

Queer Memory, Identity and Place in Halifax, Nova Scotia

By

Sarah Budgell

A Thesis Submitted to

Saint Mary's University, Halifax, Nova Scotia

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

the Degree of Master's of Arts in Atlantic Canada Studies.

November, 2021, Halifax, Nova Scotia

Copyright Sarah Budgell, 2021

Approved: Dr. Michele Byers

Supervisor

Approved: Dr. Karly Kehoe

Examiner

Approved: Dr. Goran Stanivukovic

Examiner

Date: November 22, 2021

## Abstract

### Queer Identity, Memory and Place in Halifax, Nova Scotia

By Sarah Budgell

Abstract: Personal narratives of queer community members of Halifax were collected. Using a dual theoretical lens from Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* and Edward Soja's *Thirdspace*, a narrative analysis of these personal narratives explores how these individuals and communities situate themselves and create inclusion, belonging, and community in spite of erasure from the normative cultural narratives of Halifax. Queer communities of Halifax articulate the tensions, conflicts, compromises, and labour it takes to create and occupy queer spaces in Halifax.

November 22, 2021

## Acknowledgements

I have profound gratitude for my supervisor, Dr. Michele Byers, whose patience and gentleness in guiding me through this project have altered my trajectory for life, and for my queer community, whose beauty, complexity, and solidarity nourish me daily.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
LITERATURE REVIEW	8
THEORY AND METHODOLOGY	31
Theory	31
Method and Methodology	37
ANALYSIS	51
Introduction	51
Queer Bars	59
Labour and Producing Queer Space	74
Queer-Identified cafés	78
Queer Sport	83
Halifax Pride Festival	89
CONCLUSION	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY	100
Table: List of Participants	111

## INTRODUCTION

Gender and sexual minorities have been part of Halifax's communities since the city's earliest history, before and beyond the city's founding, and during pre-colonial settlement of the Kjiptuk region of Mi'kmaw territory. There is little narrative of this queer presence, but there are many benefits to excavating, examining, and reinterpreting existing community identities from a contemporary, queer perspective. For example, it allows us to identify minorities in popular narratives that seem to deny their existence entirely. This denial of inclusion in the popular narrative serves to secure imbalanced power relations between groups that are seen as 'belonging' to the region, and groups that are not (and subsequently marginalized). Positively identifying a queer figure or narrative in an environment from which it is excluded disrupts imbalanced power relations by contesting traditions of inclusion and exclusion in the process of defining the identity of a place. In this thesis, I situate queer identities and narratives in the environments of Halifax, where they have been omitted from the popular understandings of who 'belongs' here. In environments where queerness is made 'other,' highlighting queer experiences of belonging reveals the authenticity of queer community identity in the construction of the Halifax cultural landscape.

Nova Scotian culture, or more accurately a hegemonic and oversimplified portrayal of it, presents its own challenge to the inclusion of queer perspectives in the historical narrative. Ian

McKay notes in *The Quest of the Folk* that the Folk motif—that is, the representation of a simplistic, pastoral way of life viewed in opposition to modernity—pervades “a wide range of cultural practices in twentieth-century Nova Scotia - from the writing of novels to the construction of tourist attractions - and makes the claim that, at least for a significant number of cultural producers, the idea of the Folk was of central significance” (1994, 216). The economic power of the Folk motif, and its pervasiveness in the production of ‘official’ culture in Nova Scotia, presents an obstacle for more diverse points of view:

For the left, the problem with Innocence and with the Folk is that they establish a political and social ‘common sense,’ based on a commandeering of history and identity, which excludes at the outset a critical dialogue with the past and a realistic grasp of the present. There are no progressive items in this powerful language of the Folk that racial and sexual minorities, women and workers, or any other subaltern groups could requisition as a means of understanding and countering the daily injustices they confront (296).

The Folk motif, as it has been articulated in Nova Scotia, leaves minorities no room to identify their rightful place in the larger narrative of regional historical identities or to carve out recognition for themselves in the popular imagination as part of the “people that belong here.” The ongoing consequence of this exclusion is structural prejudice in the construction of history and local, regional, and national identities. For instance, in a report for the Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, Noah Powers recognizes that “in Canada, the 2SLGBTQ+ community is not categorized as ‘underrepresented’ by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC), representing a significant roadblock to heritage preservation of queer spaces in this country” (2019, 4). This exemplifies the exclusion of queer communities from the national

historical narrative and its consequences. In Powers' example queer narratives are not underrepresented; they simply do not exist. The erasure of queer narratives from national heritage also seems to contradict the widely accepted view that LGBT+ people and communities are marginalized.

The lack of structural support by formal organizations for queer history also presents an opportunity to show the value of doing community-based historical work. Tethering the queer community's memories to the concreteness of spaces in the city is important groundwork for securing the community's future. It is one way of protecting the community against threats to its spaces posed by gentrification and cultural homogenization, by creating a memory record that directly illustrates the historical and cultural significance of a site's queerness. In the case of the argument being made by this thesis, the richer the record we create, the more resources community activists have to aid them in the preservation of sites of significance to the queer communities of Halifax. Later in the thesis I will expand upon possibilities for this work to tangibly serve queer community heritage in Halifax.

Halifax's queer history is not well represented in more traditional historical accounts of the city, at least not before the advent of the Gay Rights Movement, which in queer mythology began in North America with the Stonewall Rebellion in June 1969. After the beginning of gay and lesbian activism in the city, there are more primary sources of evidence by and about self-identified queer people, such as record-keeping by community activists made available by the NS Public Archives and the Dalhousie University-hosted Nova Scotia LGBT Seniors

Archive. The increasing public consciousness initiated by the gay rights movement of the late 1960s also provided more and increasing acceptance of queer stories in popularly accessible media. For example, on primetime scripted television, GLAAD (2019) reported 10.2% of 882 regular characters were LGBTQ in 2019, an increase from 4% LGB characters of 881 regulars in 2015 (2019 p.5; 2015 p.5).

The gaps in the historical record of queer communities both before and during the beginning of the gay rights movement era can be filled, at least partially, by social memory that is shared by community insiders. Social memory can be recorded through oral histories and shared through the practice of everyday acts such as storytelling. Community members are “doing history” in their everyday lives by occupying spaces that community members before them also occupied, using them for the same purposes, and even through the simple act of being visibly queer in public space. Queer people forge and reinforce community ties to place through the daily practices of everyday life, and through the sharing of their memories about that life with others. These practices fill spaces with meaning and steep them in memory; this memory and meaning are essential substances of community identity. Collecting, recording, and interpreting the queer practices inherent in everyday life is an effective way to make sense of how queer communities use space in Halifax, what these spaces mean, and what they do for communities here.

Queer communities are dynamic and ever-changing; the meaning of what it is to be queer is also in constant flux. Cultural and community understanding of sexual practices, sexualities,



gender identities and forms of presentation exist in a process of constant negotiation and re-negotiation, all of which are impacted by their intersection with other social locations, such as race, class, and geography. The vocabulary of queerness is also a process of transformation and inclusion: for instance, queer trans vocabularies and identities are relatively new to the collective understanding of queerness at this point in history; they provide us with a new but essential dimension to our understanding of what it means to be queer, as well as important discourses about the relationships of gender identity, presentation, and performance, to queer identity.

Outsiders to queer communities often see them as unified, stable and monolithic, but my personal experience of being part of one such community is anything but this: conflict and difference define this community as much as the community's common threads of identity, if not more. Further, the politics of inclusion and exclusion in queer communities has historically served to marginalize groups of queer people by enforcing various forms of normativity; this runs counter to the popular idea of one queer community that fully accepts all forms of difference from the hetero norm. Logie and Rwigema's 2014 study in Toronto highlights the daily experiences of intersectional stigma by LBQ women, and identifies the ways that white queer privilege marginalizes LBQ women of colour in both queer communities and racialized ones: "Participants articulated that unacknowledged racism and white privilege within queer communities reinforces notions of white racial superiority both within queer community, as well as broader societal discourses that name racialized groups as more homophobic" (184). In a case study of seven gay or queer social service providers of colour, Giwa and Greensmith also

concluded that systemic racism infiltrates the LGBTQ community of Toronto (2012). They also offer an important caveat:

The research participants challenged the pervasive, dominant discourse of a single cohesive community, thereby cautioning against the erasure of the diverse and complex experience of people of color. They called attention to the need to unpack the term “community,” as they sought to reconcile their multiple social positions within the predominantly White LGBTQ community (162).

It follows, then, that my use of the term “queer community” in this research is misleading; there is not one single queer community and there never has been. What community there is, is pervaded by the same cultures of privilege and exclusion as heteronormative society. While my research participants identified themselves as part of a queer community in Halifax, it should not be taken for granted that all the participants identify as part of the same group within that greater community or share the same or similar sets of beliefs. It is important to note that the only identifiable common thread to form a community between the individuals in my sample set is that they identify themselves in some way as queer people.

I am curious about the ways that queer people use space, especially spaces that are not necessarily designed with them in mind. My curiosity is driven by my own experience of being queer in Halifax. As I came of age and came out as a lesbian, I became more sensitive to the feel of spaces as I moved through them, and asked myself: “Do I belong?” “Am I included?” For many queers, sometimes including myself, these are all-important questions related to safety, and for racialized and gender-non-conforming people, the answers to these questions can have life-or-death stakes. Assessing spaces like this is not only about risk management; we ask these questions to decide where we can feel joy, comfort, and validation. Discussing queer presence in

Halifax is mostly a discussion of queers' exclusion from popular representation in most spaces, so my focus for this thesis has been on inclusion and belonging as driving themes for collecting queer stories about the city. In this thesis, I employ anecdotes from queer people from Halifax as a source of microhistorical evidence to discuss some broader issues related to queer spaces in the city. Collecting personal memories of specific places (a bar, café) over short periods of time (an evening, an hour) is doing history on a tiny scale, but participants' memories, thoughts and feelings shed light on larger conversations about how queer communities in Halifax have and continue to use spaces from which they have traditionally been excluded.

The data I collected is a compilation of personal memories and anecdotes about queer space in Halifax. I collected written personal statements from 28 participants, where they shared their memories, thoughts, and feelings about places they felt "belong" to queer community in Halifax. I explored how themes of inclusion, belonging, and community construct a queer experience of the Halifax geographical landscape. I guided my analysis using Edward Soja's *Thirdspace* and Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology*, a combined lens that examines how queer individuals orient themselves toward and away from spaces and objects, and how queer communities construct complex and communicative places of meaning in their environments through the process of everyday life. Based on these interpretations I discuss the space needs of queer communities under threat, and possibilities for greater inclusion of queerness in the Halifax historicocultural landscape.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

John D’Emilio established the genre of queer place-based histories with his 1989 book *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities*. In an attempt to “situate the growth of a gay politics within the larger setting of the evolution of a gay sexual identity and an urban subculture of homosexuals and lesbians,” D’Emilio provides background for the origin of using homosexuality as a personal identifier and follows it through to the development of an urban gay and lesbian subculture in the United States. He then examines its relationship to dominant heteronormative society, activism, and social movements which gave rise to the Stonewall Revolution; the mythological creation story of the modern queer movement. D’Emilio’s mixed methods approach relies on interviews (his own and others’) with early community activists and exhaustive readings of their records. His work emphasizes pre-Stonewall homosexual culture developing a social consciousness as a marginalized minority group leading up to the formation of the gay rights movement. D’Emilio emphasizes the importance of World War II in the creation of a distinct homosexual subculture: “It uprooted tens of millions of American men and women, many of them young, and deposited them in a variety of nonfamilial, often sex-segregated environments” (23).

Subsequent works draw heavily on oral history methodologies as source material for queer regional histories. For example, Alan Bérubé examines the very specific social conditions

surrounding WWII for his book, *Coming Out Under Fire* (1990), in which he reveals a “secret world” of gay life that existed during wartime using life-history interviews with gay and lesbian veterans’, as well as correspondence between soldiers, declassified government documents, newspapers, magazines, archives, and war novels. The impact of this book, published in a time long before gays and lesbians were free to openly serve in the U.S. military, was to place queer bodies in a contested space both historically and in the present-day, and this work was referenced heavily in discussions surrounding the elimination of the ban on gay, lesbian and bisexual soldiers in the American military (Bérubé and Freedman 2010, pp. viii).

Later works also engage in historical work with queer communities through the lens of understanding the places where they lived. For example, Elizabeth Kennedy and Madeline Davis (1993) draw on the oral histories of forty-five Buffalo, New York women for their book, *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold*, in which lengthy transcriptions allow Black and white working-class lesbians to tell their stories about the 1940s and 1950s bar and house party culture. Importantly, Kennedy and Davis address a point that was debated in queer theory at the time of their writing, butch/femme gender role adoption, by representing the lived experiences of the working-class lesbians for whom these roles were meaningful and providing greater dimension to the discussion by representing both Black and white articulations of these roles. According to the authors, butch-femme gender dynamics are “the organizing principle for this community's relations with the outside world” and structure relationships and social life within the community as well (152). The authors highlight the intersections of race and class among lesbian

communities as lesbian bar and party scenes began to integrate through the 1950s—the tough bar culture, comprised of working-class lesbians, was relatively more ready to do so compared to higher-class groups of lesbians: “The desegregation of the lesbian community was affected by the forces that propelled the struggle for racial justice in the United States in general. However, the fact that it happened only among tough bar lesbians suggests that integration was also shaped by internal developments in the lesbian community” (123).

Urban geographers have also engaged questions related to queer bodies in space since the 1980s, identifying queer groups in space, and tracking their distribution in the urban landscape. A notable early attempt at locating concentrations of queer bodies is Manuel Castells’ *The City and the Grassroots* (1983), where the author presents San Francisco as an enigmatic culture clash between American corporate culture and the counterculture movement, among whom he counts the city’s gay population (101). He writes, “San Francisco has become the world’s gay capital, a new Mecca in our age of individual liberation where homosexuals migrate for a few hours or many years to find themselves and to learn a language of freedom, sexuality, solidarity, and life - to ‘come out’ and to become gay” (138). Gay men’s power in carving out a concentrated and organized gay community in San Francisco speaks to community solidarity “at spatial, economic, cultural, and political levels,” and its spatial organization galvanizes the social and political power of the gay community in San Francisco (138). Spatial organization is a response to a surrounding society that punishes gay identity; gay people seek each other out to create safe spaces, widening the boundaries of safety into territories.

Castells focused his analytic attention solely on gay men, and based this selection on the perceived essential differences between men and women in the gender binary that are increasingly problematized today. For example, he argues that “[M]en have sought to dominate, and one expression of this domination has been spatial. . . . Women have rarely had these territorial aspirations: their world attaches more importance to relationships and their networks are ones of solidarity and affection” (140). Castells views women as placeless and deterritorialized. This is a false conclusion rooted in Castells’ methodology, one that is not ideal for revealing women in space: his methodology hinges on identifying large concentrations of same-gender households, concentrations of gay business ownership, and the memory of gay men canvassing for gay social issues. Using this metric to identify women, who have less political and economic power in the geographical landscape (as well as the academic landscape, affecting the direction and conclusion of studies), would prohibit them from being mapped in the same way. These issues are expanded in Adler and Brenner’s (1992) response to Castells, which I discuss below.

Castells mapped communities based on layering various maps that would positively identify a gay male presence: a map drawn by gay informants, a map revealing households of multiple male members, maps representing gay bars, gathering places and self-identified gay commercial spaces, and a map representing concentrated votes for Harvey Milk, a gay political candidate (Castells 1983; 145). All these maps converged on a relatively similar area of San Francisco, which Castells positively identifies as a gay territory: “not only a residential space but

also a space for social interaction, for business activities of all kinds, for leisure and pleasure, for feasts and politics” (151). This area, the Castro Valley, had at the time of the gay liberation movement a combination of high vacancy and low rent that attracted gay populations moving to cities. As populations expanded, so did “a very dense network of bars, health clubs, stores, businesses, and activities developed on the basis of a growing population” (156). Castells refers to “gay community” as “a deliberate effort by gay people to set up their own organizations and institutions in all spheres of life” (161). His vision of gay community was a strong network of mutually supportive organizations whose scope reached from business, to arts and culture, and churches, with its own cultural practice, celebrations (such as Halloween and the Annual Castro Street Fair) and political influence.

Castells’ (1983) assumption that “lesbians, unlike gay men, tend not to concentrate on a given territory, but establish social and interpersonal networks” has been a cause of contention among researchers of sexuality and space (140). Adler and Brenner (1992) question whether lesbians really do not concentrate, and whether their lack of geographical representation is more about resources than essentialized understandings of their gender. Lauria and Knopp (1985) also critique Castells’ gender-essentialism, but come to the equally debatable (but not, at the time, uncommon) conclusion that lesbian communities need not concentrate together because lesbian sexuality is more highly tolerated by straight culture than gay men’s is. Adler and Brenner’s response to Castells opens up the literature to include the intersections of class, gender, and



sexual orientation in defining what constitutes a queer territory and begins to deconstruct the role of capitalist patriarchy in defining lesbians' relationships to space.

Adler and Brenner redirect the question of lesbian urban space from gender to resource access, which Castells also recognized in his study of San Francisco, as a limiting factor for lesbian territoriality. While Castells saw lesbians as disconnected from geographic space because of an essentialist view of women, idealizing them as more interested in interpersonal relationships than occupying territories, Adler and Brenner identify patriarchal societal factors that limit women from occupying spaces in the way men do. They also discuss lesbians' dual experience in urban space as homosexuals and as women, which restricts their access to public space further than homosexual men. Adler and Brenner conducted their research with an anonymous population of lesbians in an unnamed city out of caution for their research participants. They model their study on Castells' sources of information for locating gay territories: "(1) key informants from the lesbian community; (2) the location of lesbian bars and other social gathering places; (3) the location of lesbian business, professional services and social service agencies; and (4) two mailing lists of lesbian organizations" (27). Adler and Brenner confirmed the existence of lesbian neighbourhoods by tracking the spatial distribution of mailing list addresses in reference to sites that cater to lesbians, and in reference to each other. They located two significant lesbian clusters, one located within the city's "gay" neighbourhood. Lesbians tended to be found in areas with low rates of home ownership, low rent, and the presence of "counter-cultural institutions" (29). Adler and Brenner do not expand the 'lesbian'

category into categories based on race or class. Ultimately, Adler and Brenner identified a neighbourhood with a “quasi-underground character; it is enfolded in a broader counter-cultural milieu and does not have its own public subculture and territory” (31). That their presence is not more public, they argue, comes down to access and means: gay men in real estate and rental markets were “a major factor facilitating the development of a gay neighborhood” (32).

Rothenberg (1995) also contests Castells’ assertion that lesbians do not have territorial impacts on urban environments and goes beyond confirming a community exists with their study of Park Slope, Brooklyn. Rothenberg interviewed lesbian Park Slope residents to gain an idea of residents’ sense of place and of the neighbourhood’s development as a lesbian-dense place. Rothenberg engages the term “community” in several senses. In urban geography and sociology as “a geographically bound area consisting of people who share particular characteristics ... and who maintain social interactions with each other,” as an “imagined community” defined by political scientist Benedict Anderson as people who may not know each other yet feel a shared sense of membership, and in the sense of a “lesbian community” which may be a local, institutional, or ideological practice and hinges on a sense of shared vision (156). Identifying and unpacking what “community” means is important when investigating relationships between, and within, social groups, as well as their situatedness in space. The slipperiness of the term “community” prompted Rothenberg to ask informants if there even was a lesbian community in Park Slope, and, if so, what (which spaces) and who comprised it? Rothenberg’s informants viewed the Park Slope lesbian population as “more like a collection of communities than a

single, unified entity” but seemed to share a sense of shared identity as lesbians (157).

