

Complicating Queer Space in Toronto: How the Development of Toronto's LGBTQ2I Spaces Fits within Homonormative and Homonationalist Scripts

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ABSTRACT

This major paper challenges the dominance of celebratory narratives in academic literature that posit Western urban gay enclaves as beacons of social inclusivity and tolerance. This research is intended to address the reality that gay village spaces in North America, Europe and Australia were built exclusively for the benefit of middle class white gay men and continue to exclude women, queers of colour, trans and gender non-conforming individuals. Toronto is used as a case study to demonstrate how modern municipalities have appropriated LGBTQ2I identities in order to market themselves as cosmopolitan urban centres that are worthy of various forms of capital investment. The case study will also elucidate how processes of homonormativity (Duggan, 2002) and homonationalism (Puar, 2007) have been accelerated by municipal investment in gay village spaces. Three central questions guide the analysis of this case study: (1) How do cities appropriate LGBTQ2I identities to present themselves as cosmopolitan urban centres? (2) In what ways does the image of state-sponsored LGBTQ2I spaces work to exclude non-homonormative queers? (3) How can cities plan differently for the future?

FOREWORD

My Area of Concentration (AOC) is titled Urban Planning, Queer Space, and Homonationalism. This AOC has focused my attention on the ways in which queer space is influenced by urban planning decisions and the way in which current methods of planning, particularly in recognized gay commercial districts, has fostered homonationalism. My AOC has been guided by two components; urban planning processes and planning and the lived experience. My major research project focused on the way in which Toronto's gay commercial district developed and has been influenced by municipal place-making strategies has merged these two components and is therefore directly related to my AOC.

Urban Planning Processes

The history of queer space in Toronto has been guided by local planning processes. Originally, the clustering of boarding houses in the city's industrial core in the late 1800s and 1900s facilitated same-sex relations between men. The planning of public spaces and facilities, such as parks and public washrooms, in some cases, created the opportunity for men who have sex with men (MSM) to engage in erotic activities. These same spaces and facilities, however, were also manipulated to allow police to prevent illicit behaviour. Later, in the 1950s, the development of high-rise rental towers along the Yonge Street corridor, once again, created a critical mass that allowed gay subcultures to flourish in the emerging gay bars of Toronto's downtown core. Today, the municipal investment into and branding of the city's gay commercial district, the Church-Wellesley Village, has turned the gay enclave into a marketed space that is central to the city's entrepreneurial world-city ambitions. Queer space in Toronto, as represented by the Church-Wellesley Village, has come to represent the operation of homonationalism in the city.

Planning and the Lived Experience

My research centralized on the false narrative projected by municipal branding efforts of queer space in Toronto. The Church-Wellesley Village is not the beacon of inclusivity that it is sold as. The history of Toronto's planning process in relation to the city's LGBTQ2I populations reveals how a certain subset of the population was able to leverage their economic status to purchase property, operate businesses, and form community. Other LGBTQ2I communities including women, queers of colour, trans and gender non-conforming individuals were excluded from the territorialisation of space, but managed to form community in alternate forms.

This major research has provided me with the understanding of how LGBTQ2I communities have been considered by planners in Toronto. It is clear to me that planning, up until the late 1970s, followed the popular discourse which viewed queer individuals to be an undesirable and criminal population. Up until the end of the 1970s, any planning related to LGBTQ2I populations sought to limit the public expression of homosexuality. Planning practice in Toronto has since come to embrace the city's queer community, but this embrace has only extended to a limited homonormative subset of the queer population. Many queer communities are still not considered by the planning process and their experience of the city is limited because of it.

INTRODUCTION

Gay Villages in North America and several European cities are experiencing decline. Scholars from multiple disciplines have documented the ways in which conventional Villages are physically shrinking, facing business closures, and losing their critical concentrations of queer urban dwellers as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgender individuals, and queer people (LGBTQ) disperse across the city (Collins, 2004; Doan and Higgins, 2011; Lewis, 2015; Ruting, 2008). There are several factors that have contributed to the decline of gay enclaves. Petra L. Doan and Harrison Higgins (2011) reference a new form of gentrification that has been introduced by developers seeking to capitalize on the trendiness of gay neighbourhoods. Others like Collins (2004) and Ruting (2008) credit the influx of heterosexual home owners and renters in gay neighbourhoods as a significant contributor to the “de-gaying” of gay enclaves. A third wave of thought emphasizes a change of culture in LGBTQ communities and the emergence of “post-gay” attitudes (Ghaziani, 2011; Gorman-Murray and Waitt, 2009; Nash, 2013a; 2013b; Warner, 1999). Post-gays are said to be less tied to Villages because they enjoy higher degrees of social tolerance and did not face the AIDS epidemic, two significant factors that tied the previous generation of gays to Villages. Post-gays are said to view conventional gay villages as an outdated concept and prefer trendy neighbourhoods with bars that cater to a socially mixed clientele.

