

RECLAIMING RESISTANCE: NEOLIBERALISM, NO JUSTICE NO PRIDE, AND THE
PURSUIT OF QUEER LIBERATION

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ABSTRACT

In the summer of 2017, tensions within the LGBT community reached a boiling point. The election of Donald Trump and the perceived failure of Pride parade organizers to grapple with the political and social needs of the community sparked protests at parades around the country from queer activists under the banner of No Justice No Pride. Although these tensions came to a head in 2017, the underlying issues have been present since the beginning of the modern LGBT movement. Issues of radicalism and respectability have been hotly contested by a group in which assimilation into heteronormative culture is not only an option, but the default. These tensions have been exacerbated under the influence of a much larger cultural force; the long march of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is an economic and political philosophy which argues that all human activities should be driven by market logics. While neoliberalism has had massive impacts on global governance and economic policies, it has also had a notable impact on social movements. In this project, I study the tensions displayed by the media between official Pride organizers and No Justice No Pride activists, and analyze the impact of neoliberal influence on each group. I argue that neoliberalism has become the discursive default of official Pride organizations, and that No Justice No Pride has arisen as a backlash to this neoliberal influence.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Like many queer people in the United States, the 2016 mass shooting at Pulse, a gay Latinx nightclub in Orlando, shook me to my core. Such a brutal act perpetrated against the LGBT community seemed at once anachronistic and unnervingly familiar in light of the barrage of mass shootings around the country. I wrote a defiant Facebook post about finding strength and solidarity in the community, then decided I needed to act. A month later, I attended my first Pride parade in Columbus, Ohio. Expecting to find comfort, community, and courage in a boisterous march with my queer contemporaries, I convinced my best friend to attend with me. We were both nervous: neither of us had ever been to Pride, and the events at Pulse made us seriously consider our personal safety. Still, we were resolute. We went. We watched. We came away thoroughly disappointed. Far from a reaffirming and empowering resistance, the “Stonewall Columbus Pride Festival and Parade” felt like an impossibility long march of insurance companies, banks, and advertisers attempting to capitalize on queer dollars. The parade featured Starbucks employees dressed in uniforms marching near a van with a giant Wells Fargo logo on its side, and a Nationwide section throwing rainbow-themed, branded merchandise into the crowds. In spite of the famous five-day New York City riot against police in 1969 that gripped the nation and remains the Columbus parade’s namesake, law enforcement supervised the parade and even marched in it.

My experience with Pride seems a grand departure from those who marched decades ago. Since the first defiant march in the streets of New York and San Francisco in June of 1970, Pride has remained the epicenter of the queer community. After decades of activists working behind

the scenes to affect social and political progress, the Stonewall Riots triggered a wave of outrage and indignation that culminated in the modern gay rights movement (Gross, 2005). A year later, Pride marches sprung up around the country to commemorate the riots and celebrate their defiance. These first marches were scarcely attended and discouraged by police and city governments, and some attendees hid their faces for fear of violence and persecution. In the decades since, Pride evolved and adapted to reflect the current state of the movement and the loudest voices in the community. In the 1970s, it moved from a site of turbulent protest toward a form of radical liberation in an era in which being “out” could cost participants everything (Bennet, 2017). In the 1980s, Pride changed again to highlight the horrors of the ongoing AIDS crisis; protests became more desperate and more organized as government officials refused to comment on the masses of sick and dying (Rand, 2012). And in recent decades, Pride has become a “carnavalesque” celebration; an annual festival of color and creativity (Campbell, 2003a). This celebratory spirit reflects the progress our movement has made both in terms of social acceptance and legal victories, but it does not represent the entire picture.

While it’s true that social circumstances surrounding queer people have improved since the 1970s, queer liberation is far from being achieved. The LGBT community, specifically trans women and people of color, still face a harsh reality in the United States. In the majority of states, there are no protections for LGBT people who lose their jobs, their rights to basic services, and their place of residence simply for being queer. The shooting at Pulse demonstrated the violent reality that many LGBT people face across the country; according to the Human Right’s Campaign, 2016 marked the highest number of deaths for trans women on record. Clearly, there is some disconnect between the realities of being queer in America and the

celebrations that are meant to represent the community. In 2017, with the election of Donald Trump, this tension escalated dramatically. Across the country, Pride parades were struck by violence, arrests, and protests by an organization called No Justice No Pride. Led by queer activists in Washington, D.C., No Justice No Pride claims that Pride has been stripped of its purpose and radical potential by corporate co-opting and the presence of police.

Division within the queer community is not new, but few opposition groups have been as well organized, vocal, and successful in gaining national press coverage as No Justice No Pride. Their website lists clear demands, including “barring all industries that profit from war, detention and incarceration, environmental destruction, evictions, community displacement and Israel's oppression of Palestinians” and “no longer allowing MPD or any other law enforcement agency to march” (Our Demands, 2017). This counter-activism, and the tension it reveals, makes 2017 an ideal site to undercover the systems, silences, and sponsors that have caused Pride to become so disconnected with the queer community. In order to uncover these tensions, I answer three research questions. First, *how do Pride organizations in 2017 manage the tensions between the political and celebratory goals of their activism?* Second, *how do the demands and methods of No Justice No Pride align with scholarly critiques of neoliberalism?* And third, *how does the popular coverage of tensions between Pride organizations and No Justice No Pride expose, undermine, or privilege neoliberal ideology within the queer rights movement?* The following sections include my rationale as to why this is a worthy academic study, a review of the relevant scholarly literature, a summary of my critical orientation, two chapters which analyze media coverage of Pride parades and the protests surrounding them, and a conclusion.

CHAPTER TWO: RATIONALE

The resilience and adaptability of Pride across the decades makes it an ideal site for academic exploration—one that is perpetually underutilized by scholars. A search for “Gay Pride” or “LGBT Pride” in the Communication and Mass Media Complete database yields single-digit results for peer reviewed, scholarly articles. Limiting the search to English-language results about Pride in the United States, and there is a single result from 2012. Communication and Mass Media Complete is the premier database for communication scholars; this absence marks a notable gap in the research. This is not to say Pride has been totally ignored by scholars, or that Pride should be central to the study of queer life. Rather, I argue that Pride offers academics a stable, public platform that amplifies the loudest voices in the LGBT community. The evolution of Pride, from its earliest days as a symbol of resistance to its radical politics during the AIDS crisis to its modern form, has been largely thematic and cosmetic. Pride has remained a consistent, annual event since its beginning, and the changes it has made reflect the larger social issues of its time. As such, Pride can reveal what is currently being prioritized, derided, or silenced by the most influential queer actors and activists. In light of the events of 2017, this project is all the more salient— both because Pride continues to be a dominating force within the LGBT community and because of the resistance surrounding it.

In terms of attendance, 2017 proved to be a record-breaking year for Pride around the world. In New York City, a record 40,000 people marched in the parade itself, with millions of additional bystanders (Walsh, 2017). *The Dispatch* reports that Pride in Columbus, Ohio drew 500,000 people, topping the previous year’s record number. (Evans, 2017). Internationally,

the São Paulo parade in Brazil boasted an attendance of over 3 million people— the largest ever (Persio, 2017). Like every year in recent memory, the 2017 festivities also garnered the attention of multinational corporations, who serve as sponsors, vendors, and even march in parades with decorated vehicles or smiling employees. Police were also ubiquitous throughout the Pride experience; many police departments not only serve as security for the festivals but also participate in the parades. And despite the election of a homophobic president (Sipe & Parson, 2016), most parades in the United States kept their celebratory tones and colorful festivals— adding a political speech or acknowledgment to their regularly-scheduled rosters. For example, the Columbus Pride parade kept its corporate sponsors, celebratory tone, and Sunday brunch in 2017, but replaced their annual Grand Marshall with LGBT refugees (Duthie, 2017). In New York City, the parade was helmed by the American Civil Liberties Union in order to bring attention to the Trump administration’s targeting of transgender students and their rights to use the appropriate bathroom. Despite the changes implemented in response to the rhetorical situation, some queer activists felt they were not enough in the face of a hostile administration and the larger realities of the community.

No Justice No Pride is an organization founded in 2017 by queer activists in Washington, D.C. who argue that modern Pride has marginalized the most vulnerable in the LGBT community. According to their website,

No Justice No Pride is an ad-hoc collective of organizers and activists from across the District of Columbia. We exist to end the LGBT movement’s complicity with systems of oppression that further marginalize queer and trans individuals. Our members are black, brown, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, bisexual, indigenous, two-spirit, formerly

incarcerated, disabled, white allies and together we recognize that there can be no pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.

No Justice No Pride has several detailed demands listed on their website, some which include a recognition of the queer people of color who helped found the modern queer rights movement, an end to the cozy relationship Pride has fostered with the police, and a re-centering of marginalized voices in the community (including trans people, people of color, native peoples, and bisexuals). The group also maintains a strong position against corporate sponsorship; it advocates for an outright ban of any and all corporate branding and signage at future Pride events and outlines specific corporations that should be disallowed to participate because of the harm they cause to vulnerable members of the community. While No Justice No Pride is based in Washington, D.C. and continues to operate as a specific protest to Capital Pride, the “ad-hoc” nature of the organization and the slew of demonstrations and arrests of people claiming its banner all across the country shows that the goals of No Justice No Pride should be seen as reaching beyond any single city or event.

In 2017, queer activists began protesting Pride parades across the country under the banner of No Justice No Pride, a play on the rally cry “No Justice No Peace” chanted during many Black Lives Matter protests. The tactics of these protests varied slightly from city to city, but all were fundamentally disruptive to traditional Pride marches. Protesters sat or laid in the streets on the parade routes; blocking Pride participants until their forceful removal by police. NBC News noted that 12 queer activists were arrested just outside Stonewall Inn for disrupting the annual Pride parade in New York City in June (O’hara, 2017). According to the report, “A dozen activists affiliated with the group No Justice No Pride were arrested at New York City’s

Pride March on Sunday, while protesting what they said was inappropriate corporate sponsorship and police presence in the LGBTQ community event” (p. 1). Protestors held signs that read, "No Cops, No Banks," and were charged with disorderly conduct. In the same month, CNN reported similar protests by No Justice No Pride and affiliated groups in Minneapolis, Seattle, Columbus, Ohio, and Washington, DC. (Grinberg, 2017). Many of these protests highlighted the unjust deaths of local citizens murdered by police, including Philando Castile in Minneapolis and Charleena Lyle in Seattle. In Columbus, Ohio, four activists were pepper-sprayed and arrested after a protest “to create awareness of the lack of spaces for queer people of color in Columbus and the police presence at Pride,” said Michaela Mason, an organizer and activist interviewed by The Dispatch (Evans, 2017).

These nation-wide demonstrations and the media coverage surrounding them serve as valuable texts to understand the larger tensions that are apparent in the LGBT community. Pride clearly remains a vital and vibrant platform for the LGBT community, both as a sight of celebration and resistance. The activists of No Justice No Pride are well organized, specific in their demands, and have successfully captured the attention of both the national media and the queer community. No Justice No Pride is important because it demonstrates the tensions between Pride and the larger community of queer people, and serves as an accessible text for understanding the grievances of queer people who feel they have been silenced by commercial interests, exclusionary practices, and police presence. These tensions were noted by Kates and Belk (2001) in their ethnographic study of Pride parades, who describe the festivities as “a carnivalesque celebration of excess... and a contested commercialized experience” (p. 393).

While other scholars make use of queer theory to study queer people, I postulate that modern Pride been affected by larger shifts global economic and political structures. Capitalism has had an inconsistent and contradictory relationship with queer people. While the LGBT is disproportionately impoverished and composed of racial minorities who suffer other forms of discrimination, Campbell (2003a) argues that corporations have sought out white, affluent gays and lesbians as a valuable market segment. This gap, Campbell argues, has created a misperception that the Will Trumans of the world are representative of the whole community, while further ostracizing the poor people of color that make up the community's majority. He wrote, "My ultimate goal is to debase sexual minorities of the belief that meaningful social and political liberation can be achieved through the marketplace" (p. 24). With the advent of No Justice No Pride and their overt opposition to the very consumption that the research critiques, it seems an opportune time to fulfill the hopes of Kates and Belk (2001), who wrote, "Our hope is that this research will inspire further inquiry into [Pride] and into the festival behavior and consumption-related resistances more generally" (p. 425). By examining the conflicts between No Justice No Pride and Pride parades around the country, this project serves as a timely, scholarly case study of the broader issues facing the queer liberation, and offers a critique of the intersecting influences of Pride in 2017.