Informants also pointed to the greater significance of other identity markers, like race, over their lesbian identities. However, the concentration of lesbians in Park Slope was doubtless important to Rothenberg’s informants [emphasis author’s]: “for many the geographical aspect was *the* prime shaping force for their interpretation of the concentration as a community,” which signifies the lesbians’ relationship with the *space* of Park Slope being in general as meaningful as a direct sense of unity with each other (157).

Park Slope lesbians use community organization by social networks, rather than officially designated spaces, as platforms for social contact and political engagement. Rothenberg indicates urban factors like the timing of gentrification as causes for the high concentrations of lesbians in Park Slope, but stresses the strength and importance of the lesbian social network for the growth of the community [emphasis author’s]: “Half the women I talked to knew about Park Slope’s lesbian reputation before they moved there; it was an important reason, although not the only one, for the move. One of the women I talked to found out about Park Slope through her real-estate agent, who was a lesbian herself. The women who *hadn’t* known about Park Slope’s reputation as a lesbian area moved there to live with a lover or to live in a lesbian household. And everyone I spoke with has encouraged friends (although not only lesbians) to move to Park Slope” (161).

These explorations of lesbian territorialities were particularly helpful for my examination of the Halifax queer community. Although not exclusively made up of lesbians, Halifax’s queer

networks are increasingly despatialized and rely on the strength of social networks to maintain a sense of community (or more realistically, multiple senses of multiple communities) as concrete gathering places for communities become sparser over time.

Tiffany Muller Myrdahl (2013) provides a necessary criticism of well-established theoretical lenses which imagine a hierarchy of queer geographies and experiences, placing metropolitan queer communities at the pinnacle. This frame of reference pervades both academic and popular thinking but limits a nuanced understanding of queer community life. Myrdahl invites us to deconstruct this well-established model with a case-study of queer placemaking in Lethbridge, Alberta. She criticises trends in the existing literature that “reify an existing tendency to create a hierarchy between, on the one hand, places where LGBTQ lives are assumed to thrive, and on the other hand, places that are assumed to inhibit queer place-making” (281). Juxtaposing urban and rural queer space is a frequent theme in queer storytelling, what Larry Knopp (2007) terms a “closet-ghetto dichotomy” in reference to the queer identity quest of coming out and seeking one’s own kind in urban space (51). Kath Weston (1995) identifies the queer orientation towards metropolises as a structuring theme of coming-out stories: “Just as I began to question the validity of the rural/urban opposition as an analytic tool for classifying persons, I noticed that this symbolic contrast was central to the organization of many coming-out stories” (255). Myrdahl challenges the “referential illusion” of the metropolis as point of origin and frame of reference for less populated queer communities (283). She collects oral histories of LGBTQ women, which discuss the struggles to create queer space in Lethbridge. Myrdahl argues that

works in the field of rural queer studies have not adequately challenged the prevailing notion that urban centres provide the standard of living that smaller queer communities look up to (284). Her informants illustrate the challenges of being part of a small queer community, but they also disrupt the view of small cities as places that are perennially hostile to queer life. This more complicated finding is useful when looking at Halifax, a city positioned as both the urban center of the Atlantic region, but comparatively small when considering neighbouring major cities Toronto and Montreal.

Kelly Baker's (2016) multi-site study of rural queer experiences in Nova Scotia focuses on interviews with fourteen participants that are "geographically dispersed, yet socially connected" (28). Rural queer experiences in Nova Scotia are impacted by the "academic and popular representations of rural areas [that] often portray them as 'backward' or 'traditional' and thus heterosexual" (25). Baker's participants position cities, Halifax foremost, as a focal point for LGBT community building in Nova Scotia, "an anchor for the LGBT community" (36). But rural queer participants also identify a tension between the anonymity, acceptance and diversity of urban queer space, and its simultaneous insularity and division along lines of gender, ethnicity, race, class, and culture: for example "acceptance into Halifax's lesbian-feminist community was not only dependent on being in the right space and having the right identity; it necessitated a certain amount of 'cultural capital' - that is, a certain kind of knowledge, a certain vocabulary, and a certain type of taste" (37). These tensions highlight some mismatch in the social values between urban and rural communities that queer people adopt to in order to be comfortable in

their chosen communities: “rooted particularly in family connections, familiarity and belonging are central to the structures of rural life. While much urban visibility politics, at their very tamest, center on the different-but-equal paradigm, rural LGBT visibility politics involve a delicate balance of nonheterosexuality and localness, putting forth a logic of different-but-similar” (42).

Julie A. Podmore’s analysis of the trend in Montreal’s lesbian communities’ of moving away from lesbian-identified space towards “queer” forms of community, highlights a larger shift in urban culture from “gay and lesbian” communities to more broadly general “queer” ones (2006). Podmore employs mixed-methods data collection, using periodicals and interviews, articulating the fluid and shifting nature of lesbian identities in Montreal urban space. Podmore accounts for the negotiation of urban space by Montreal’s lesbian communities over a relatively long period of time, from 1950 to the early 2000s, which illustrates the rise and fall of lesbian commercial space, such as bars and bookstores. Shifting trends in economy, social life, and political activism were all determining factors in the production, and later consolidation, of lesbian and gay space. Podmore builds on existing queer urban geography by discussing the progression of queer urban space as connected to changes in both urban development and social-political change in the LGBT movement.

Using a communication studies framework, Nikki Usher and Eleanor Morrison (2010) also track change in queer communities, as “former gay havens” migrate online (271). Usher and Morrison use Communication Infrastructure Theory to question “the relationship between public

space, communication, and civic engagement” (273). They identify how gay neighbourhoods, once “set geographic enclaves” with their own businesses, social spaces, and media, are facing transitions brought by gentrification, “straightening” of the populations, and “gay sprawl”: the dispersal of gay populations to other neighbourhoods and suburbs (276). They present the example of The Castro as subject to this transition today; the streetscape of one of the world’s most famous gay neighbourhoods is dominated by chain businesses rather than independent gay ones, and community organizations who have been priced out by rising rents are displaced beyond the neighbourhood (277). The authors argue that gentrification has diluted the public’s expectation of sexual permissiveness in The Castro in favour of greater marketability (and acceptability) to those outside The Castro’s community, and corporate marketability: “For example, in 2005, a lesbian mother wrote to city officials to protest an S&M storefront in The Castro that showed a mannequin chained to a toilet” (277). Usher and Morrison point to a “changed communication action context” where community ties are more dispersed, and dominant culture is more integrated, “diminishing the strength of interconnected communication that occurs informally when there is frequent incidental community exposure through population proximity and density” (277). The community, they argue, has moved online, and shifted to forms of “de-localized storytelling” to articulate a more global sense of community (279). With the caveat that social life online is not less meaningful than experiences in the material world, local storytelling networks are still weakened as published content generalizes in order to contact a more universal audience of internet users, rather than an identifiable and geographically

constrained neighbourhood. The value of discussing the dissolution of gay geographic enclaves, in the authors' view, is its implication for civic engagement and the production of social change at the local level: "The challenge for gay activism will be to harness these new communication contexts" (284). When investigating queer communities under threat, considering community action in spite of a weakened storytelling network is especially important; re-localizing storytelling networks is vital to fostering community action both in general and to the specific end of rescuing queer locales.

Studies from many disciplines have offered perspectives on tracking change in queer communities. With the public health objective of analysing HIV risk behaviour in many cities worldwide, Simon Rosser et al (2008) examined the impact of social change in gay communities. Participants in their survey and focus group reported "structural decline" in their communities, with social engagement migrating online and perceived solidarity decreasing (590). Gentrification disperses gay populations and renders traditionally gay living areas less homogeneously queer. Similarly, participants reported bars and clubs trending towards serving a mixed clientele. "Large numbers of gay individuals, couples, and families appear well integrated into mainstream society; use virtual means to meet their same-sex social, sexual, and educational needs; yet experience 'gay' more as an individual descriptor than as a community label" (592).

Sam Miles (2021a) further explores the migration of queer spaces from geographic to digital with an examination of location-based online dating through smartphone apps including Grindr, Tinder, and Blued. Miles notes a "growing 'digital turn' in urban geography [that]



strongly suggests technological processes will become ever more dominant in our epistemological and empirical studies of urban life” (206). Queer online dating apps recreate cruising encounters previously reserved for queer geographic spaces while subverting the dominant norms of urban space: “Even the most intimidating sports bar can play host to a same-sex encounter, if the 4G reception allows” (210). On the other hand, decentralizing queer social life also decentralizes important sites of queer heritage. Miles claims migration to digital space as one factor in the queer diffusions from queer neighbourhoods and the general decrease in queer commercial and community spaces (213).

Especially relevant for future study of queer place, physical and digital, Miles also reflects on possibilities for both a “post-gayborhood” and post-pandemic social reality for queer people (205). Miles et al (2021b) speculate optimistically, despite the obvious impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, “that place will still matter for LGBTQ+ people in a post-COVID-19 era, albeit with altered meanings and material expressions” (394). COVID-19 poses a clear challenge to queer community space, as shutdowns and gathering limits limit access to sites of queer social life. However, the authors identify five trends that may permit them some optimism for the future of urban queer community space: “(1) the power of mutual aid networks, (2) the power of institutional anchors in placemaking efforts, (3) urban change related to homesteading and population shifts, (4) innovations in the architecture and interior design of physical spaces, and (5) opportunities to enhance social connection through augmented virtual engagements” (398). Queer communities have and will identify opportunities to organize mutual aid networks for

grassroots responses to COVID-19. These communities, especially centered in queer neighbourhoods, have historically been sites of community action around HIV/AIDS and there are many opportunities to engage in community support activity surrounding the pandemic. COVID-19 has shuttered queer businesses, especially bars, but the authors also speculate that queer “institutional anchors,” sites where locals “engage with queer culture, reproducing it through their experiences and enactments,” will become especially important to community members and other participants in the urban landscape (400). The pandemic is also changing urban economies, prompting outward migration from metropolises to suburbs and small cities: “Overlaying pandemic-related population shifts onto scholarly critiques of the gayborhood reveals the power of an expansive analytic gaze that reaches beyond city-center locations” (403). The pandemic also invites speculation on “the possibilities of the virtual” for creating queer space (407). 2020 Pride celebrations in Vancouver, for instance, were hosted completely online. The COVID-19 era compromise of shifting community gatherings online in the interest of public safety also bears potential for future placemaking. The authors speculate that the resilience of queer cultural communities, as well as an expansive point of view with regards to queer place, will maintain the value of queer spaces in the post-COVID-19 era.

Anderson and Knee (2021) also reflect on the state of queer social life in the pandemic era and assert that “the changing nature of queer leisure spaces, and indeed the decline of some, does not diminish the role that such spaces play in the lives of queer persons” (3). Queer leisure spaces are vital to the formation of social identities and senses of belonging. The authors

consider the continued need for social contact and physical connection with others in the material world, but also report the translations of queer leisure to virtual space, thus “queering isolation:” “Media representations of queer leisure during the pandemic have reported virtual variety hours, drag performances, support groups for at-risk LGBTQ populations, and even plans for digital pride celebrations as the summer of 2020 approaches” (4). Photographer Maddi Tang has engaged the pandemic-isolated queer community of Halifax with their project *Queer in Quarantine*, a book of portraits of queer participants with their personal reflections on community during the pandemic. This project “was motivated by the desire to connect with queer friends and community members, and to celebrate and showcase queer experiences, in a time when we weren’t able to physically be together” (Tang 2021, author’s note). Their project creates a record of how queer placemaking takes place during a time when queer people’s access to community space is extremely limited.

Wesley Crichlow’s (2003) work, *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities* is an analysis of Black same-sex experience in the cities of Halifax and Toronto. His work brings into the focus the intersectional experiences of Black men who engage in same-sex behaviour with Black nationalism, Caribbean and North American positioning, class, and colonialism. Crichlow’s perspective exposes the white appropriation of the gay and lesbian activist movement by highlighting a uniquely Black point of view that has been left out of the largely white and colonized discussion of queer liberation. Crichlow engages the vernaculars specific to the realities of Caribbean and African-Canadian men in Toronto and

Halifax to address the layers of normativity within and beyond the Black communities that impact the ways “buller men” and “batty bwoys” negotiate everyday life: “A buller is often forced to develop ways of participating in communal structures that allow him to pass as heterosexual while continuing to pursue same-sex pleasures and desires” (6). Expanding on his own lived experience as a buller man and interviews with other community members, Crichlow situates these Black queer identities in the institutions of whiteness and white queerness, language, family dynamics, religion and organization, and Black nationalisms, which all create cultures that alienate and oppress Black same-sex desire: “By the phrase *structures of dominance*, I am referring to the myriad ways in which bullers and batty bwoys are positioned within social relations of Black community life, to the point that we come to anticipate that our presence will provoke practices of marginalization in the form of symbolic if not physical violence” (27). By organizing and analyzing these personal narratives, Crichlow’s goal is to make space for difference in the Black imaginary.

Nova Scotians outside the academic world have more readily engaged with Nova Scotian queer historiography through art production and activism. For many years, Robyn Metcalfe’s *Queer Looking, Queer Acting*, the catalog of his 1997 exhibition of queer ephemera at the MSVU art gallery, was the standalone reference for our local queer social history: “In the absence of any published history of lesbian and gay communities in Nova Scotia, there may be a temptation to make this essay serve a purpose for which it is not intended” (27). It documents a significant tradition of queer activist art in Halifax, but Metcalfe seems to resist its continued

citation as a key historical document in Halifax queer history. In the second edition of *QLQA*, titled *OUT: Queer Looking, Queer Acting Revisited*, he writes: “I am both proud and disappointed that 'Queer looking, Queer Acting' continues to serve as something it was not designed to be: the principal social historical text on Halifax Queer Experience” (2014, p. 9).

Numerous Nova Scotian films represent queer life stories against a regional backdrop. Queer film in Nova Scotia tends to queer the landscape as much as the characters, by disrupting the conventions associated with Nova Scotia storytelling in film, whose themes often reflect MacKay’s all-pervading Folk motif discussed earlier in this thesis. Two such examples are Andrea Dorfman’s *Parsley Days* (2000) and Thom Fitzgerald’s *The Hanging Garden* (1997); “While *Parsley Days* and *The Hanging Garden* both draw on magical realism to destabilize society’s governing hetero-normative assumptions, they also do so in order to represent something of the uncanny strangeness of Maritime life itself” (Burke 2009; p. 223). The films’ disruption of hetero norms is explicitly situated in regional space and local places: Halifax’s North End in *Parsley Days* and rural Nova Scotia in *The Hanging Garden*.

*Parsley Days* follows Kate through North End Halifax as she considers leaving a long-term relationship with her boyfriend Ollie (“the King of Contraception”) while trying to facilitate a natural abortion using parsley. By resisting archetypal representations of Maritime character and place, *Parsley Days* queers the Nova Scotian heritage myth and subverts the Folk motif, despite its authentic-feeling and immediately recognizable representation of space and ways of life in the North End:

Parsley Days offers a way out of this dilemma [of producing problematic regional stereotypes] not by effacing the differences between Maritime life and Life elsewhere, but by immersing its characters in a deeply historical neighbourhood that is nevertheless very much part of the modern city. Dorfman conveys something general about the way in which community, wherever it may be and however it may take shape, influences the identity of those within it (Burke, 224).

*Parsley Days* represents queer characters and ways of life in the main character's lesbian herbalist best friend, but also queers the narrative itself in the way Dorfman upsets the expectation of a heterosexual romantic storyline (where true love always wins, and nobody falls out of love for no reason at all); "what makes this movie such a beautiful experience, and such a moving one, is the way it toys with our expectations" (Monk 2001, 133).

*The Hanging Garden* (1997) is the first feature by Thom Fitzgerald, who tells the story of a gay man returning to his small Nova Scotia hometown and confronting his past life as a miserable teenager, seeking closure with his family: "This film not only has a happy ending, it's one of the few Canadian films that ends on a note of closure and healing" (Monk 146). Fitzgerald revisits Nova Scotia and the themes of queerness, homecoming, and difficult family relationships in *Splinters* (2018). These films follow a recognizable script of queer characters who have started new lives 'elsewhere' returning home to a Nova Scotian environment, and a family environment, that has not adequately made space for the main characters' queer identities. *Splinters'* main character, Belle, confronts her mother's fixed idea of Belle's being a lesbian after having spent her time away renegotiating her sense of self after entering a relationship with a man. *The Hanging Garden's* Sweet William returns home from the (presumed) city, where he has fully realized himself as a gay man, to find his past selves still haunting his parents' family home. In

both films, it is implied that queer self-understanding must occur elsewhere, but it takes returning home to begin the dialogue of sorting out the relationships between place, identity, and family.

Queer filmmaker Jim MacSwain also (re)negotiates the regional identity of Nova Scotia and plays with the hegemony of the Folk motif in his short film *Nova Scotia Tourist Industries* (1998), a spoof of Nova Scotia tourism ads: “Are you looking for a place to commit suicide? Look no further than this lovely land. Drenched in the blood of genocide, war, deportation, hanging, slaughter ... explosions ... rape and drunkenness” (in Varga 2015, p. 91).

Theresa Heath (2018) points to a closure of community queer spaces in London, UK that disproportionately impacts queer women, trans people, and people of colour; “As a result, social events for these marginalised communities have become largely peripatetic and are held in a range of venues on a weekly, monthly, or more infrequent basis” (119). Heath argues that grassroots-organized, activist-led queer film festivals are a strategy to oppose the decline in queer social space wrought by “neoliberal urban planning strategies which have prioritized high end accommodation and chain outlets over community space” (119). She dubs the queer film event a “political and strategic tool of urban reclamation,” and explores the challenges to queer film festivals brought on by the system they oppose: neoliberalism in the form of funding, corporate sponsorship, and investment (119).

Queer spaces, especially women and trans-oriented spaces, are particularly vulnerable to urban renewal schemes and unregulated property markets, a force of “social cleaning” that allow landowners to “manipulate the character of an area” (120). However, maintaining relationships

to queer community space is “fundamental to community cohesion, self-ideation, and personal safety” (121). Queer film festivals, collectives, and events, then, are a form of reclaiming community space in the face of ongoing decline in material urban space. Queer film festivals engage in forms of resistance by visibly occupying public space, often reconfiguring it in service of non-normative bodies, as well as by showcasing political work: “In this way, urban space is claimed and reconfigured in the service of a queer, feminist, intersectional project which recognizes how discourses of oppression function together as part of a structural system of exclusion” (124). Queer film festivals play the triplicate role of facilitating the formation of queer space, however temporary, providing a platform for queer cultural work, and “preserving queer urban heritage” (132).

In Halifax, where spaces for marginalized people are similarly threatened by neoliberal urban development, and the free market positions the wealthiest to define the character of neighbourhoods, Heath’s work points to the community value of queer and queer-inclusive film and art collectives: The OUTeast Queer Film Festival, RadStorm, The Khyber Centre for the Arts, and the Centre for Art Tapes prominent among them. CFAT, noticeably, supported the first queer art exhibit hosted in Halifax: “We may take for granted a broadly progressive politics in the cultural community, but it was not until 1982 that a queer art exhibit would be staged in Halifax - Art by Gay Men, organized by curator Robin Metcalfe in space provided by CFAT, though the event was not officially part of CFAT’s programming” (Varga 2015; p. 90).



