



'Rural Roots'- More Than Just a Metaphor: The Lived Experience of  
Homosexual Migration from a Rural to an Urban Setting

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**ABSTRACT**

Advancing upon previous research, this study aims to develop knowledge upon the shaping of identity in homosexuals through the experience of rural to urban migration. Exploring theories of homosexual identity (Troiden, 1988), philosophy of space/place (Casey, 1993) and the sexual being (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) this study allows for an insight into the effects on identity due to homosexual migration. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was the chosen methodology for an interpretation of findings amongst six homosexual participants, who all moved to an urban setting from a rural background. Straying away from previous research around the determinants of homosexual migration, this study concentrates on the embodiment of 'rurality' on a homosexual identity and the effect of the lived experience. The analysis demonstrated how identity is never 'finalised' due to constantly being built upon however; it did find that 'rurality' does have a rooted effect upon identity. Three emergent themes from the analysis helped come to this conclusion; a defence against internalised homonegativity, the organisation of the sexual self and the search for a role model.

<b>KEY WORDS:</b>	<b>IDENTITY</b>	<b>HOMOSEXUALITY</b>	<b>MIGRATION</b>	<b>URBAN</b>	<b>RURAL</b>
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## **Introduction**

“When a place gets crowded enough to require identities, social collapse is not far away. It is time to go elsewhere.” (Heinlein, 1973 as cited by Zubrin, 2008:1)

## **Homosexual Migration Research**

Historical paradigms of rejected homosexual identities in specific countries (Foucault, 1986) highlight the reasons behind the exclusion of minority groups such as homosexuality. More modern approaches look at the inclusion and how this is achieved. The ‘great gay migration’, a term used by Weston (1995:255) is the ‘riding of the wave’ from a rural to an urban setting in which sexual identity becomes the ‘basis for community’. Migration of rural homosexuals to urban areas is increasingly popular and even more ‘salient in shaping how gay and lesbian identities are constituted’, (Kazyak, 2010: 83). Constructions of sexualised spaces (Bell and Binnie, 2004) have attempted this but merely concentrated on urban spaces and ‘gay ghettos’ (Sibalis, 2004). Instead, this phenomenological approach aims to gain insight into the embodied *experience* of the rural migrant and the formation around identity.

Previous research has predominant claims that rural areas are shadowed with a cloud of heterosexism, which causes homosexuals to become displaced. Rural areas are reported to be more rigid in their beliefs to increase rural survival and therefore, condemn any sexuality that prevents reproduction (Little, 1987). Hillier et al (1999) stated rural young women lacked a sense of embodied sexuality due to, what Longhurst (1997:487) describes as, a scarring by ‘heterosexist

institutional regimes'. Little and Leyshon (2003) excuse this as an 'embodied rurality' where rurality is much deeper than the central performance the body displays. However, this has not yet been applied to 'non-normalised minority sexual groups' (Poon and Saewyc, 2009). Is this found in homosexuality despite the urban reality encouraging their sexuality? A wide scope of scholar has attempted to concentrate on homosexual migration and determinants behind it but unfortunately has missed any connection to rurality or identity formation and instead construed a stigma of anonymity upon the reasons behind it (Kang et al, 2013).

The homosexual migration is often seen as an escape from rural 'family pressures' (Smith 2012:93) and allows a movement to urban liberation as a movement from 'repression to freedom' (Grewal and Kaplan 2001:670). Supporting this, Yue (2008) states migration purely happens due to the homosexual not fitting into the normalised rural hybrid and so the individual longs for anonymity. The desire for 'anonymity' has dominated homosexual studies and is cumbersome behind homosexual migration (Redlin and Annes, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kirkey and Forsyth, 2001). D'Augelli and Hart, (1987) state this is due to feelings of isolation within their rural backgrounds. Cass (1979) relates this as a process of 'identification tolerance' where the individual seeks out other homosexuals to prevent feelings of alienation. However, these studies suggest homosexuals seek 'invisibility' rather than simply searching for people with similar interests. Proposed researchers convey a false perception of migration as a total conversion of one's identity and fail to connect to any embodiment at all.

Albeit negative, one identity effect studied within rural homosexuals is that of 'internalised homonegativity'. This refers to a homosexual individual holding negative thoughts and feelings towards themselves as a result of their rural societal settings (Berg et al, 2012). This supports the idea of a deep seated effect upon individual's identity formation through an experience, echoing the 'outwardly expression of an internal homosexual orientation' (Unks, 1995:18). However, it has not yet been re-evaluated in migration to an urban setting.

Knopp (2004) deems migration as the queer's quest for an identity within place and space, suggesting homosexual individuals do not have an identity of any kind before they move. This would disregard the concept of an embodied rurality and could suggest a total conversion in identity is enabled within homosexual migration. Academics have not yet managed to focus upon the philosophical or transferral aspects of 'space', such as rural or urban settings, and 'place' upon sexual identity.