However, as some scholars have demonstrated, gay enclaves were mostly established by middle class white gay men to serve their interests. Jin Haritaworn (2015) argues that the literature that debates the decline of gay enclaves is dangerously nostalgic and celebratory. The narrative of decline often fails to address the fact that gay enclaves historically excluded women, people of colour, and trans and gender non-conforming people (Doan, 2017; Haritaworn, 2015; Nero, 2005). This exclusion can easily be determined from a reading of some of the foundational

research on gay villages in the post-WWII era. Many of the original works that examined gay residential and commercial enclaves focused almost exclusively on the gentrification and neighbourhood transformation undertaken by middle class white gay men (Castells, 1983; Harry, 1974; Knopp; 1990; Lauria, 1985; Levine, 1979). Some academics, such as Manuel Castells (1983) have attempted to explain their singular focus on gay male urban spaces through a reliance of oversimplified stereotypes. "Men have sought to dominate, and one expression of this domination has been spatial. (The same desire for spatial superiority has driven male-dominated cultures to send astronauts to the moon and to explore the galaxy)" (Castells, 1983, 140). Some work has been done to address the way that lesbians have altered space but more research is needed to provide a more holistic version of how multiple LGBTQ2I populations experience and shape the city.

Contemporary research on gay enclaves has explored the way in which gay urban spaces have been entrenched in neoliberal capitalist city building strategies. In particular, the branding and marketing of gay commercial districts has been used as a method for cities to present themselves outwardly as cosmopolitan world cities worthy of multiple forms of capital investment (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Binnie, 1995; Binnie and Skeggs, 2004; Rushbrook, 2002). Municipal branding initiatives have accelerated what Lisa Duggan (2002) has called the "homonormalization" of Village spaces, a process she describes as the normalizing of gay identities to emulate the neoliberal heteronormative behaviours of consumerism and domesticity. The homonormative gay is typically white, middle class, and someone who actively participates in capitalist practices of consumption and the accumulation of wealth. Duggan asserts that gay men, in the fight to gain political recognition, have adopted homonormative behaviours in an effort to demonstrate their similarities to the heterosexual majority. This process

translates into space via the efforts that white middle class gay (and heterosexual) home owners and business associations have made to sanitize their enclaves of sexually explicit and other nonconsumer elements to render them safe for consumers and tourists (Rubin, 1999; Rushbrook, 2002; Wahab; 2015).

The cleansing, packaging, and selling of Village spaces also feeds into Jasbir Puar's (2007) discussion of homonationalism. Homonationalism is "[a] brand of homosexuality [which] operates as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, but also of the racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects" (2). For Puar, homonationalism is a tool used by the state to lend new tolerance to the gay community in order to justify or suppress injustices committed elsewhere. One example of these injustices has been wars waged against Islamic nations such as Afghanistan and Iraq. U.S. exceptionalism ignores its own negative treatment of non-normative queers as new state support of gay communities is limited to a certain portion of the population, i.e., white, middle class gay men and lesbians. Puar argues that homonationalism, as it exists and operates in the United States, has produced a new social binary, a "Muslim-or-gay" one that, she argues, is based on assumption that one cannot be both Muslim and gay and, indeed, that the two identities are essentially ideologically opposed. Within homonationalism, gay commercial and residential districts become central to projecting an outward image of tolerance in the world, to which "fundamentalist" Muslims are entirely other.

This major paper will build on the concepts of homonormativity and homonationalism to challenge the celebratory narrative that has silenced the exclusions and erasures that exist in contemporary Village spaces. I will use Toronto as a case study to demonstrate how the Church-Wellesley Village has emerged as a space that embodies both homonormativity and homonationalism. One of the main intentions of this paper is to tell a spatial and political history

of “queer” Toronto that exposes the racism, sexism, and transphobia that exists within and around Toronto’s LGBTQ2I community; I also seek to shed light on spatial and social organizing of women, queer of colour, trans and gender non-conforming populations that has, both historically and in the present, resisted this politics. The paper will seek to address the following research question: How do cities appropriate LGBTQ2I identities to present themselves as cosmopolitan urban centres? In what ways does the image of state-sponsored LGBTQ2I spaces work to exclude non-homonormative queers? How can cities plan differently for the future?

