how we can preserve what we have and go back to the safe fun

neighborhood Boystown is known for” (“Take Back Boystown” 2011). As posted comments raised concerns about the increased presence of black and Latino LGBT Youth from the south and west sides, the page generated heated debate among respondents throughout the Chicagoland area, sharply divided over who had rightful access to community in the gay neighborhood. The debate spilled over to the monthly neighborhood town hall meeting in Boystown on community safety with local leaders and the Chicago police, which was also heavily promoted by purveyors of the Facebook page. The event, which typically attracted 35–40 residents, drew nearly 800 people from across the city to express their concerns about local safety, including many black and Latino LGBT youth who spoke passionately in defense of their rights to participate as legitimate community stakeholders (Barlow 2011; Sosin 2011). “Everybody in this room has a say-so in this community,” one of the youth stated at the meeting. “We all need to work together to make this community better . . . this is our community. This is everyone’s community.”

Sometimes, political opportunity conveniently coincides with other local claims, enabling political claims-makers to insert themselves into larger state and national debates on key political and cultural issues. When Boystown bar owner Geno Zaharakis issued a statement in 2008 reaffirming his 2004 ban on bachelorette parties in the wake of Proposition 8’s passage in California, he propelled his little corner gay bar into a national debate on same-sex marriage. “Until same-sex marriage is legal everywhere,” Zaharakis wrote in a prepared statement, “and same-sex couples are allowed the rights as every heterosexual worldwide, we simply do not think it’s fair or just for a female bride-to-be to celebrate her upcoming nuptials here” (Trice 2009). However locally, many respondents suggested that Zaharakis largely bowed to increased community pressure from his gay patrons, who found the bachelorettes disruptive to gay patrons’ “nightly round” (Hunter 2010). “We complained about it all the time,” Jarrett (35, white, gay), a self-proclaimed bar regular, explained, “to anyone and everyone who would hear us — the bartenders, the manager . . . we’d even stand by the bar and bitch about it around the bachelorettes, hoping they’d get the message.” Many maintained that the political opportunity afforded Zaharakis a convenient justification for discouraging women from coming to the bar. “It’s a very smart strategy,” Stephen (40, white, gay) argued. “Obviously, you can’t ban [women] outright, but you can make the place less appealing to them, so they know they clearly aren’t welcome.” For these local respondents, how Zaharakis enforced their normative claim did not matter; rather, they saw the ban as Zaharakis’ tacit acknowledgement of their concerns about the appropriation and misrecognition (Centner 2008) of gay space by straight women.

Not all political claims prove successful; decision-makers often dismiss political claims by vicarious citizens for a variety of reasons, including the absence of material ties to the local area. However, the increasing presence and involvement of extra-neighborhood residents in local community affairs indicate that local politicians and key decision-makers can no longer afford to ignore the concerns of vicarious citizens only on the basis of owning property or living in an area.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This article introduces the notion of vicarious citizenship—the exercise of rights and claims-making emanating from extra-neighborhood, symbolic ties to community. In

contrast to the longstanding sociology of nonresidential vicarious belonging and communities without propinquity, vicarious citizenship builds on the unique conditions of the postmodern city, where the deployment of culture and history as strategies for urban revitalization, as well as advances in communication and transportation technologies, have allowed vicarious citizens to retain deep, personal investment in a place. Consequently, the increased participation of vicarious citizens has reconfigured local neighborhoods into communities comprised of residents and nonresidents whose differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives on the representations and functions of community vary with their relationship to the local area.

There remains much to learn about the myriad ways in which urban citizens articulate legitimate stakes in place-making in contemporary cities, particularly as citizens may draw on the unique character of a neighborhood to make these claims (Gotham and Brumley 2002). As disparities in wealth continue to displace and price middle- and working-class denizens out of urban housing and rental markets (Kaysen 2014; Sassen 1999, 2005), vicarious citizenship offers one of potentially many new avenues for investigating questions pertaining to who belongs to neighborhood-based communities and what functions urban neighborhoods serve. Through various examples of normative and political claims, this article draws attention to the influence of extra-neighborhood citizens on local place-making.