### **Space and Place**

Echoing the geography around embodied sexuality and body/mind dualism (Rose, 1993), space and place could be seen to have a similar effect. Rural 'spaces' are essential for rural survival in that they provide the scaffolds to ground an identity. However, spaces are nothing without the personalised places that are set amongst it, for a space without place is worthy to no one. Without 'identity place', a space is merely an empty abyss. Following from the works of Casey (1993), the idea of a 'place' somewhat echoes that of a transferable 'identity', it suggests everyone moves until they have their own place in the world to identify themselves by. But what happens when the space is not suitable for the sexual being?

Phenomenologist Merleau-Ponty (1962:154) claims a 'being' begins through the format of love or desire and due to this we are instantly instilled with a

'constant aim... to elucidate the primary function whereby we bring into existence... take a hold upon, space, the object...and to describe the body as the place where this appropriation occurs'.

From this sense of 'being', a further movement, personalised to the individual is possible. Contrasting this, Yi-Fu (1977) argues place is a 'pause' where identity is finalised ignoring the possibility of a fluid place which has 'great intimations of mobility and agility' (Massey 1994:1). Furthermore, Skeggs et al (2004:1848) states 'identification is transitory, it moves between characters rather than being projected onto a singular being' suggesting identification is a discovery through social processes. In regards to this research, 'place' is viewed as an aromatic metaphor that humans shape and transfer *around* personal demographics, which allows individuals to have a sense of 'being' and identity. Loy (2010)'s argument of a renegotiation of a 'dual identity' will be adopted and developed in regards to 'space' and 'place'.

### **The Importance of Sexual Identity**

Theorists have solely concentrated on reductionist, staged models as a construct of homosexuality. Troiden's (1988) 'identity formation model', concludes that homosexual identities are different as they are only established through a sequential process (identity confusion, sensitization, identity assumption, commitment) where the individual passes through stages and eventually consciously identifies themselves, by their sexuality within their

'place'. Many theorists reduce homosexuals to a sequential system for identity formation but there is yet to be a fluid and dynamic theory contributed. Staged models are helpful but are narrow in that they reduce homosexuals to constantly having to surpass stages in a hierarchical stance, even unconsciously. Merleau-Ponty (1962:141) argues sexuality is more a process

'of taking root in different settings, of establishing himself through different experiences, of gaining structures of conduct'.

Although Merleau-Ponty was often referring to heterosexual individuals, this argument is essential for an understanding of the homosexual 'existential being' as embodied to a space (Loy, 2010).

Bech (1997:152) offers a more combined theory and suggests a homosexual's role and identity are 'mutually reproductive' in constructing an identity within an environment, rather than the stages previously mentioned. A 'meaningful fusion' with identity is seen to be vital to prevent affirmations within social constructs, such as a deprivation of positive models (Harrison 2003:108). Several theories emphasise the importance of accepting and fully recognising one's self with an identity but fails to connect this to a basis or how this is achieved. This also raises issues to a conflict within a homosexual, in that they have two selves; the 'urban self' they *want* to be and the 'rural self' they *have* to be.

Previous gay and lesbian studies have been quick to concentrate on the homosexual 'conversion' of values, attitudes and behaviours (Tajon, 2009) rather than the possibility of identity being developed, not changed. Farinelli (2003:11) states 'place' 'cannot be exchanged with any other, without everything

changing'. This disregards the idea that 'gendered identities are not given but emerge in practice... as active processes through... the use of space' (Andrews 2009: 167). Moreover, both arguments ignore the possibility of an embedded connection to their hometown beliefs.

### **The Danger of an Unrecognised Identity**

If a 'meaningful fusion' is not reached, Casey (1993) states an 'implacement' is suffered where individuals feel terror and homelessness due to not belonging to a place. This 'implacement' leaves the individual without a cause for existence or a sense of 'being', meaning they must find another way to construct their identity. This is further support for the reasons behind migration but disregards the aspect of a rural homosexual ever returning. Following on from this, Morris (1999:39) states issues; such as those felt by homosexuals, are not with the space but are 'how the body and place encompass one another in a complex, living interplay' stating that migration may not help the individual find their place. An assumption that location is shaping of an identity, suggests an embodied 'rurality' is a basis for identity to flourish (Carter, 1993).

Van Sluytman et al (2013:232) suggest homosexuals 'scan existing networks and communities for potential exchanges and resources' suggesting some homosexuals feel ambivalence about their migration. This could suggest despite migration, a rural upbringing is finitely instilled into a rural homosexual's identity. Researchers have yet to analyse any embodiment of rural lives and instead have construed urban life as the pinnacle of a homosexual identity. This further assumes that identity has a 'peak' completely disregarding the possibilities of



identity being a continuously developmental aspect. There is yet to be a study that connects the determinants to an embodied rural self. Moreover, modern research positioned within a liberal ideology is needed as current research stems from assumptions, therefore it is a possibility that homosexual victimisation is no longer a determinant for migrating. The vast majority of studies have failed to notice an adaption of identity upon their existing rural identity. Many researchers are entangled in their own roots and have been quick to make assumptions around the determinants of migration and identity formation. Rather than being solely accepting of previous research, this analysis attempts to cut through old wood and plant new seedlings in regards to homosexual migration research and identity as a growth rather than a complete change. This study aims to argue migration is not the making of the homosexual identity; it is simply an additive experience to transfer back to their hometowns. Working on the ideas that 'one's publicly proclaimed identity does not always match one's self-perception' (Hemmings, 2002:91) a combined approach of phenomenology, identity and pragmatics will allow for a thorough study into homosexual identities, how they are shaped and how they are transferred through migration.