The dominant narrative regarding the Church-Wellesley Village sells the neighbourhood as a beacon of inclusivity and a milestone achievement in Toronto’s tolerance of diversity. This rhetoric is sold to both locals and prospective tourists to boast Toronto’s progressive cosmopolitanism and can be found everywhere from the city’s website, tourism brochures, and the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area’s (CWVBIA) promotional material. The following provides a brief sample of the language that is often used to project this narrative of all-encompassing inclusion:

The Village is a comfortable and supportive community that offers the connectedness of a small town, in the heart of the City. The Village is the historic home of Toronto’s LGBTQ communities. Our neighbourhood has been known for decades as the gathering place for diverse communities and is still a primary point of contact for tourists and LGBTQ people moving to the city. (CWVBIA, 2016)

The CWVBIA’s description of the Village presents the neighbourhood as a naturalized “gay” community in the city’s downtown core. It is sold as the “historic home” of *all* LGBTQ communities and is referenced to as “our neighbourhood” to suggest that the Church-Wellesley Village is both welcoming to the diverse range of queer bodies and embraced by these communities in return. This narrative erases and rewrites a complex history of contestation and political activism that opposed the formation of the Village. The narrative also erases and rewrites

the sexism, racism, transphobia and multiple other forms of discrimination that exist in the Village's history and weaved into its historic fabric by the middle class white gay men who built it. A more complex history is needed to challenge the diluted celebratory history that exists today.

My major paper thus re-tells the story of the development of Toronto's gay community as it has, and has not, centred on the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood that is currently known as The Village: past, present, and future. My retelling includes scholarship that has focused on the *spaces* of diverse forms of LGBTQ congregation; it also includes scholarship that has focused on some of the *political* struggles that have intersected with, but never been confined to, these spaces. My methodology includes the selective use of secondary sources, including both older historical materials and two significant new texts on Toronto's queer histories *Queer Progress* (McCaskell, 2016) and *Any Other Way: How Toronto Got Queer* (Chambers et al, 2017) that have begun the process of a more diverse, and more accurate, rendering. It also includes considerable archival research, conducted primarily (and not without limitation, as I will discuss below) at the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto, and interview research with ten members of the Toronto LGBTQ community in order to add necessary alternate perspectives to the archival materials.

My archival research process sought to find primary resources to both corroborate and supplement existing secondary sources. During my hours of sifting through the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archive's fonds I searched for material that would provide context related to the early development of queer spaces prior to the Village's establishment as a consolidated recognizable queer neighbourhood in the city. I also searched for materials produced by activist organizations that documented distaste for the commercialization of gay space in Toronto. The history of Pride events, origin of the CWVBIA, and materials on various protests were also topics of interest. My

search yielded newspaper clippings, city documents, personal correspondences, flyers advertising activist organizations, clubs and bars, and parties, and photographic material that began to help me piece together a more holistic history of queer space in the city. A large portion of my time at the archives was dedicated to uncovering the histories of lesbian, queer of colour, trans organizing in Toronto. Although some material was found, it was noticeably lacking. The material related to the histories of these groups was negligible when compared to that of middle class white gay men. I found that important queer of colour community figures mentioned in varying secondary resources or during my interview process regularly did not have dedicated fonds. Additionally, material that was available was often scant. Because of this, my archival research should not be considered complete.

As a way of purposely reaching out to communities not as well represented in the archival materials, I selected my interviewees based on their stature as community leaders and activists: some of their perspectives on Toronto's history were fairly well represented in the Archives, but many were not. In all cases, the interviews provided depth, nuance, and detail, and showed some of the subtle (and not so subtle) ways in which gay Toronto history has been sanitized for public, and corporate, consumption. (A list of the interviewees and their accomplishments can be found in Appendix A.) The interviewees were asked to articulate their vision for how queer space in the city could be improved or made more inclusive in the future: these visions are included toward the end of the major paper.

The paper is divided into three chapters. I will begin with a discussion of the historical origins of the LGB(T) community in the city of Toronto starting in the late 1800s. Drawing on both primary and secondary sources, this section will demonstrate the social and economic conditions that enabled gay and lesbian subcultures to develop in the city. This chapter will follow a historical

lineage up until the end of the 1970s. The purpose of this first chapter is to chart the way LGB(T) populations moved through the city, established networks, and began to influence the creation of distinct gay space in Toronto. This chapter will, following my intent to show the political and spatial tensions between different LGB(T) interests, include a significant discussion of the conflicts that existed between gay activists and business owners. Specifically, I will explore the way in which the Village, up to the 1970s, began to take shape *despite* the disapproval of gay and lesbian activist organizations.

The second chapter will move on to discuss how Toronto's gay enclave evolved from a loose scattering of bars in the Yonge and Carlton area to the consolidated Church Street strip by the end of the 1990s. I will trace a series of state sanctions against the city's gay and lesbian community that fostered an alliance between gay activists and gay business owners. This discussion will also detail how this alliance of activism and business came to be dominated by business interests, as well as by those of an emerging homonormative class of relatively wealthy white, professional gays and lesbians. The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate how social and political factors, rooted in homonormativity, influenced the physical development of the Village.