In the context of gay neighborhoods, this article examines how vicarious citizens are diverse racial, socio-economic, and aged-based populations who protect and defend gay neighborhoods from the external threats of increasing heterosexual presence. Exercises in vicarious citizenship may range from culturally sanctioned practices in public to organized collective action in the political arena. Vicarious citizenship complicates contemporary scholarship on the demise of gay neighborhoods, highlighting how many LGBT citizens continue to find gay neighborhoods vitally important to their sense of identity and community despite evidence signaling their decline or dispersion. Furthermore, by examining vicarious citizenship through the case of gay neighborhoods, this article demonstrates how sexuality and sexual diversity can serve as critical variables in the study of American urban communities more generally.

While gesturing to the diversity of LGBT populations who participate in gay neighborhood life, this article only focuses on vicarious citizens who demonstrate strong attachments to community in gay neighborhoods. However, as the scholarship of Ghaziani (2011) and others suggests, increased political and social acceptance means that not all LGBT citizens necessarily require or rely on gay neighborhoods for a sense of community. Equally, contact with vicarious community and feelings of community attachment may fluctuate over the course of one's life, being particularly strong at some points and weak or nonexistent at others. Moreover, this article's emphasis on vicarious citizenship as a response to heteronormative threats underplays the internal conflicts over access to the gay community. As scholars continue to define gay neighborhoods as white, middle-class gay male spaces, future research should consider whether and how vicarious citizenship and nonresidential vicarious communities exacerbate race, class, and generational cleavages within gay communities, and how those cleavages shape debates over what types of LGBT citizens have rights of access to the community.

There are many other illustrations of vicarious citizenship, such as Americans protesting Ground Zero plans and support for the revitalization of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Nonresidential community attachments to ethnic enclaves are widespread, too.

Further research should investigate how vicarious citizenship operates like other communities of limited liability (Hunter and Suttles 1972; Janowitz 1952), where it has costs and benefits for those with cultural, affective, or political ties to a locale.

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Notes

¹The word “vicarious” most commonly evokes the act of experiencing something through the imagined participation of a real or imagined person(s) (e.g., living vicariously through someone) (*The Oxford American English Dictionary*, 1995: 1608). However, “vicarious” may also refer to the act of substituting one thing for another, or “taking the place of another person or thing; acting as a substitute” (*Random House Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary, Second Edition*, 2001: 2118; see also *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, 2000: 1916). The article contends that the definition of “vicarious” used in Hunter’s version of vicarious community draws from the latter definition. This iteration of vicarious communities and vicarious citizenship are also based on that particular usage.

²I am using the real names of the neighborhoods in Washington, DC, and in Chicago for two main reasons. First, Chicago and Washington, DC, neighborhoods are easily identifiable no matter what they are called. Second, to use pseudonyms for these neighborhoods would require me to obscure important characteristics of each site, hindering my discussion of the findings. I do identify my informants by neighborhood and not by specific addresses or streets in order to protect their identities—even of those who allowed their real names to be used in connection with this research.

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Barrios Gay y los Derechos del Ciudadano Vicario. (Theo Greene)

Resumen

En base a una combinación de métodos cualitativos usando información recogida en barrios gay en Chicago y Washington DC, este artículo desarrolla la noción de ciudadano vicario—el ejercicio de derechos y formas de hacer pedidos de parte de dirigentes que no son residentes pero que se identifican de forma política, económica y sociocultural con una comunidad local. Los ciudadanos vicarios incluyen a una diversidad de miembros auto-identificados con la comunidad, algunos de los cuales fueron residentes antiguos o desplazados del barrio, quienes despliegan una variedad de prácticas socio-territoriales para movilizarse contra normativas y políticas percibidas como peligrosas para sus nociones de comunidad auténtica. En momentos, los ciudadanos vicarios pueden tener perspectivas diferentes e incluso conflictivas sobre el funcionamiento de la comunidad, e incluso enfrentarse a los pedidos de los residentes locales y de aquellos con activos más materiales en el área local. Propongo que la noción de ciudadanía vicaria puede expandir nuestra comprensión de cómo los barrios gay se mantienen como relevantes entre cierta población LGBT quienes, por varios motivos, residen en barrios fuera de las áreas gay establecidas. La ciudadanía vicaria también puede ser encontrada en otras comunidades de no-residentes.