### **Research Aims**

This research takes a unique stance by viewing sexuality and place as an *integrated* phenomenon where the sexuality 'is the object' and the place is the 'sense of experience' (Battersby, 1998:1). In agreement with Neill (2009), to say identity is a cultural result would be to 'state truism', instead this analysis aims to:

- Evaluate previous ideas of homosexual migration (Redlin and Annes, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kirkey and Forsyth, 2001).
- Analyse the lived experience of migration from a rural to an urban setting (Kazyak, 2010).
- Create an explanation combining migration and embodied rurality (Little and Leyshon, 2003).

## **Method**

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is an integrative method that creates an understanding between the 'lived body' and the 'environment' (Moran and Mooney, 2002:212). This ontological method is a useful approach to gain insight into the world of another and especially for sensitive subjects such as 'non-normative' sexualities (homosexuality). McWhorter (2010:48) concludes sexuality is 'essentially epistemological' as it serves as an object of knowledge and a locus of truth' further strengthening the argument for IPA as it uses their 'knowledge' to gain insight. Therefore, as Smith et al (2009:28) states "to understand any given part, you must look to the whole; to understand the whole, you look to the parts". Thus, this research is suitable for exploration of the subjective experiences in the homosexual 'place' in regards to the 'space' and the formations of identity underlying it.

Using inspiration from other gay and lesbian researchers (Lebolt, 1999; Murray and Rhodes; 2005) this research adopted the same format and use of IPA as a further explanatory method into homosexuality as an experience. IPA was

adopted, as “it makes no sense to think of the world as objects and subjects as separate from our experience of it” (Willig, 2008:52). Rather than acting as a ‘simple window on the mind’ (Abell & Stoke, 2001 as cited by Giovanoni, 2012) IPA allows for an insight into ‘the manifold layers of the experience of objectivity as it emerges at the heart of subjectivity’ (Moran and Mooney, 2002:2). The ‘presenting’ of one’s self is particularly important as the manifestation allows for an extensive and incorporative view of the person as a whole. Bogdan and Taylor (1975:14) argue humans are constantly in ‘a process of interpretation and definition as they move from one situation to another’ which is only accessible through people’s interpretations, descriptions and explanations of it. The phenomenologist ‘acts as an intermediary between any predisposition to act and the action itself’. In a form of epoche, IPA allows a shutting out of the world to perceive the phenomena in all its ‘totality’. IPA is beneficial to research as it ‘brackets out the world and presuppositions to identify the data in pure form’, which enables an equal stance to be adopted upon the phenomena (Moustakas, 1994:34). IPA goes beyond the participant’s conceptions and is inductive in that it allows ‘the unanticipated to emerge’ (Grigoriou, 2004:8).

Other qualitative approaches were unsuitable for the aims of this research as they argue that concepts such as identity ‘become something people do rather than something people have or are’ (Willig, 2008:97). By demeaning homosexuality to a verb, it implies there is a choice as whether to ‘do’ homosexuality or not when this is not the case. Taking on an understanding that homosexual individuals tend to avoid talking about their sexuality, this approach allows for a non-invasive and empathetic manner towards their experiences. Stein and Plummer (1996:130) claim ‘empirical studies have tended to be

unreflective about the nature of sexuality as a social category'. Therefore, this research aims to show that space is a metaphorical oven that enables all the aspects of a homosexual's self and place, to rise together and create a moulded individual.

### The Researcher

The researcher is a heterosexual, 20 year old female with a particular interest within the psychological works of geographical location and the self. With a keen interest amongst philosophy and psychology these often overlap in the works of the researcher to create a unique and unified understanding of phenomenas such as identity.

### Materials/Ethics

A full ethics forms in regards to the BPS guidelines was approved (Appendix 2). A consent form was completed by all six individuals (Appendix 4) that took part within the study and after was given a debrief sheet (Appendix 5) in case they needed any help after talking about their sensitive issues as well as a participant information sheet (Appendix 6). A dictaphone was used to record all interviews for transcribing to be applied (Appendix 7, 8).

### Data Collection

Opportunity sampling was the chosen selection for this research as participants must feel comfortable with talking about their sexuality and therefore, would only volunteer if this was the case. An online advert was posted on various 'LGBT' sites inviting participants to volunteer to take part with the study. Six adult participants responded to the advert, three of which were male and three

female. All respondents participated in a 30 minute, face-to-face interview that were tape-recorded and then transcribed.