Queer engagement with space in Halifax, by the community, has been done primarily through activists' work of claiming space. Rebecca Rose documents queer activists articulating their community's right to space in her book, *Before the Parade* (2019). This book was not yet published when I started work on this thesis, yet it is ostensibly the only published narrative history that focuses directly on the Halifax queer community. It therefore becomes by necessity the de facto source for queer community history work and puts Rose at the forefront of queer authors of history in Halifax. It was also Rebecca Rose who, at a time when I was newly out and attempting to locate queer culture in this city, wrote Autostraddle's (2013) "Queer Girl City Guide" to Halifax, Nova Scotia (many of the listed queer and queer-friendly businesses are now closed). *Before the Parade* offers an excellent representation of queer space work of the kind that has warranted inclusion in my project. Community action is not an academic discipline, but it effectively represents the work that Halifax queer people have done in this field. Rose's book invites us to view the 1977 picketing of The Jury Room and CBC by the GAE as queer space work; the first Pride parade route in 1988; and the more recent Halifax Dyke and Trans March (Rose 2019, 13). Sources including Robin Metcalfe's rich personal queer archive and interviews with activists from the researched time period, Rose's work features the voices of activists from the early years of the gay and lesbian liberation movement in Halifax, the GAE. *Before the Parade* grew from a (2016) longform article in *The Coast*, which makes clear the importance of this work:

Most LGBTQIA people are not born into queer or trans families and don't grow up hearing stories about the Compton cafeteria Riots (San Francisco's precursor to Stonewall); Marsha P. Johnson, Sylvia Rivera and Miss Major Griffin Gracey; or the

1981 Toronto Bathhouse Raids around the dinner table. It's often up to us to locate our community - our elders - and uncover our LGBTQIA history. And these conversations, these relationships - the first between young activists and those 30, 40, and even 50 years our seniors - are in themselves historic (July 21, 2016).

In terms of community-sourced texts on queer history, culture, and place, [gay.hfxns.org](http://gay.hfxns.org) is a wiki-style encyclopedia website whose aim is to represent the collective knowledge of queer Halifax. In its own words, "The goal of the Halifax Rainbow Encyclopedia is to have a page for every person, place, thing, and event of relevance to the Q community in Halifax, ever. As of May 2020, we have over eighteen hundred finished pages, works-in-progress, or stubs on line." ([gay.hfxns](http://gay.hfxns.org), May 13 2020). [Gay.hfxns](http://gay.hfxns.org), started in 2000 by community member and community archivist, Daniel MacKay, is an impressive resource for community members seeking groups, resources, and activities as it is for researchers seeking historical records. MacKay's personal website ([bonmot.ca](http://bonmot.ca)) also hosts an archive of digital items related to queer history in Halifax; MacKay, a former publisher of the *GAEZETTE*, is as much a historical figure in this scene as he is a steward of history ([gay.hfxns.org/DanielMacKay](http://gay.hfxns.org/DanielMacKay)).

Under construction as of July 2007, the "Walking Tour of Halifax" is as much a roundup of queer historic places as it is a queer historic place itself, given the speed with which "current" queer hangouts become "former" queer hangouts. Organized by street, each list item is a site or former site of queer history and short description of what made it meaningful. This is connected to the "History Project," lists items with information on people, places, organizations, and events of significance in Halifax's queer history. Source material for this project, too, draws from the standout sources of Halifax queer history: Robin Metcalfe's (1997) *Queer Looking, Queer Acting*

program and Rebecca Rose's *Before the Parade*, as well as *Thirty Years of Halifax Pride: A Souvenir History Magazine* (2003) published by Halifax's Pride Guide Publishing, which contains a timeline of significant events leading up to the first Halifax Pride Parade. Along with the addition of the Nova Scotia LGBT Seniors' Archive, hosted at Dalhousie University, it is important to consider that in Halifax, the most developed sources of queer historical narrative and objects in Halifax are community-based and hosted by community members.

## THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

### *Theory*

I placed this narrative research within the combined frameworks of urban theory, a critical lens addressing the factors and processes involved in the development of cities, and queer theory, which addresses and deconstructs sexual and gender identities. Used together, they allowed me to view both the orientation of queer bodies in space and how they are placed in the system of human beings participating in space to help me understand the construction of socially meaningful urban environments. The key concepts that I deployed from these frameworks as analytical guides are Sara Ahmed's "queer phenomenology" and Edward Soja's "Thirdspace."

Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* centers the concept of "orientation" in her development of a device for understanding both how bodies inhabit space and what bodies direct their attention towards (2006; p. 3). She writes: "Phenomenology can offer a resource for queer studies insofar as it emphasizes the importance of lived experience, the intentionality of consciousness, the significance of nearness or what is ready-to-hand, and the role of repeated and habitual actions in shaping bodies and worlds" (2). Ahmed emphasizes the dependence of space on embodiment, and the dependence of orientation on familiarity to surroundings.

For intersectional feminist and queer theory scholar Ahmed, "[T]he question of orientation becomes, then, a question not only about how we 'find our way' but how we come to feel at home" (7). Queer bodies are often precluded from feeling at home given that space is so often mapped to heterosexual norms. In her book, she enters the environment of the family

home, filled with objects (dining tables, wedding gifts, family photographs) that reproduce a heterosexual way of life as well as generate pressure to “inherit the line” of heterosexuality and follow its reproductive path (90). She writes: “Heterosexuality is not then simply an orientation towards others, it is also something that we are orientated around, even if it disappears from view” (90). This observation expands on the work of Merleau-Ponty, who discusses “reorientation”: in experiments where subjects’ points of view are skewed, they are able to extend themselves into space given enough adjustment, aligning themselves to the lines in their environment. Ahmed interprets: “Things look right when they approach us from the right angle” (67). When environments are the way we expect them to be, approaching us from the right angle, they go unnoticed and fade into the background. By this measure, heterosexuality disappears from view by being seen to “align” with the normative progression of everyday life. Queer sexuality, constituted as an orientation outside of the “neutral” heterosexuality, is comparatively crooked (69).

Understanding queerness in spatial terms, where “heterosexuality functions as a background” (87), the expectation of everyday life against which queerness is skewed, we can also see how MacKay’s motif of “The Folk” also provides a background for Nova Scotian everyday life against which all other ways of life are seen to be skewed. Compulsory heterosexuality is as much a part of the normative expectation of “The Folk” in MacKay’s view. Queerness is seen as not to fit in, not “in line” with the folksy rusticity of Nova Scotian people. Compulsory heterosexuality, coined by Adrienne Rich in 1980, describes the myth of “a

mystical/biological heterosexual inclination, a ‘preference’ or ‘choice’ which draws women towards men” (637). Compulsory heterosexuality is the unquestioned assumption of heterosexuality (and, folded into that, a binary gender model) that positions non-heterosexual identities as Other. Compulsory heterosexuality insists subjects orient themselves toward the “correct” love object and align with assigned identities: cis gender (gender identity that matches the sex assigned at birth) and heterosexuality. Against a backdrop where compulsory heterosexuality is integral to the particular working-class regional version of normative identity established by The Folk, queer orientations toward spaces in Halifax (as well as the identification of spaces in Halifax *as* queer) can only be understood as “out of line” (MacKay 1994, 91). Alongside this is an equal insistence that subjects orient themselves away from objects that do not align with gender and sexual normative roles and goals. This straightening effect is felt as pressure to conform to the normative expectation in the region or risk social exclusion.

Using Ahmed’s lens of queer phenomenology to view stories of queer lived experience in Halifax, which is, as described previously, presumed not to have queer heritage, I was also able to view the everyday life experiences of queer people as troubling the heterosexual norm. This is especially relevant when I discuss unofficial sites of queerness, or transient times of queerness, where, by queering spaces that are presumed straight and neutral for a fleeting time, queer populations disturb implicit assumptions of straightness, or cis-ness, and resist displacement by the perceived neutrality of heterosexual space. In one response, one of this project’s participants remembers the excitement of disrupting a presumed-straight space, feeling “that [they] had

infiltrated an event that wasn't explicitly gay coded and made it a queer event” (Shannon C., written response).

Postmodern political geographer, Edward Soja’s concept of “thirdspace” is an analytical tool for writing about space as a process of constructing meaning—in this case queer meaning—through relationships with spaces. He builds on the work of French sociologist and philosopher Henri Lefebvre (social space as social product) and French philosopher Michel Foucault (heterotopias; places outside of space) and expands what he argues is the more traditional, binary view of space: “a Firstspace perspective that is focused on the ‘real’ material world and a Secondspace perspective that interprets this reality through “imagined representations of spatiality” (1996, p. 6). Thirdspace, for Soja, is more than the sum of the first two; it also involves the system of human beings participating in space, their knowledge, feelings, and perspectives, the possibilities of space, and its experiences filtered by Secondspace and established in Firstspace. According to Borch, Soja asserts not only its existence, but its “vital equivalence” to material and conceptual spaces (2002, p. 113). Thirdspace holds potential for spatial justice work in its alignment with feminist, postcolonial thinking, making it a highly appropriate lens for viewing communities under threat. We can see the Halifax urban environment (firstspace) as presumed to have a heterosexual, cisgender neutrality - Ahmed’s normative dimension, where compulsory heterosexuality disappears into the background. In the queer thirdspace, then, I am concerned with how queer people experience this environment and carve out sites of inclusion by creating a queer social environment.

Sara Ahmed describes the domestic environment of her family's home as mapped to heterosexual and patriarchal norms, but this mapping is visible across public and urban space as well. Sexuality and gender are intimately connected to social identity and existence, which necessarily embeds itself in all types of spaces. The process of forming and maintaining identities and social relationships, creating and changing societies, and interacting with surroundings, confluently constructs an important part of our complete view of urban space. We can therefore argue that norms surrounding sexuality and gender are major influencers of the construction and understanding of public space. Gill Valentine (1993) argues, "[H]eterosexuality is not merely defined by sexual acts in private space. ... it is a taken-for-granted process of power relations which operates in most everyday environments, thus highlighting the inaccuracy of assuming a sexual public-private dichotomy" (410). Presumed compulsorily heterosexual neutrality in the built environment might look like a single master bedroom in a house that presumes one monogamous partnership to be the dominant figures of the household, or sex-segregated toilets in public buildings that presume a binary gender system based on two opposing sexes. Using space that is presumed heterosexual or cisgender for queer purposes is a disruptive action that troubles the association of everyday life with heterosexual or cisgender norms. Heterosexuality therefore extends beyond the sphere of hetero bodies having sex; it is part of the texture of all environments where social life takes place. In Halifax, heterosexuality is packaged along with national and regional (folk) identities; queerness is not included in the construction of this place. Situating queer memories in space, in this project, is part of



complicating the supremacy of assumed identities and making room for queer ways of being in Halifax.

Bringing Soja and Ahmed into dialogue helps me to view queer space in two ways at once. Queer people disrupt the presumed neutrality of space by virtue of not aligning with the normative assumptions of the space, and they make complex meanings of the spaces they occupy by filling them with queer experience. This combined point of view is concerned with how queer people disturb implicit assumptions about normative experiences, but also how queer people, in doing everyday life, create spaces of inclusion for themselves through ongoing, productive relationships with their environments. Sara Ahmed's lens in tandem with Edward Soja's concept of thirdspace helped me observe and analyze queer approaches to space and space-making. Through a queer lens, we can imagine the background, the assumed neutrality of heterosexual norms, as the Soja's secondspace. Under compulsory heterosexuality, this is the intended way for spaces to be experienced; secondspace, like MacKay's myth of The Folk, erases minority experiences from the "authentic" story of this region. Creating thirdspace, however, goes beyond the assembly of first and secondspaces. Queer thirdspace, in the case described in this thesis, is created by bending the "straight lines" of assumed norms by filling these spaces with queer meaning, memory, and experience. This point of view is also useful in looking at how queer people find and identify queer space by feel. In heteropatriarchal space, where queer identities are disoriented or skewed, we can identify a queer space by having an experience where our skewed "lines" line up with those around us (Ahmed 2004, 69). In Halifax, where very little

space benefits from being “officially” queer, asking how these straight lines are skewed reveals queer space where it may not be purported to exist.

We can interpret Citadel Hill, for example, as queer thirdspace using the memories and experiences of queer community members and sex workers who use the parking lot of Citadel Hill for cruising and work. This experience of Citadel Hill was not mentioned in my data, but its use for this purpose is popularly known by people within and outside Halifax’s queer communities. Its official conceptualization is as a site of naval history and of tourism, historical interpretation and education. Citadel Hill is not officially conceptualized to be a sexual space; individuals skew that line and are themselves skewed against the unsexed background when they use Citadel Hill as a site for cruising and sex work. This unofficial, queered thirdspace exists alongside the thirdspace constructions that do align with Citadel Hill’s official conceptualization, and the powerful motif of The Folk, like the workplace culture of the parks staff there, or a tourist’s experience viewing the harbour from the fort.

### *Method and Methodology*

The data collection for this study took place over the course of 2020. I approached the collection of queer memories of Halifax through the framework of narrative inquiry, a methodology in which “researchers usually embrace the assumption that the story is one if not the fundamental unit that accounts for human experience,” given its relevance in exploring social

and individual identities (Pinnegar and Daynes, 2007, 4). Pinnegar and Daynes describe the move toward narrative inquiry from other social science methodologies in four “turns”: “(1) a change in the relationship between the person conducting the research and a person participating as the subject (the relationship between the researcher and the researched), (2) a move from the use of number toward the use of words as data, (3) a change from a focus on the general and universal toward the logical and specific, and finally (4) a widening in acceptance of alternative epistemologies or ways of knowing” (7). Doing narrative inquiry makes sense when researching queer life experiences, given the general erasure of queer life from dominant narratives of daily existence. For example, Endo et. al (2010) use narrative methods to approach queer identity among teachers, Faulkner and Hecht (2010) explore how Jewish Americans negotiate religious and queer identities, and Lenning and Buist (2013) reflect on the various experiences of transgender adults in intimate relationships.

I was additionally influenced by the robust historiography of queer oral history work (i.e. the collection and analysis of personal life-history narratives) when planning my approach to this thesis, as place-based queer histories tend to privilege the personal experience narratives of people who lived there as opposed to other historical sources. Nan Alamilla Boyd notes a strong tradition of using oral histories already exists in queer theory: “[T]here are few works in this twenty-five-year-old field that do not depend heavily on oral history methods” (2008, p. 177).

Initially, I designed a personal narrative collection method of face-to-face, semi structured, and audio-recorded interviews. The onset of the covid-19 pandemic and resulting

disease control measures in Nova Scotia re-directed my narrative-gathering methods towards socially distant interviews over conferencing software as well as passive collection through a Google submission form. I designed the submission form with the goal of maintaining the spirit of a face-to-face conversation, in line with a central focus of oral history: to analyze “how individuals produce and make meaning from their memories” (Hamilton and Shopes, 2008, x).

Before the pandemic, I imagined that the best quality interviews would necessarily be in-person, because both the participant and interviewer would share a more natural feeling of human conversation. In light of the changes required by the pandemic, I could hypothetically have adapted my interview setting to conferencing software and *not* collected responses with a submission form (which is what I ultimately did). It is possible that this would have made the least possible impact on my collection method and would have maintained some of that natural feeling that I imagined would provide me with quality recordings. However, after spending time in lockdown myself, I was sensitive to potential problems that could arise with regard to participants’ privacy while being confined to a space that was likely to be shared with other people close to them, as well as the emotional and mental effort it would take to participate in an interview while experiencing ongoing stress from many directions on top of the collective trauma of a pandemic. My home workspace was also occupied by my partner, and I worried that the spaces where my participants were located could also be occupied by any number of persons within listening range. Potential participants might have been deterred from offering their narratives, or felt pressure to excessively self-edit, if they sensed they had an audience,

especially an audience that was personally invested in their stories (i.e. best friends, partners, or children). Introducing a Google form as an alternative to an interview, in my view, made it easier for everyone to participate given the newly introduced challenges of everyday life.

My study was open to adult participants who self-identified as queer (defined in this context as being not heterosexual and/or not cisgender), living or having lived in Halifax, and self-identifying as belonging to at least one queer community in some capacity. I recruited participants from my group of social contacts by asking my friends if they would participate in the study, and requesting they share the link to my Google form with social contacts of theirs that they felt was appropriate. I found it helpful to have a wide window for inclusion in this project, since my goals for this research did not involve defining queerness or highlighting the borders of who, what, and what places get included or excluded from the queer community. In my view, “membership” and “belonging” are hazy, undefined concepts in queer communities, with no authoritative source on who is in the in-group, or what even counts as the in-group. Since my study did not hinge on deciding what being queer is, I used the most general terms possible for inclusion: if you think you could be involved in a Halifax queer community, then you are involved in a Halifax queer community. Queer theory considers gender and sexual orientation as culturally constructed, therefore allowing potential participants to determine their own eligibility based in their own cultural concepts of queerness, sex, gender, and identity; this would, I felt, encourage more diverse points of view from participants and guarantee a greater variety of perspectives from responses. However, this is speculative as I did not prompt participants to give

any demographic data; any of this type of data that I did receive was offered by participants as part of their responses to other questions.

In my interviews and in the question fields of my response form, I tended to prioritize memories and feelings over factual data that might be available elsewhere. I did not bother to ask participants, for example, what the address of their chosen place of significance was, but I would ask about what it was like to travel there. The participant told their story by answering open-ended questions about their experiences. Interviews were semi-structured to provide opportunities to pursue areas of knowledge the participants were more comfortable with. Open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews gave participants more control over their contributions, and more opportunities to make decisions about how their narratives were constructed. Additionally, using a semi-structured interview or open-ended survey question allowed me to ensure that participants could freely redirect to avoid topics that brought discomfort. This made my research less invasive and more equitable for the participant.

When participants narrated their personal memories, it was important to let them guide the experience. For me, that meant that I would hear stories that were richer because participants shared what they knew instead of speculating on topics I gave them. Participants had more opportunities, within this structure, to represent their identities and points of view in a manner that felt authentic to them. My less structured approach was not an attempt to create “objectivity” in the narrative collection process; I did not at any point attempt to be impartial. My research collection and analysis demanded a reflexive approach, particularly because I was doing

narrative analysis from within my own community. In my view, each participant's voice and their style of narrative creation needed to be prioritized above my interpretation of the content they provided. In this case, using open-ended survey questions allowed participants to both interpret the questions in a way they felt would be appropriate, for example "how did you get there?" elicited responses about the mode of transportation by which the participant arrived at a place, but also responses about why they were drawn there in the first place.

The participants' unique perspectives, how they each construct *their own* memory and identity without my input, was the most important thing. I provided a blueprint that they could use as a guide for sharing their experiences, and that served me as a reference sheet and a sample to send to potential participants to clarify what kinds of questions I might ask them. I first asked for biographical information: I asked every participant their name, age, place of origin, the amount of time they had spent living in Halifax, and how long they felt they had been an active member in a queer community in Halifax. This more general biographical aspect still had great potential for storytelling opportunities as I did not define what being an active community member meant. For different participants, it meant how long an individual had been out of the closet, how long they have been dating in Halifax, or how long they had been doing community activism here. I made the decision to avoid asking for demographic information such as sexual or gender identity, race, or socioeconomic status. I determined that if those identifiers defined a person's experience of place in Halifax, it would most likely come up naturally in the course of the participant's responses to other questions; conversely my asking might lead me toward

wrongly assuming that these aspects of their identities defined their experiences in particular ways, including ways they might not agree with. I asked about specific places that the participants had found memorable and thought “belonged” to the queer community. I used the “five W’s” to further clarify this question: Who accompanied you? What genders/races/ages/social groups did you find there? Was it crowded or sparse? What did the people do? When did they go, how long did they stay? Where did you come from, did you go anywhere else afterward? Why do you remember this place? What made you decide to go there? How did you feel about it? What did it look/sound/feel like?