The final chapter will move to address the effect of neoliberal city building strategies on the Church-Wellesley Village and its transformation into a site of homonationalism. I will emphasize the role of the Church-Wellesley Business Improvement Area (BIA), the 519, and Pride Toronto in the branding and marketing of the Village. This narrative will be paired with a discussion of the ways in which different groups have attempted to challenge the commodification of queer space and bodies. The second portion of the chapter will then shift to

focus on the future. I will weave together the voices of my research participants to present a more inclusive future for queer space in Toronto.

CHAPTER 1: The Emergence and Spatialization of Homosexual Subcultures (1890-1978)

This story begins with the emergence of gay and lesbian subcultures in the city of Toronto in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Significant changes to the industrial economy and wage labour system created the conditions by which men and women dramatically increased the density of urban centres like Toronto. The critical mass of people in the city's industrial core facilitated chance encounters between men and women who had same-sex sexual desires. However, the severe regulation of sexual morality in Canada meant that same-sex encounters were limited to private spaces or the shadows of the city. The eventual loosening of the Canadian Criminal Code; however created the opportunity by which Toronto's gay subculture began to move above ground.

This chapter will document lesbian and gay history in Toronto from the late 1800s to the late 1970s. Emphasis will be placed on the spatial, social, and political conditions that either fostered or inhibited gay life in Toronto. In particular, attention will be paid to the moral and spatial regulation of sexuality that occurred in the period prior to World War Two. I will then move on to discuss the ways in which the War created the conditions for gay and lesbian networks to expand dramatically in Toronto. Attention will then be directed to simultaneous emergence of gay businesses on the downtown Yonge Street corridor and gay activist organizations in the 1960s. In particular, I will highlight the contemptuous relationship that existed between gay businesses and their patrons and activist organizations. The chapter will also include a discussion of the ways in which middle class white gay men enjoyed certain social privileges that women and queers of colour did not. Finally, this chapter will explain how the gay rights movement began to concentrate on ideals of normativity by the 1970s.

Turn-of-the-Century Sexual Spatiality and Regulation

Gay and lesbian subcultures in Toronto, like many other western cities, can be traced back to the nineteenth century. John D'Emilio (1998) argues the rapid expansion of industrial capitalism and its free labour system is a particularly critical moment in history. This shift in economics is marked by the decreasing significance of the household economy in exchange for the rise of the free labour system. Men and women entered the marketplace at impressive rates to trade time and labour for wages. The industrial system resulted in the mass production of goods, formerly produced by the family unit, for purchase. This revolution made it possible for individuals to function outside of the household economy and fostered greater social autonomy and individualism. The simultaneous process of urbanization, driven by the industrial economy, brought thousands of single individuals into growing cities. The combination of greater social autonomy and urban population growth provided the social conditions necessary for gay men and lesbians to find and pursue each other (D'Emilio, 1998).

The economic conditions in turn-of-the century Toronto echo D'Emilio's arguments. It is estimated that the city's population nearly quadrupled from 56,000 to 208,000 between 1871 and 1901. The population boom was caused by the availability of industrial based jobs in the city's factories and related industries (Levine, 2014). Steven Maynard (2004) details how the city's population boom and growing industrial economy allowed for the pursuit of same-sex relations for men and women. However, the forms these relationships took and the spaces in which they occurred were highly dependent on an individual's class status.

Boarding houses were particularly important for the facilitation of same-sex encounters between working-class men in turn-of-the-century Toronto. It was common practice in the late 1800s for single working-class men to rent rooms in boarding houses (Maynard, 2004). The

concentration of boarding houses in working-class neighbourhoods created an urban bachelor-subculture similar to what has been described in New York by George Chauncey (1994). Chauncey asserts that the cluster of boarding houses and cafeterias served as meeting grounds and fostered the constant interaction that would have made it possible for men who have sex with men (MSM) to find each other.

The privacy that boarding houses provided for their residents was also an extremely important factor in the facilitation of sex between working-class men. For MSM, regardless of class, secrecy and privacy were imperative as there were severe legal and social penalties for those who were caught. Canada's legal framework was derived from British law. As Tom Warner (2002) notes, British buggery laws became part of the penal code in a newly independent Canada. Buggery was a crime punishable by death until 1892 when the punishment was changed to imprisonment. Gross Indecency was added to the Canadian penal code to cover all sexual acts between men that did not technically constitute buggery. Gross Indecency came with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment with provisions for whipping (Kinsman, 1996).