Semi-structured interviews were used in order to delve into further exploration of the participant's experiences of their 'migration' (Appendix 5). This allowed the participant to expand on questions as much as they were comfortable with and prevented the interviewer influencing or blocking answers the participants may give. An interview schedule was formulated which consisted of topics so that it allowed flexibility and adaptability around the participant's answers (Appendix 3). This meant a full and deep analysis could be conducted from the data of lived experiences, allowing emergent themes to be found and discussed.

### Participants

Participants were deliberately selected due to their sexuality and their experiences of migration from a rural to an urban setting. The Office of National Statistics (2011) offered an urban-rural classification by entering a postcode or area. This interactive map allowed for security that the participants did in fact migrate from a classified 'rural area' where it would have a population of below 10,000 people, a 'sparse settlement' and 'remoteness' (Hewitt, 1989:3). It was pre-requisite for the research that all participants were currently living in an urban area, in this case Manchester and had moved from a rural area.

A semi-structured interview format, as seen in the interview schedule (Appendix 6), was used in order to "give voice to common people allowing them to freely present their life situations in their own words" (Kvale and Brinkman, 2009:481). This type of format developed trust and made participants feel more comfortable to talk about their sexuality. Downey, (2010) states this is due to the participants

feeling the researcher has offered a 'willingness to invest their time into others'. Silverman (2006:128) suggests open ended questions 'offers the opportunity for an authentic gaze into the soul of another' as well as allowing for more spontaneous speech. This ideally makes for a perfect window into the participant's world of experience in which phenomenological analysis can be applied.

### **Analysis**

After all six transcripts were written, a full IPA was conducted which found three emergent themes;

- A defence against internalized homonegativity
- A search for a model
- An organisation of the sexual self.

The dominant findings within this analysis found that homosexual migrants have an embodied rurality and the urban reality is simply an extension of pre-existing identity.

Final Themes:	A Defence against Internalised Homonegativity.	Search for a Model of Sexual Identity.	Organisation of the Sexual Self.
Sub Themes:	Negative experiences around sexuality	Searching for people with similar interests	Family members express discomfort around sexuality
	Defence to show they are unaffected by it	Know how to act due to the models found	More active sexuality away from family pressures
		Experiences of isolation	Objectifying sexuality in terms of wearing it to 'show' it

### ***Defence against Internalized Homonegativity***

The migration from a rural to an urban setting overall seemed to make all participants comfortable in that they could now cope with their sexuality in a way that would allow them to transfer their sexuality back to their rural setting. This suggests urban environments allow for a space which is strengthening in character and creates a defence against negativity in the future.

“I’ve become such a strong person it’s hard to intimidate me now” (Q, Line 180).

‘Internalized homonegativity’ is a theme found within many previous homosexual narratives. However, in this analysis the migration seemed to create a defence against this.

“...just people that heckle you in the street, which doesn’t bother me...” (La, Line 57).

It was seen that the urban exemption encouraged a defence but the expression of it was still grounded to their rural masculinity. The male participants particularly showed signs of their instilled, rigid, rural stereotypes by ensuring they maintained a typical masculine stance when talking about any negative experiences.

“...I don’t care; I don’t really give a crap if people know...” (Q, Line 53-54).

The rural gender roles were also seen in the female participants as they adopted more feminine views upon the negativity they experienced. The females showed a certain degree of openness about being scared and fearful.

“...someone I knew came out to their very catholic family and got kicked out...Yeah so that made me scared then.” (A, Line 99-102).

Every participant stated their desire, if possible, would be to change their sexuality, this is seen as a result from the rural pressures of homosexuality being wrong.

“I want to be straight but I can't, this is who I am” (Q, Line 112-113).

However, participants were careful to ensure they did not support any claims that it was in fact a choice or changeable, something which can be seen as an effect from urban politics.

“the people who organise the things in the gay village are sort of very political in that they stress we have to argue sexuality as biological” (A, Line 55-57).

It became apparent there was a need for an acceptance with their own sexuality and an experience to become comfortable with their sexuality for them to then identify themselves by it. This full acceptance seemed to happen only once they had moved away from the suppressing norms of a rural background. This was particularly seen in ‘A’ who did not ‘come out’ until she was away from the rural constraints.

“I really did not want to be gay because where I come from it isn't accepted, but I am so there's nothing I can do about it” (A, Line 155).

### ***Search for a Model of Sexual Identity***

‘Seeking anonymity’ is a dominant theme in previous research however; this analysis argues, instead of the individual wanting to be ‘invisible’ the individuals



were merely searching for 'models' and wider social structures to be physically exploratory in.

All participants described isolative experiences within their rural settings where they felt continuously noticed and alone.

“the more remote you are you feel like a big fish in a small pond and you stick out like a sore thumb” (La, Line 146-147).

This led the individual to seeking out social surroundings where others had the same sexual interests.

“ there’s a lot more people there looking for the same thing you are so it makes it a bit more fun” (La, Line 51-52).

However, instead of the individuals wanting to be anonymous or invisible this analysis suggests they are merely looking for a variety of models or 'teachers' to show them how to express their sexuality.