During in-person interviews, I had more opportunities to go deeper into topics the participant seemed more engaged with or knowledgeable about. When I translated my interview plan to a Google submission form with written responses, I asked broad questions with long answer fields in order to allow each participant enough space to interpret the question in a way that was meaningful to them, and to write as much or as little as felt appropriate. This was a fair but less detailed substitute for having a real-time discussion with another person, however I had to concede that an overly long written response form with too many questions, that appeared to demand too much of a time commitment, might deter potential participants with valuable perspectives. I decided that it would be more profitable to keep the time and effort commitment down, bearing in mind that writing takes more time and focus than having a conversation.

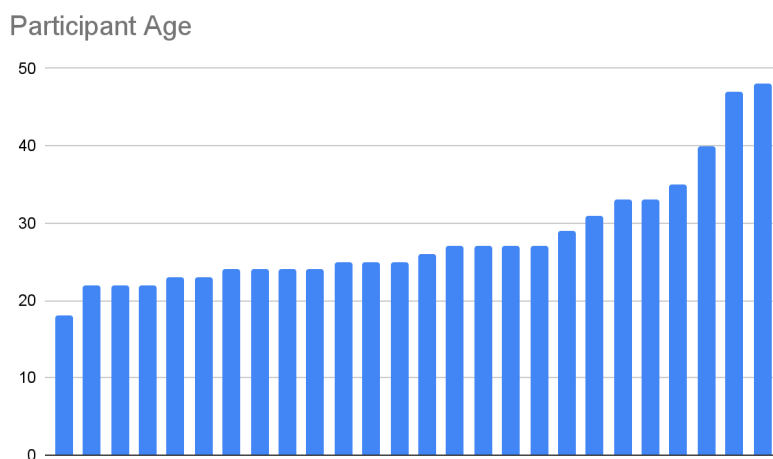
The final section of the interview and submission form asked participants to share their thoughts and feelings regarding the queer community in Halifax in general. I asked which queer



social events participants still enjoyed, if their opinions about their memorable places had changed over time, what they felt the queer communities in Halifax needed, and how we might use history and narrative to address those needs. This section was largely trimmed from the submission form in order to make the participation commitment more accessible. Instead, I combined them into one general field that asked participants for additional information regarding their experience as a queer person in Halifax, regarding the previous questions, or their personal opinions in general. Additionally, I asked questions from the final section of my interview plan, as well as more specific questions about what they had shared in their submission, to form submitters who indicated their interest in a follow-up interview, mainly via email.

I did not avoid talking about the content of participants' contributions with my friends and personal contacts in casual conversation, although I did avoid identifying specific people. Asking questions and opinions about what I had learned in a more casual, non-recorded context often prompted productive discussions and memory-sharing. Less productive avenues of exploration would often lead to interesting and detailed results. I would ask, for example, "one of my participants specifically remembers the chili at Company House... Did you ever have chili at Company House? Was it good?" My friend would answer, "No, but..." and share their experience or valued memories of spending time at the Company House. I did not directly analyze these encounters, but they did provide me with some valuable guidance when I reflected

on what was important and on avenues for more exploration.

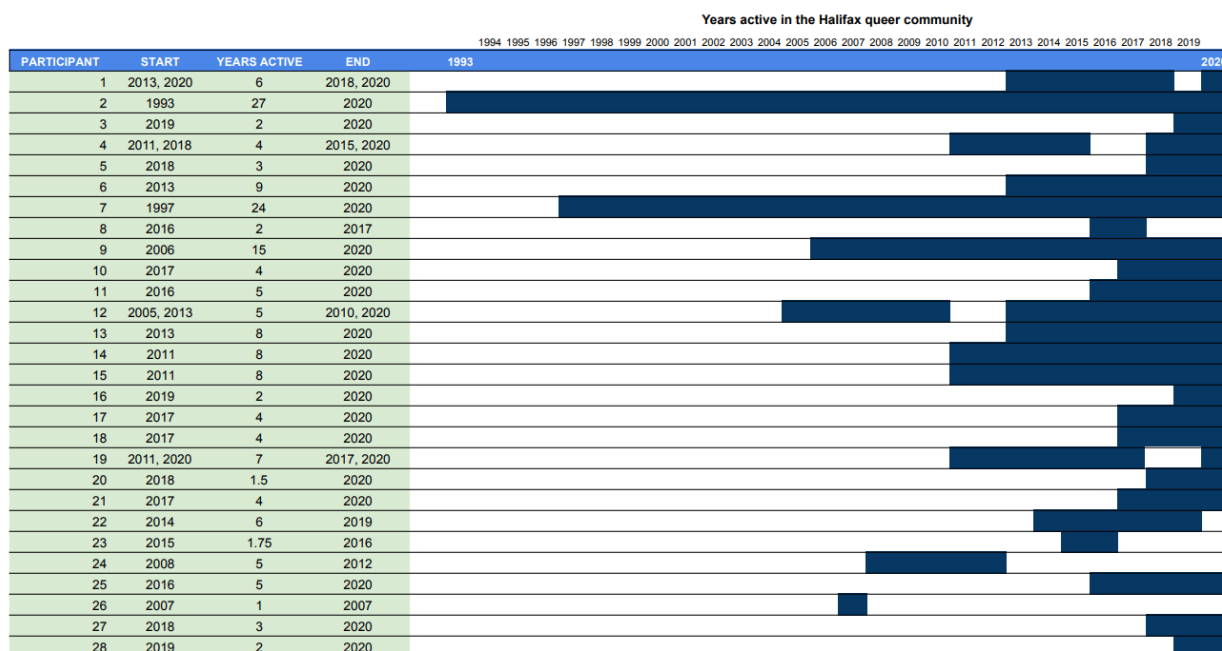


At the end of the collection period, I had collected responses from 28 participants ranging in age from 18 to 48, who self-identified as being “actively queer” in Halifax for up to 24 years of their life. The sample is difficult to generalise as during this study I did not collect detailed demographic information. The largest portion of participants - 68% - fall within the age range of 20-30 years old, and 86% of the sample originate from within Canada (39% of the sample from within HRM). Due to snowball sampling, it can be assumed that most participants have at least tangential social connections to at least one other participant, but this was not tracked. The largest weakness of this study was not taking a more directed sample, as with more specific demographic information I would have been able to better inform myself on how this particular sample viewed their space. I assume a more specific sample that focuses on identified intersections of age, racial identity, or class (for example) would present a different set of data with a view of Halifax that differs from this highly general set.

The responses I received through the submission form surprised me and challenged the assumptions I had about the natural feeling of speech and the perceived quality of recorded interviews' content in relation to written submissions. The form responses still carried a sense of the participant's voice and style. Additionally, the indirectness of writing a response and greater potential for anonymity encouraged responses from participants who might not have otherwise participated; I read responses from individuals who were in the closet, and from personal friends who were uncomfortable with the context of an interview but were happier to write their own thoughts down on their own time. Time zones and daily schedules were less of a challenge for me and for my participants. I still made an effort to solicit recorded interviews, but I was simultaneously discouraged by the repeated pattern of potential participants showing initial interest followed by lack of follow-through when I presented them with the interview itself and encouraged by the wave of detailed and interesting responses through the submission form. In the process of gaining informed consent, I asserted that the interview process would be led by the participant, who was welcome to share as much or as little as they liked on whatever topics interested them, however my presence in a live interview session would always imply my *expectations* that participants answer questions on my terms. The submission form removed my live feedback from the equation and may have created a more positive space for those uncomfortable participants to share their memories without having to deal with the potential of any pushy behaviour on my part.

From my study participants I collected memories about personal experiences directly relating to places in Halifax they viewed as queer, and their opinions regarding places they sensed are or were significant or belonged to Halifax's queer community. A large part of what I collected comprised memories, short stories, thoughts, and feelings. Personal memories were an appropriate choice for collecting data about queer places, because queer "territories" in Halifax are not always officially or explicitly designated, and clearly bordered locations. In my experience I have rarely encountered a place or event that explicitly excluded the non-queer population—many queer spaces are found by feeling, not by fact—in the words of one participant, "you just know" when you are in a queer space. (Taylor A., written response). I decided that in the search for queer sense of place, literal truth or objective reality would not productively serve me in identifying queer spaces. The constructed, subjective quality of individual memories and personal thoughts I collected was more likely to reveal where queerness thrives in Halifax and what it means to the people who experience these places first-hand.

The responses I collected did not represent a wide variety of time periods, which was why other documents were a boon for adding detail to the picture of queer life in Halifax.



For the most part, written sources could not tell me what these places meant to individuals going there, but Rebecca Rose’s *Before The Parade* (2020), the nebulous user-driven wiki [gay.hfxns.org](http://gay.hfxns.org), and the Lesbian History Project fonds at the Nova Scotia Archive did provide additional information about where these places were, when they hosted activity, who was there, and what they did. These sources added detail without answering the specific questions I asked of participants, like what images they remembered, how it felt to be there, why one chose to go, and how one found out it was there.

Before embarking on my research, I struggled with the question of whether I could *really* call myself “part of the community” if I did not dedicate myself to activism or have a lot of queer social contacts. I am always asking myself if I am “cool enough” to call myself part of a queer community. After some self-reflection I decided that by minimizing my own involvement in a

queer community based on my low social participation, I would conflict with my more foundational belief as a folklorist that any queer person with a story is also a carrier of queer heritage, and any person bearing queer heritage is part of a queer community.

The sampling method for the recruitment of participants was directly related to my positionality in conducting this research, in that recruiting through my own social connections is by its nature an indirect form of disclosure to potential participants of my position in relation to the community and to the research. Hayfield and Huxley (2014) analyze the effect of the researcher's positioning (insider or outsider) on the process of researching with lesbian and bisexual women. With regards to accessing the community: "Being an outsider has distinct disadvantages in terms of accessing potentially hard-to-reach populations, while an insider benefits from additional knowledge and an implied credibility, especially because their understanding may enable them to be more aware of ethical matters" (98).

Kim England also notes that "fieldwork is intensely personal, in that the positionality and biography of the researcher plays a central role in the research process, in the field as well as in the final text." (1994, p. 87). Snowball sampling is a highly suitable recruitment method for qualitative researchers who are focused on the shared meanings and priorities in the research relationship and who "seek methods that develop this advantage." (82) Hayfield and Huxley confirm that "LGBT people may consider researchers to be an intrusion unless that researcher is a member of their community, or shares their identity, and is therefore more likely to be considered trustworthy in their motives," and that the positive referral of other community

members builds social capital for the community researcher and therefore greater credibility (2014, p. 97). I also imagined that by using my own social networks, thus positioning myself as a member of the community, participants could determine to omit details about the queer community here that “go without saying” to insiders but might have to be explained to outsiders, for example, they could safely assume I already have a general sense of how it feels to be marginalized for my sexual orientation and could assume this feeling will not have to be explained to me in terms I could understand.

That is not to say that my research was not exploitative just because as a queer person I want the best for my community. The direct benefits of this research for me (master’s degree) are more concrete than the conceptual benefits of the research for the community (increased representation in the historical record). Identifying my own positioning in this study as “insider” is only meaningful because I also fit the selection criteria for my own study; in reality, considering the intersectionality of each participant’s identities, there is no guarantee, and maybe even no possibility, that I am more similar to my participants than I am different. Hayfield and Huxley confirm, “the intersections of different aspects of identity point to a ‘space between’ that of insider and outsider. Further, in this space, researchers will never be entirely ‘insider’ due to the irremovable boundary between researcher and researched” (95). Ultimately, despite my increased access to the community, my implied credibility, and my common goal of furthering the societal position of queer people, I was still self-serving in this project, taking narratives from the queer community to use elsewhere, and so should necessarily subject myself to the same

scrutiny as any researcher with an outsider's perspective. Because I was researching my own community and more or less had credibility in that context, I had to interrogate my own position instead of having the community do it for me. Therefore, I also included my own reflections by responding on my own to the prompts set forth in my Google form.



## ANALYSIS

### *Introduction*

When I read data collected about human experiences, I track my own reactions as a researcher by asking myself, “what surprised me?” “what intrigued me?” and “what disturbed me?” Bonnie Sunstein and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater (2012) offer these questions as a means for researchers to check in on their own assumptions, personal positions, and blind spots about their own work. Because I identify as a member of the group of people I am researching, these questions were good starting points for analyzing the narratives I collected (and questioning my positions relative to them) and prompts for creating narratives about my own experience. I was surprised by how few experiences I shared with my participants. I expected differing opinions regarding queer spaces I *did* have experience in, but I expected more consistency regarding what participants did in these spaces and what these spaces did for them. I was introduced to a range of experiences that had nothing to do with my queer experience of Halifax, like participating in sport, and a range of feelings that I had never felt regarding Halifax’s queer communities, like self-doubt over belonging. As noted in my introduction, this cemented what I had known intellectually, something that I discussed in my introduction. A monolithic, stable, and single queer community with shared experience and understanding of “membership” is a misleading and oversimplified understanding of what queer communities actually are: fluid, various, and inconsistently defined. Being reminded that I was no authority on what queerness was like in

Halifax, exposing my own implicit assumptions to myself became more exciting as the picture emerging from the research became more complicated and colourful. Despite this reality check, I was still most intrigued by experiences of queer community that mirrored my own, especially stories of doing work within queer community. I think that, if I had a do-over, the theme of labouring to build queer space (through workplace, community service, or social justice work) could be a thesis on its own. Nevertheless, reading the variety of stories I had been offered, as well as the many ways my participants had interpreted my vague questions, provided many avenues for productive analysis.

I organized the data from my participants into several broad categories of space they brought up in their responses: queer bars, queer cafés, queer sport, community support spaces, and the Halifax Pride festival. The majority of their personal reflections addressed encounters with queer bars and nightlife, followed by cafés, then sport. In addition to my own reflections, only one respondent discussed memories of community support spaces and the Halifax Pride festival, respectively. During the time I was collecting responses for my study, queer bars might have been on the minds of many queer community members, as the much-beloved queer bar Menz and Mollyz had recently closed its doors for good (April 2020). Additionally, many participants would have been in isolation from the COVID-19 pandemic and may have been spending more time than usual time thinking and reminiscing about queer leisure spaces, social spaces, and party spaces that were shut down for public safety. On the other hand, queer community services were comparatively more able to maintain a digital/internet presence in

community members' lives during the pandemic and because of their relative availability, they might not have been the subject of as much longing or nostalgia. I wonder whether, if I had solicited responses in a non-pandemic year, or close to the Pride festival or another large event in the queer social calendar, I would have had more or different responses about community spaces or Pride, and fewer about bars and cafés, or whether I would have seen places mentioned that did not show up in the data set I received in this collection period. This is probably something every researcher asks themselves when considering their data, but it is perhaps most significant when research is being conducted during a period like the one we have been living in since the start of 2020, when many of the most basic aspects of daily life have been disrupted for most people.

What struck me as most significant in the analysis of my data, was the potential for any space in Halifax to be a queer space as long as queer people felt they could gather there safely. This research provided a good opportunity for me to reflect on my own queer experiences of belonging. In nearly every new space I enter, I take stock of how I feel, consider whether I think it is a safe place to appear as queer, and whether I think my queerness will be tolerated or welcomed. The process of determining whether I belong is intensely personal, and related to how I imagine strangers will read my appearance and make decisions about my gender, sexual allegiances, race, and social status, as well as how I read others sharing that space with me: can I see any people I think are queer? I also listen to community knowledge about spaces: do my queer friends feel they belong here, and if so, which ones? The large variety in the responses I received from participants in my study, as well as responses that conflicted with one another

about whether or not a space felt safe to be queer in or not, reflect the reality that there is no consensus on queer experience, and that queer experience is always inextricably linked with other lived experiences and social locations, such as gender, race, and class.

Some responses I received indicated that there are queer individuals who do not believe there are any truly queer spaces in Halifax, or who have no memories of feeling a queer sense of belonging in spaces here. For Noah, the pervasiveness of straight tourism in Halifax's queer spaces makes him to feel as if there are no true places where queers belong, or places tailor-made for queers: "Spaces which do/have existed, such as Reflections or Menz, were not queer owned or accessible. While these spaces provided a place for LGBTQ2S+ people to gather, I always felt that it was very consumeristic and appropriated. I never felt truly safe being surrounded by straight people who wanted the 'queer experience.'" For Noah, safety and belonging in queer space is directly impeded by his perception that, in these spaces, his identity is being treated as a product for straight consumption and entertainment. Noah's experience is linked with the increasing visibility and commodification of queer cultures, spaces, and ways of life, and the neoliberal value of ignoring difference in order to welcome "everyone." In my reading, his statement highlights the tension between neoliberal values that commodify queer space as consumable by all, and maintaining a grip on the space that forefronts the experience of the queer consumer and backgrounds other forms of consumption as less important or unwelcome.

Marketing queer space to mainstream consumers to signal the cosmopolitanism and progressiveness of the city suggests a queer-friendly culture, but inviting straight tourists to

sample the “queer experience” as Noah puts it can also diminish the queer patron’s sense of ease and welcome in spaces that queers perceive as belonging to them. The gradual integration of straight and gay nightlife scenes tends to better serve hetero- and homonormative performances and identities and further marginalize queer actors who mismatch with normative ideals of white, bourgeois, cis male embodiment. This integration is viewed as progressive but challenges a sense of safety for marginalized queers; “[T]hus, the integration that is so essential to ‘post-gay’ ideology makes the presence of straight patrons in queer space seem desirable, but that ideology cannot buffer queer people from the costs of that integration. This makes straight people fine in theory, but often problematic in practice” (Hartless 2019, 18). Noah defines his position in queer space as opposing the “consumeristic” and “appropriated” gaze of straight people in so-identified queer spaces that disorients queer consumers from identifying with it.

The theme of “Straight” versus “Queer” control over a space is brought up, from multiple perspectives, by participants in my project. Participants gauge by feel whether the balance of a space is shifted towards a queer or a straight-dominant side, although the line is increasingly blurred as culture begins to understand (or at least acknowledge) more and more complicated concepts of both queerness and straightness. Some participants, like Noah, were able to situate themselves on one side of that line, but another common thread in the data was whether or not participants felt qualified to decide if spaces were queer or not based on their own sense of queer identity. Some participants perceived that they had not been recognized as community members

in community spaces, that there is an unknown set of standards to measure up to and they are being set up to fail by an unknown judge. Stephanie elaborated in her reflection:

Many places in this city have made me feel welcomed while simultaneously unwelcomed, possibly welcomed by some- but not all. While I've identified as queer as long as I can remember, I feel a strong need to explain myself or defend my queerness in most settings. In very few geographical and social locations have I ever felt accepted without question. This may be a product of my own discomfort within the gay community. I don't feel "gay enough" to be taken seriously in the gay community or to be fully embraced by queer folk. Heterosexual social settings seem more willing to embrace my gayness than the LGBTQ+ community themselves.

Ella similarly described feeling "like I'm a newbie when it comes to being part of the queer community here. COVID has definitely impacted my ability to be involved and make friends, but I do feel like I don't quite belong everywhere yet. That is, I'm not even quite sure of what/where/who the queer community is in Halifax or how I can be an active part of it." The feeling of small-town exclusivity was echoed by Britt: "I didn't feel particularly connected to the queer scene in Halifax. I found it almost a tight knit group when I tried to access community groups." In these reflections, the participants have identified a "scene" of people they identify as queer, and of people they would like to feel a sense of belonging with, only to perceive boundaries to their inclusion. These reflections expose confusion about what queer people feel community should do for them: Ella asks what kind of activity is involved in being an "active" part of the queer community, and Britt questions whether community groups are more about already established, "tight-knit" friendship ties than they are about serving any queer person.