CHAPTER THREE: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The gay rights movement has grown in the shadow of a larger social and political transformation: the unsteady march of neoliberalism. Since the 1970s, this new epoch of the global capitalist economy has reimagined financial markets, labor relations, economic policy, and international trade. Neoliberalism has a profound and sustained impact on social relations; it has fundamentally altered the values, identities, and democratic ideations of public discourse. Neoliberalism is a complex, controversial, and sometimes contradictory ideology and political construct. To understand the full breadth of its influence, it is vital to understand how neoliberalism was conceptualized, what it is, and what rhetorical methods its practitioners use to expand and maintain its dominance. Once the full scale of neoliberalism is established, I will review the literature relevant to its impact on American social movements, and conclude with an examination of the current literature regarding the gay rights movement and the means and methods of queer liberation.

The March of Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is an economic and political ideology that seeks to bring all of society under the the control of market forces. Practitioners of neoliberalism have systematically pervaded countries, corporations, churches, and places of learning in order to instill neoliberal ideology into nearly every aspect of public and private life. While neoliberalism purports to enhance economic opportunity through unbridled capitalism, the policies and praxis of neoliberal governance are heavily skewed toward the redistribution of class power to the richest. Neoliberal advocates have shrouded this redistributive aim by rhetorically linking the “free market” to

personal freedom, and asserting that all economic responsibility should be placed onto the individual. By isolating and commodifying the individual as a solely economic agent, neoliberalism is fundamentally incompatible with robust democratic citizenship that depends on selflessness, solidarity, and collective action. Neoliberal societies replace social cohesion with individualized identity politics—undermining group action while commodifying and co-opting past social endeavors. In order to make sense of this tangled construct, this review will trace the history and influence of neoliberalism from its earliest conception to its status as a hegemonic authority, and unravel its ideology, methods, motives, and democratic compatibility.

The ideological foundations of neoliberalism were drafted by the Mont Pelerin Society in 1947 (Harvey, 2005). Term *neoliberalism* comes from the classic European understanding of liberalism as a respect for the freedom of individuals, but applied them to the capitalist market. The group based its economic and social ideologies on the work of Austrian political philosopher Friedrich von Hayak, who argued that a “battle of ideas” would have to be waged against Marxist and Keynesian influence in order for a purer form of capitalism to become ascendant. The Mont Pelerin Society included notable members Ludwig von Mises, Milton Freeman, and Karl Popper. The group’s founding statement warns:

The central values of civilization are in danger. Over large stretches of the earth’s surface the essential conditions of human dignity and freedom have already disappeared. In others they are under constant menace from the development of current tendencies of policy. The position of the individual and the voluntary group are progressively undermined by the extensions of arbitrary power. Even that most precious possession of the Western Man, freedom of thought and expression, is threatened by the spread of

creeds which, claiming the privilege of tolerance when in the possession of a minority, seek only to establish a position of power in which they can suppress and obliterate all views but their own. The group holds that these developments have been fostered by the growth of a view of history which denies all absolute moral standards and by the growth of theories which question the desirability of the rule of law. It holds further that they have been fostered by a decline in belief of private property and the competitive market; for without the diffused power and initiative associated with these institutions it is difficult to imagine a society in which freedom can effectively be preserved.

The Mont Pelerin Society imagined a battle for the hearts and minds of a populous they saw as becoming increasingly resentful of capitalist inequality and exploitation. While it would take decades to come to fruition, the group eventually won the battle it had predicted decades earlier.

Neoliberalism rose to hegemonic power in the wake of the collapse of what prominent Marxist scholar David Harvey (2005) terms *embedded liberalism*. Embedded liberalism was an economic model based on the work of British economist John Maynard Keynes that was instituted after the Second World War to ensure American dominance, fight communist sympathies, and pacify class struggles. Proletariate workers, industry unions, and political parties of the Left enjoyed real influence under this system, and formed a strong sense of economic solidarity that took the form of labor movements, government initiatives, and an increasingly socialist mentality (Harvey, 2005). The Keynesian economic philosophy was dominant; advocating government intervention in markets, vast welfare programs, and standardized trade practices across borders. The Bretton Woods agreements solidified the new capitalist order under various international structures (the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and

World Bank) and the triumphalism of American hegemony. However, the system began to fail in the 1960s, when instability and economic stagnation threatened the power and wealth of the upper classes. Neoliberalism emerged as the “economic and political reaction against Keynesianism and democratic socialism” (Brown, 2015, p. 27).

Neoliberalism invaded the public sphere via the influence of a multitude of think tanks, universities, and even churches to shift the consent of the governed toward neoliberal policies. The creation of the Institute of Economic Affairs in London and the Heritage Foundation in the United States became key to neoliberalism’s gradual ascension to mainstream politics from its humble beginnings as a theory on the fringe. From the very beginning, the Mont Pelerin group used think tanks to ally themselves with like-minded capitalists throughout the West. Holborow (2013) argues that these think tanks had had an astounding affect on public discourse— although like all aspects of neoliberalism, this influence is not total or pure in its ideological underpinnings. Harvey (2005) cites the organization of corporate-backed think tanks as key to “the ‘long march’ of neoliberal ideas” that invaded popular culture (p. 40).

As neoliberalism become more influential, its advocates used an increasingly wide variety of institutions to reach the mainstream masses. Harvey (2005) explains that “powerful ideological influences circulated through the corporations, the media, and...universities, schools, churches, and professional associations” (p. 40). The success of this ideological invasion was uneven and impure, but it granted neoliberal thinkers and scholars increased credibility and access to resources that had previously been denied to them by main-line political parties. In 1997, a report titled *Moving a Public Policy Agenda: The Strategic Philanthropy of Conservative Foundations* made apparent “the sheer enormity of the right-wing ideological offensive on

universities, mainline churches, and the government” (Aune, 2001, p. 5). The corporate-controlled media, especially the multinational empire of Rupert Murdoch, were also complicit in neoliberalism’s rising supremacy. According to rhetorical theorist James Aune, “In addition to better financing its intellectuals, the right has lately been honing its communication skills more assiduously and adeptly than liberals... Right-wing advocates nowadays have a much enlarged network in which well-crafted speeches, public relations campaigns, and mass media strategies are highly valued” (Aune, 2001, p. 6). Griebeling (2008) argues that mainstream protestant Christian leaders also adapted their teachings and ethics to be in line with the growing dominance of neoliberal logics: from an increased focus on individual responsibility to a systematic downplaying of Christian teachings on wealth accumulation.

Educational institutions were especially targeted as ways to disseminate neoliberal ways of thinking— from K-12 to universities. Winslow (2015) argues that public schools are a paradoxical tool of neoliberalism because they require public funding, but are also used to justify economic inequality because all students (allegedly) get the same schooling across class lines. To remove this perceptual barrier, advocates increasingly called for privatized education and the formation of charter schools. Universities were also key to the mainstreaming of neoliberal thought— especially the University of Chicago where Milton Friedman dominated (Harvey, 2005). The 1997 report *Moving a Public Policy Agenda* “detailed how twelve foundations... contributed \$210 million between 1995 and 1997 to create conservative academic programs at such esteemed institutions as the University of Chicago, Harvard, George Mason, Yale, and Claremont McKenna” (Aune, 2001, p. 16-17). This funding, as well as neoliberal economic and social policies, has resulted in increasing pressure for universities to justify the economic

viability of their degrees— neoliberalizing the very nature of education. Kapur (2016) argues that neoliberalism has undermined the very purpose of education as a means to enhance human potential, self-realization, and social development and replaced them with economic incentives. Brown (2015) further argues that return on investment (ROI) algorithms “shrinks the value of higher education to individual economic risk and gain, removing quaint concerns with developing the person and citizen or perhaps reducing such development to the capacity for economic advantage” (p. 32). Through these various institutions, as well as state action and political endorsements, neoliberalism was able to manufacture the consent of the governed.

The true turning point in neoliberalism’s bid for economic and political dominance was achieved in the 1970s. The awarding of the Nobel Prize in economics to Hayek in 1974 and Friedman in 1976 brought real intellectual credibility to neoliberal ideas. Harvey (2005) argues these awards were heavily influenced by Sweden’s banking elite who saw neoliberalism as a way to assert class power. The United States and Britain led the charge toward a global neoliberal system through key figures in 1978-1980: Paul Volcker, Ronald Reagan, and Margaret Thatcher (Harvey, 2005, p. 23-24). Paul Volcker served as chairman of the US Federal Reserve Bank under Carter and Reagan. He spearheaded neoliberalism in US economic policy; imposing a positive rate of interest and preventing inflation by any means. Although Carter had slowly begun deregulation in some industries, Ronald Reagan’s victory in 1979 bolstered Volcker’s influence and began a reckless and revolutionary path toward neoliberalism in the United States. His economic model caused a long, deep recession that crippled the power of unions, drove up unemployment, and increased interest rates. Known as the Volcker shock, the downturn is seen as the vanguard to neoliberalism’s stronghold of the American economy. Across the Atlantic,

Margaret Thatcher began to espouse neoliberalism due to the economic guidance of Keith Joseph (Fuchs, 2016). Thatcher privatized industries, reduced taxes and welfare, and brought unions to their knees. She was ferocious, famously declaring, “there is no alternative” to the march of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2005, p. 23). Such a proclamation seemed almost prophetic: “Future historians may well look upon the years 1978-80 as a revolutionary turning-point in the world’s social and economic history.” (Harvey, 2005, p. 1). The decades since have borne the fruit of this revolution. It has effected power, democracy, and the individual in ways that seem omnipresent.

Neoliberalism in Governance

The term “neoliberalism” represents a dynamic, complex, and sometimes conflicting system of interconnected policies, discourse, ideology and philosophy. Neoliberalism operates on all levels of society; it is both economic and political, governmental and discursive. It is a philosophy in which the political is economic but also one in which the economic is deeply political (though purists would argue otherwise). Harvey (2005) writes, “Neoliberalism is in the first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can be best advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade” (p. 2). According to neoliberalism, state action should be limited to creating and sustaining the conditions that best serve capital accumulation and maintain “military defense, police, and legal structures and functions required to secure private property rights and to guarantee, by force if need be, the proper functioning of markets” (p. 2). However, neoliberalization is achieved through state policies and political action that prioritize market forces above all else.

Neoliberalism intersects with various economic and theoretical systems, including capitalism, globalization, and libertarianism. Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as the current epoch of capitalist reinvention. Garland and Harper (2012) argue that neoliberalism is distinct but complicit with other forms of capitalism, and caution that critics of neoliberalism often reify other capitalist formations through short-sighted critiques of neoliberal functions. They argue that critiquing neoliberalism and its effects on democracy should not be an endorsement of earlier forms of capitalist control, but a call to democratize the means of production beyond that which has been achieved by societies in the past. Neoliberalism is also distinct from “globalization,” a term that is often used synonymously with it. Globalization can be defined as a global shift toward interconnectedness and interdependence enabled by technological advancement. (Steger, 2013). If globalization is the process of globalizing, then neoliberalism is the policies by which globalization is achieved and the ideology that governs it. Neoliberalism also parallels much of the rhetoric of libertarianism, but neoliberalism heavily relies on government action in the economy and in civic life in ways that are incompatible with libertarian doctrine. Neoliberalism relies on government intervention to maintain policies that are heavily advantageous to multinational corporations; libertarians term this “crony capitalism” and believe in little or no government intervention. Neoliberalism also relies on state violence and international interference to achieve global hegemony, while libertarians advocate for a total retreat from the world stage. Finally, while libertarians maintain a *laissez-faire* attitude toward all social activities, neoliberalism is inconsistent in supporting government policies toward social moments— a characteristic that will be explored later. These intersections with other economic

and political phenomena demonstrate both the breath of neoliberal influence and its uniqueness as a distinct ideology.

However, Harvey (2005) cautions that scholars should note the distinctions between neoliberal ideology and the praxis of neoliberal governance. Brown (2015) explains that “[Neoliberalism] intersects in Sweden with the continued legitimacy of welfarism, in South Africa with a post-Apartheid expectation of a democratizing and redistributive state, in China with Confucianism, post-Maoism, and capitalism, in the United States with a strange brew of long-established antistatism and new managerialism” (p. 26). The varied ways in which neoliberalism has been implemented make it clear that neoliberalism is not a doctrine of ideological purity, but rather an instrument with a specific goal that exists separate from neoliberalism’s stated doctrine. Within the United States, the two major political parties (both of which subscribe more or less to neoliberal thinking) show how neoliberalism can be enacted in distinct, seemingly contradicting ways (Harvey, 2005). Both parties in the US are heavily beholden to American corporations for financial backing, and thus the entire American political system (with very few exceptions) can be considered neoliberal. While “neoconservatives” are the most prominent advocates of neoliberal policies in the United States, Harvey (2005) and Brown (2015) point to Democratic Presidents Clinton and Obama, respectively, as neoliberal operatives. Clinton, a so-called “moderate” Democrat, advocated for and established NAFTA, privatized many federal prisons, instituted welfare “reform” and made balancing the federal budget a priority— all policies straight from the Reagan playbook (Meeropol, 2000). Because Democratic leaders are beholden to neoliberal policies, they are limited to pursuing social progress and identity politics at the expense of economic justice (Brown, 2015). After the Bush

administration further deregulated the economy, Obama, an arguably more liberal Democrat than Clinton, doubled-down on neoliberal policies amid the 2008 financial crisis; rejecting the progressive reforms advocated by Occupy Wall Street movement.