“I can be...more gay in Manchester. If that makes sense? Like go more to the gay bars and that and everything here” (Q, Line 47-48)

This is due to the lack of homosexual 'places' and social settings due to homosexuality not being seen as the norm in rural areas. It seems the urban life is now a typical place for rural homosexuals to go as it is viewed as a 'big gay city' (A, Line 11). However, hardly any participants mentioned the struggle or frustration of trying to seek out other gay or lesbian individuals in their rural settings.

“there’s a lot more opportunities to be gay...I'm not saying you can't be gay at home,...but at home there's no gay clubs, there's loads of gay people but no gay clubs” (H, Line 41-42).

In fact many of the rural individuals had only ever had relationships with individuals from their own town rather than in the city, further stressing the impact of rurality. Homosexuals have seen to be stigmatised for searching for anonymity but no participants expressed any negative feelings towards their home town and all of them mentioned moving back after their degree. This suggests it is more than just wanting to be anonymous or invisible; it is more of a search for a model and a surrounding that will show them how to express their sexuality.

It seems anonymity is a stigma placed upon what a homosexual individual wants when this is not necessarily the case.

“I sorta expected it to be more of an anonymous place to live” (A, Line 47-48)

Studies into homosexuality have unfortunately placed further stigmas upon homosexuality. Although they are not particularly negative stigmas, these associations could soon fall into modern stereotypes upon homosexuality. Rather than the size of a 'space' being the problem, it seemed it was more the identification of the place and the people within it.

“There are more gay people here, in a concentrated place” (A, Line 63-64)

The majority of the participants lived with other homosexual individuals further extending the need to be anonymous into their home life. By surrounding themselves with other individuals that have similar sexual interests creates a setting where there is a chosen ignorance against differences and stops isolation further. The participants also showed signs of fear about being alone and isolated within the city suggesting the fear is not due to their 'space' but relates back to their internalised homonegativity.

### ***Organisation of the sexual self***

The last theme that emerged was an organisation of their sexual self. This was found when the individuals would speak about their sexual relationships but would always refer back to their family views upon them. It seemed their sexual selves had to be organised away from their family so not to make them feel uncomfortable.

“I took one of my exes back to my mum’s and because I knew she wasn’t completely okay with it I felt like I couldn’t put my arm around her or anything I was like compensating for the fact that my mum felt uncomfortable even though she wasn’t vocal about it I just didn’t want to push that on to her.” (L, Line 128-131)

This was also seen despite the individuals moving to a new city, away from parents. Although it seemed to ease the pressure off the participants from having to experience any awkwardness around their sexuality, the participants would always have the rural opinions playing on their mind.

“I’d still be more likely to watch what I’m doing like I wouldn’t get with someone in case someone homophobic saw.” (R, Line 4-5)

Participants seemed to organise their sexuality by objectifying it through fashion or expressing thoughts around 'wearing' their sexuality. This organisation was seen as a sort of visual 'coming out' in an urban place, to ensure people would know their sexual interests whilst avoiding having to speak about them.

"...you have to dress to the stereotype, if you wanna find somebody because not a lot of people know" (L, Line 148)

However, they would also argue they should not have to dress to the typical stereotype. This could further be connected to their rural organisation in that they would want to stay unnoticed as the minority and therefore prevent themselves from being visual in any sense.

"I'm quite girly anyway, I wear dresses, I like pretty things I do my nails so not really" (A, Line 126-127).

Overall, the analysis found a conflict between the rural roots and urban liberty. The urban setting was shaping of their identity so they could go back to their rural setting a new person with the same embodied rural beliefs. It seemed rural constraints are rooted into the participant constantly grounding their attitudes, behaviours etc, back to the rural beliefs even when they were in the urban setting.

### **Reflexive**

"I don't feel that it is necessary to know exactly what I am. The main interest in life and work is to become someone else that you were not in the beginning."- Foucault (as cited by Taylor 2011)

Being an outsider to homosexuality has been argued as problematic in regards to IPA, many researchers argue without having an 'inside perspective' the researcher is less likely to 'gain entry' into the experiences homosexuals have (Martin and Meezan, 2003). However, the researcher's sexuality should not have had an impact upon the findings, as it is consistent with the limit on 'perspective free preconceptions' phenomenologist Husserl (1970) aims for. The researcher had no difficulties in 'gaining entry' via connections with the participants in that, the rural background was something familiar. By being from a background like the participants, phenomenological analysis could benefit from suggesting the analyst is not experienced in the works or holds any biases, before they adopt phenomenology as their epistemology.