In the written response she shared with me about The Company House, Cora-Lee emphasized the difficult relationship she feels she has with the queer community. In a later conversation she elaborated, “It’s almost as if I don’t feel qualified to explain *what* feels queer to me because I don’t feel queer enough - like accepted as queer enough - if that makes sense.” Cora-Lee understood that she met the inclusion criteria for the study but did not feel qualified to identify a queer space on behalf of a community from which she often felt excluded. Killen and McCann (2020), in their reflection on femme invisibility within the larger queer community, highlight “a more pernicious homophobia that can only see queerness according to certain logics of self- presentation ... [that] can operate within queer communities to mark certain bodies as ‘less’ queer than others” (136). The uncertainty of many participants about whether they were queer *enough* to be part of a queer community makes clear how inclusion, in this case in a queer community that claims a right to a space, is also a process of exclusion, with shaky boundaries for identifying queerness based on what “not-queer” might look, speak, dress or act like. In many of the responses I received, participants felt that spaces were queer when they could identify visibly queer people, usually strangers. It appeared that they were trying to imagine how “queer” and “not-queer” seem in order to assess whether the strangers around them belong to queer community, and to decide whether they themselves could be seen as queer and belonging.

This queer ‘impostor syndrome’ is the internal fear that participants were somehow less qualified than others to speak on experiences from within their queer community. It could have been informed by the participant’s concerns over having few queer social contacts, by concerns

about not being read by others as visibly queer, or by the participant's less than complete understanding of their own queerness (setting aside the fact that self-actualization and coming out is a lifelong process). I wonder if I would not have heard these conflicted perspectives from queer individuals who question their sense of belonging if, in designing my study, I had made some attempt at defining queerness more explicitly as criteria for inclusion in my study. Attempting to do so would have been socially and academically problematic provided how queerness is essentially undefinable and constantly shifting. Noah highlighted how my nonspecific criteria for inclusion led him to question his own eligibility: "Is Queer here being used to describe people who identify as Queer or an umbrella term for the LGBTQ2S+ community? Further clarification would be helpful since the term Queer can be ambiguous; I was unsure of how to answer this survey identifying as a gay man." I stand by my non-specificity. This conflicted sense of belonging is a valuable dimension and allowed me to think about how queer space *works* for queer people of various orientations, as well as the spaces queer people feel comfortable orienting themselves towards.



### *Queer Bars*

The places most frequently mentioned by participants in this study can be loosely grouped under the heading “queer bars.” The data identifies Reflections Cabaret (5187 Salter Street), The Seahorse Tavern (2037 Gottingen Street), Menz and Mollyz (closed, formerly at 182 Gottingen Street), and The Company House (closed, formerly at 2202 Gottingen St) as the queer bars of Halifax, all located in a tight cluster on Gottingen Street in Halifax’s North End neighbourhood with the exception of Reflections Cabaret, which can be found downtown. The North End neighbourhood is historically marked by lower-income households, as well as by a significant presence of African Nova Scotians<sup>1</sup>, military installations, the Halifax Shipyard and related industrial projects, and the Halifax Common. The North End, traditionally a lower-rent area that would have attracted populations of marginalized peoples, has in more recent years been subject to the forces of gentrification and urban renewal. The construction of luxury housing and businesses (e.g. boutiques and restaurants) catering to upper and upper-middle class consumers have created a sense of alienation among the area’s working-class residents: “this world is well outside of the price range of working-class people. For low-wage workers (disproportionately women and people of colour), the proliferation of \$300,000 condominiums and fancy restaurants is at best useless. Generally, it’s worse” (Gragg and Pankhurst, July 24,

---

<sup>1</sup> Many Black Nova Scotians were displaced within their own neighbourhood by the destruction of the Africville community by the municipal government.

2014). Like we have seen in other studies of queer neighbourhoods (for example Castells 1983; Adler and Brenner 1992 discussed earlier), queer businesses and people tend to cluster in areas with lower rents. The North End neighbourhood would fit the bill in this scenario, given it had a reputation (among non-residents) for being a dangerous area with high rates of violence and crime: “‘The way they sometimes wanted to paint our community,’ she said, ‘was that there was drugs, and there was violence, and nobody wanted to come to Creighton St [residential street nearby the Gottingen queer cluster].’” (Melinda Daye, qtd. CBC Radio, Feb 21 2018).

Concurrent with rising rents and the impacts of gentrification in the neighbourhood, the Gottingen Street queer business cluster has broken up as businesses have permanently closed.<sup>2</sup>

Queer bars are simultaneously important cultural symbols and sites of contested meaning in queer communities. The queer bar is often the first recognizable sign of queer presence in an urban environment and were usually the first queer space to come to the mind of people I engaged when talking about this study (“queer space, you mean like gay bars?” came up a lot when discussing my research with others). A queer bar can hold powerful symbolic value as a space where it is safe to be oneself and as a venue for queer entertainment, performance, and erotic play. Yet, these, like most queer-oriented spaces, are increasingly under threat. Queer bars are closing. In Halifax, 2017 saw the closure of The Company House at 2202 Gottingen Street after what had been described as “months of harassment” in response to backlash from an offensive comedy performance in April 2017. The Company House owner EmmaLeigh Rivera

---

<sup>2</sup> This cluster also surely includes SeaDogs Sauna, a bathhouse at 2199 Gottingen St, which was not mentioned by my participants

shared concerns for her safety: "It's been just kind of ongoing harassment ... People had lots of feelings about that and taking that out on us, calling us very horrific names. They knew a lot of personal information about my family's whereabouts and things like that. It's been a bit of a struggle" (qtd. Davie 2017). Menz & Mollyz, Halifax's only dedicated queer bar, succumbed to pandemic-related loss of revenue in 2020 (Thompson, 2020). Mattson's (2019) American study suggests that total gay bar listings declined by 36.6% from 2007 to 2019 in the United States (2), indicating that this downward trend extends further and more pervasively than Halifax, and is, in fact, reflected across North America. Multiple factors can be blamed for the decline of the queer bar: increasing acceptance leading to a "post-gay" society where queer and straight social lives are more integrated, the rise of dating and cruising apps eliminating the need for geographical space used for making sexual connections, and rising costs of property in the city (Miles 2021).

Hartless (2019) somewhat complicates the issue of gay bars in decline and highlights an important caveat for queer geographers: "Older narratives about the importance of queer space have often drawn a problematic line between heterosexual and LGBTQ places, framing queer enclaves and venues as more clearly bounded and homogeneous than is justified by reality" (7). This is an especially relevant consideration when confronted with the queer bar scene of Halifax, where explicitly or officially queer bar spaces no longer exist and there is no identifiable "queer neighbourhood" with a mappable border. Using a binary narrative of hetero vs. queer space could lead us to assume that, because there are no gay bars here, queer people simply do not gather together in space. Using Hartless' assertion, we can challenge the idea of "authentic" queer

spaces and emphasize any bar's potential to be queered, appropriated by queers, or made queer for a short time.

Shannon's memory of The Seahorse Tavern identifies it as one of these "questionably queer" environments: a space with great potential to be queered despite not ever being explicitly identified as a queer bar. When they attended a 90's Night event with some friends from work, Shannon remembers "being surprised that there were so many young visibly queer people in this space. The most I had seen in a space outside a Pride event or a concert of a queer artist." Contrasting The Seahorse with places they might expect to see a queer majority, underlines their surprise at having found community in an unexpected space. On the dance floor, they experienced an almost magical breakthrough: "The bar itself was nothing special and looked like an ordinary bar where people would dance. I remember not thinking anything of it, until I was in the middle of the dancefloor and I looked around to notice just how many queer people were around me. Young queer people openly kissing, dancing, and touching each other without fear or shame." Here, queerness is seen as unexpected in "an ordinary bar," where an exclusively straight presence is much easier to imagine. Being raised under the regime of heteronormativity influences us to imagine straight culture in "everyday" spaces and queer culture in spaces marked as different, through aesthetic choices, explicitly queer branding, or queer reputation. "I remember feeling excited to be around so many gays, who I didn't know. I felt like we had pulled a fast one on people, that we had infiltrated an event that wasn't explicitly gay coded and made it a queer event," Shannon elaborated. The queer presence at The Seahorse was not intentional.

Queer space was created here seemingly from thin air, on a night where Shannon expected nothing particularly queer to happen, by the appearance of high enough concentration of people Shannon read as visibly queer / practicing queerness and, however temporarily, gaining “control” of the space and disrupting the perceived norms implied by its “ordinary” atmosphere. Shannon noted that in recent years, while queer people still attend 90’s Night at The Seahorse, they no longer form a majority in the space, and as a result, “[T]he space feels different.” This may point to a permanent shift in Shannon’s mind about who attends 90’s Nights at The Seahorse, but it also highlights the fluid and unreliable production of queer space that the welcoming (but ultimately neutral) nightlife space offers to queer consumers.

Reflections Cabaret was a site of conflicted meaning for those who participated in my study. Among several positive responses there were also explicit mentions of Reflections as an unsafe space. For example, while Carley M. comments, “Reflections never felt safe, especially when it was Hot Tub Night,” Kirsten remembers “[H]anging out with all the freaks and queers and nobody was there to judge. It felt safe.” The written responses I received that specified Reflections as a site of queer belonging all situate Reflections as an “officially” queer location, although that designation is complicated by Reflections’ own self-identification as “label-free,” while acknowledging the bar’s gay-identified past. Lindsay V. is careful to specify “the *old* Reflections” [emphasis mine] in her response, and in a later conversation she revealed she felt different in the new space on Salter Street than she had in the old venue. After the 2014 move

from Sackville Street, she wrote, “it was less queer,” adding that she felt it was now more difficult to assume people in the new space would be queer.

Reflections self-describes, in their downtownhalifax.ca business directory listing, as having “evolved in to a ‘no labels, no rules’ bar where everyone is welcome and as long as what you are doing is not negatively affecting someone else’s experience and is not illegal, its ok.” Here, it is implied that Reflections has moved on from using labels, while continuing to adhere to some assumed norms of queer space: freedom to be one’s self, freedom to do what one wants (which implies sexual freedom too, as long as it does not interfere with others or the law), and being an inclusive and accepting environment. The Reflections business listing signals a desire to be defined by more than its reputation for being a queer spot, and Lindsay’s concern that the bar is now “less queer” suggests that that small linguistic shift might not have gone unnoticed. Hartless (2019) identifies Reflections’ self-described evolution toward a “no labels” bar (not signalling what they are evolving from) as an important marketing strategy for generating revenue, a “neoliberal branding” that indicates Reflections’ re-orientation of itself towards a “post-gay society.” This branding positions queerness as a draw for both queer consumers and non-queer people looking to enjoy a queer environment, in this case selling the “former” reputation of Reflections as a queers-only space along with the explicit open invitation to *everyone*, including non-queer people. That all responders coded Reflections as queer when the business itself only references queerness through innuendo (if at all) shows the power of reputation in coding a space as queer. At the same time nearly all responses about Reflections

noted that participants read many people at the club as straight: Lindsay and Kirsten both brought straight friends along to the club with them: “I would often go with straight friends who went for the drugs ... More often than not I would be surrounded (in my group) more by straight people than other queer people” (Lindsay); “[Who were you with?] Friends, lovers, also people who identified as straight but are my friends” (Kirsten). Daniel read the crowd as “a mix of LGBT folk and straights,” and EC highlights how although they perceived Reflections as a queer space, people they read as straight also felt comfortable enough in the Reflections environment (and, anecdotally, queer leisure environments more broadly) to look for straight affection: “Surrounded by a variety of queer people, but always seemed to be able to get hit on by straight men anyway.”

Aside from EC’s response, in which they position the presence of people perceived as straight—specifically the presence of straight *men*—as an intrusion, references to straight patrons at Reflections mostly seemed to position straight people as the invited guests of queer attendees. Kirsten and Lindsay, for example, both described inviting and including straight friends in outings to Reflections, and Daniel acknowledged their presence as part of “a mix” without expressing a positive or negative opinion on their presence. It is fair to assume that no queer bar is absolutely free of straight people or people perceived as straight, whether or not the bar markets itself as a welcoming environment to them: members of any majority population are found everywhere, even in spaces where minority populations congregate. But straight people were mentioned in this set of responses more than in reference to other queer bars in the data,

indicating that Reflections has apparently been somewhat successful in marketing itself as a “mixed” space rather than an exclusively queer one. It also indicates there is some tension about who controls the space. In my data, a straight presence at Reflections was defended when the straights were friends of queer respondents or if they blend into the “mix,” but was resented when they attempted to apply their own norms to the space, like a straight man hitting on a perceived member of the opposite gender.

Jey’s experience with straight friends and people they identify as straight at Menz & Mollyz [Menz] also acknowledges a tension between straight and queer presences in spaces that participants saw as queer. Jey acknowledged the more “exclusive” identification of Menz as a queer space, saying they vet their straight friends before inviting them there: “I usually went with other queers or sometimes coworkers as one of my colleagues often performed there. Menz was very much a queer space, so I generally only went with other queers or allies who I felt extremely comfortable with in my queerness.” Here Jey hints at a social barrier for straights who want to spend time in the so-called queer bar. In this example, Jey suggests that straight patrons should first be understood as trustworthy by the queer people they are connected to before being invited into the queer space; the social barrier to straight inclusion is the enforcement of this vetting process by queer friends who claim ownership over the space, and take responsibility for the straight people they allow into it. Jey described using a vetting process to maintain the value of safety for queer patrons (to be themselves), this is perhaps the most important guiding norm that governs the space. The vetting process that Jey described is a strategic attempt at



maintaining the queer control of a space they feel should be queer cultural territory; it works to alleviate discomfort over the feeling that queer bodies and culture are being targeted as objects of cosmopolitan tourism by visitors who self-identify, or who are identified by queer consumers, as straight, and it helps manage the feeling of injustice over straight people claiming space to engage with queer practice while avoiding any of the cultural stigma of having to be a queer person. Vetting straight friends is additionally a form of resistance to allowing straight cultural norms to dominate the space. For instance, EC's frustration at being the object of straight men's attraction at Reflections signals that they believe the perceived norm of straight bars - that straight men are permitted to show attraction toward people perceived as straight women - should not be the norm in queer bars.

The process of vetting straight friends might be especially important at Menz, formerly Halifax's de facto drag bar, especially considering the explosion in popularity of drag performance in mainstream culture thanks in large part, in recent years, to RuPaul's Drag Empire. Live drag performances take place in many spaces of Halifax. I have seen drag performances at student union bars, the public library, and in high school auditoriums, but Menz and Mollyz's resident drag performers also drew regular audiences of straight and queer people. The idea of "ownership" of queer cultural products, or commodities from *any* culture, is a complicated issue surrounded by massive questions about the politics of consumption. What queer cultural products are consumable by straight communities, and what are unacceptable to consume? When is consuming a product from another cultural group supporting them with

exposure and capital, and at what point does it become unacceptable or an imposition? And what is (or should be) the role of commercial spaces or cultural insiders in managing the access that cultural outsiders have to the product they are selling? At what point does cross-cultural consumption become cultural appropriation? These large questions point to the complicated ethics and social dynamics of outsiders consuming ‘queer culture,’ especially considering queer communities in and of themselves cross-cultural and fold into a much wider diversity of cultural experiences. Certainly, gay bars have made some attempts at managing straight access to queer territories. For example, Lauren O’Neil for *blogTO* (2019) reported that Toronto drag bar *Crews* and *Tangos* had stopped taking reservations for bachelorette parties (identified as heteronormative rituals beyond the cultural practices of the queer community) in order to maintain the balance of straight to queer consumers.

This defensiveness on the part of queer actors is a strategy for keeping queer control of contested spaces challenged by real or perceived straight tourism, but knee-jerk opposition to a dominating straight presence may also further exclude queer individuals who struggle to find a sense of belonging in queer communities. Cora-Lee, for example, describes the struggle to find space within the queer community based on her relationship, which often appears heterosexual: “As someone who is bi, and in a man-woman relationship I find it difficult to fit into the queer community. Even though my queerness is a huge part of my identity.” Speaking specifically of her experience at *The Company House*, she identifies a conflict between her feelings of alienation from the queer community and her perception of the community’s goals: “I didn’t feel

as though it was a queer safe space at times but felt like I needed to feel that way because of its reputation.” Cora-Lee sensed some tension between The Company House’s purported reputation for supporting queer life and the exclusion she felt based on others’ understanding of her relationship as a straight one<sup>3</sup> and therefore not as welcome to participate in the social contract of creating queer safe space.

There is a strong community association of The Company House [CoHo] with lesbians and queer women. Although none of my participants identified it as actively excluding or catering to any group of people, my recollection from my own experience with the space, and stereotypes I absorbed from people in my circle, was that it tended to attract lesbians and queer-identified women, maybe due in part to noticeable lesbian representation among their front of house staff: “A lot of my friends worked there and were queer/lesbians, and many queer friendly events were hosted there” (Carley); “Long red curtains. Clean bathrooms. A long bar always with a deft dyke slinging drinks” (Alana). The presence of queer staff, identified by friends as members of the community, or easily read as queer by their personal style, makes a difference in coding a place as queer; participants who talked about Glitterbean Café noted that queer staff were also highly noticeable there. From working with a majority queer front-of-house staff at Java Blend, one memorable experience I had (that created a sensation among the queer women on staff) was hearing from a neighborhood resident and gay community member that he had been hearing that Java Blend was turning into “a dyke café.” For queer women, who are often more vulnerable to fetishisation and other unwanted sexual attention, I speculate that a

---

<sup>3</sup> Cora-Lee is a woman-appearing person who is romantically involved with a man-appearing person.

strong presence of queer women on staff will indicate to queer women patrons a social contract in the space that will protect them from this unwanted attention and the associated risk of harassment or assault. Staff who are less aware of issues queer women face in the nightlife scene may not recognize the signs that this is happening, or they might be quietly complicit in this kind of behaviour. From the data I collected, and from my own experiences of queer culture, safety is the most important thing for many queer women.

If we conceptualize the queer bar as an important site of sexual liberation, we can also posit that queer women will seek spaces in which they can comfortably express their sexuality away from the patriarchal gaze, spaces like the Company House. Michelle comments, “I loved seeing girls kissing other girls or grinding on other girls and it wasn’t a thing.” Under the heteropatriarchal regime, female sexuality, including sexuality *between* women, is highly commodified and is often packaged for the consumption of straight men. In a leisure atmosphere where same-gender sexual play, especially between women, is often understood to be a performance for straight men’s consumption, it can be more liberating not to be noticed at all. For queer women, the integration of men- and women-oriented queer spaces as well as straight and queer nightlife scenes means that, due to the pervasiveness of the patriarchal gaze outside women’s spaces, the “post-gay” integrated space cannot deliver the sexual freedom that it promises.

Consistent with their conceptualization as sites of sexual liberation, participants tended to sexualize the space through their use of physical descriptors: hot, sweaty, gritty, seedy, dirty; a

welcoming place of great potential for various kinds of forbidden and furtive activities.

Seediness played a significant thematic role in the narrative responses the participants offered about queer night life in Halifax, and about Reflections in particular. EC described it as, “[D]ark, dirty, small stage ... gross bathrooms and backstage ... Loud, press of bodies, smell of spilled beer ... Made me feel excited, almost giddy.” For Lindsay and Daniel, “It was so dirty and grungy, but it was the vibe. The grimy checkered dance floor and bathroom stalls that never had proper working doors. There was almost always people having sex or making out in the one working stall in the bathroom” (Lindsay); “Dim, welcoming, slightly seedy, gaudy lights, seeing them seeing you” (Daniel). Taylor and Falconer (2015) highlight the role of disgust and attraction in peoples’ understandings and mappings of queer space. The spatial affects of dirt, grime, and seediness work as a deterrent for some, but also as a part of the draw for people who enjoy Reflections, and hint to some of the possibilities of interacting within this type of space that might be impossible in cleaner, brighter, and quieter environments: “having sex in the one working stall in the bathroom,” for example.