Neoliberalism's positioning domestically is the focus of this study, but it is important to note neoliberalism's implementation on the international level is even more uneven. Despite its claim to further individual freedoms, neoliberalism is achieved through democratic means only when necessary (Brown, 2015). For example, neoliberalism was introduced to Latin America coups and military takeovers and covert operations throughout the region in the 1970s (Harvey, 2005). Neoliberalism was also forcibly imposed on Iraq by US overseers in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion. When all other excuses had failed to appease the American public's skepticism over the war, Bush renamed his campaign "Operation Iraqi Freedom" in line with the neoliberal promise of individual freedoms born of trade. Harvey (2005) argues that, "The freedoms [the neoliberal state] embodies reflect the interests of private property owners, businesses, multinational corporations, and financial capital. [America] invited the Iraqis, in short, to ride their horse of freedom straight into the neoliberal corral" (p. 7). In the case of Iraq, freedom stopped just short of petroleum; the United States ensured that oil would remain in the hands of the US-occupied Iraqi government in order to pay for the costly war and ensure its geopolitical significance. Harvey (2005) again notes, "What the US evidently sought to impose by main force on Iraq was a state apparatus whose fundamental mission was to facilitate conditions for profitable capital accumulation on the part of both foreign and domestic capital" (p. 7). These changes were not made with the consent of the governed; they were orchestrated by a global

superpower in order to expand the scope of neoliberalism and further their interests and the interests of many multinational corporations (Harvey, 2005).

Rather than a strict ideological regimen of free markets and individualism, neoliberalism is ultimately a means to restore class power for the upper echelons (Harvey, 2005).

Neoliberalism became ascendant because the power of the upper classes had eroded and was further threatened by “stagflation” under embedded liberalism. Their class power had eroded economically through radically increased taxation and increased government oversight in the wake of the 1930s and the New Deal. They also faced lessening political influence due to increased unionization, powerful Leftist political parties, and social solidarity among lower and working classes. This discrepancy between neoliberalism’s core ideology and the praxis of its implementation on the part of the upper classes can be seen in its successes; neoliberalism has been unevenly successful or downright failed in all of its purported goals (Harvey, 2005). In the United States, two competing political parties espouse neoliberal ideologies that seemingly contradict. Republicans consistently insist on neoliberal economic policies while rejecting its tenets against government intervention in individuals’ lives. Democrats maintain social welfare programs that pure neoliberal ideology would reject, yet are more neoliberal in the social sphere of government policies. In Britain and much of Europe, governments have maintained their public healthcare system and other social benefits that should technically be obsolete under the neoliberal paradigm. Neoliberalism has also failed to consistently advanced personal freedoms: Latin American neoliberal governments violently suppressed opposition and curtailed citizen power while foreign investors controlled resources, while international institutions such as the IMF, World Bank, and the World Trade Organization have been leveraged to force nations to

comply with neoliberal policies that conflicted with democratic mandates. Neoliberalism has also failed to increase capital accumulation for the vast majority of the economy, as can be seen by the rising economic inequality in rich nations (Harvey, 2005).

Marxist scholar and rhetorician Wendy Brown (2015) outlines four critiques of neoliberalism in her *Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution*— all of which directly relate to its status as a redistributive system. The first is intensified inequality: “The very top strata acquires and retains ever more wealth, the very bottom is literally turned out on the streets or into the growing urban and suburban slums of the world, while the middle strata works more hours for less pay, fewer benefits, less security, and less promise of retirement or upward mobility than at any time in the past half century” (p. 42). Brown (2015) also points to unethical commercialization. This includes the exploitation of human laborers (such as slaves in the Global South) as well as the privatization of resources which should be accessible to all, particularly healthcare, education, a safe environment and usable infrastructure. Neoliberalism also increases “the ever-growing intimacy of corporate and finance capital with the state, and corporate domination of political decisions and economic policy” (Brown, 2015, p. 44). Such increased access to state instruments has proved powerful; it has even proved resilient to the collapse of the global economy. Brown (2015) argues these crises have become more frequent; because neoliberalism advocates for deregulation, the “inherent bubbles and...dramatic fluctuations of financial markets” have become worse as investors grow bolder and regulations are unwisely decreased (p. 44).

These four effects of neoliberalism in praxis show how successful its redistributive efforts have been for the upper classes, and how disparate neoliberal ideology is from its praxis.

In fact, neoliberalism has fundamentally changed the power and composition of the upper classes; demonstrating its immense and unwieldy influence. Harvey (2005) observes, “In the US, the rising power and significance of financiers and CEOs of large corporations, as well as the immense burst of activity in wholly new sectors...changed the locus of upper-class economic power significantly” (p. 31). In Britain, Thatcher challenged the Aristocracy in favor of younger, corporate-based financiers like George Soros and Richard Branson. Harvey (2005) suggests this is indicative of the system’s power, “While neoliberalization may have been about the restoration of class power, it has not necessarily meant the restoration of economic power to the same people” (p. 31). This restructuring of the upper classes makes it clear that neoliberalism is the ascendant force of economic domination; it has systematically uprooted established (sometimes ancient) economic models and remade the upper echelons in its image.

If neoliberalism was presented as an instrument of class warfare, it would likely be rejected outright by nations with democratic alternatives. Thus, proponents of neoliberalism waged a campaign to influence the citizenry toward neoliberal ideals cloaked in cultural and traditional values (Harvey, 2005). This was all intentional; “By capturing ideals of individual freedom and turning them against the interventionists and regulatory practices of the state, capitalist class interests could hope to protect and even restore their position” (Harvey, 2005, p. 45). Margaret Thatcher once stated, “Economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul.” I take issue with that assessment— economic redistribution is the object, and the *method* is changing the soul. Neoliberalism has appealed to Western conceptions of individual liberty and personal responsibility by reframing them as primarily economic. Aune (2001) points to Ayn Rand as a key figure in selling the free market as individual liberty. He argues Rand was able to

achieve this by appealing to the morality of capitalism— an “inspirational message about self reliance and the struggle to be all you can be” (p. 75). The rampant individualism courted by neoliberalism has even effected our justice system. Jones and Mukherjee (2010) examined the rhetoric of anti-affirmative action in court cases across a 10-year period. They found a reframing of arguments that invoke “the neoliberal myth of free, entrepreneurial individuals against a meddling, inefficient, authoritarian state” (p. 401). Under neoliberal conceptions of freedom, any state intervention on behalf of a group is construed as a threat to that group’s liberty and independence— even if that group is of protected status.

Neoliberalism and Democracy

Democracy relies on the freedom of choice, including political dissent, in order to function. Neoliberalism promotes the freedom of choice, but co-opts and confines it to the free market. By claiming that market freedoms are equivalent (or even superior) to the freedoms of liberal democracy, neoliberalism is able to co-opt and confine political dissent (De Castro, 2015). Neoliberal ideology posits that if a consumer finds something objectionable about society, that consumer can choose to not purchase it. This individual action is known as *voting with your dollar* or *conscious capitalism*. For example, Kinser (2017) studied food safety and ethics in the neoliberal household. She found that while there are many alarmist political and marketing discourses about the real and perceived dangers of such things as GMOs, pesticides, and problematic feeding practices, these sources almost exclusively put the onus on the consumer— namely the mother-figure— to keep their families safe. Giant agribusiness and chemical corporations such as Monsanto are rarely if ever mentioned in these articles. Fenton (2014) argues that even the free press and the consumer choice therein is a thinly veiled guise for the

market exploitation of the mainstream media by giant, multinational corporations who all operate as pro-capitalist agents. In the neoliberal mind, “The consumer is sovereign when, in his role of citizen, he has not delegated to political institutions for authoritarian use the power which he can exercise socially through his power to demand (or refrain from demanding)” (Hutt, 1936, p. 257). Neoliberalism conflates a consumer-centric model of supply-and-demand with the democratic process (Brown, 2015). But consumer choice is ineffective as a means of producing systemic change. The free market cannot provide free services— even services that are a human necessity— because it functions to earn a profit. Consumer choice is limited by the economic access of the individual: a economically disadvantaged man or women may be able to afford alternative services that the market makes available to those wealthy enough. And of course the free market reproduces that which sustains itself; capitalism can never offer an alternative to capitalist labor relations.

Rather than being a method of self-correction, “consumer choice” is a deceit necessary to maintain the capital accumulation of the upper classes. Frank (1997) argues that since the 1970s, even so-called countercultures are simply consumers purchasing a branded identity. In fact, Frank (1997) argues counter-cultures have contributed to a capitalist boom because they diversify the market while offering consumers the mirage of choice. Put another way,

This system requires constant revolutionizing, disturbance, agitation; it needs to be perpetually pushed and pressed in order to maintain its elasticity and resilience, to appropriate and assimilate new energies, to drive itself to new heights of activity and growth. This means, however, that men and movements that proclaim their enmity to capitalism may be just the sort of stimulants capitalism needs (Berman, 1988, p. 118).

In shifting the economic locus to the individual consumer, neoliberalism is able to excuse any crises as a failure of the individual rather than an indictment of the system. “Thus, if a worker is unemployed, this is not explained as a structural problem of capitalism, or even as a cyclical problem caused by recessive economic policies, but as a presumed personal deficit of someone who is not adequately prepared to deal with the existing circumstances in the labor market” (De Castro, 2015, p. 278). Neoliberalism attempts to destroy any lingering social solidarity by casting poor individuals as irrational economic agents (rather than systematically oppressed or personally afflicted) and by casting wealthy individuals as responsible and morally superior (rather than those who receive small loans of a million dollars).

Neoliberalism seeks to transform individuals into economic agents of *human capital*. Human capital is a term used by neoliberal economists to describe individuals solely in relation to their economic worth. Human capital is the total embodiment of the neoliberalized individual — one whose only value and reasoning is that of the market. Brown (2015) explains, “Human capital’s constant and ubiquitous aim, whether studying, interning, working, planning retirement, or reinventing itself in a new life, is to entrepreneurialize its endeavors, appreciate its value, and increase its rating or ranking” (p. 57). Brown (2015) uses social media as an example of this phenomenon: the transformation of lived experiences from private occasions to public exploits that are judged by likes, favs, tweets, and replies. As human capital, the individual seeks to be the most marketable self— through efficiency, constant electronic accessibility, and consumption. Under neoliberalism, even class status symbols have been flipped on their heads as individuals are economized— leisure time becomes a symbol of laziness and poverty, while constant work becomes the new ethic (Bellezza, Paharia, & Keinan, 2017). Murray and Bellman (2011) argue

that the pressures of human capital have made even hedonistic activities like video games environments in which performance efficiency is valued in the manner of a utilitarian task. Democracy requires more of its citizens than to be mere “human capital” in a frantic rush to commercialize all activity; it requires thoughtful reflection, broad understanding, diverse views, quiet bravery, social solidarity, and trust in governance. Especially in regards to social solidarity and trust in governance, neoliberalism undermines or directly attacks the foundational functions of democratic citizenship (Harvey, 2005). By stripping individuals of their social and political identities, the neoliberal conception of “human capital” is fundamentally at odds with democracy. Human capital does not care about the whole of society or group identity— only individual wants and needs. Human capital has no need to vote at the ballot— individuals vote by consumption. Finally, human capital does not have a class— removing the possibility of revolution or retaliation against the redistributive practices inflicted by neoliberalism.

Social Movements under Neoliberalism

The anti-democratic nature of neoliberalism can be best seen in situations in which social justice is in dispute, for it is in these situations that solidarity and communal action is most important and most affected. Social movements are identifiable groups which unify and act to confront and disrupt a perceived injustice. Social movements vary widely in structure and organization; some have resulted in highly organized structures with legitimized power (such as the labor movement) whereas others are loose coalitions of peoples with similar goals or grievances. Social movements also vary in their tactics to achieve social or political change: some aim to better challenge the dominate culture through direct appeals to the public, or while others focus their methods on securing government protections and ending legal discrimination.

Neoliberalism has broad implications for both the organization and aims of American social movements. It has shifted the focus of social movements from democratic processes to corporate alliances, and, as a result, many social movements have radically altered their methods and messages to sway corporate interests and adopt neoliberal mindsets. Unfortunately, such movements that fail to resist the neoliberal pull towards corporate co-option can never produce radical change for the same reasons neoliberalism itself can never dismantle capitalism.