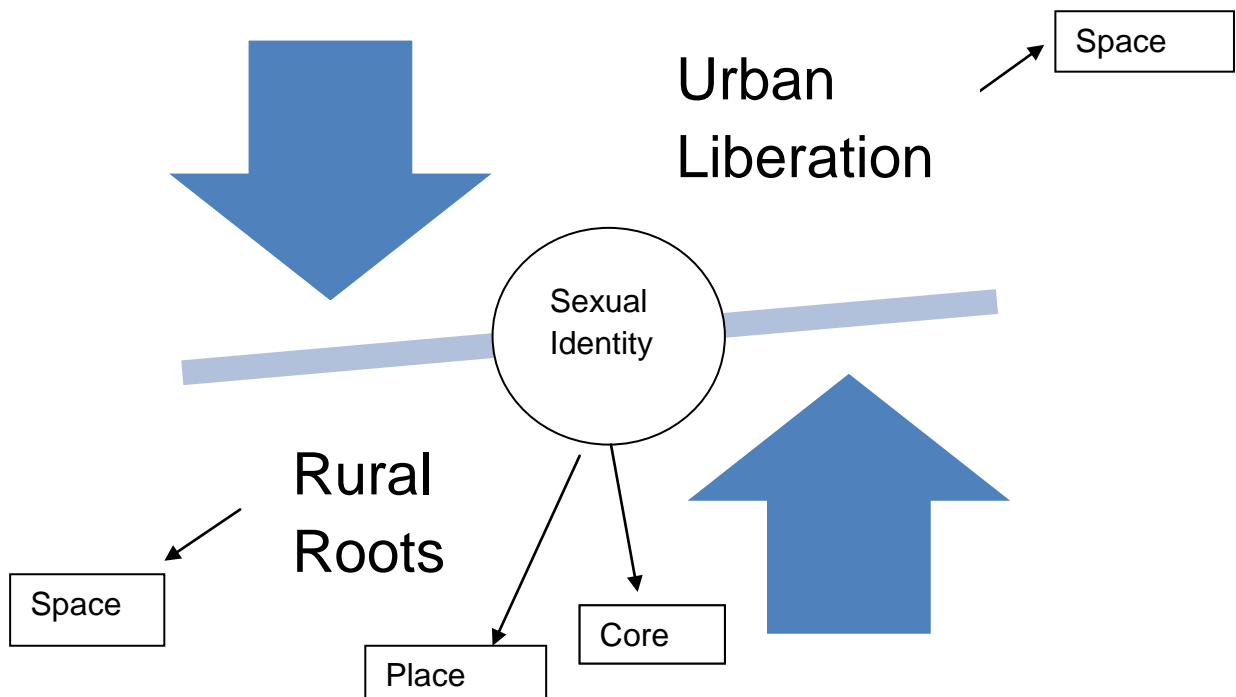
A surprising emotional investment was gained by engaging with the homosexual's and their reflections on their negative experiences. An empathetic stance was almost essential in homosexuality, despite the new liberal views on it, is still a sensitive topic. The researcher's interpretations can never be 'exact' or 'valid' as phenomenological analysis echoes the work of an artist. No one person will completely and exactly interpret the same thing as the next person, from a painting. Alongside this, it is very humbling where one's dissertation connects to the new movements of today's society as all marriage whether it be gay or straight is now legal and equal (as from the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2014). This is a perfect example why research must be continuous as with every new psychological paradigm, new ideas will be found. Therefore, a definitive theory that cannot be critiqued is not the aim here, as in the words of Foucault, (1971 as cited by O'Farrell, 2005:9)

“I don't write a book so that it will be the final word; I write a book so that other books are possible, not necessarily written by me.”

### Discussion

Through IPA, the research's dominant finding was, despite the urban liberation, the participant's sexual identity was rooted to rural societal beliefs, leaving the participants with feelings of ambivalence. This supported Little and Layshon's embodied rurality and offered an evaluative stance upon homosexual stages and the migration experience allowing for a new theory to be constructed. A conflict between the two selves; the urban self and the rural self, was analysed within the narratives further disregarding identity as a sequential process.

Figure 1: An illustration of the conflict between the rural roots and urban liberty



Due to 'space' playing a major role with the expression of sexual identity, support for a combined approach towards homosexual identity and environment being 'mutually reproductive' is vital (Bech, 1997). There is room for a further

argument that participants needed a balance between their urban self and their rural self in regards to the urban liberty and their rural roots (Loy, 2010). Here, the analysis found a change of context can have an effect upon a pre-existing identity meaning identity is a constantly working, fluid concept, not sequential as Troiden (1988) or Cass (1970) suggests. However, there is still a constricted fluidity as it is only developed upon the embodied rural roots.

Theme one represented this in the 'defence against internalised homonegativity'. Although it works against Berg et al's (2012) original idea, it scaffolds the works of Little and Panelli (2007) in that identity stemmed from the participant's instilled, rigid, rural identities but was worked upon via urban liberties to create a defence against the negativity. The fact participants still showed signs of a 'scarring' from their rural negativity further supports Longhurst, (1997) and shows a continuity of connecting back to their embodied rurality.

The second theme expressed the participants need for a growth beyond their rural embodiment, which they could only find in the wide urban spaces.

Following on from this, the earlier mention of Cass' 'homosexual tolerance' and Harrison's argument of the fusion of identity is useful here, as the participants did seem to have a specific deprivation of role models. However, this was resolved with their migration and allowed them to seek out models of sexuality that worked in favour to their instilled rural attitudes. Ideas of a 'shift' away from an ego-dystonic homosexuality are needed as it echoes the argument of a sexual identity being fluctuant (Lebolt, 1999).