Criminal convictions were not the only concern for men who were caught. The extremely negative perception of same-sex behaviours often resulted in the firing, eviction, and ostracism of men who were accused of such crimes. Maynard (1994), however, notes that not all working-class men had the same amount of privacy. He cites the presence of landlords and ladies and the inability of some working-class men to afford their own private spaces as the reason why many men resorted to sex with other men in public spaces.

Maynard (1994) elucidates how the planning and physical design of some of Toronto's public spaces such as public washrooms, laneways, and parks facilitated cruising activities. He specifically cites court records from the 1990s that document gross indecency arrests in Allen

Gardens, Queen's Park, and the St. Albert Laneway of the city's working-class slum neighbourhood known as The Ward. Maynard notes that public washrooms, which increased considerably in number in the early 1900s, were intended to imbue social morality and decency in working-class slum neighbourhoods. Ironically, these city-built facilities provided the physical space for a different form of behaviour that was also perceived to be immoral: public sex (1994).

Same-sex sexual encounters between middle-class gay men took different forms. The rise of Toronto's industrial economy contributed to the growth of a middle class job sector for men in clerical and sales positions (Maynard, 2004). John Grube's 1980s recordings of oral histories of gay men from Toronto, recorded as part of his Foolscap Oral History Project, provide perspective on what life was like for MSM during this period. One key benefit that middle-class MSM enjoyed was access to a social network of men who shared similar sexual desires. One of Grube's interviewees, Fredrick Sproule, reveals his knowledge of a network of middle and upper class men who held house parties for friends who shared sexual desires. Sproule himself recounts attending these parties on occasion. He goes on to say that the parties were not necessarily intended for sex, but provided the space for MSM to openly socialize or form relationships (Sproule, 1983). Sproule's experiences at house parties indicate his class privilege. While gay men of a certain class were able to host and attend house parties as a method of communing, it is unclear, and perhaps unlikely, that the same opportunities for socialization were available to working-class MSM.

The privacy afforded by homeownership or apartment rental would likely have provided middle and upper class men with the cover necessary to maintain discretion while engaging in illegal sexual practices. Portions of Sproule's testimony indicate that his class status assisted his ability to maintain a long-term relationship with another man. Sproule had met his partner, Charlie, shortly after World War One ended in 1918. The two men were in a relationship for

twenty-five years. When asked if the pair ever lived together, Sproule replies by stating that each had his own individual private accommodations. Sproule's situation may have been different had he been a long-term rooming house resident. Reviewing historical accounts indicates that class difference influenced how MSM were able to act upon their sexual desires. The central difference seems to be related to the degree of privacy that an individual's living accommodations could provide. Cruising, however, stands out as a shared practice amongst MSM of varying class statuses. Sproule indicates that the network of homosexual middle and upper class gay men in Toronto during the early 1900s was relatively small. Sproule's testimony confirms Maynard's accounts that public cruising largely took place in parks such as Allen Gardens and Queens Park. Sproule suggests that it was relatively safe: "Queen's Park was very, very famous, and you could do that with a degree of security, you wouldn't run a chance of having your head smashed in like you are today" (Sproule, 1983).

Turn-of-the-century Toronto, as buggery and gross indecency laws indicate, was governed by staunchly conservative ideologies. The rapid growth of the city had, in the opinion of prominent moral conservatives like Toronto Mayor William Howland and later, Edward Frederick Clarke, become overtaken by the immorality of alcohol consumption, prostitution, and other vices. The city needed to be reformed. Mayor Howland appointed a known moral reformer, David Archibald, to lead the city's newly established police Morality Department in 1886 (Levine, 2014). Toronto's Morality Department was in charge of policing vice in the city including, but not limited to brothels, gambling dens; illegal alcohol provision and adultery were also within its new mandate. Maynard (1994) implies that the Morality Department was also the division of police responsible for cracking down on same-sex relations. The moral position held by city officials such as Howland and Archibald followed popular discourse of the time, which viewed cities as

unnatural and polluted. The unsanitary conditions of the city, as a result, were believed to cause morally depraved behaviours believed to be “against nature” (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010).

Maynard’s (1994) analysis of the Morality Department’s policing tactics exposes how anti-homosexual crack downs altered the physical design of the city’s public spaces as early as the late 1800s. In order for men to be successfully convicted of gross indecency charges, the police were required to demonstrate that it was physically possible to have seen the crime take place. Public washrooms thus began to be designed with stall doors that stopped well above the floor so that the number of patrons in each compartment could be easily determined. The exteriors of the buildings were also designed with ventilation grills at the top of the walls. Police would use ladders on the outside of the buildings to allow them to see down through the grills and into the bathroom stalls to catch men in the act. In park spaces, additional lighting was installed to limit dark spaces where encounters could go unnoticed. Maynard goes on to note that flashlights eventually became a standard part of police uniforms so that public spaces could be properly inspected after dark (223-229).