Defining and studying social movements is a task that has its roots in Burkeian scholarship. Burke (1950) argued that the primary goal of rhetoric is not “persuasion” but instead to create “identification” within a people that draws upon their predisposed bias, sense of self, and the rhetorical moment. Charland (1987) argues that this Burkeian shift allows rhetors to understand the formation of groups whose identities or mutually beneficial goals are not inherently obvious, and how these groups are called into existence. Those seeking to build coalitions use “constitutive rhetoric” which calls for cohesion among people who had previously not seem themselves as a part of this particular group. Chavez (2011) terms this process coalition building, and argues that it is undervalued and understudied in the discipline because of the inaccessibility of “protected enclaves” in which different social actors propose cooperation (p. 2).

But a true *social movement* does not simply seek to form an identifiable group (although this is a necessary component) but also to enact a “means for symbolic resistance” (Downing, 2010). Cathcart (1972) posits the central rhetorical action of a social movement as a *dialectical enjoinder* with the mainstream culture— a reciprocity between the member’s needs and the justice of the dominant culture (p. 87). Scott (1969) argues that the “rhetoric of confrontation” found within social movements is a potentially radical and revolutionary act, and one that is

contingent on a clear division between those in power and those under it. He uses the classic phrasing of the “haves” and the “have-nots” to describe the dominate culture and the minority voice— which have not the wealth, the power, the influence, or the ability to thrive within the current system. Historically, Scott (1969) argues, the “have-nots” toiled toward assimilation into the dominate culture through appeals to the benevolence of those in the elite. However, Stewart, Smith, and Denton (2012) posit that once social movements reach a critical mass of assimilation, which they term the “maintenance” phase, social movements risk termination unless they are renewed by a more radical faction or notable event that reinvigorates them. However, such factions also risk the termination of the movement by sowing discord.

Historically, social movement organizations brought their grievances and petitions to governments to sway democratic processes (Monti, Gamson, Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, 1978). Funke and Wolfson (2017) term this period of social activism the Old Left, which they characterize as having developed in tandem with industrialization. Many social movements’ goals are tied the traditional functions of governance (e.g. taxation, the general welfare, regulations on industry) and thus saw democratic processes as the means to enact change (Trumpy, 2008). Social movement organizations used government bodies to act as intermediaries to larger, more powerful, better funded opponents (Monti, Gamson, Tilly, Tilly, & Tilly, 1978). The “Old Left” was organized in a fairly rigid structure that prioritized and politicized the needs and normative lifestyles of the working-class (Funke & Wolfson, 2017). Under embedded liberalism, these social movements were fairly successful at stirring government action— including setting minimum wages, improving factory conditions, and maintaining relative class parity (Harvey, 2005). However, neoliberalism erased or largely dismembered the power of unions as advocates

for the economic rights of the lower classes (Harvey, 2005). With the shift toward the neoliberal agenda, governments became less inclined to serve functions that conflicted with economic and industry deregulation (Burris & Sklair, 2002). Trumpy (2008) elaborates, “The proliferation of neoliberal policies, which emphasize the merits of free markets, free trade, deregulation, and privatization, and the corresponding growth of corporate power, has prompted many social movement organizations (SMOs) to shift attention from the state to corporate actors in order to bring about desired social change” (p. 480). To attract and appease these corporate partners, SMOs have radically altered the methods and messages of their movements.

Funke and Wolfson (2017) identify the New Left as emerging from the transformation of economic and social configurations under neoliberalism. Neoliberalism shifted the focus of the social movement organizations from class solidarity to individual diversity and nonmaterial issues. These new social movements were inspired by the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, and center around the inequality found in everyday life: race, gender norms, and sexual diversity, the antiwar movement, and environmentalism (Funke & Wolfson, 2017). Harvey (2005) argues that social movements under the New Left have adapted four characteristics that conform the logic of the neoliberal era:

1. **Apolitical:** Neoliberal social relations are not solved through political means; government action is largely seen as tyrannical or omitted as an option.
2. **Individualistic:** Neoliberal social relations operate at the level of the individual; responsibility and actions are seen as personal choices independent of group status.

3. Capitalistic: Neoliberal social relations are non-threatening to capitalism; social movements are often compelled to justify their goals economically and anticapitalist strands of the movements are silenced and disavowed.
4. Co-optive: Neoliberal social relations can be co-opted by corporations, governments, and lobbies to promote neoliberal agendas; movements should welcome corporate sponsorship by tailoring their means and motives to be easily marketable.

All four of these characteristics work together to hinder potentially transformative, anti-capitalist social movements, and cannot have developed in a vacuum. As Funke and Wolfson (2017) articulate, “These changes in strategy, structure, and governance of social movements must be linked to shifts in the nature of the political economy in order to more fully understand the development, progression, and implications of social movements” (p. 395). Neoliberalism has fundamentally changed the way social movements function.

Neoliberalism and Gay Liberation

The gay rights movement (also referred to here as LGBT equality and the Gay Liberation Movement) sits at the crux of the tension between individual rights and social cohesion that has become so fraught under neoliberalism. Queer people in the United States have existed in some form since before the nation’s founding, but the queerness was mostly hidden and unofficial. Sexual minorities have unique identity formations when compared to racial or ethnic minorities because they cannot be identified by their physicality. While other minorities have their status mapped onto their bodies unwillingly, queer people can only be identified through “deviant” sexual and cultural practices, which can be hidden, obscured, and denied (Campbell, 2013a). As such, the formation of a queer identity was consistently undermined by the need for secrecy in an

unwelcoming and often violent society. Foucault (1978) traces the birth of a modern queer identity to the 19th century, where industrial capitalism necessitated the need to regulate sexual proclivities in order to assure robust reproduction of both the laborers and social norms that benefited its continued dominance. This transition is marked by the decline of the Church as a means to regulate and monitor sexual deviance and the rise of medical and psychological institutions that used “scientific” terminology to pathologize queerness. It is from these institutions that a stable locus of queerness was captured: that of the “homosexual.” While homosexuality and other deviant sexual identities were catalogued and “treated” by medical practitioners, an LGBT community began to form even as the larger society was intent on policing them. D’Elilio (1983a) credits industrial capitalism with the rise of queer culture and identity. Under industrial capitalism, traditional modes of private, hereditary labor were replaced with more urban, social factory production. As the degree of fraternization between the masses increased, so did the individual’s agency to interact with a wider degree of social and sexual diversity. However, as the individual’s conception of queer identities arose, so did social and legal frameworks to silence and discipline them.

As Gross (2005) wrote, “[the gay community] suffered under a semiofficial conspiracy of silencing that was endorsed at the highest levels” (p. 509). LGBT people were discriminated against legally, subjected to systemic police brutality, regularly disavowed by the media as perverts and sociopaths, and at constant risk of losing their families, jobs, security, and lives if they were outed or self-disclosed (Alwood, 2015). In the 1950s, burgeoning gay activists were inspired by the Civil Rights movement to form a unified social movement as an oppressed minority. The Mattachine Society “which was organized by five Los Angeles men in 1950 to

form a political bloc much like the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People” was one of the earliest examples of an organized activism (Alwood, 2015, p. 12). The founders of the the Mattachine Society were radical Leftists who were alienated from both the American Old Left in its pursuit of labor reforms and Leftist movements inspired by Marx. One of the most notable founding members of the Mattachine Society was Harry Hay, a Communist Party member who was expelled from the group after declaring his sexuality (Timmons, 1990). Hay and a group of friends and associates used the Mattachine Society to protest police abuse and queer oppression, and found moderate success while operating anonymously. Yet as the Mattachine Society grew, Hay also found himself unwelcome in his own society. More conservative and traditional Leftists saw Hay and his comrades as a threat to the group’s success, and in 1953 Hay stepped down from his position after being publicly exposed as a Marxist (Timmons, 1990).

After Hay’s departure, the remaining radicals that had founded the society stepped down from their positions, and the Mattachine Society adopted new rules that declared loyalty to the United States government and a policy of non-confrontation (Timmons, 1990). The Mattachine Society continued to operate primarily in the shadows; using connections with business leaders and “an approach founded on an implicit contract with the larger society wherein gay identity, culture, and values would be disavowed (or at least concealed) in return for the *promise* of equal treatment” (Adam, 1978, p. 121). But not everyone was content to stay in the shadows. In 1951, Donald Webster Cory’s book *The Homosexual in America* was published and advocated for a different approach: one in which the LGBT community actively spoke out in resistance (Gross, 2005). In an era in which the federal government was actively investigating its employees for

suspected homosexual activity, activists like former astronomer Frank Kameny publicly fought their unjust terminations under the banner of Queer Liberation. This new era of out-and-proud activism reached a crescendo in 1969, when drag queens, trans women of color and LGBT street fighters fought back against a police raid on Stonewall Inn.

In the face of continued oppression and a growing community consciousness, LGBT havens were de-facto established in large cities like New York and Chicago. The Castro in San Francisco was and remains notable for its election of Harvey Milk in 1977, California's first openly-gay elected official who was murdered mere months after his election. These vibrant communities fostered a sense of optimism and stability as public opinion began to shift in favor of social acceptance for the most normative factions of the LGBT community. However, this sense of optimism was short-lived as a disease known as "gay cancer" began to devastate sexual minorities seemingly overnight. Rogers and Dearing (1995) detail the disastrous impact of the AIDS epidemic on the queer community in San Francisco. Although organizations, rallies, and marches forged a bond between participants and increased their solidarity, Rand (2012) argues that this newfound pride was also afflicted with a level of shame. ACT UP, undoubtedly the most prominent of the organizations that emerged as a result of the AIDS crisis, declared the famous and defiant slogan "Silence = Death" in the streets of San Francisco. However, the group's work as activists was silencing to many whom they felt did not represent the respectability that the organization sought in order to uphold its public image as defenders of the suffering. This pressure to uphold normative standards while fighting for the rights of those considered by many to be wholly abnormal and dangerous is a paradox that in some ways defines the modern gay rights movement. Rand (2012) argues that many of these fault lines can be traced to the AIDS

crisis, in which respectability and social expectance was paramount in the face of a dying population and an uncaring government.

The tensions between respectability and inclusion have not abated since the height of the AIDS crisis. In the 1990s, corporate America began to perceive certain segments of the LGBT community as a potentially lucrative market segment (Campbell, 2003). Of course, the segment of the queer community that appealed to these marketers were the affluent, white gays and lesbians depicted in shows like *Will & Grace* (Mitchell, 2005). This perception of the LGBT community as an affluent and respectable market was courted by LGBT groups, who saw corporate favor as a positive step toward social acceptance. Unfortunately, this “positive step” for some in the community was extremely exclusive— particularly of racial and ethnic minorities, trans individuals, and anyone not deemed respectable or wealthy enough to be a viable market. Campbell (2003) argues that this corporatized LGBT community served the interests of the capitalists and the upper echelons of white gays and lesbians, while hollowing out the wide range of queer people who were deemed less appealing. As Dodd and Supa (2015) note, corporations have not only seen the LGBT community as a viable market, a large number of CEOs and official company statements have championed pro-LGBT issues such as gay marriage. This co-mingling of corporations and gay rights is symptomatic of a neoliberal influence. The tension between furthering the goals of queer liberation and excluding the most vulnerable in the community is ripe for critical attention.

CHAPTER FOUR

CRITICAL ORIENTATION

It is my goal in this project to provide a critical perspective of the tensions surrounding the 2017 Pride demonstrations and the larger social, political, and economic contexts that contribute to this struggle. In doing so, I offer up an argument on the state of the modern LGBT community; one which I hope will inspire more scholarly attention to the fragmentation and turmoil facing queer people today. As a rhetorical critic, I am compelled to uncover the underlying of manifestations of power and domination within a given context. The project of critically examining the tensions and underlying influences within a social movement is one which is rooted in the evolution and history of rhetorical scholarship.

Cloud (1994) traces the freedom and the responsibility to critically examine a text to Burke (1935), whose “analysis of the ways language mystifies and legitimizes capitalism” stands as a transformative moment in the history of critical scholarship within our discipline (Cloud, 1994, p. 143). Burke was followed by scholars who took his critical opening and made it a mandate. Wander and McGee were at the forefront of this call, inspired by the work of French philosopher Michel Foucault. Wander (1983, 1984) envisioned an *ideological turn* for rhetorical scholars; one in which economic and political domination formed a basis to understand how a text functioned within a structures of domination and control. McGee (1982, 1984) emphasized the power of discourse to reflect, reify, and enforce the will of those who govern a society and their political and economic interests. Tracing this history, Cloud (1994) explains,

Wander and McGee argued that it would be productive for rhetoricians to view discourse as an agency of economic and political power, and to bring rhetoric's considerable

repertoire of textual analysis skills to bear on understanding how political and economic power is mediated, reinforced, perpetuated, and challenged in the texts we study (p. 143).