The third theme of the 'organised sexual self', further showed how instilled the rural embodiment was within the participants as despite being away from the

rural constraints, there organisation was still arranged around rural beliefs. This added support for Battersby, (1998:1) in sexuality being an 'object' and place being the 'sense of experience'. Following on from this, a combination of the reviewed research (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Loy, 2010; Bech, 1997; Carter et al, 1993; Little and Panelli, 2007) is useful as it shows one's original background either rural or urban has an effect on a homosexual identity. Location was found to play a role in all expressions of sexuality and specifically the construction of identity.

This study differs from past research that towers over studies of migration determinants. Instead it agrees urban settings allow for a change in identity, but argues it is more of an expansion on their pre-existing one than a change. Contrasting to Knopp (2004), who suggested homosexuals do not have an identity before their migration; this study showed the individuals had a strong rural identity before and during their migration.

Many studies have argued identities are not 'additive' (Takagi, 1996:245) whereas this research argues they are, in that the individuals showed progression within their embodied rurality i.e. the defence. Rather than a complete change of identity as Farinelli (2003) suggests, a combination of both community margins are compromised within the individual's identity.

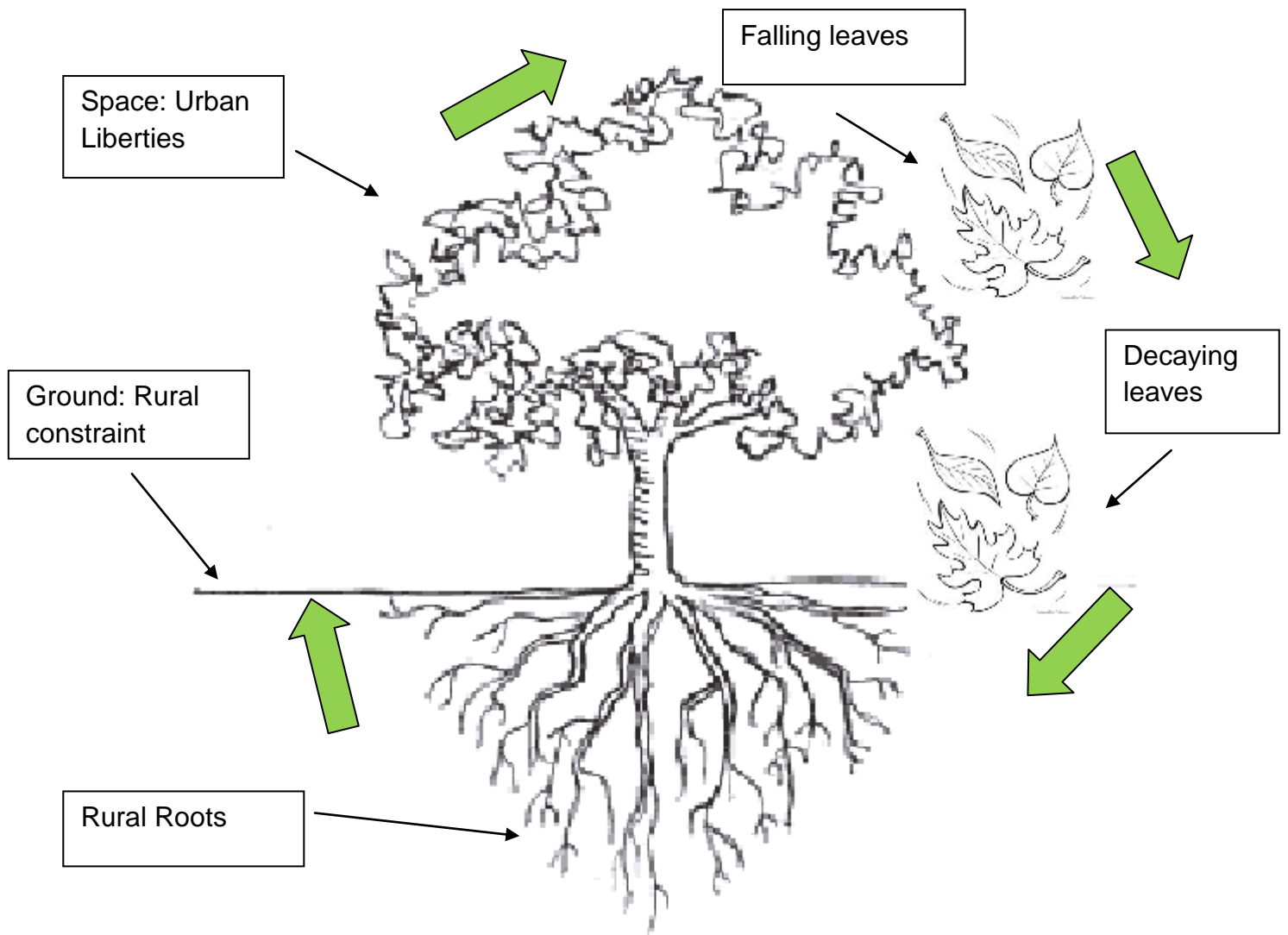
The main argument is that identity has no peak or final stage; it is an ever fluctuating, looping, transferable and constantly developing aspect. In addition to past research this study has further supported rural identity as an 'unchanging core' (Neil, 2004:3) as well as ambulatory (Skeggs et al, 2004) .