The “dirty” effect plays an important role in sexualizing the space, and the symbolic associations between seediness, shame, and marginalised sexual bodies highlights how participants saw, used, and queered Reflections. This connection was especially real for Daniel, who described Reflections as both “welcoming” and “slightly seedy.” Daniel highlights visibility in his response: the reciprocal relationship of observing others and being observed (“seeing them seeing you”), noticing classmates from high school he hadn’t previously recognized as queer and

re-coding them in this environment, and using the boundaries of the space as a tool of (in)visibility: “balconies and alcoves for opportunities to enter and exit the fray, acting as respite and space for a partial community overview.” At the same time, I got the sense that Daniel’s memory was situated in a very personal process of getting to know himself in this environment; he recalls his “personal attempts at lowering guard,” feeling “awkward, out-of-place, uncertain, elated.” Here, a personal relationship with marginalized sexuality (and, with marginalisation, shame) is experienced as reflected in a seedy, queer environment, through the processes of seeing and being seen, queer coding others, and presumably being queer coded oneself. Did the more sanitised (relatively speaking) environment provided in Reflections’ new, post-2014 Salter Street location contribute to Lindsay’s feeling that the site was less queer than the original? Does Reflections’ new, cleaner image make the queer aesthetic more desirable, or does it make it easier to sell queer space to a mainstream crowd?

By contrast, some participants positioned themselves as disconnected from the bar scene and focused instead on a need for more youth space as a critique of how bars and sexualised environments hold sway over the way queer cultural life is viewed. These responses imagined youth access to sober spaces as conflicting with available adult-oriented space, substance use, and partying. “I have felt that Halifax has done a good start with creating spaces for queer youth, it is important to create smaller gatherings that seem less intimidating and more accessible spaces,” suggested Eli. For Britt, “I think it’s telling that one of the few queer spaces, and the primary one I remember is a bar. I had an alcohol dependency at the time, and it is easy to see the

correlation.” Theo and Abbey seemingly agreed: “Ya, I think Halifax is really lacking spaces for the queer community to go. There was one bar, but it was really trashy and now that it’s closed there’s nothing” (Theo); “As someone who does not really ‘party’ a sober and inclusive space meant for people like me meant the world to me” (Abbey).

These narratives, ones that create distance between the queer self and the queer bar, make up an important and fascinating counternarrative to a popular but opposing view: that queer bars are critically endangered sites of queer cultural heritage, and that queer bars are the most important point of focus for situating queer identities in a region. Again, it highlights the problem with viewing queer community as singular and stable. My first reaction to this wholesale rejection of the queer bar by some of my study’s participants was to view it as part of the same socially conservative mentality that attempts to moderate ways of life that are viewed as hedonistic. There is room, of course, for a more complicated interpretation. First, as Britt highlights, substance use is a pressing issue for queer communities: a 2020 report on 2018 data collected by the Substance Use and mental Health Services Administration demonstrates that substance use is higher in queer (in this study, lesbian, gay and bisexual) adults than straight adults in the United States across all drugs. A lack of welcoming sober space in queer communities can be isolating for queer individuals who have rejected substance use due to addiction or personal preference. Additionally, the pervasive and powerful stereotype associating queerness with party culture and substance use can be alienating for individuals who do not identify with it; like Abbey, “someone who doesn’t really ‘party’” is not going to benefit from

the environment of the queer bar. Although the queer bar is ostensibly a safe space where queers can be themselves, the space will not work that way for people whose senses of self, and senses of queerness, do not involve going to parties or using substances.

The 2020 closure of Menz and Mollyz also spurred a discussion in support of queer space for adults. In one Global News article, McSheffery (2021) reported that: “Adult-only queer spaces are critical, ... as some members of the LGTBQ2 community are at risk of falling ‘through the cracks’ when they age out of the youth programming they leaned on as teenagers.” This perspective emphasizes the importance of balancing the many expectations and priorities of the loose collection of queer communities of Halifax. In my view, emphasizing a need for youth spaces and sober spaces *instead* of queer bars problematically oversimplifies the many and various needs of queer people as a cultural group. The critique of several participants of the queer bar as the supreme cultural space of the queer people reminds us that the symbolic value of queer bars, while popular, does not reflect the more complex ways of life of queer people. We might adopt a more balanced view by incorporating not only youth programming (as suggested by participants) but other forms of queer leisure like sports and café life, which are also represented in my study’s data. This way we can expand the social contract of the queer bar as “a safe space to be oneself,” into more space, more aspects of queer living.

### *Labour and Producing Queer Space*



Julien engaged queer bar culture as a producer, rather than a consumer, of queer leisure space. He entertained audiences at Menz and Mollyz as a drag performer: “I started doing drag during Pride and like every local drag performer, ended up backstage at Menz.” As previously discussed, drag is a form of entertainment widely associated with queer space, and key in the production of queer-oriented entertainment at Menz and Mollyz. This often came at a cost to the entertainers who laboured to create an entertaining and inviting queer environment for consumers, often in spite of a toxic and uncomfortable work environment. As Julien elaborated:

Well, I won't be in this place again, COVID-19 forced it to close. Come near the end of my time going and performing I was pretty exhausted of the place. The power dynamics of the drag queens vs the rest of the performers were so imbalanced and I was feeling like a token in the shows I was booked for. ... Though I do believe Halifax is a relatively safe city to be queer in, I believe our queer community within itself needs to do better for each other.

Another participant, Emerson, engaged the topic of queer space in Halifax by reflecting on their experience with spaces where they had acted as a service provider of social justice work and of commercial products:

As a queer youth, The Youth Project was a safe haven for discovering and developing my identity for about two years. However, when I started to become more politically active, and started to question (for instance) why the space was predominantly white in a predominantly Black neighbourhood, I was met with hostility from the staff and eventually felt pushed out of the space. South House Gender and Sexual Resource Center was also a space where I felt seen and held in queer community for many years.

The Youth Project is a community resource center located at 2281 Brunswick Street. It is a stone's throw away from the previously discussed (former) cluster of queer bars on Gottingen Street. Following their mission statement, “to make Nova Scotia a safer, healthier, and happier

place for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth through support, education, resource expansion and community development,” they host events and programs like conferences, drop-ins and summer camps, provide free resources to youth such as gender-affirming clothing and safer sex supplies, and distribute a range of educational materials in support of queer and trans youth (“The Youth Project”). For Emerson, The Youth Project was a space to find their footing in the queer community, but it was also where they came to understand the difficult politics of inclusivity at play there. The deeply held value of inclusiveness, they found, held up only *as long as you cooperated*. When Emerson began to challenge problematic structural issues in The Youth Project, their co-workers and leadership designated them as a disruption and they were rejected. Inclusivity, even in a space purported to be highly inclusive, is never perfect, and often breaks down when norms are challenged. This also connects to neoliberal branding of urban queer space as accepting and cosmopolitan for including sanitized versions of queer life that are palatable to the heteronormative mainstream. In Emerson’s example, although The Youth Project was not actively excluding Black queers, the predominance of white people in the space suggested that their programming was not reaching the queer youth who live in the predominantly Black neighbourhood where The Youth Project is located. Emerson’s criticism ran counter to The Youth Project’s inclusive brand, and, in this case, it was easier for the critic to be removed from the space than for meaningful discussion and, potentially, restructuring to occur.

Emerson outgrew The Youth Project when The Youth Project refused to engage with issues Emerson viewed as very important. Instead, they turned their sights to South House, which works from the Dalhousie-King's University communities as “ a student-funded, volunteer-driven resource centre that seeks to address and advocate for anti-oppression issues within a feminist framework,” as a resource centre that aims to extend beyond the university into the broader community (“The South House Sexual and Gender Resource Society Constitution,” 2017). Through their library, they offer “a wide variety of social justice themed publications,” as well as safer sex supplies and menstrual supplies. Emerson worked at the South House as a community volunteer before joining the organization as a student: “I started frequenting South House in my last year of high school in preparation for going to Dal, to try to establish myself in that space, especially as I became more and more disillusioned with The Youth Project and their lack of support for various communities.” Emerson sought out an environment where their perspective was valued and shared by others:

The Youth Project was primarily other white queer Liberal youth in my experience - any youth that began to radicalize or ask for an intersectional approach were pushed out of that space. South House was more radical leftists, where intersectional thought was encouraged - a lot of the people that came to that space were radical or looking to become more radical. This is where I met my crew of ‘angry feminists.’

While the dominant theme in work about queer space, including mine, is that *queers are losing space*, Emerson's and Julien's memories about *space losing queers* is useful for complicating that narrative, and especially when moving on from queer space comes as a direct result of providing labour to queer communities: social justice work and entertainment in these

two cases. Experiences of growth away from queer spaces represent queers not as solely victims of gentrification or other threats to space, but also as agents of conflict and cultural change with decision making power over where they situate queer community and feel senses of belonging. This is evidenced by how different Lynne's experience of The Youth Project community was from Emerson's. Lynne attended multiple "Transformers" events during her time in Halifax, an evening discussion group for transgender youth. During her time there, The Youth Project "moved toward being a very comfortable place" where she "met other trans people and got to know their experiences." For Lynne, the environment she got comfortable in at The Youth Project was worth the forty-minute drive from her home outside town.

Emerson and Lynne played different roles in the organization: Emerson sat on boards and volunteered, while Lynne was a recipient of services and events. Emerson's memories of The Youth Project contrasted with Lynne's, just as the joy multiple responders felt at Menz contrasted with the exhaustion Julien felt navigating the power dynamics of the performers there. These differences reflect and underline both the value and the cost of the *labour* it takes to be queer and create queer space for others. Emerson sums it up well:

Community is beautiful but also incredibly difficult and complicated. Having to navigate complex conflicts and bureaucracy through both The Youth Project and South House left me incredibly burnt out. I remember the burnout rate for SoHo being 1-2 years in my time there - I lasted about 3, which felt like quite an accomplishment. But when everyone is running on fumes, you're relying almost entirely on volunteer labour, and most people are marginalized and already dealing with oppression and hardship on a daily basis, it's hard for people to do the work sustainably.

*Queer-Identified cafés*

I frame my own experiences with queer scenes in Halifax through labour as well, largely through the specialty coffee industry at Halifax at Steve-O-Reno's café and Java Blend café. When considering my own responses to the questions I offered my participants, I considered the time I had spent enjoying myself in queer bars or partying at Pride, but by and large I have spent most of my queer life in Halifax in spaces where I was not enjoying myself: working at my minimum wage café jobs. I have had a variety of work experiences during my time in Halifax, but the only times I have been able to extend my queerness into my workday is when I have worked as a barista. For me, being visible at work feels good and affirming; being in an environment where much of the time I am *assumed* to be queer is refreshing compared to so many of my other life experiences where a heteronormative environment has pressured me to appear heterosexual or (at the very least) not to be so obvious about being gay, in order to be successful and accepted.

In this section, I have felt encouraged to reflect on the labour that I do in my own workplace to produce queer space; Java Blend, as a space steeped in North End history, resists categorization as belonging to any one part of Halifax's population as it carries meaning and memory for a huge variety of people. A space that feels queer tends to start with a diverse and visible queer staff who occupy space with their bodies and cultures, but who also have an interest in establishing a social contract in the space that respects queer people; they create an

environment where queer forms of expression can thrive. A non-queer ownership can foster this environment with various supports like, for example, nongendered washrooms, anti-oppression training, or adequate medical supports for staff undergoing medical gender transition. Making queer spaces includes creating an attractive, safe environment for queer people to work and be in; this will encourage queer people to show up.

I am personally deeply attached to the queer café as a space of massive potential for studying queer life because of my own lived experience in and out of work. As a very insecure, teenaged “baby gay,” in the closet and new to thinking about gender and sexuality, I cut my teeth on queer life at Halifax cafés, memorably Just Us! on Spring Garden Road<sup>4</sup>, Coburg Coffee on Coburg Road, Paperchase café on Blowers Street, and Java Blend on North Street. I drank coffee in these places, but I also observed the queer quotidian of both customers and staff, and started to model my style choices after theirs. I was chasing a vague and slippery quality in these people that I could not yet identify in them or in myself. Café culture and learning how to fit in and socialize in these spaces cannot be disentangled from my own growing up and coming out story.

Moving back to Halifax, having come of age and gained a sense of my queer self elsewhere, my road into queer community was also through the café world, this time from the other side of the counter at Steve-O-Reno’s and Java Blend, places where I had the experience of working with some of the archetypal “cool people” that might have influenced me as a teenager. The realization that I was now viewed in the same way—a friend who worked up the street told

---

<sup>4</sup> This Just Us! location eventually became the franchise of The Smiling Goat that subsequently became the Glitterbean Café.

me their young queer clients were talking about *me*, the unapproachable queer barista—was a powerful feeling, and shaped the way I viewed my own young customers, especially now that I have had the reality check that the name and reputation that sometimes come with being a queer barista do not adequately improve the fundamentally bad experience of working in the minimum wage service industry. On the other hand, working in coffee, and sometimes being part of a majority queer front of house staff, has always felt like an affirming environment for my gender and sexuality. Both as a customer and a staff member, specialty café environments in Halifax feel generally welcoming to me and my identities. Other work environments were at best less explicitly supportive, dismissive of my personal life, or at worst made me vulnerable to harassment and workplace discrimination.

Emerson returns to the story at this point, having laboured as part of the groups that opened two important, currently operating queer spaces in Halifax: the Glitter Bean café, which was represented in the data collected from my participants, and Outlaw Country Tattoo, which was not: “I worked full time at the Glitter Bean ... for just under a year before transitioning into working more hours at Outlaw, where I now work full time.” Glitter Bean grew out of a labour dispute that is still being resolved. The Spring Garden Road location of the Smiling Goat café was abruptly shuttered in 2017 amid ongoing conflict between the café workers and owner Kit Singh over unpaid wages, as well as unpaid expenses with suppliers, landlords, and lawyers (Von Stackelberg, May 28, 2018). Smiling Goat former staff members took over the lease and reopened the space as the Glitter Bean café, a queer worker-run co-op café and community space

(Saunders, 2018). Another establishing member of Glitter Bean, Charlie Huntley, described it in *The Coast* as “explicitly queer but not exclusively queer” (qtd. Durling 2018), signaling to queer people through a memorably colourful aesthetic, queer staff, and use of activist language in the space: for instance, the “no terfs, no swerfs” sign in looping, delicate cursive taped to the front door. The staff, who are majority out queer, emphasize that they are creating queer space by curating the space itself: signs, flags, and art by local queer creators adorn the walls and windows, as well as workplace traditions: “I remember the early days where we had Freddie Friday at The Glitter Bean, where my coworker and I would play Queen for the whole morning and dance to Freddie Mercury’s voice while pulling shots of espresso” (Emerson). The importance of this curation is well remembered by a number of participants: “I remember warm inviting colours and artwork,” “The walls were really pink, and there was artwork all over the place,” “It was colourful and filled with people,” (Eli C, Josie, Abbie C). On one wall, you could also find a collection of posters that shows a history of Halifax’s queer businesses, indicating an association with a long tradition of activist queer business in Halifax including historic gay bars Rumours and The Turret.

The combined effect of the atmosphere, queer staff, and the very public story of how Glitter Bean developed all add up to a queer sense of belonging for many customers. Eli stated, “I felt accepted and [a part] of the queer community for the first time since I had been outed two years prior.” For Abbey, “[J]ust thinking about it makes me feel so warm and giddy, I just want to be back there so bad - I want to feel like I belong.” Andrew Gorman-Murray and Catherine



Nash (2017) highlight the importance in queer neighbourhoods of multiple sites of consumption, including cafés, for generating a sense of community and conviviality “that are supportive of a queer sensibility” (794). Easy comparisons can also be made between the queer bar and the queer café: they are leisure spaces for queer people to drink beverages and socialize with one another. Given the dominance of the bar as a queer social site, it is easy enough to view the café as its daytime parallel or sober alternative, and cafés *do* serve as important social spaces for non-drinkers and underaged people. Gorman-Murray and Nash emphasize the importance of a balance in thriving queer neighbourhoods between more “inclusive” daytime leisure sites of consumption like cafés and more “exclusive” nightlife leisure sites like gay bars: “the balance between vibrant daytime and night-time economies is consequential for the types of social interaction and inclusion in neighbourhoods, especially for LGBT populations” (802). We can expand on these relationships by considering the different meanings queer folks have made of cafés. Jodi Davis, in her study of Hot Java, a café in Long Beach, California, identified the café as a space that “challenges the concept of the closet. It provides a socially visible setting that allows customers to gather based on sexual orientation and to create a sense of social capital” (8). The shared value of the queer café and the queer bar is evident through the construction of social capital in a shared space, but in the queer café there is also a unique and nuanced text to be understood about its “dailiness”: working, eating, socializing and drinking in a queer café are viewed both as processes of everyday life and as practices of queer visibility beyond the more liminal space of a nightclub where the expectations and boundaries of daily life do not apply.

### *Queer Sport*

In a leisure scene that appears to be rapidly shifting towards an integrated, “post-gay” model that cannot fully satisfy any consumer (except maybe the straight tourist to gay space), the queer sport scene radically creates space for queer(ed) bodies whose exclusion from sport is often a matter of official policy. Though there are numerous queer sports organizations in Halifax, I received responses that specifically discussed the Anchor City Rollers roller derby organization, and Seven Bays Bouldering. Although Seven Bays is not exclusively used for sport—it is also a café and licensed establishment—I included it as part of this discussion because of the strong association Maddi made between Seven Bays and the community of friends they made through climbing.

Sport is a notoriously hostile terrain for trans and intersex bodies due to highly regulated criteria for inclusion or exclusion, as well as for those with queer sexual identities. Homophobic cultures in and surrounding sport are pervasive and present unwelcoming environments for queer athletes in many forms of competitive sport. Trans and intersex bodies are often excluded from sport through the application of barriers related to hormone levels that are nearly never applied to cisgender bodies. Sport participation, especially for youth, is a public health concern: “Regular physical activity ... is important for the health and mental well-being of young people; has long-term health and cardiovascular benefits; has positive effects on academic performance;

reduces stress, anxiety, and depressive symptoms; and improves self-confidence and self-esteem,” yet sport participation is low among queer people compared to straight and cisgender people due to the multiple barriers they face (Doull et. al., 2018, 218). Faced with a dearth of resources to address homophobia, transphobia, and other gender and sexuality-based exclusion from competitive sport space, queers have created their own separate spaces as a form of resistance to a system that excludes them and to provide safer access to the many and layered positive health effects of participating in sport.

Roller derby has emerged as both a team sport and an important site for gender and erotic play as performance. Parry (2016) situates roller derby as a form of resistance in a wider social and cultural context of women and women’s bodies in sport being stigmatized as mannish and masculine, generating pressure for women to emphasize femininity and heterosexuality through various means. The transgressions of gendered performance in sport, in this case engaging in full-contact, “violent,” and fast-paced bouts, are a form of resistance to hegemonic norms that simultaneously position men’s dominance in sport as natural and disorient women from sport.