Although McGee confirmed the utility of rhetoric, he argued it needed to adapt to a more complex and multifaceted society. No longer could the power of the elite be disseminated directly through a political speech or press release; the 20th century, he argued, had fragmented the media landscape to the extent that no one text could fully contain the agenda of economic and political power. Rather, McGee (1990) argued that critics must draw upon a variety of texts in order to ascertain that larger social patterns within them. Burke, Wander, and McGee began a revolution within rhetorical scholarship that lay the foundation for an ideological criticism.

McKerrow (1989) termed scholarship that seeks to understand power in relation to communication “critical rhetoric.” This term conceived rhetorical studies as the method of inquiry and discourse as the means of disseminating power (Sloop, 2004). Cloud (1994) argued that critical rhetoric must answer “how power, consciousness, and resistance are crafted, articulated, and influenced in and by the act of speaking” and that this criticism “is vital to the projects of critique and social change” (p. 141). Discourse holds real power because it is disseminated from the oppressive powers that control very real economic and political structures. Thus, Cloud (1994) argued that “the task of a critique of culture is to unmask the shared illusions of a society as ideas promulgated by and serving the interests of the ruling class, or those who control the production and distribution of material goods” (p. 145). The materiality of discourse is essential to the act of criticism. Cloud (1994) defines materialism as “the idea that the mode of production, or the way in which goods are made and distributed in society, determines the social relations and norms of consciousness of any given epoch” (p. 144).

McKerrow (1989) argues that the social relations revealed through texts contain underlying political messages that are interpreted by the rhetor, the audience, and the critic. In his own words, “a critical rhetoric examines the dimensions of domination and freedom as these are exercised in a relativized world” (p. 91). Relativity is central to a critical understanding of texts. Dow (1996) posits that critical rhetoric “is not about discovering or reporting the meaning in texts. Rather, it becomes a performative activity that is, in some sense, dedicated to creating meaning.” (pp. 3-4). Rather than searching for an objective truth, critical rhetors make arguments about the texts they study. This academic pluralism, or polysemous scholarship, enables critics to acknowledge their own lived experience and social locations while still making rich, meaningful contributions toward a greater understanding of a text and its social contexts. This polysemous approach to criticism does not constitute a criticism without merit; the arguments that scholars make should be logical and well supported (Dow, 1996). However, it does allow for a more cooperative, pluralistic approach to scholarship.

While the esteemed scholars cited above have called for more complex, more nuanced perspectives of social hierarchies and academic insights, the study of social movements has remained fairly dichotomous; social movements are often studied as monoliths in opposition to the status quo. The very idea of a singular system of popular belief, or as the Ancient Greeks termed it, *doxa*, is an oversimplification which ignores the intersecting power structures constantly vying for domination. McGee (1990) writes that “*doxa* is silent, and it should be kept silent, unless it becomes itself a source of grievance” (p. 281). To identify my grievance and shed light on the ideological nature of everyday discourse, I use neoliberalism as the lens to analyze dominant culture. While there remains no codified methodology for identifying neoliberal

influence, Harvey (2005) identifies four characteristics of neoliberal ideology. In conjunction with Brown (2015), these four characteristics (apolitical, individualistic, capitalistic, and co-optive) form the basis of my understanding of the dominate *doxa* of our time. Yet, as Singer's (2017) research on neoliberalism within the environmental movement finds, neoliberal logics are not isolated to the popular views; they are foundational to oppositional social movements as well. Therefore, the prototypical dichotomy between popular culture and social movements is simply reinforcing neoliberal logics. In this project, I instead turn to competing discourses within a particular social movement—the LGBT rights movement—in order to distinguish the factions of the movement that are beholden to neoliberal logics and the factions that reject those logics. Sloop and Ono (1997) provide the theoretical underpinnings for this shifted perspective. In their 1997 essay, Sloop and Ono argue that cultural groups may be subordinate (or “in-laws”) or superordinate (“out-laws”) to the hegemonic structures of the time. Using that same logic, I argue that a single cultural group may have both out-laws and in-laws fighting for dominance and influence among their own people. In the LGBT community, I argue, this is especially true as queer identity is often bereft of any physical markers— providing the ultimate “in-law” of assimilation through non-disclosure.

In line with McGee and Wander, my approach to scholarship is not merely descriptive; I seek to understand not only what is being said, but also how it relates to the economic, social, and political power structures of the present. To do so, I will heed the advice of McGee (1990) and draw upon a variety of texts from different mediums, sources, and perspectives. Sloop (2004) provides a model for this type of multi-textual analysis; his body of work includes several

case studies which are each in turn comprised of a multitude of artifacts, press coverages, and individual responses, which are then conceptualized as a cohesive and compelling argument.

My analysis is divided into two parts: one focused on the current state of LGBT Pride, and the other focused on the queer resistance group No Justice No Pride. Because the protests of No Justice No Pride were concentrated in several cities and because the cities with protests tend to be the largest and most culturally relevant parades in the US, I analyzing the discourse that emerged from cities where the protests were most prevalent for both sections. For the first section, I examine the official online statements of five major Pride organizations, including New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. In addition, I have selected a total of three local and national popular news articles of the 2017 events from each location in order to gain a breadth of opinions in the news media from each location. For the second half of the analysis, I draw from the official online statements of the organization No Justice No Pride, including their mission statement and list of demands. This section also contains popular press coverage of the 2017 protests in New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. The three local and national news articles from each location were selected based on their coverage of No Justice No Pride. In total, I analyze six official statements and 30 news articles from around the nation. The combination of these official statements and popular news coverage from various positions expose the underlying tensions and power relations at work in Pride parades in 2017.

In tracing the materiality of discourse, I pay special attention to the financial ties that situate modern Pride and inform the resistance movement. As noted before, Pride is no longer a small and insular event for radical queer people; it is a spectacle that draws millions of participants and viewers from around the globe. It is also a heavily-funded spectacle. Sponsors

range from local coffee shops to large, multi-national banking conglomerates. However, the materiality of discourse goes beyond rainbow-themed corporate logos and financial sponsorship. Scholars should pay attention to how the pervasive commercialization of public life, or “neoliberalism,” affects the content, organization, and positions of social movements. In pursuit of this understanding, I perform a close textual analyses on official statements on organization websites, as well as direct quotations from on-the-ground spectators and individual supporters located in the articles. This is in line with Singer’s (2017) analysis of neoliberalism within the “Meatless Monday” campaign, who analyzed the rhetoric of both the organization and the media response, as well as the work of Rand (2012) and Campbell (2003). While the tensions may not explicitly cite neoliberalism (although in many cases, they do), the underlying tensions between corporate control, pragmatism, and radical activism are clearly delineated. It is vital to situate Pride and its opposition within the larger discourse of neoliberal ideology. To do so, I rely on the detailed accounts of neoliberalism provided by Marxist rhetorician and political scientist Wendy Brown (2015) and prominent scholar David Harvey (2005). The combined contributions of these scholars make way for a rich, thorough analysis of the political and economic constructs that underlie modern Pride.

By advancing a fragmented, materialist criticism of Pride 2017 and its resistance movement, I seek to offer up a well-defended and logically-sound argument that advocates understanding of a complex, dynamic, and multifaceted issue. As McKerrow (1989) notes, a single text can be interpreted, misinterpreted, realigned and ignored along every step of the communicative process. Thus, it would be foolish or, at the very least, arrogant, to claim a single, unqualified answer to an issue of this magnitude. Guided by Dow (1996), it is my goal to submit

an argument that enriches, empowers, and invigorates future academic study of the important issues discussed here. In doing so, I need not provide all the answers or evoke every possible line of thought. I seek only to do my due diligence to provide a more nuanced understanding of the issues that befall the queer community in 2017 and beyond. To do so, I pose the following research questions:

(R1): How do Pride organizations in 2017 manage the tensions between the political and celebratory goals of their activism?

(R2): How do the demands and methods of No Justice No Pride align with scholarly critiques of neoliberalism?

(R3): How does the popular coverage of tensions between Pride organizations and No Justice No Pride expose, undermine, or privilege neoliberal ideology within the queer rights movement?

CHAPTER FIVE

PRIDE WITH PREJUDICE

Pride in 2017 commanded the attention of journalists from around the country. The disruption of the parades by the activist group No Justice No Pride prompted some attention, but many news articles ignored the protests altogether in favor of highlighting different aspects of the parade. Such articles tend to focus on two themes: the history of LGBT Pride and the commercial appeal of the event. These two themes appear across local and national press coverage of Pride events, although not every article exhibits both themes. These themes are also echoed by the official statements of Pride organizers in New York, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, and Columbus, Ohio. While the themes are not unique to 2017, the election of Donald Trump and Mike Pence and the ascension of No Justice No Pride have made Pride's political ineffectiveness transparent. While No Justice No Pride will be discussed at length in the next chapter, Pride organizations and media responses to the election of Trump is discussed within the context of the two themes. Pride's approach to addressing the Trump Administration also demonstrates that, despite claims to the contrary, modern Pride remains fundamentally disconnected from its radical history, and that large crowds and corporate sponsorship are not inherently metrics of positive progress. In the following chapter, I will detail these themes and conclude with an analysis of their implications for Pride under neoliberalism.

The Hollow Call of History

The first theme found in both popular press articles and the official statements of Pride organizers is a persistent documentation of Pride's history and, more significantly, a co-opting of this legacy. The history of Pride is one of tension and turmoil. Pride arose out of remembrance for the Stonewall Riots— a five-day uprising against a hostile and violent NYPD. Some early

participants wore bags over their heads for fear they were risking their homes, their families, and their lives. Callbacks to this history are also found throughout media coverage of Pride in 2017, but many of them obscure the details of the violent onslaught of police harassment and the brave trans women of color that fought against them. *The New York Times* (2017) simply wrote of the parade, “New York City’s annual Pride March was founded as a civil rights demonstration and a remembrance for those lost to illness and violence.” The historic allusions in this statement are, as best, devoid of context and in some ways incorrect. Pride was founded in 1970; a whole decade before AIDS epidemic devastated the LGBT community. The violence alluded to by the *Times* is true, but it is notably lacking in specific references to the police brutality that sparked the Stonewall Riots and inspired Pride a year later. *ABC News 7* (2017) in New York City was more forthcoming in its documentation of the history of the event; highlighting its importance by making it the first sentence of the article. The popular press article noted, “The NYC Pride March started in 1970 as a civil rights demonstration on the 1-year anniversary of the Stonewall Uprising. Today, it is one of the world's best known LGBT events, with 350 marching contingents and more than 2 million spectators in 2016” (*ABC News 7*, 2017). By contextualizing the modern parade within its historic lineage and juxtaposing it with a record of its current successes, journalists explicitly link modern Pride to its forbearers. *ABC News 10* (2017) of San Francisco employs a similar tactic in the reverse; the disruption of modern Pride is immediately followed by references to its history. They wrote that Pride is, “a celebration of diversity, joining in on the fun and a chance to wear a colorful and prideful costume. It’s also a time to reflect on the good, and bad, history that the LGBT community has gone through over the years.” This idea of reflection can also be seen in the official statements of Pride organizations around the country.

In their official 2017 statement, Pride organizers in Seattle referenced that history was an important aspect of Seattle Pride, “We coordinate and promote Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender pride events in the Seattle area celebrating the present, envisioning the future, and honoring the past” (Seattle Pride, 2017). Pride organizers in Washington, DC also touted their commitment to history, “The Capital Pride Alliance...serves to celebrate, educate, support, and inspire our diverse communities in order to grow and protect our legacy, history, and rights for future generations” (Capital Pride, 2017). Some organizations were even more explicit in their connections to history. The official website of NYC Pride proclaims, “The spirit of Stonewall lives on. Heritage of Pride is a nonprofit organization that plans and produces New York City’s official LGBT Pride events each year to commemorate the Stonewall Riots of 1969 — the beginning of the modern Gay Rights movement” (NYC Pride, 2017). The Stonewall Inn is also the namesake of the official Pride organization in Columbus, Ohio. Stonewall Columbus also documents its local legacy in the official 2017 statement, “Be Strong. Stay Proud. This mantra has been said many times here at Stonewall Columbus over the past year. Thirty-six years ago this June, three young gay activists staged a civil rights march through the streets of Columbus to draw attention to the discrimination that was happening in our city. We honor their legacy and assume their mantle as we take to the streets once again this year” (Stonewall Columbus, 2017). These official statements link the modern parades to the radical vision of the Stonewall Riots and the brave LGBT activists who risked their jobs, families, and lives to demonstrate in the streets.