Women with same-sex interests were not granted the same spatial, social and economic opportunities that facilitated sex between men in the pre-World War Two era. Women had significantly fewer rights and legal recognition than their male counterparts. For example, women did not gain the right to vote until the First World War and were legally considered to be the property of men until 1928. It was also considered abnormal for women to hold jobs. Toronto’s faith-based fixation on morality confined women to the domestic sphere. Consequently, Toronto’s urban poor and working class population were considered threatening to the city’s social order and morality. Moral reformers sought to limit the role of working-class women in the

job market to protect them from being corrupted. Moral panics related to the rise of prostitution meant that women who went unaccompanied by their legal spouses or guardians in public spaces were often suspected of participating in prostitution (Kinsman, 1996). Women who earned wages held working-class jobs, which, in many cases, made them reliant on male wage earners (D'Emilio, 1998).

Maynard (2004) borrows from Elizabeth Lapovsky Kennedy and Madeline D. Davis's study of working-class lesbian bar culture in 1930s and 1940s Buffalo, New York to extrapolate the opportunities that may have existed for lesbians during this period in Toronto. Kennedy and Davis (1994) argue that bars were the primary way for working-class lesbians to meet like-minded women and act upon their sexuality. However, many bars were not welcoming spaces for women. It was common for bars to deny service to women as their presence in bars was considered to be socially inappropriate. Those that granted entry to women provided separate entrances and back rooms where they could be served separately (Lupton, 1979). Bars that were open to lesbians commonly existed in working-class and so-called red-light districts, which were considered dangerous for women. It is in these spaces that lesbians were able to express their sexuality with comparatively limited harassment or consequence. Although the social liberties afforded to women in Toronto at the turn-of-the-century were limited, women did circumnavigate the social and spatial regulation of the day to form sexual bonds with other women.

Within the existing research related to sexual diversity in turn-of-the-century Toronto, and Canada, there is extremely limited acknowledgement of histories of people of colour. Steven Maynard's (2004) study of gay subcultures in Toronto in the early 1900s does mention one case in which a working-class Chinese man faced trial for buggery. Maynard details that the man lived in a part of Toronto that had many boarding houses that rented to immigrant populations. This

acknowledgement addresses the reality that non-white men also used their private accommodations to facilitate sex with other men. More research is needed to better understand how men and women of colour during this period managed sexual activity.

World War II Sexual Expansion

The Second World War and immediate post-war era in Toronto were marked by competing trends: first, the increased emergence of gay and lesbian subcultures and, second the laws, policies, and other forms of regulation that were created to suppress their existence. This period is cited by several academics as being a critical time for the formation of contemporary gay identities. For example, Allen Berube's (1991) *Coming Out Under Fire* documents how the Second World War disrupted the gender and sex systems that regulated North American society. He cites the gender segregated living conditions of GIs and the rooming houses provided to female workers who were relocated for factory work as significant. D'Emilio (1998) argues that war freed many gay men and women from the confines of socially rigid communities. The war enabled new erotic conditions in which men and women could explore their sexuality (24).

Canadian historians and academics have noted, like their American counterparts, that gay men and lesbians achieved greater social visibility in North America during the Second World War. Gary Kinsman (1996) discusses the way in which the war increased men's awareness of homosexuality. For Bert Sutcliffe, his years in the service initiated what he referred to as his "education," which he described in the following way: "He took me into the first gay bar I'd ever been into, London [England] during the war time was heaven, really. I made sure before I came home to ask the men I knew overseas who were gay: 'okay, where do you go to in Toronto.' They told me of two or three places" (quoted in Kinsman, 1996, 34). Although social networks and local knowledge of spaces where men could find sex existed prior to World War Two, the war, created

an environment where more men were introduced to such spaces. For many individuals such as Sutcliffe, this knowledge was brought home with them.

Following the war, gay subcultures in Toronto began to expand with broader networks of social spaces that supported their growth. John Grube (1997) notes that gay social life was still an underground phenomenon. House parties were still the primary form of communal socialization for gay men during and immediately following the end of the Second World War (*Jim Loves Jack*, 1996). However, it became increasingly common for gay men, and sometimes lesbians, to congregate in hotel bars, or beverage rooms as they were known, including those located in the Royal York, King Edward, and Municipal Hotel (the site of present day Sheridan Centre, Kinsman, 1996; McLeod, 1998; Grimson, 1983; *Forbidden Love*, 1992). In the 1950s and into the 1960s, several bars along Yonge Street became popular among gay men (Grube, 1997; Chenier, 2017). These bars, Grube (1997) asserts, were an important part of a collective mental map of spaces where gay men knew they could find each other (130). Included in this mental map were some of the city's bathhouses and cinemas. Both types of public spaces, against their intended use, facilitated sexual contact between men (Hislop, 1987; Kinsman, 1996).