Sports are popularly categorized as “sport” (meaning played by cis-men) and “women’s sport” (played by cis women) as in, for example, the National Basketball Association and the Women’s National Basketball Association. This linguistic distinction positions cis maleness and male embodiment as the norm and cis women as the exception; non-binary and trans athletes need not apply, as these linguistic distinctions also enforce a binary gender model from which they are excluded. Alongside this is the implicit assumption that the bodies participating in sport

are heterosexual. Roller Derby is notable because since its inception, the rules (if not the pay) for men's and women's professional games have been the same (Klemesrud, 1972), and spectators expect the same behaviour in the sport from men and women. By contrast, as an example, bodychecking is encouraged in men's professional hockey and illegal in women's.

The most popular professional derby leagues, International Roller Derby League and Roller Games, folded by 1975, and the current most popular revival of the sport began in 2001 with a group of women in Austin, Texas (Harlan, July 16, 2019). The modern revival of roller derby is largely women-dominated, and the Women's Flat Track Derby Association, the international governing body of roller derby leagues, is explicit about not discriminating based on "sexual orientation, gender identity and expression" in the composition of WFTDA's version of roller derby (Women's Flat Track Derby Association, 2020). Anchor City Rollers also welcomes gender-diverse skaters: "ACR does not and will not differentiate between members who identify as cisgender and those who identify as transgender or non-binary gender," and does not set medical qualification requirements or requirements based on declaring a sex or gender, removing any official gender or sex-based barriers from participating. Their policy is also to engage gender neutral language to create a culture and a vernacular that is equally accessible to people of all genders (ACRC Code of Conduct, 2019).

Much of the existing literature on contemporary roller derby focuses on the experiences of women-identified people, but the discussion becomes richer when we expand the language and scope to include people with a broader range of gender identities and presentations,

including non-binary and genderqueer identities. Carly Gieseler (2014) presents derby as a women's parody of "hegemonic scripts of sexuality through embodiment, costume, play, and language" in a transgressive and sexual gender performance not unlike drag (758). Derby skaters drag traditional scripts of sport by elevating the traditionally marginalized space of women's sport, and simultaneously elevating bodies and sexualities that elude the heteronormative male gaze (772). Expanding the scope to include a wider range of non-binary gender performances beyond those who identify, or who spectators identify, as women, we can also identify a wider range of transgression and see how nonbinary bodies in sport (and in everyday life) play with scripts of normative sex and sexuality, body shape and ability, expectations of women, and expectations of women in sport.

The value of derby to Art was in its provision of an inclusive and open environment to be active and surrounded by community. When Art first encountered the Anchor City Rollers, they went alone, and encountered "a sea of queer people" who welcomed them right away:

When I walked into the gym, it was like I had found my people. Everyone was a cool AFAB queer, with cool hair and tattoos. They were all on roller skates and were all kind to me. I felt so included. ... I remember being attracted to the freedom of the community. Everyone was positive and smouldering. Everyone was attractive and athletic. I wanted to join and become friends and partners with many.

The roller derby environment, for Art, was welcoming and freeing, a far cry from traditional sports environments that draw hard lines of inclusion and exclusion and foster queerphobic cultures. In some ways, the way Anchor City Rollers has created queer space is similar to what I described in relation to gay bars and other leisure spaces: a gathering of queer

people together in a time and place where there is a scarcity of safe places to play. But Anchor City Rollers also demonstrates how a “top-down” approach to queer placemaking, using official policy to explicitly welcome nonnormative gender performances, creates an environment where queer people want to go, want to participate, and want to welcome each other.

At Seven Bays Bouldering on Gottingen Street, Maddi acknowledges a similar effort to include non-normative identities: “They have events geared towards creating space for ‘womxn’ (their word), or women and queer folks, but, overall, it is an unofficial queer space.” Seven Bays offers another example of “post-gay” mixed spaces in Halifax; spaces that should be seen as welcoming to all. Maddi situates themselves, as a queer person, as part of an active minority of queer people in the climbing community:

I started going there very soon after coming out, and it stands in my brain as a place worth mentioning here because I felt surrounded by queer community almost all of the time that I was there. I would often make plans to go with one or two friends, but in almost no time at all I had expanded my climbing social circle such that it was nearly impossible to walk into the building and NOT see someone I knew! Seven Bays stands out to me as a place I could go to be surrounded especially by queer women, but this was an interesting phenomenon because there is definitely a significant portion of the climbing population that does not consist of queer women. It’s safe to say that my access to queer community and support networks was greatly improved by my decision to start climbing there.

For Maddi, using Seven Bays as a combined social, work, and sport space provided them a gateway to much expanding their queer community:

In the beginning I went with friends (often queer friends) to climb, and then we would usually follow our climbs with a coffee or a beer and a catch-up. I then started spending more time there outside of climbing, to study and work on my thesis. In November I fell and broke my arm, which meant that I couldn’t climb for a few months, but I still frequented the café to see my climbing friends for

coffee/beers and to do schoolwork. Throughout it all, though, socializing with friends and meeting new people was also central to any time I spent there.

Maddi's reflection also shows how Seven Bays cannot be categorized as *only* a place for sport. When Maddi broke their arm and could not climb, their access to the queer community that Seven Bays hosted was not cut off or diminished by their diminished ability to participate in the activity that brought them to the community in the first place. Seven Bays is expansive in the way it offers queer communities many different ways to engage the space: as a solo or class-based exercise, as a café, and as a bar.

One thing I found interesting about the two participants responses that discussed queer sport space is that they were the only ones to eroticize queer people or position themselves as sexual or romantic agents [the emphases that follow are mine]: "Everyone was positive and smouldering. *Everyone was attractive and athletic. I wanted to join and become friends and partners with many*" (Art); "I remember having a lot of crushes, making new friends, and enjoying the feeling of having a place that I could go where I knew I could surround myself with friends and community" (Maddi). It makes me wonder whether it is a coincidence that these participants, both of whom felt a sense of belonging in spaces where queer bodies and what they can do are at the forefront, are more comfortable than other participants acknowledging the romantic and sexual feelings that come into being in a space where queer people gather together.

### *Halifax Pride Festival*

In Halifax, the annual Pride festival is probably the most overt manifestation of queer placemaking to the outsider. It is the multi-day appropriation of public space for queer cultural activity and educational content, celebration, the well-attended Pride parade, and various forms of partying. Pride is also subject to the same process of commodification and “blending” of the boundaries of straight and queer spaces that I have demonstrated play out (most obviously) in the queer bar; a narrative that “Pride is for everyone” seemingly competes with one of queer people celebrating their various differences from the hetero-cis-norm: “We’re here, we’re queer, get used to it!” This tension is further complicated by the interests of the city, not a neutral space; although Pride events happen inside the city, it is also an institution with its own interests: “For the entrepreneurial city, cosmopolitan places serve both as destinations for local and out-of-town tourists and as markers of tolerance and diversity that enhance the city’s perceived quality of life” (Rushbrook 2002, p. 189). The neoliberal branding of Pride as “for everyone” serves the city’s interest in positioning itself as a tolerant and diverse place: it has more practical value here than to the queer activists who originated Pride; including straight people in the festivities is not generally considered a goal of the LGBTQ+ justice movement. Halifax Pride takes place in July while most major Pride festivals are held in June; Halifax’s comparatively smaller festival with



less corporate sponsorship cannot compete with the tourist draws of larger festivals in Toronto and Montreal.

Pride was not mentioned much by my participants. I don't interpret this to mean that my participants do not care about Pride or do not believe that Pride is a queer space, but maybe that they wanted to highlight the importance of other, more permanent queer spaces first. Michelle, for example, seems to position Pride as an inferior stand-in for permanent queer space: "The closure of all the queer space in our city is devastating. We now have only one week a year to be who we want to be in any given public space." Michelle draws attention to the value of Pride as a context for being Out in public, but also its ephemerality. With very little 24/7 queer leisure space, is the only remaining context for celebrating queerness a highly scheduled, boundaried, and controlled (by authorities, the city, and corporate interests) festival environment?

As contentious as the issue of corporatizing and integrating Pride can be, it also provides a space of potential for closeted queer people to participate without concealing their identities. In 1987, some of Halifax's first gay pride marchers wore paper bag masks out of fear for their safety (CBC News, July 27, 2013). In today's cultural and commercial environment, where a number of observers and participants can reasonably be expected to be straight, queer people can use heteronormativity and the presence of straight solidarity (or voyeurship) as a form of armour from being outed. Kay, a study participant who is in the closet, observed The Grind (formerly WetSpot) at the Garrison Grounds, a dance party held at the end of the Pride festival. She situated herself, in 2019, at the periphery of the event:

I was going for an evening walk and decided to walk on Citadel Hill. Some loud music was coming from the Garrison Grounds and I wanted to check it out, I was walking along the South Park St. towards the Citadel Hill. ... I was with my partner. I actually saw an acquaintance there we both knew but we decided not to say hi because we were not open to him and he was not open to us. A lot of people were at the venue. Some people were walking/sitting outside the fence (like us, didn't pay to go in) enjoying the music and performances. ... It looked like a lot of fun, but also a lot of people under influence of alcohol/substance. I remember the event being loud, fun, colorful. I remember seeing drag performances and myself dancing to the music while my partner was just smiling at me.

Kay, on the hill, emphasized her feelings of peace and connection to her natural surroundings while people-watching the event below her:

This was before the Dorian [2019 hurricane] and there were still big trees on the Citadel Hill. Those trees were iconic (to me) and the little trail on the Citadel Hill was one of my favourite places to walk with my dog. I remember those trees, people sitting down and watching the performances. It was loud from the event and cold because it was late at night. ... I feel the connection to nature, I feel accepted (not by people around but more so by nature around me), free.

This Pride dance party took a place that Kay already had a relationship with (Citadel Hill) and filled it with queer space, creating a memory with new meanings beyond the ones she had already established. Her memory is of simultaneously enjoying the familiar natural element of this place, to which she was already connected, and the new queer one, which connected with her concealed identity.

I felt connected to this submission because I was at this party—I have been at every one since moving here—and it was surprising to read Kay watching a crowd of people under the influence in which I could positively include myself. Lindsay was also at this party (we went together):

Wet Spot has been another place/occasion that has made a pretty big impact on me. It's the one party I look forward to every year. There's nothing like being surrounded by so many people who have gone through the same struggles as you, who feel the same sense of community as you. All while being able to let loose and celebrate who you are.

A critical mass of queer bodies partying, a sense of shared struggle, creates an environment where Lindsay can let loose. In the venue I saw many other participants who, like Kay, positioned themselves on the periphery to take in the event—some shy and removed from the organism of the crowd, some relaxed and open to it. We entered and exited the amoeba of dancers to wait in beer lines and portajohn lines. We ended our night like we usually do, further downtown with a slice of pizza. Crossing out of that fenced and boundaried queer world into the “real world,” where heteronormativity even thrives in pizza shops, my partner and I transformed into poorly dressed unfeminine misfits, and some of the other pizza patrons were treating us with hostility. I remember thinking “*I'm not drunk enough for people to be this rude to me.*” The only difference was that our party clothes weren't suitable for a night out on Argyle Street. I sensed this transition deeply and regretted the sudden absence of queer space. Kay, on the hill, occupied the liminal between-space where queer-world and pizza-world crossed over.

These narratives are about crossings-over into and out of the Pride festival and of sensing the boundary between the urban space appropriated by Pride and the remaining urban space that moves along without it. Originally, gay pride marches were radical appropriations of space where gender and sexually diverse people demanded, by occupying visible space with the undeniable facts of their bodies, basic recognition of their humanity. The structure of capital-P Pride festivals has changed since then along with significant progress in Canada surrounding the

human rights of queer people. Tied up in the interests of the city and corporate institutions, which are concerned with “tolerant” neoliberal branding, has the element of radical placemaking at the heart of the pride movement become compartmentalized out of sight?

This can be a larger question. A theme repeated throughout the interpretation of my thesis data is that at the same time as dedicatedly queer spaces are shutting down, a more integrated conceptualization of queer space is becoming more prevalent, especially in the world of leisure activities. As queer presence is integrated into mixed environments, are the needs, desires, and stories of queer people at risk of being pushed aside in favour of the heteronormative status quo, or do they blend into the background to create a new standard expectation? A significant portion of my participants expressed their doubts about where they fell on the boundary between belonging and being an outsider to queer community. With great inconsistency over how many of the queer spaces mentioned in this data worked for people with various identities underneath the ever-evolving LGBTQ+ umbrella<sup>5</sup>, can there really be a space, going forward, that serves all forms of queer personhood and yet can still be recognizably distinct from spaces that are not explicitly queer but are nonetheless accepting of queerness?

---

<sup>5</sup> For example, a queer woman participant in a straight-appearing relationship feels excluded from the crowd of queer women at the Company House.

## CONCLUSION

In this research I have collected and presented a variety of experiences relating to queer space in Halifax. I explored how the themes of inclusion, belonging, and community informed and shaped queer individuals' personal experiences of queer space in Halifax, and found that these themes complicated peoples' experiences of queer space more than they fostered them. Inclusion, belonging, and community are, abstractly, pillar values of many queer spaces. Many participants emphasized a need for "a safe space" where queer people felt comfortable to "be themselves." These spaces were imagined as accessible, welcoming, and full of others with a sense of shared struggle and solidarity with one another. Another thread that ran through participants' personal reflections, regardless of the type of space they decided to share in engaging in this project, was that queer space generally fell short of meeting those expectations. The experiences shared in this work are a necessary revision to the popular view of how queer community works for people, as a singular and stable kinship network that is fully inclusive and harmonic. It also troubles the conception of queer space as a "safe" space for queer people of various orientations to be comfortable. In their memories of queer space, participants articulated the tensions, conflicts, compromises, and work it takes to make and occupy queer space.

In experiences some participants shared, inclusivity was contested because of a disagreement, or ongoing negotiation, over whether or not the value of "inclusiveness" extended to people perceived by others as straight. Does "inclusiveness" mean anyone and everyone, like

the free market might suggest? If it does, this creates opportunities for queer people to participate in queer space regardless of whether or not they are “out,” like we saw at the Halifax Pride festival, but it also provides a chance for a straight (or straight-appearing) majority to take control over the social norms guiding the space, reducing the feeling of safety for the queer minority. When Shannon returned to The Seahorse Tavern after having an experience of queer space there to find a perceived-straight majority, they could not enjoy the space the same way as they had before. In some participants’ views, “inclusiveness” actually means a careful *exclusion* of people and values from participating in a particular space: an unspoken vetting process for straight friends who are going to accompany them to the queer bar, for example. There is no firm set of rules about which people, which values, are to be included and/or excluded from queer space. Identifying others as “queer” and therefore more welcome, or “straight” and therefore less welcome is done by feel, leaving some queer participants to feel left-out of space making because they are perceived not to be queer, because they come from outside the “scene” of friendship networks that dominate the space, or because their personal views challenge the norms and expectations that are already established in that space.

The process of inclusion and exclusion in queer spaces affected individual participants’ sense of belonging in queer communities more broadly. When, in space, queer individuals had a mutual experience of seeing and being seen by others identified as queer, they described a sense of togetherness. Participants who felt they could not be identified as queer, for instance those who did not feel attached to the “party” scene of queer bars, or who were queer in

straight-appearing relationships, felt alienated from larger queer communities and struggled to find a place to fit in. A larger variety in the way queer people can participate in space fostered a greater sense of belonging: a participant who felt detached from queer bars found it easier to see themselves reflected in the Glitter Bean café.

The diversity of experiences and perspectives on queer space and community represented in this research serves to further emphasize a model in which queer “community” is seen as fluid and inconsistently defined, with no consensus on which identities are included or what its set of values are. Queer people are a group insofar as there is a shared sense of struggle not to be marginalized, as well as various levels of participation in oral traditions, folk speech, and cultural practice. In the reflection they offered to me for this project, Emerson described queer community as “beautiful but also incredibly difficult and complicated,” and creating and maintaining spaces where queer community can thrive is the result of immense emotional and mental labour. Queer space is very often identified in this research as any space with a large amount of queer-identified people in it, and queer people are invited by signs of a safe space to be oneself. This could be a social contract that supports queer identity, like an explicit set of policies and rules to protect queer people from discrimination (e.g. Anchor City Rollers does not wish to categorize the genders of roller derby skaters), a queer-majority staff signaling a space where queer people are comfortable spending a full workday (e.g. Company House or Glitter Bean), or an open celebration of the queer liberation movement (e.g. the Halifax Pride Festival). These spaces are all products of the labour of—by and large—other queer people, who share

some sense of identity with those they are serving and wish to benefit from community in the same ways.

Because of the scarcity of works addressing queer space in Halifax, this small-scale study still represents a meaningful contribution to queer academia in Nova Scotia, and demonstrates how individuals' memories and personal feelings can be used as a source of evidence for mapping a region according to minority communities' senses of place. For communities lacking "official" spaces, individual memories are a more effective tool for spatializing groups than less-informal sources like public records or advertising. There are many minority communities in Halifax that are despatialized in a similar fashion to Halifax's queer communities, and this approach is highly applicable to studies of these other minority groups as well. The continued inclusion and highlighting of other minority experiences continues to add value to conducting this research in that it will further challenge the predominance of the Folk motif in popular understandings of culture in Halifax.

The continued inclusion of queer memory is a necessary element in expanding the way we imagine the history and culture of this region, and further research in this area is rich with possibility. This data was taken from a highly generalized sample, and demonstrated that, generally, queer individuals primarily view leisure sites (bars, cafes, sport, and Pride festivals) as sites that 'belong' to queer communities in Halifax. A more directed sample that takes into account one or more intersections of identity may reveal more specific or different data - and this work is necessary to understand queer communities in all their undefinable complexity. Greater



dissections of specific queer identity groups, as well as a more intersectional approach that forefronts the interaction of race and class with queer identity will reveal greater dimensions especially when compared with my research, whose scope was comparatively much wider. Expanding on this work with a more focused approach will bring exciting possibilities for the field of Atlantic Canada Studies as well as, importantly, queer social justice work in the Atlantic region. In terms of spatial justice, more directed memory projects that address specific sites of meaning would build strong cases for the inclusion of these sites (in more official capacities) as locations of public heritage. This work has apparently already begun: a (2019) CBC news story indicates that the 1588 Barrington Building Preservation Society will rebrand as “The Turret Arts Space” to honour the building’s significance to the gay and lesbian movement in Halifax. More official historical acknowledgement of queer presences in Halifax will further diversify popular senses of history and culture<sup>6</sup>.

Queer spaces in Halifax are closing, and this is unfolding at the same time as (*generally speaking*) progressive development in North America regarding human rights for people with queer identities. It would be easy to view these facts together and assume that queer spaces are closing because they are no longer needed; queer people are fully tolerated by society at large. However, many queer people, especially gender-diverse, racialized, and Indigenous people, are still very much lacking basic acknowledgement of their humanity. A (2021) report by Halifax-based consulting firm Wisdom2Action reports that “[a]s a result of systemic transphobia,

---

<sup>6</sup> The Turret was not mentioned by any of my participants in my study; Chapter 5 of Rebecca Rose’s *Before The Parade* offers a detailed history of The Turret and its historical significance in Halifax.

84% of trans people in Canada avoid at least one public space to protect themselves from harassment and discrimination based on their gender identity and expression,” and that “[b]etween 25 and 40% of homeless youth in Canada identify as 2SLGBTQ+ and 40% of trans and gender diverse people in Canada are living in a low-income household.” Despite the general trend towards acceptance of queer and gender-diverse identities, these facts indicate that public and domestic spaces are still failing to meet the mark: these numbers indicate clearly that queer people still need safe housing and public space.