While organizers and media outlets do much work to link the modern parades to Prides’ radical past, 2017 demonstrated how tenuous that link has become. The Trump Administration and the right-wing discourse it has cultivated is undoubtedly the gravest threat to LGBT rights in

the United States in nearly a decade, yet parades across the country failed meet this challenge. Most of the “resistance” to the President and his Administration came in the form of symbolic gestures. Stonewall Columbus cancelled its annual brunch. As noted earlier, New York and San Francisco Prides were headed by politically-minded Grand Marshalls. Several organizers stated their opposition to federal actions (*ABC News* 7, 2017; *KOMO News*, 2017). Yet in their official 2017 statements, not a single city’s Pride organization mentioned Trump either explicitly or implicitly. Columbus, Ohio, which had the longest and most politically-charged 2017 statement, seemed to bend backwards not to mention the administration. Stonewall Columbus mentioned housing eviction, LGBTQ refugees, the persecution of gay men in Chechnya, Ugandan and Iranian refugees who have settled in Columbus, and the “strength, resilience, and dedication of our community” (Stonewall Columbus, 2017).

It is not just the silence of these organizations that renders their symbolic acts frail; it is the contractions. NYC Pride’s official 2107 statement reads, “Heritage of Pride works toward a future without discrimination where all people have equal rights under the law.” This goal would be infinitely more attainable if the threat were named. The Washington, DC, statement declares that Capital Pride “serves to celebrate, educate, support, and inspire our diverse communities in order to grow and protect our legacy, history, and rights for future generations” (Capital Pride, 2017). A thoroughly vacant statement without any political, social, or current context. Seattle Pride’s 2017 statement is dedicated to “celebrating the present, envisioning the future, and honoring the past.” By refusing to engage with the threat posed by Donald Trump, Pride organizations risk the promises they make towards the future and break with the explicitly political Prides of the past.

By linking the modern parade to Pride's radical roots, Pride organizers and the popular press invite comparisons of their activism to that which came before them. However, if parade participants, organizers, and onlookers are to don the mantle of their predecessors, Pride must engage with the political realities of the present. Symbolic gestures like grand marshals and campaign catch-phrases hardly deliver a blow to an Administration represents the gravest threat to LGBT rights in nearly a decade. It is important to recognize queer history, but recognition for its own sake or for the sake of self-aggrandizement is a waste of the past's potential. Opaque references to historical happenings is a poor substitute for the rich lessons and ominous parallels that history offers us. Contextless allusions to past struggles allows institutions that have harassed, arrested, and oppressed members of the LGBT community from time immemorial to march down the street like trusted friends.

This is the case with the police presence as well. As police marched in uniform in parades in New York City and Columbus, Ohio, the San Francisco police were hailed as protectors. Writing for *ABC News* 7, Brinkley (2017) reported "Overlooking it all, police up on rooftops and down in the crowd. It was all hands on deck with days off canceled. 'We do have a lot of police officers out there in uniform creating a presence to make people feel safe,' SFPD Officer Robert Rueca said. For the second year, there were strict protocols for bag checks and metal detectors. And there was indeed a lot of pride in being part of what's become an iconic event here." Such a positive outlook on an Orwellian level of security allows both police and participants to forget the very violence that inspired the event. Pride, through its official statements and media discourse, has enraptured itself in the high ideals of past queer activism. Yet modern Pride falls

far short of any radical resistance— even when faced with an Administration that poses a grave threat to LGBT rights across the country.

Commercial Appeal As Consumption

The second theme found throughout the articles and official statements of Pride organizations across the country was the commercial appeal of the parade. In terms of attendance, 2017 proved to be a record-breaking year for Pride around the world. In New York City, a record 40,000 people marched in the parade itself, with millions of additional bystanders (Walsh, 2017). *The News York Times* (2017) touted that NYC Pride is “known as the city’s biggest early-summer party, and Sunday’s march was no exception. Thousands lined the streets of Manhattan waving rainbow flags, and costumes were ever colorful (albeit, sometimes barely there).” New York’s *ABC News 7* (2107) reported that NYC Pride was host to “350 marching contingents and more than 2 million spectators in 2016” and would surpass that figure in 2017. In Seattle, reports claimed, “Tens of thousands of people flooded downtown Seattle streets Sunday for Seattle’s annual Pride Parade. The march kicked off at 4th Avenue and Union Street and ended at Seattle Center. Hundreds of people marched in the parade, police say. The city estimates about 200,000 people were at the event” (*KOMO News*, 2017).

Most if not all articles on Pride 2017 were conscious of the size and grandeur of the event; taking special note to the size of the crowds and the amounts of people marching. *K5 News*, a local syndicate of *NBC*, began their article on 2017’s Pride with a colorful estimate of the parade’s turnout. Javier (2017) reported, “An expected 200,000 people gathered in downtown Sunday in a sea of rainbow colors to celebrate the 2017 Seattle Pride Parade.” Reporters in San Francisco were similarly inclined to recite the event’s turnout. Brinkley (2017) from *ABC News 7*

of San Francisco reported, “The pride parade down Market Street had a record breaking 250 contingents marching this year, and the SF Pride Director said more than a million people were attending the celebration.” Mahbubani (2017) upped the directors estimate, saying, “San Francisco Pride 2017 kicked off in a flurry of rainbows. Millions of people are expected to trek to the City by the Bay through Sunday to celebrate and show support for the LGBTQ community.” San Francisco’s *ABC News 10* (2017) was more tempered in their estimates, but still reported “that thousands of people from all over the world” would attend the event in “colorful and prideful costumes.”

In Chicago, Rumore (2017) of the *Tribune* reported that “organizers of Sunday’s 48th annual Chicago Pride Parade expect at least 250,000 people to line the 4-mile route and as many as 1 million to move in and out of the area surrounding the parade.” *CBS Chicago* cheerfully declared, “With pride and joy, thousands took over Chicago’s streets to celebrate the 2017 Gay Pride Parade!” In Columbus, Ohio, Evens (2017) of *The Columbus Dispatch* wrote, “Stonewall Columbus director Karla Rothan said we’re on track to draw more than 500,000 people, topping 2016’s record number. ‘It’s a bigger Pride than ever before,’ said Rothan. ‘We think we surpassed Chicago, which is a big, big, big deal.’ Surpassing Chicago’s attendance would make Columbus Pride the largest such event in the Midwest.” Clearly, the popularity of Pride is important for journalists to note. Declarations of the parades’ popularity are ubiquitous, and they are often accompanied by descriptions of the brightly-colored festivities and throngs of cheering crowds. And corporations have been quick to monetize this momentum.

Pride organizers and journalists alike highlight the number of sponsorships that Pride parades garnered. Some Pride organizations seem boastful in their use of corporate sponsors. The

official statement of Columbus' Stonewall Pride proudly declares, "In 2016, we were joined by over 200 unique marching contingents, representing a vast array of non-profits, community organizations, corporate sponsors, small businesses, political candidates and activists!"

(Stonewall Pride Official Statement, 2017). These sponsors are ubiquitous; their branding can be seen on floats, pasted on the side of vans, on free rainbow-colored merchandise, hanging from banners above the parade, or on the tee shirts of their employees as they march in the parade.

One of the chairpeople of Columbus Pride touted its business connections, "It isn't surprising that Columbus would draw a big crowd to support the gay community, considering it...has several businesses that have been given perfect scores for embracing inclusive policies for LGBTQ workers" (Buchanan, 2017). In DC, sponsors were present in especially bold ways. As *Fox News* (2017) reported,

McDonald's customers in Washington, D.C., can expect their next order of fries to come with a message of inclusivity. In celebration of the city's LGBTQ community, select McDonald's locations in the D.C. area will be serving large orders of french fries in rainbow-print packaging during Pride weekend. The colorful fry boxes will be available between June 9 and June 11, but only while supplies last, and only at three specific McDonald's restaurants located along this year's Capital Pride Alliance's parade route.

Inspired by the celebratory nature of the parade and eagerness of officials to collaborate, these corporations cloak their products in the symbols of LBGT history and Pride.

While a rainbow box of fries is distasteful, Pride organizers who welcome donations from corporate sponsors have more salient sins to reckon with. In 2017, Capital Pride received sponsorship from both Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the mortgage loan companies that

triggered an economic catastrophe in 2008 when they collapsed due to toxic trading, the #1 private arms dealer in the world, Lockheed Martin, and Wells Fargo, a bank with major investments in the prison-industrial complex as well as the Dakota Access pipeline (Capital Pride, 2017). Major donors to Stonewall Columbus and NYC Pride include Target and Nordstrom, both of whom use suppliers that profit from prison labor. These are companies that millions of Americans interact with daily, most without knowledge of the ethical concerns that plague their business practices. Yet for Pride to claim political power— a power it claims by reciting its history— it must be better.

The overarching impression fostered by both the media and Pride organizations themselves is that huge crowds and equally large commercial appeal is a “win” for the movement in its own right. This narrative of progress can be seen in articles across the country. In Columbus, Jessica Homan from the Department of Veteran Affairs said, “For many pride week and this parade is about celebrating acceptance and how far society has come.” (Carter, 2017). Dow (2010) disagreed with the assessment that visibility is equivalent to legitimacy. When discussing Ellen Degeneres’ coming out narrative, she wrote, “The positive visibility given to lesbian identity in Ellen is not the same as political progress— or even political awareness— and it is a mistake to confuse them” (Dow, 1990, p. 136). Just as Ellen’s visibility was not innately liberatory, the fanfare of record-breaking Pride parades is not innately political or progressive. Pride’s failure to confront the threats introduced by the Trump administration is clear evidence that the events’ success is not inherently correlated with progress. Pride officials and the the media may be quick to boast about the throngs of cheering crowds and the vast corporate

sponsorships, but this is more a symbol of neoliberal influence than a sign of unencumbered progress.

Discussion

The two themes apparent from the media analysis and bolstered by Pride organizations' official statements have vast ramifications for Pride in 2017. Pride's claim to its radical history is tempered by failure to address Trump in any meaningful way, and its triumphant claims to success as a means to progress are stymied by its nefarious corporate connections and its weakened political power. These themes also illustrate how neoliberalism functions within modern Pride parades. This first theme highlights how Pride organizers under neoliberalism co-opt radical narratives and flout them as evidence of their authenticity while simultaneously upholding the status-quo. Harvey (2005) identifies co-option of past narratives as one of the characteristics of a neoliberalized social movement, and the history of Pride has been thoroughly co-opted. Articles and official statements about Pride in 2017 are ripe with references to the history of Pride parades; many cite the 1969 riots at Stonewall Inn as their real or spiritual lineage. Where this history is deployed, it is wasted. Articles and official statements systemically fail to address police brutality, violence against trans women of color, or even the lowest possible hanging fruit— President Donald Trump. Without any political direction in the present, references to the radical past are little more than window dressings to a thoroughly co-opted event. But co-opted by whom? The second theme revealed claims about the successes of 2017 Pride parades in garnering attention, drawing crowds, and courting corporate sponsors. Here is where the influence of neoliberalism is most opaque; each of these measures of success are easily monetized and highlight the intrusion of corporate interests into Pride under neoliberalism.

As Trumpy (2008) notes, the shift to neoliberalism has left social movements primarily reliant on corporate power to promote social change (p. 280). And, as discussed in the literature, that power is extremely limiting. Pride has become little more than the carnival of consumption that Kates and Belk (2001) describe and that Campbell (2003) argues is symptomatic of the larger LGBT movement. Pride in 2017 is a politically neutered event, and that has implications in the real world. It allows a celebration that highlights empty progress while ignoring the violence ravaging large segments of the community. Not one article mentioned police brutality against LGBT people of color, nor the current spike in hate crimes, nor the rampant murders of trans women across the country. The *doxa* of the community and its media representation excludes the narratives of the most vulnerable, and leaves open the door for factions of the community to resist these discourses. If the spirit of Stonewall lives on, it is not in Pride in 2017.

CHAPTER SIX

NO JUSTICE NO PRIDE

The 2017 protests of No Justice No Pride were a major disruption to Pride parades across the country. Far from the annual displays of bigotry expressed by groups on the sidelines, queer activists were a visible force in the festivities— holding large banners, blocking parade routes, and, in at least one case, violently resisting arrest. The demonstrations also contrasted with the political hedging displayed by parade organizers in response to a clear and president threat; No Justice No Pride held an array of overly political, social, and economic demands that implicate government policy, corporate corruption, and the LGBT community itself. Analysis of the popular press articles revealed that this range of topics were echoed in articles that covered No Justice No Pride’s demonstrations; issues not mentioned in press coverage of Pride itself. Even in the case of overlap between articles that cover No Justice No Pride and those that do not, the depth of articulation of these topics was starkly different.