Lesbian subcultures in Toronto also began to expand following the Second World War, albeit in a much different form than it did for men. Toronto became the centre of Canada's war production industry. Women from all over Ontario moved to the city to fill factory positions that often paid well. The availability of well-paying factory work for women had two significant effects. First, women's involvement in the public domain was temporarily normalized; second, women were able to find the means to financially support themselves without having to marry (Chenier, 2004). Following the war, many factory jobs moved out of the city's downtown core. Factories that did remain open often replaced their female employees with men returning from

the war. The division of labour in Toronto, following the war, returned to its gendered roots. Work opportunities for women were readily available in the service and administrative sectors, but as Chenier notes, "butch women determined to live the gay life full time were less able to access these jobs" (90). Consequently, butch lesbians were forced into a less predictable job market or turned to the informal or illegal economy.

The gendered nature of Toronto's post-war economy had significant spatial implications. In contrast to butch lesbians, femmes (feminine lesbians) in Toronto more readily conformed to the social norms associated with womanhood and therefore were more likely to hold jobs that afforded them the opportunity to live outside the "rough" inner-city. Thus, femmes were described by "downtown" butch lesbians as "uptowners." "Uptowner" femmes were said to be able to separate their "gay lives" from their familial relationships, thus maintaining their secrecy. Femmes could be gay for the night and were able to enjoy a high degree of social mobility in the city. Butches, on the other hand, lived the gay life all the time and had their social and economic opportunities severely limited for it.

Bar culture emerged as a central fixture in lesbian socialization in post-war Toronto. Many of the bars frequented by both butch and femme lesbians were located within the city's vice districts, which existed near Jarvis and Carlton and in Toronto's original Chinatown around Dundas and Elizabeth. In an attempt to crack down on immorality, namely prostitution, Ontario liquor laws up until the 1970s required pubs to provide separate beverage rooms: one for only men and another for women and their escorts. The Rideau, at Jarvis and Gerrard, however, had rooms that were strictly divided by gender. The Rideau thus became popular amongst lesbians as it allowed them to socialize with limited harassment from heterosexual male patrons (Chenier, 2017). The following account of the Rideau describes its significance in the following way: "It was

somewhere in the area of 1951 that we went to our first gay bar in Toronto. The Rideau at Jarvis and Gerrard, which was a very tough spot. It was kind of novel because it had a bar for women only and so, the gay women in Toronto had chosen that place to have their drinks" (*Forbidden Love*, 1992). This commentator goes on to note that the Rideau was short-lived. The bar's rules eventually changed to allow men, accompanying women, into the formerly women's only section. Lesbians moved on.

The next bar of choice became the Continental House located at Dundas and Elizabeth, in the heart of Chinatown. Many personal accounts and historical re-tellings of experiences in the Continental refer to its grimy and violent environment (Chenier, 2004; Kinsman, 1996; *Forbidden Love*, 1992). My own interview with LeZlie Lee Kam provides insight into some of the reasons for bar violence: "I remember within minutes of sitting down at the table all we heard was 'bottoms up.' This butch came flying down.... We were down at the far end and she just came flying down and went off the end of the table. She had looked at somebody else's femme. The next thing you know there was fighting in the bathroom" (Lee Kam, interview, 2017). Various sources agree that tensions in the bars stemmed from rampant alcohol consumption and territorial arguments between butches over femmes (Chenier, 2004; *Forbidden Love*, 1992; Lee Kam, interview, 2017).

For many lesbians, bar culture went beyond socialization and became a means of survival. Chenier's (2004) work notes that the post-war shift in job availability was extremely difficult for butch lesbians. Jobs that did allow butch lesbians to maintain their appearance were difficult to come by and were often filled by word-of-mouth. Bar culture began to facilitate an underground economy that enabled butch lesbians to survive. Chenier notes that many lesbians relied on bars to earn money through "rolling" male patrons (stealing wallets) or performing "tricks" (engaging in sex work) to make rent and pay for the necessities (92-93). As a result, femmes were

sometimes considered by butches to be temporary visitors in the downtown lesbian bar culture and were not always warmly received (Chenier, 2004). Like men, gay women in the post-war era continued to find ways to circumnavigate society's regulation of sexuality to fulfill their social, sexual, and economic needs.