My angle of approach with this project comes from my background in folklore studies. I saw the queer people of Halifax as a folk group, people connected by at least one common cultural element, and looked to identify their stories in the larger narratives of a region whose cultural script of “authenticity,” the pervasive myth of “The Folk,” stubbornly denies their role in shaping its current and historic cultural life. I am a queer researcher and a queer resident of Halifax; I see queer stories everywhere. “We are here now, and we have always been here,” is a powerful message with implications for future research as well as future progress in incorporating queer stories into the broader cultural narratives of Halifax. And as the future of queer spaces “goes incognito,” signalling queer culture without explicitly identifying that way, calling on queer communities’ ongoing and historic presence is a powerful tool for ensuring queer voices are not erased from shaping the urban cultural landscape here. In my view, queer heritage work might no longer mean protecting existing queer spaces or keeping spaces on life

support that are no longer working for communities, but identifying and highlighting the queer experience in the everyday life of Halifax's urban organism.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

“2015 Where We Are on TV.” 2015. GLAAD Media Institute. [glaad.org/whereweareontv15](http://glaad.org/whereweareontv15).

Adler, Sy, and Johanna Brenner. 1992. “Gender and Space: Lesbians and Gay Men in the City.”

*International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 16 (1): 24–34.

Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Alamilla Boyd, Nan. 2008. “Who Is the Subject?: Queer Theory Meets Oral History.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 17 (2): 177–89.

Anderson, Austin, and Eric Knee. 2021. “Queer Isolation or Queering Isolation? Reflecting upon the Ramifications of COVID-19 on the Future of Queer Leisure Spaces.” *Leisure Sciences* 43 (1–2): 118–24.

Baker, Kelly. 2016. “Out Back Home: An Exploration of LGBT Identities and Community in Rural Nova Scotia, Canada.” In *Queering the Countryside*, 25–48. New York: New York University Press.

Berube, Allan, John D’Emilio, and Estelle Freedman. 2010. *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War II*. University of North Carolina Press.

Binnie, Jon, and Gill Valentine. 1999. “Geographies of Sexuality - a Review of Progress.” *Progress in Human Geography* 23 (2): 175–87.

- Borch, Christian. 2002. "Interview with Edward W. Soja: Thirdspace, Postmetropolis, and Social Theory." *Distinktion: Scandinavian Journal of Social Theory* 3 (1): 113–20.
- Burke, Andrew. 2009. "Site Specific: Visualizing the Vernacular in Andrea Dorfman's Parsley Days." In *Rain, Drizzle, Fog: Film and Television in Atlantic Canada*, edited by Darrell Varga. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Oxfordshire: Routledge.
- Castells, Manuel. 1983. *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements*. London: E. Arnold.
- CBC News. 2013. "Halifax Celebrates Pride Parade 2013," July 17, 2013.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/halifax-celebrates-pride-parade-2013-1.1350495>.
- CBC News. 2019. "The Khyber Building is getting a new name to honour its queer history." April 12, 2019.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/khyber-building-barrington-preservation-society-historic-arts-community-the-turret-1.5095488>.
- Chauncey, George. 1994. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic.
- "Code of Conduct." 2020. Women's Flat Track Derby Association.  
<https://resources.wftda.org/membership/wftda-code-of-conduct/>.

“Constitution 2017-2018.” 2017. South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre.

<http://southhousehalifax.ca/about/mandate-and-constitution/>.

Crichlow, Wesley. 2003. *Buller Men and Batty Bwoys: Hidden Men in Toronto and Halifax Black Communities*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Davie, Emma. 2017. “The Company House to Close amid ‘Ongoing Harassment.’” *CBC News*, August 12, 2017.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/company-house-halifax-music-venue-closing-its-doors-ongoing-harassment-1.4245218>.

Davis, Jodi. 2013. “It’s Not About the Coffee: Queer Temporalities at a Community Coffeehouse.” *LUX: A Journal of Transdisciplinary Writing and Research from Claremont Graduate University* 2 (1): Article 9.

Davis, Madeline, and Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy. 1993. *Boots of Leather, Slippers of Gold: The History of a Lesbian Community*. New York: Routledge.

D’Emilio, John. 1998. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Doan, Petra. 2010. “The Tyranny of Gendered Spaces - Reflections from beyond the Gender Dichotomy.” *Gender, Place & Culture* 17 (5): 635–54.

Doull, Marion, Ryan Watson, Annie Smith, Yuko Homma, and Elizabeth Saewyc. 2018. “Are We Leveling the Playing Field? Trends and Disparities in Sports Participation among Sexual Minority Youth in Canada.” *Journal of Sport and Health Science* 7 (2): 218–26.

- Durling, Jessica. 2018. "Former Smiling Goat Workers Are Opening Glitter Bean café." *The Coast*, June 23, 2018.  
<https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/former-smiling-goat-workers-are-opening-glitter-bean-café/Content?oid=15562105>.
- Endo, Hidehiro, Paul Chamness Reece-Miller, and Nicholas Santavicca. 2010. "Surviving in the Trenches: A Narrative Inquiry into Queer Teachers' Experiences and Identity." *Teaching and Teacher Education* 26 (4): 1023–30.
- England, Kim. 1994. "Getting Personal: Reflexivity, Positionality, and Feminist Research." *The Professional Geographer* 46 (1): 80–89.
- Faulkner, Sandra L., and Michael L. Hecht. 2010. "The Negotiation of Closetable Identities: A Narrative Analysis of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered Queer Jewish Identity." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 28 (6): 829–47.
- Forsyth, Ann. 2001. "Nonconformist Populations and Planning Sexuality and Space: Nonconformist Populations and Planning Practice." *Journal of Planning Literature* 15 (3): 339–58.
- Gieseler, Carly. 2014. "Derby Drag: Parodying Sexualities in the Sport of Roller Derby." *Sexualities* 17 (5–6): 758–76.
- Giwa, Sulaimon, and Cameron Greensmith. 2012. "Race Relations in the LGBTQ Community of Toronto: Perceptions of Gay and Queer Social Service Providers of Color." *Journal of Homosexuality* 59 (2): 149–85.

- Gorman-Murray, Andrew, and Catherine Nash. 2017. "Transformations in LGBT Consumer Landscapes and Leisure Spaces in the Neoliberal City." *Urban Studies* 54 (3): 786–805.
- Hamilton, Paula, and Linda Shopes. 2008. *Oral History and Public Memories*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Harlan, Jennifer. 2019. "The Long and Surprising History of Roller Derby." *The New York Times*, July 26, 2019. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/26/sports/roller-derby-history-photos.html>.
- Hartless, Jaime. 2019. "Questionably Queer: Understanding Straight Presence in the Post-Gay Bar." *Journal of Homosexuality* 66 (8): 1035–57.
- Hayfield, Nikki, and Caroline Huxley. 2015. "Insider and Outsider Perspectives: Reflections on Researcher Identities in Research with Lesbian and Bisexual Women." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 12 (2): 91–106.
- Heath, Theresa. 2018. "Neoliberalism, Politics and Resistance: Queer Film Festivals and the Fight against Urban Erasure." *Altre Modernità* 20: 118–35. <https://doi.org/10.13130/2035-7680/10827>.
- Ian MacKay. 1994. *Quest of the Folk*. Montreal: Queen's University Press.
- Johnston, Lynda. 2015. "Lynda Johnston, 'Sexuality and Space,' In: James D. Wright (Ed.) International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences, 2nd. Ed. Vol. 21. (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015): P. 808-812." In *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioural Sciences*, edited by James D. Wright, 2nd ed., 21:808–12. Oxford: Elsevier.



- Klemesrud, Judy. 1972. "Roller Derby Women Have Ups and Downs." *The New York Times*, February 4, 1972.  
<https://www.nytimes.com/1972/02/04/archives/roller-derby-women-have-ups-and-downs.html>.
- Knopp, Larry. 2004. "Ontologies of Place, Placelessness, and Movement: Queer Quests for Identity and Their Impacts on Contemporary Geographic Thought." *Gender, Place & Culture* 11 (1): 121–34.
- . 2007. "On the Relationship Between Queer and Feminist Geographies." *The Professional Geographer* 59 (1): 47–55.
- Lauria, Mickey, and Lawrence Knopp. 1985. "Toward an Analysis of the Role of Gay Communities in the Urban Renaissance." *Urban Geography* 6 (2): 152–69.
- Lenning, Emily, and Buist, Carrie L. 2013. "Social, Psychological and Economic Challenges Faced by Transgender Individuals and Their Significant Others: Gaining Insight through Personal Narratives." *Culture, Health & Sexuality* 15 (1): 44–57.
- Logie, Carmen H., and Marie-Jolie Rwigema. 2014. "'The Normative Idea of Queer Is a White Person': Understanding Perceptions of White Privilege Among Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women of Color in Toronto, Canada." *Journal of Lesbian Studies* 18 (2): 174–91.
- MacKay, Daniel. 2020. "History Project." *The Halifax Rainbow Encyclopedia* (blog). September 4, 2020. <https://gay.hfxns.org/HistoryProject>.
- . 2021a. "Daniel MacKay." Wiki. *The Halifax Rainbow Encyclopedia* (blog). March 9, 2021. <https://gay.hfxns.org/DanielMacKay>.

- . 2021b. “Walking Tour of Halifax.” *The Halifax Rainbow Encyclopedia* (blog). March 30, 2021. <https://gay.hfxns.org/TourOfHalifax>.
- Mattson, Gregor. 2019. “Are Gay Bars Closing? Using Business Listings to Infer Rates of Gay Bar Closure in the United States, 1977–2019.” *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World* 5: 1–2.
- McCann, Hannah, and Gemma Killen. 2019. “Femininity Isn’t Femme: Appearance and the Contradictory Space of Queer Femme Belonging.” In *Social Beings, Future Belongings: Reimagining the Social*, edited by Anna Tsalapatani, Miranda Bruce, David Bissell, and Helen Keane. Routledge.
- McKenna, Caora, Morgan Mullin, Kyle Shaw, and Victoria Walton. 2020. “Reasons We Love The City.” *The Coast*, November 12, 2020.
- McSheffrey, Elizabeth. 2021. “Sale of Menz and Mollyz Bar Highlights Need for ‘Life-Saving’ Queer Spaces for Adults.” *Global News*, April 21, 2021. <https://globalnews.ca/news/7763403>.
- “Member Code of Conduct.” 2019. Anchor City Rollers Club. <https://www.anchorcityrollers.ca/skater-resources>.
- Metcalf, Robin. 2014. *OUT: Queer Looking, Queer Acting Revisited*. 2nd ed. Halifax: The Khyber Centre for the Arts.
- Miles, Sam. 2021. “Let’s (Not) Go Outside: Grindr, Hybrid Space, and Digital Queer Neighbourhoods.” In *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods, Renaissance and Resurgence*, edited by Alex Bitterman and Daniel Baldwin Hess. The Urban Book Series. Springer.

- Miles, Sam, Jack Coffin, Amin Ghaziani, Daniel Baldwin Hess, and Alex Bitterman. 2021. "Fter/Lives: Insights from the COVID-19 Pandemic for Gay Neighborhoods." In *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods*. Springer.
- "Mission Statement." n.d. *The Youth Project* (blog). <https://youthproject.ns.ca/mission-statement/>.
- Monk, Katherine. 2001. *Weird Sex and Snowshoes: And Other Canadian Film Phenomena*. Richmond, BC: Raincoast Books.
- Mulaj, Jeta. 2019. "A Critique of Queer Phenomenology: Gender and the Sexual." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 20 (3): 189–203.
- Muller Myrdahl, Tiffany. 2013. "Ordinary (Small) Cities and LGBTQ Lives." *ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies* 12 (2): 279–304.
- Murphy, Kevin, Jennifer Pierce, and Jason Ruiz. 2016. "What Makes Queer Oral History Different." *The Oral History Review* 43 (1): 1–24.
- Nelson, Lise. 1999. "Bodies (and Spaces) Do Matter: The Limits of Performativity." *Gender, Place & Culture* 6 (4): 331–53.
- Newton, Esther. 1993. *Cherry Grove, Fire Island: Sixty Years in America's First Gay and Lesbian Town*. Boston: Beacon.
- O'Neil, Lauren. 2019. "Popular Toronto Drag Bar Stops Accepting Bachelorette Party Reservations." *BlogTO* (blog). September 22, 2019. [https://www.blogto.com/eat\\_drink/2019/09/toronto-drag-bar-bachelorette-parties/](https://www.blogto.com/eat_drink/2019/09/toronto-drag-bar-bachelorette-parties/).

- Parry, Diana. 2016. “‘Skankalicious’: Erotic Capital in Women’s Flat Track Roller Derby.” *Leisure Sciences* 38 (4): 295–314.
- Pinnegar, Stefinee, and J. Gary Daynes. 2007. “Locating Narrative Inquiry Historically: Thematics in the Turn to Narrative.” In *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, edited by D. Jean Clandinin. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Podmore, Julie. 2006. “Gone ‘Underground’? Lesbian Visibility and the Consolidation of Queer Space in Montreal.” *Social & Cultural Geography* 7 (4): 595–625.
- Powers, Noah. 2019. “Making Invisible History Visible: Investigating the Decline and Preservation of Queer Spaces.” Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness.
- Rich, Adrienne. 1980. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” *Signs* 5 (4): 631–60.
- Rose, Rebecca. 2013. “Queer Girl City Guide: Halifax, Nova Scotia.” *Autostraddle* (blog). July 5, 2013. <https://www.autostraddle.com/queer-girl-city-guide-halifax-nova-scotia-180007/>.
- . 2016. “Before The Parade.” *The Coast*, July 21, 2016, sec. Arts+Music - Cultural Festivals. <https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/before-the-parade/Content?oid=5523368>.
- . 2019. *Before the Parade: A History of Halifax’s Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Communities, 1972-1984*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing.
- Rosenfeld, Dana. 2009. “From Same-Sex Desire to Homosexual Identity: History, Biography, and the Production of the Sexual Self in Lesbian and Gay Elders’ Narratives.” In *The Story of Sexual Identity: Narrative Perspectives on the Gay and Lesbian Life Course*, 425–50. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

- Rothenberg, Tamar. 1995. “‘And She Told Two Friends:’ Lesbians Creating Social Space.” In *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexualities*, edited by David Bell and Gill Valentine, 150–65. London: Routledge.
- Rushbrook, Dereka. 2002. “Cities, Queer Space, and the Cosmopolitan Tourist.” *GLQ A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8 (1): 183–206.
- Saunders, Allison. 2018. “Glitter Bean’s Labour of Love.” *The Coast*, December 13, 2018. <https://www.thecoast.ca/halifax/glitter-beans-labour-of-love/Content?oid=19856021>.
- Simon Rosser, B.R., William West, and Richard Weinmeyer. 2008. “Are Gay Communities Dying or Just in Transition? Results from an International Consultation Examining Possible Structural Change in Gay Communities.” *AIDS Care* 20 (5): 588–95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540120701867156>.
- Soja, Edward. 1996. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell.
- “South House Brochure Update 2016.” 2016. South House Sexual and Gender Resource Centre. <https://southhousehalifax.ca/resources/>.
- Stone Sunstein, Bonnie, and Elizabeth Chiseri-Strater. 2012. *Fieldworking: Reading and Writing Research*. 4th ed. Boston/New York: Bedford/St. Martin’s.
- Tang, Maddi. 2021. *Queer in Quarantine*. self-published.
- Taylor, Yvette, and Emily Falconer. 2015. “‘Seedy Bars and Grotty Pints’: Close Encounters in Queer Leisure Spaces.” *Social & Cultural Geography* 15 (1): 43–57.

Thomson, Aly. 2020. “‘A Second Home’: Halifax’s Only Dedicated LGBTQ Bar Closes for Good.”

*CBC News*, April 15, 2020.

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/menz-and-mollyz-halifax-lgbt-closes-permanently-1.5531921>.

Tierney, William, and Patrick Dilley. 1998. “Constructing Knowledge: Educational Research and Gay and Lesbian Studies.” In *Queer Theory in Education*, edited by W. F. Pinar, 49–71. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers.

Tremonti, Anna Maria. 2018. “‘Call It What It Is — White Ignorance’: Gentrification Frays the Social Fabric in Halifax’s North End.” *The Current*. Halifax.

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/thecurrent/the-current-for-february-21-2018-1.4543540/february-21-2018-episode-transcript-1.4545990>.

Usher, Nikki, and Eleanor Morrison. 2010. “The Demise of the Gay Enclave, Communication Infrastructure Theory, and the Transformation of Gay Public Space.” In *LGBT Identity and Online New Media*, edited by Christopher Pullen and Margaret Cooper, 271–87. New York: Routledge.

Valentine, Gill. 1993. “(Hetero) Sexing Space: Lesbian Perceptions and Experiences of Everyday Spaces.” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 11 (4): 345–413.

———. 1995. “Out and About: Geographies of Lesbian Landscapes.” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 19 (1): 96–111.

- Varga, Darrell. 2015. *Shooting From the East: Filmmaking on the Canadian Atlantic*. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press.
- Von Stackelberg, Marina. 2018. "Former Suppliers Allege Smiling Goat Owes Them Thousands in Unpaid Bills." *CBC News: CBC Investigates*, May 28, 2018.  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/nova-scotia/smiling-goat-lawsuits-1.4678018>.
- Weston, Kath. 1995. "Get Thee to a Big City: Sexual Imaginary and the Great Gay Migration." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 2 (3): 253–77. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-2-3-253>.
- "Where We Are on TV: 2019-2020." 2019. GLAAD Media Institute. [glaad.org/whereweareontv19](https://www.glaad.org/whereweareontv19).
- "Beyond Platitudes: A Bold 2SLGBTQ+ Agenda for the 2021 Federal Election." 2021. Halifax, NS: Wisdom2Action.

Table: List of Participants

No.	Name	Pronouns	Age	Place of Origin	Years in Halifax	Years Active
1	Jey	they/them	24	Hammonds Plains, HRM	2013-2018, 2020	6
2	Taylor	she/her	27	Halifax, HRM	27 years	0
3	Kay	she/her	23	South Korea	9 years	2
4	Carley	she/her	27	New Glasgow, NS	2011-2015, 2018-2020	7
5	Julien	he/him	29	Cape Breton, NS	2009-2020	3
6	Michelle	she/her	40	Centreville, NS	11 years	9
7	EC	they/them	47	Sherbrooke, QC	1995-2020	24
8	Britt	they/them	25	Beamsville, ON	2012-2017	2
9	Theo	they/them	33	Ontario	2009-2020	15
10	Art	they/them	27	Surrey, UK	4 years	4
11	Casper	they/them	22	Halifax, HRM	5 years	5
12	Tyler	he/him	35		2005-2010, 2013-2020	15
13	Josie	she/her	early 20s	Halifax, HRM	2001-2020	4-8
14	Lindsay	she/her	27	Comox, BC/Halifax, HRM	2011-2020	8
15	Emerson	they/them	24	Halifax, HRM	1996-2020	8
16	Ella	she/her	24	Lower Onslow, NS	2019-2020	2



17	Stephanie	she/her	25	Mississauga, ON	2015-2020	4
18	Eli	they/them	18	Halifax, HRM	2002-2020	4
19	Alana	she/her	31	Winnipeg, MA	2011-2017, 2020	9
20	Maddi	they/them	22	Ottawa, ON	2016-2020	1.5
21	Noah	he/him		London, ON	2016-2020	4
22	Shannon	they/them	26	Hammonds Plains, HRM	2012-2019	6
23	Santi	they/them	33	South Texas, USA	2015-2016	1.75
24	Daniel	he/him	25	Halifax, HRM	1995-2012	5
25	Abbey	she/her	22	Halifax, HRM	1998-2020	5
26	Kirsten	she/her	48	Bedford, HRM	1994-2007	1
27	Lynne	she/her	23	Toronto, ON	2004-2020	3
28	Coralee	she/her	24	Halifax, HRM	1996-2014, 2018-2020	2