This chapter is divided into the two overarching themes found within the popular press coverage of No Justice No Pride’s protests: the history of Pride and Pride’s corporate sponsorship. These themes emerged from analysis of the media’s coverage of Pride in 2017, but they are also echoed in the official statement and list of demands on No Justice No Pride’s website. These two themes elevate the activism of No Justice No Pride within LGBT politics, and demonstrate that the group serves as an “out-law” faction (Sloop & Ono, 1997) within the broader community to both the discourse of official Pride organizers and, more importantly, the neoliberal influences that have neutered Pride’s political potential.

History Revisited

No Justice No Pride's focus on race and intersectionality becomes apparent when viewed contrasted with articles that lack its input. As indicated in Chapter 5, Pride's radical history was widely exploited but poorly echoed by parade organizers in 2017— especially in regard to the Stonewall Riots. While the activists of No Justice No Pride also called upon Pride's history, they did so in a way that contextualized those early struggles for the modern community. In the case of Stonewall, No Justice No Pride emphasized the riot's connection to police brutality against marginalized groups. *NBC News* (2017) quoted an activist from No Justice No Pride who recalled this history while protesting NYPD's presence at NYC Pride, "We can't say the police are our friends when this started with Stonewall, which was a riot of resistance to police harassment." While this account of Stonewall is rather mild, it is still far more than the hollow history presented by the Pride organizations themselves who allow police to march in parades in uniform. Grinberg (2017) of *CNN* reported an even more detailed history of Stonewall, stating, "Indeed, Pride originated 48 years ago in the wake of the 1969 Stonewall riots, a series of uprisings by women of color from the LGBTQ community over the Inn's raid. The significance of Pride's origins makes it the ideal staging ground for today's protests within the LGBTQ community." As Moskowitz (2017) of *VICE News* explains, "controversies over the inclusion of police and other state representatives have taken center stage at...pride celebrations." The centering of police brutality was far from a forgone conclusion; the history and current state of violence against minority groups is rampant and unrepentant. While Pride organizations seemed happy to welcome police presence in and surrounding the parades, No Justice No Pride

demonstrated the continued violence of the police state with their own bodies. In Columbus, Ohio, activists were physically removed from their protest— resulting in multiple injuries and at least one broken limb (Woods, 2017). These actions are in line with the history of the state under neoliberalism, in which military and police are called upon to maintain the status quo both domestically and via international interventions (Harvey, 2005). Demonstrating such outbreaks of violence in the face of peaceful protest also in line with a long history of radical tactics on the part of No Justice No Pride (Bowers, Ochs, Jensen, & Schulz, 2010).

By demonstrating at the event and drawing media attention to the intersection of police brutality and LGBT history, No Justice No Pride invited popular press coverage of issues far beyond the norm of Pride reporting. But No Justice No Pride did not control the entire narrative within these reports. Grinberg (2017) of *CNN* framed the arrests of 12 protesters in New York City as an act of Free Speech, and continued to cite a NYC spokesperson who stated it was “impossible to run an event of Pride's size without police presence. Parade organizers recognize that police violence is a ‘major issue’ in the United States, he said. They're trying to address it through a ‘good working relationship’ with the NYPD” (p. 2). *NBC News* (2017) devoted a shocking amount of space for the police officers who marched in Pride to rebuttal the claims activists made against them:

NBC Out reached out to the Gay Officers Action League (GOAL NY), which participates in the New York City Pride March. The group is celebrating its 35th anniversary this year. GOAL NY President Brian Downey told NBC Out, "It's important that everybody has a voice and a seat at the table," and he said his group's mission is to help bridge the divide. "We weren't just given the right to participate (in the NYC Pride

March) in uniform. The right to participate in uniform was the result of a federal lawsuit we brought against the NYPD," Downey said. In a short documentary about GOAL NY, officers are shown marching in an early gay pride parade without their uniforms. "Right after I marched in the first gay pride parade," retired NYPD captain Jay Rivera said in the documentary, "I came back and my locker was vandalized." Ever since, GOAL NY has been fighting to combat homophobia and transphobia within the police department. Downey said that protesters "baited and antagonized" officers marching with GOAL NY, but he doesn't think the celebratory mood of the parade was dampened. "I respect the issues that many people presented," Downey said. "I believe that there is still a certain degree of divide and a certain amount of distrust from people in the LGBTQ community with the justice system. My organization has been working on that divide for 35 years.

While this article provided a police spokesman much more space than it offered No Justice No Pride activists, it still gave space to a nuanced and deeply important debate that was not present at all in articles devoid of No Justice No Pride's influence. The activism of No Justice No Pride made space for journalists to discuss issues related to the intersection of race, gender, and sexuality in a space that is dominated largely by a colorful corporate carnival of consumption disinclined to have difficult conversations.

The racial justice advocated by No Justice No Pride extends far beyond police brutality, and Stonewall and Pride's racial history were referenced in opposition to to capitalism as a whole and to Donald Trump specifically. When discussing police presence at Pride, one member of No Justice No Pride stated, "We stand against any police presence in Pride, since police have never stood with us. The notion that police serve all people is a myth - they serve the white upper class

and protect private property above all else” (NBC News, 2017). This co-mingling of racial and economic justice is distinct but complimentary to earlier statements against police brutality, and demonstrates how far-reaching the ideological gap between Pride organizers and No Justice No Pride truly is. No Justice No Pride explicitly cites the radical history of queer activism in reference to Trump on their 2017 official statement, stating, “Even in the current political moment – with the Trump Administration pursuing anti-immigrant, anti-trans, anti-LGBTQ2S, anti-women, anti-Muslim, anti-poor, and White supremacist policies – Capital Pride insists on continuing business as usual, ignoring the most marginalized members of our community. WE MUST FIGHT BACK and bring pride back to it’s roots [sic].” Tying an intersectional and political message to queer history and the modern political threats that stand before it, No Justice No Pride could not be more distinct from the hesitant, opaque response to Trump of official parade organizers. No Justice No Pride may draw from the same history as Pride organizers, but instead of squandering it, the activists use the past to link current grievances to bygone battles.

The explicitly political, anti-Trump, anti-police, anti-capitalist perspective of No Justice No Pride is incompatible and antithetical with neoliberal ideology. No Justice No Pride does not offer individualistic alternatives to the public; they aren’t interested in creating an “Alternative Pride” people can choose to attend. No Justice No Pride does not offer an apolitical message; it directly responds to federal legislation and governmental policies of discrimination, yes, but also violence and domination. No Justice No Pride does not offer a capitalistic remedy; the police cannot sponsor the movement because the movement is against sponsorship *and* the police. No Justice No Pride cannot be co-opted and turned into “friendlier” LGBT movement; that LGBT movement already exists, and No Justice No Pride is laying in the streets to protest it. The theme

of history is entwined in the logical of No Justice No Pride, and No Justice No Pride seems determined to course-correct the mistakes of Prides past: the admission of police, the jockeying for corporate approval, the soft approach to Donald Trump. No Justice No Pride disrupts these neoliberal niceties with its own, more-radical narrative; drawing from the past and forging a more fierce future.

Corporate Critique

The activism of No Justice No Pride is highly critical of the corporations that sponsor Pride parades. Their official website contains explicit demands regarding corporate sponsorship in Pride, including “barring all industries that profit from war, detention and incarceration, environmental destruction, evictions, community displacement and Israel's oppression of Palestinians from participation” and “restricting all corporate branding and signage” (Our Demands, 2017). Grinsberg (2017) of CNN echoed this language; discussing “police shootings, violence against transgender women of color, mass deportations, corporate sponsorship of Pride” (p. 1). These larger topics were made more specific by some activists. O’hara (2017) of *NBC News* explicitly mentioned Wells Fargo in relation to the Dakota Access Pipeline and the destruction of Cherokee land. The article quotes Jen Deerinwater, an activist and member of the Cherokee Nation, when she commented that Wells Fargo is “actively causing harm to our community members.” Wells Fargo is a popular target of No Justice No Pride’s ire, along with Lockheed Martin, BAE Systems, Leidos, Northrop Grumman, and any other defense contractors. Wells Fargo even receives its own bulletpoint on No Justice No Pride’s list of demands. The group advises Pride organizers to “immediately cut ties with Wells Fargo and defense contractors and donate any and all funds from them to local community based organizations that support

queer, trans, two-spirit and Muslim communities” (Our Demands, 2017). These demands were picked up by journalists at various levels; most articles pinpoint a single issue (e.g. police brutality, indigenous lands, trans rights) to make the protest more manageable. Greene (2017) of *USA Today* went as far as to list the demands of the protestors, although this list is much briefer than the full document found on the official No Justice No Pride website. Greene (2017) lists placing trans women of color and indigenous people in decision-making roles, ending the endorsement of law enforcement agencies, and barring corporations that have a negative impact on the “LGBT+” community.

While a major part of No Justice No Pride’s platform involves opposition to corporate sponsorship of Pride, media coverage of that opposition is less prominent in the popular press than issues of police brutality or even racial justice more broadly. Perhaps this is because police violence continues to be a major threat beyond the LGBT community and thus merits more coverage by mainstream sources. Or perhaps the arrests of several members of No Justice No Pride brought the issue to the forefront. It is also possible, and I think likely, that the media simply does not know how to report on such a critique. The issues raised by No Justice No Pride go beyond one wrongdoing by one corporation— although some articles chose to frame it in this way— but rather an opposition to corporate influence full stop. In a neoliberal landscape in which success equals having massive, record-breaking turnouts and rich and complaint corporate sponsors, the demands leveled by No Justice No Pride are extreme and counter-productive. To compensate, the articles above either hide No Justice No Pride’s opposition to corporate sponsors in a list of grievances without any further articulation or simply highlight a single example (i.e.

Wells Fargo) as if it were representative of the whole. No Justice No Pride presents a radically anti-corporate message that is in direct opposition to neoliberal ideology and influence in Pride.

Discussion

On the surface, the themes found in articles discussing No Justice No Pride and those that are exclusively focused on the official Pride parades are very similar. Both discuss the history of Pride, including Stonewall and early activism, and both talk about the corporate sponsorship of the events. However, articles that focus on No Justice No Pride approach these themes radically different manner than their peers. The Stonewall Riot is not just some far-flung incident that launched the modern LGBT rights movement; it is contextualized by discussions about the Trump Administration and police violence against minority members and the intersections of identity. Corporate sponsorships are not a golden stamp of approval given by benevolent corporations that are seeking queer goodwill; they are complicity in a system that oppresses minority members ranging from young black men to indigenous peoples. The differing approaches between No Justice No Pride and the official Pride organizers is not incidental; it is a difference rooted in opposing responses to neoliberalism. As discussed in the last chapter, Pride has become a highly neoliberalized event— one that exhibits all four of the traits of identified by Harvey (2005). Pride has become a hyper-individualistic spectacle of capitalistic co-option so concerned with its own popularity that it is essentially apolitical. No Justice No Pride is in direct opposition to each of these characteristics of Pride, although its motives are distinct from those of Harvey (2005) and Brown (2015).

Much of the political will behind No Justice No Pride stems from its embrace of intersectionality. In its official statement (2017), the organization proudly states, “Our members

are black, brown, queer, trans, gender nonconforming, bisexual, indigenous, two-spirit, formerly incarcerated, disabled, white allies and together we recognize that there can be no pride for some of us without liberation for all of us.” The racial politics of No Justice No Pride seeps into nearly every issue it raises against Pride in 2017, and is thus the focus of the majority of news articles covering the protests. *CNN* quotes an activist from No Justice No Pride who states the racial dimension of the group’s work explicitly, saying, "There's a broad concern among LGBTQ folks, especially people of color, that this movement that claims victory around marriage equality has very much left behind those of us who still experience marginalization” (Grinberg, 2017).

No Justice No Pride offers a counter-narrative to the dominate discourse surrounding Pride.

Media coverage of No Justice No Pride is not all positive nor free from neoliberal influence—journalists go out of their way to defend police and downplay opposition to corporate sponsors. However, No Justice No Pride demonstrates an ability to spark conversations and uncover controversies that would otherwise stay silenced. Rather than seeing a wildly successful party with a long history and fabulous corporate sponsorships, NJNP reveals a hollowed-out, white-washed carnival of consumption with ties to some of today’s most pressing atrocities.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Across the country, Pride in 2017 was defined by two separate but interrelated forces: Donald Trump's presidency and the activism of No Justice No Pride. These events coalesced into a year that was rife with tension and ripe for academic investigation; revealing the underlying strains that have been present in the LGBT community since its beginning. Media coverage of Pride in 2017 reported these tensions while reflecting its own biases toward the ideological influences at play; namely that of neoliberalism. To clarify and condense these many different threads about many different organizations from many different sources, I divided my analysis into two chapters. The first examined the themes of history and commercial appeal found in popular press coverage of Pride in 2017. In Chapter 4, media reports and parade organizers frame Pride as being rooted in the opaque activism of Stonewall and wildly successful in its wooing of an audience and corporate sponsors. In Chapter 5, the focus is put on No Justice No Pride and its activism. Through news articles and its own official website, the queer activist group re-politicizes both the history and the commercial appeal of Pride, and argues that Pride is complicit in harming minorities and white-washing the modern LGBT movement. This analysis of both Pride and No Justice No Pride fits within the theoretical construct of neoliberalism, which Harvey (2005) and Brown (2015) argue is the hegemonic economic ideology of the past several decades.