Therefore, this research stresses homosexual migration is a process of 'working sexual identity' which is moulded to establish an identity which negotiates the



existing rural beliefs. This is so the individuals can return with a modified self and still be accepted.

This can be best explained through the metaphor of the cycle of a tree as the cycle of identity as shown below.



The 'roots' are representative of the embodied rurality that are instilled into the homosexual. The 'ground' expresses the rural constraints of constantly compressing rural beliefs and values into the individual, ensuring there is no change to the embodiment. The trunk represents the growth of identity being possible and the 'branches' are free to grow due to the space of urban liberty. The 'leaves' are further developments on identity and sprouting of 'new buds'

within personal identity. This is then a further process of spreading seedlings and creating more rural identities. When pieces of the identity conflict with the rural roots, the 'leaves' fall off and land back to the ground 'rural roots'. The 'leaves' then decay and this feeds the 'roots' with more support for one's embodied rurality. The cycle of a tree is natural much like the unconscious development upon one's embodied rurality.

This research has accomplished other aims in that it has laid to rest previous stigmas of homosexuals being victims, that seek anonymity due to social isolation (Redlin and Annes, 2012; Smith, 2012; Kirkey and Forsyth, 2001; Dunn, 2012). Instead, this analysis showed migration is not necessary as an escape but does contribute to the shaping of one's identity. It stops identity being a purely unconscious process and turns it into a partly physical one (migration). This analysis has enabled a new explanation of conflict and the concept of 'rural roots' to be discussed. This embodied rurality mirrors 'traits' in that they are both instilled and central to identity performance. It is then the experiences of their social spaces that help towards the shaping of sexual identity.

Developing Casey's (1993) ideas, an integration of space (urban/rural) and place (identity) has been created. Yi-Fu's (1977) idea of 'place' being a pause is partly adopted as this further supports the idea of a 'fixed rurality'. Due to the physical migration and the applying of identities in different contexts, has shown identity as mobile, agile and transferable (Massey, 1994; Skeggs et al, 2004). As a conclusion, this analysis has been able to view the rooted identity of 'rurality' and the dominance of this in all contexts.

The study differs from past research in that it can now argue the 'crucial step' (McLean, 2007:151) of 'coming out' (De Monteflores et al, 1978) fully recognising an identity can be disregarded due to the 'finalising' of a sexual identity never being reached. 'Homosexual migration' is now accessible as a narrative of gain rather than a narrative of loss. Boundaries of 'sexualised spaces' (Bell and Binnie, 2004) such as gay villages, are not closed or 'keeping the unwanted out', this research argues homosexual migration is an attempt to develop an identity that makes it more susceptible to openness. This openness is so the homosexual can customise their identity to a comfortable stance and transit their newfound identity back to their rural area to encourage citizens into the homosexual's mobile space.

This study is unique in connecting homosexuality, identity and embodiment and so further study would be complimentary to this. The generalisability of this research is somewhat debateable as the participants volunteered and therefore had a willingness to be studied. This could suggest there would be more perspectives and richer data with a larger sample of homosexuals that are selected rather than volunteering. More identity research would benefit from researching migration of urban citizens to rural areas as this could trigger a critical approach upon the one apposed within this research. There was a clear sense of discomfort within the individuals to completely banish any rurality they have therefore, there must be psychological reasoning behind this. Research into rural disembodiment and the effects of this could trigger a critical approach upon the one apposed within this research.

## Conclusion

This analysis, as aimed, has managed to go beyond the previous findings with a unique branching into 'Queer Theory'. Queer theory is a great foundation for this theory as there is no one text or theory that dominates it. Instead, Queer Theory adopts an integrative stance picking up bits of each theory to form completely unique positions each time. This analysis fleshes out the relatively new ideas of homosexual identity being transferable and blended of many constructs. Like Queer Theory, identity should be seen as eternally developmental with a basis to work on.

On top of this, due to identity being continuously emphasised within the works of psychology, this analysis offers a clear argument for the strengths within qualitative studies and subjectivity. Although IPA is still awaiting its appraisal to be recognised as a prestigious ontological method, the methodology is perfect for this study in that 'identity' is the best and biggest phenomena one could interpret and more importantly, analyse. Although this research has finitely argued that identity is an ever-changing concept within a person there is still room for an argument as to whether a fusion with an identity is really all that necessary.

A future hypothesis would suggest urban cement is concreted into an urban individual as this basis is necessary for an identity in the first place. Moreover, identity should be viewed alike the paradigms in psychology, open to development and change to better the understandings of the world and to question one's self identity. For a world without questions is a world without place and 'a world without place is worthy to no one'.

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