Here, I return to the three research questions I posed in Chapter 1 and provide answers based on my analysis. First, how do Pride organizations in 2017 manage the tensions between the political and celebratory goals of their activism? Second, how do the demands and methods

of No Justice No Pride align with scholarly critiques of neoliberalism? And finally, how does the popular coverage of tensions between Pride organizations and No Justice No Pride expose, undermine, or privilege neoliberal ideology within the queer rights movement?

Main Findings

Pride organizations in 2017 managed the tensions between a somber political moment and a celebratory event by referencing the parades' radical history while emphasizing their own current commercial success. Pride organizers and media organizations took pains to highlight the long, storied history of Pride; invocations of Stonewall were particularly prominent in the articles and official statements of 2017. Yet this history rang hollow as Pride organizers failed to stand strong against the moment's greatest foe: the Trump Administration. Signs and slogans against Trump may have been commonplace for those marching alongside Starbucks baristas and bank logos, but across the country, Pride organizers failed to mention Trump or his policies directly in a single official statement. Modifications for the "political climate" of 2017 did cause a few cancelled brunches and guest speakers, but remained a far cry from any sort of condemnation or collective action.

Instead, Pride organizers and media coverage in 2017 touted the commercial appeal of the festivities and embraced corporate sponsorships. Official Pride statements stressed the record-breaking crowd sizes of their parades; the growing attendance symbolizing the success of the LGBT movement. Journalists often aided this perception by juxtaposing the longevity and history of Pride with its current success in attracting large crowds. Pride organizers also took pains to extoll the generosity of their many corporate contributors— highlighting both the success of the parades in attracting sponsorships from national brands and the benevolence and

progressivism of the brands themselves. In doing so, Pride organizers and media sympathizers have replaced the historic emphasis on political action with pandering to corporate allies and crowded throngs of spectators. Pride organizers have transformed the march into a spectacle of consumption that downplays political realities to soothe the shareholders of corporate sponsors. This is exactly the shift Funke and Wolfson (2017) predict in the wake of neoliberalism: an over-reliance on corporate benevolence in place of direct democratic action.

While Pride has become a neoliberal spectacle, the demands and methods of No Justice No Pride are centered on the scholarly critiques of neoliberal social movements. The activists' emphasis on racial and trans inclusivity is not innately in opposition to neoliberal ideology; even corporate corruption could be sought after in a neoliberal way. It is No Justice No Pride's methods that make it fundamentally opposed to neoliberal logics. Like Pride organizers, No Justice No Pride evokes Pride's history, but does so in a way that politicizes notions of private property and police purity that exist at the heart of neoliberalism. Also like Pride, No Justice No Pride is eager to point to corporate sponsorships, but does so through a critical lens that paints corporations as antithetical to Pride's supposed mission. Through these two contexts, No Justice No Pride disavows the four tenants of neoliberal ideology: apoliticism, individualism, capitalism, and co-option. Harvey (2005) argues that social movements under neoliberalism function apolitically because they rely on corporate partnerships and "cultural shifts" rather than democratic action to achieve their goals. No Justice No Pride eschews this model— explicitly targeting the Trump Administration's immigration policies, the justice system's handling of police brutality, and the efforts of state legislators regarding trans bathroom rights. Neoliberal social movements also rely individualistic action to achieve their purposes (Harvey, 2005). No

Justice No Pride insists on collective action in the form of systemic change. No Justice No Pride does not attempt to get individual Pride participants to boycott Wells Fargo or stop purchasing Rainbow Fries; its demands seek changes to the organizational structure and behavior of the organizations that put on Pride. The demands No Justice No Pride places on these organizations are also antithetical to neoliberalism; they confront capitalism head-on. Rather than simply point to instances of corporate corruption, which can serve as a tool of “self correction” under neoliberal logic, No Justice No Pride takes a more holistic and combative approach. Their arguments may pinpoint certain corporations as the worst offenders, but the goal of No Justice No Pride is to eliminate corporate involvement in Pride altogether. The combination of these approaches to activism make the current iteration of No Justice No Pride incapable of being co-opted by neoliberal ideology.

The popular press coverage of the tensions between Pride organizations and No Justice No Pride privileges neoliberal influences within modern Pride and undermines the radical message of No Justice No Pride’s activism. Many news articles ignored No Justice No Pride altogether; preferring to report on the massive crowds and the happy, colorful floats rather than the activists being arrested, injured, and carried away by the very police forces they were protesting. These journalists were also quick to sanitize the history of radical queer activism at Stonewall and link it to the commercial success of Pride in 2017. Over and over again, the record breaking numbers were touted as equivalent to the success of the movement, while the bleak political realities of LGBT peoples in the United States and around the world were ignored or “honored” with a missing brunch and a guest speaker. Even the articles that chose to cover the protests of No Justice No Pride revealed their bias against the movement. Some journalists

displayed this bias by giving opposing sources more space to state their disagreements. In one article, No Justice No Pride activists were represented by a single quotation while representatives of the police presence at Pride received nearly two paragraphs (*NBC News*, 2017). Some downplayed the nature of No Justice No Pride's grievances by highlighting one particular example of the wrongdoings of a particular corporation. Others directly made counter-claims against No Justice No Pride— particularly in defense of the corporations perceived as being under attack for their liberal credentials. Yet even still, the articles that featured accounts and quotes about No Justice No Pride's activism were forced to report on the tensions that enveloped Pride in 2017. While imperfect, these reports show the success of No Justice No Pride in gaining attention through radical means and fearless tactics.

The New Divide

The LGBT community is no stranger to division. Political movements are complicated, unwieldy beasts, and a community composed of so many disparate identities will always struggle to be represented as a monolith. From the very beginning, queer activists and individuals have argued for and against different methods of liberation, visibility, and living. The early Mattachine Society operated primarily in the shadows; beginning as a product of radical Marxists disposed by more moderate peers. With the advent of the Stonewall Riots, such activism gave way to more confrontational approaches. Trans people of color took the fight to the streets; violently resisting the constant harassment of the NYPD with bricks and fists. Those privileged enough to combat discrimination at the highest echelons were usurped by a new, radically visionary movement that demanded an end to oppression loudly and in the streets. Pride marches were the ultimate symbol of this new era— an intimidating display of force by a group who had once been easily ignored.

Yet divisions persisted. With the advent of the AIDS crisis, queer activists were torn between those pleading with an uncaring Reagan Administration by presenting a “respectable” image of the community and those who felt respectability politics had left them behind. Neoliberal ideology emerged as an advantageous alternative to more radical ideals of activism. In line with the New Left, LGBT leaders began reaching out towards corporations for their support just as corporations began seeing white, affluent gays and lesbians as a potentially profitable market. While the government refused to act to protect even the most basic rights of LGBT people, corporations have presented themselves as benevolent actors of progressive politics. It is little wonder that arguably the most successful breakthrough of the Gay Rights movement has been marriage equality— a freedom that benefits multiple industries while providing the perception of legitimacy. For the Will Trumans of the world, the cultural cache gained by this alliance has enhanced their social and economic prestige while distancing them from the plight of trans people and people of color. The movement privileged the goals of the white and affluent members of the community, and has largely ignored the pressing needs of the vulnerable.

No Justice No Pride is far from the first to resist the current direction of the LGBT community. Many minority leaders have denounced the white-washing of queer representation, and trans people of color are constantly fighting for visibility within the movement. Yet No Justice No Pride stands apart from these important but narrow critiques. With their long list of grievances, the activists of No Justice No Pride contest more than just the toxic symptoms of a movement pandering to corporate interests; they attack the root of the problem. While the organization has not, to my knowledge, used the word “neoliberalism” to describe its ideological opponent, No Justice No Pride’s demands demonstrate a deep understanding of neoliberalism’s

corrupting influences. Each of Harvey's (2005) four characteristics of a neoliberal social movement is present in modern Pride, and No Justice No Pride responds to each of these characteristics with condemnation. No Justice No Pride rejects the apolitical nature of movements under neoliberalism by explicitly targeting Trump and by widening the political discourse surrounding LGBT issues. No Justice No Pride resists the individualistic nature of neoliberal logics by insisting on systemic changes to Pride rather than individual actions. No Justice No Pride rejects any capitalist tendencies by calling for the banning of all corporate influence on Pride, and, finally, resists co-opting by rejecting the possibility of corporate reform as a way to regain the trust of the people. The activism of No Justice No Pride serves as a counter-public to the mainstream Pride movement; providing a potent voice for those ignored and further marginalized by Pride organizations and media sympathizers.

Toward the Future

2017 proved to be a turbulent year for the LGBT community. The election of Donald Trump and its accompanying conservative revival has created a desperate need for a politically savvy, radically diverse queer movement. Unfortunately, Pride has shown itself to be unfit for the task. While No Justice No Pride activists risked their freedom and safety to protest injustice, official Pride organizers remained unmoved to engage the political realities of the time. In Columbus, Ohio, where four No Justice No Pride activists were taken to trial for disrupting the parade and resisting arrest, organizers from Stonewall Columbus testified in court against their queer brethren (Woods, 2017). On the day before the trial, 75 activists from several organizations protested in the streets of the city. The four activists, dubbed the #BlackPride4, were convicted of six of the eight charges against them.

Still, change may come. Spurred by the #BlackPride4 controversy, the executive director of Stonewall Columbus announced she would be stepping down from the position. Pride organizations around the country may take similar steps to prevent further protests and bad PR. Much of the potential impact of No Justice No Pride is yet to be felt. Stewart, Smith, and Denton (2012) explain that this type of internal struggle is common when social movements have acquiesced to assimilation. These competing discourses and groups within a single social movement may revitalize a movement that is in decline, or it may bring about its destruction. The future of the LGBT movement and its various factions is not entirely clear. As this project has demonstrated, the doxastic discourse of the queer community is heavily influenced by neoliberal logics. While No Justice No Pride serves as a resistance towards that dominate narrative, it is unclear how successful it can be given the larger social *doxa* of a neoliberal state. Pride may be a microcosm of the community, but it is not the complete picture.

Further research on neoliberalism within the broader LGBT movement is needed. The five cities I analyzed in my analysis do not represent the entire nation or the global LGBT community; they are simply the parades where No Justice No Pride's activism was most present. In 2017, Las Angeles Pride transformed itself into the #ResistMarch, which warrants its own research analysis. This study is also mediated through the news media— a perspective which yields its own insights and limits others. But the tensions found in Pride in 2017 will continue as long as Pride subscribes to the neoliberal logic of social movements. In Columbus and elsewhere, new queer activists groups such as Black Queer & Intersectional Columbus (BQIC) are continuing the activism began by No Justice No Pride. It is unclear if these new organizations will maintain the same focus, or if they will alter or usurp the message of No Justice No Pride.

What remains clear is that the current iteration of LGBT Pride will continue to be changed and challenged, just as it has throughout the movement's history.

Final Thoughts

Neoliberalism is an ideology that has infected the thinking of the modern world. It is ubiquitous and all-encompassing; a political, economic, and social philosophy that drives the logic of tyrants and democracies, grocery workers and baristas. Its influence on social movements is hardly surprising, but it is disheartening. Social movements are the raw manifestations of conscious collective action; the purest counter-publics conceivable. The ideological infiltration of these movements by neoliberalism demonstrates the hegemonic power neoliberalism wields. Perhaps Pride was especially susceptible to its charms. For much of its history, Pride has been a boisterous celebration of the community's campy creativity. Such an event makes a fabulous Instagram post, so of course corporations came to exploit it with rainbow fries and branded merchandise. Perhaps queerness itself is especially susceptible to co-option. After all, queer people are individualistic by default; they are born into a heterosexual society and forced to swim upstream, often in isolation. Yet queer people also have more reasons to resist neoliberalism than the heterosexual majority. The unattributed appropriation of queer culture is far from new, but it has exploded with the advent of neoliberalism. Respectability politics and corporate pandering has white-washed a community that is unendingly diverse and primarily non-white. And in contrast to the modern view of the affluent cosmopolitan homosexual, most LGBT Americans are economically impoverished and socially oppressed. Neoliberalism's hostility toward social welfare and economic safeguards disproportionately harms queer individuals. An LGBT movement that fails to address neoliberal politics fundamentally

fails the community that it purports to serve. No Justice No Pride has arisen to address these discrepancies and to set the LGBT rights movement right. Godspeed, rebels.

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