Gay men and lesbians did not live in entirely separate worlds. One of the women interviewed in the documentary *Forbidden Love* (1992), which documents the experiences of mid-twentieth century Canadian lesbians, notes that friendships were formed between gay men and women. She notes that both men and women frequented Hanlan's Point, a beach that earned its reputation as a gay hotspot in the 1950s. In some cases, friendships between lesbians and gay men served a utilitarian purpose. In many cases, bars would not grant entry to women who were unaccompanied by men. The same interviewee states the following: "You did not go there without a man, you couldn't go to the King Edward, to the mezzanine dressed in slacks. You dressed, and you dressed well, and you went with one good looking fellow. Now, what he did in the men's washroom was none of your business, but they made good escorts; they were charming, they were good looking, and you got everywhere you wanted to go" (*Forbidden Love*, 1992). For gay men, the accompaniment of a woman was used as a tactic to blend in with the bar's otherwise predominantly heterosexual patrons. The relationship described by the interviewee also indicates class. As Becki Ross (1993) notes, places like the King Edward Hotel catered to a "monied" set of the city's gay and lesbian population. It is unclear to me if the same types of relationship existed between working-class gay men and lesbians.

Achievements made by gays and lesbians to expand their social networks and territory did not come without consequences. The increased visibility of postwar gay and lesbian subcultures in Toronto was met with significant legal and regulatory pushback. One of the more significant

changes in the legal system occurred in the Criminal Code between 1953 and 1954. The definition of gross indecency was redefined to include any act of sexual misconduct with another person. This redefinition meant that the specificities of gender no longer applied: women caught engaging in same-sex activities could now also be charged (Kinsman, 1996). During this period, the medical profession's classification of homosexuality as a psychological disorder began to take root in Canadian culture. Homosexuals, especially men, were portrayed by the media, politicians, and police authorities as sexual deviants, sexual predators, and child molesters. In 1948, the Canadian Criminal Code was updated to add a section related to criminal sexual psychopaths. A short definition of this classification describes a sexual psychopath as someone who is unable to control their sexual impulses, and because of it, is likely to attack others. A convicted sexual psychopath could be imprisoned for an indefinite period. The law was crafted so that anyone convicted of buggery or gross indecency could be labeled a sexual psychopath (Kinsman, 1996). Additional amendments were made in 1961, which added specific wording that would allow for harsher sentencing and a classification of "dangerous sexual offenders." This change was the case even if the act was found to be committed between two consenting adults (Kinsman, 1996).

The significant changes and increased severity of laws, combined with growing anti-gay rhetoric in politics and media, resulted in intensified policing tactics designed to repress what was thought to be a "homosexual problem." The Toronto Morality Department employed spatial strategies that involved staking out known gay spaces such as bars, baths, and parks (Kinsman, 1996). Becki Ross (1993) writes that police would target bars known to be frequented by gay men and lesbians, in an effort to harass them into shutting down. The following quote demonstrates these tactics: "Undercover police officers regularly slapped fines on owners who sold liquor after

hours and to minors, and they raided the bars, scooping up queer patrons on charges of vagrancy, drunkenness and disorderliness, gross indecency, and female impersonation" (273).

House parties were also targeted and so called "found-ins" could be charged with gross indecency if caught (Warner, 2002). John Grube (1997), quoting an interview with George Hislop, notes that the police began to stake out known cruising spots in order to entrap men participating in sexual acts or scare them off. During this period, Cherry Beach became a known site where the police would take suspected gay men and lesbians and physically assault them. There are also many reports of lesbian women being sexually abused and raped by police officers (Brown, 2012; *Forbidden Love*, 1992; Warner, 2002). Reports related to this specific form of police brutality were so common that the term "Cherry Beach Express" was coined to describe it (McCaskell, 2016). These historical accounts demonstrate that the Toronto Morality Department's response to growing gay and lesbian visibility relied on its own knowledge of how the city's gay and lesbian communities moved through space.

The experiences of racialized LGBTQ2I communities during this period were difficult for me to uncover. Some of my sources attempted to provide an explanation for the lack of detail in this respect. For example, Warner (2002), notes that people from racial minorities would have had a difficult time navigating the social networks and spaces dominated by white gay men and lesbians because of the blatant racism that existed at the time. Unfortunately, he does not pursue the issue further. Grube's 1983 interview with a Jewish gay man hints at the severity of the racism that existed within the early 1940s social circuit he managed to be a part of: "It surprised me particularly at the party was the vehemence of bigotry... blacks and Jews and so on... I was the only Jew there... it was strictly WASP-y [white, anglo-saxon, protestants]" (Grimson). Lesbian social circles were no different: "There was a lot of prejudice at that time. We had our WASPs.

They didn't like women of colour. They didn't like anyone who was different" (*Forbidden Love*, 1992). The sources I found confirmed that racism that made it difficult for people of colour to occupy space in gay environments and social networks, but not impossible.

There are several explanations as to why racialized individuals would have had difficulty accessing gay and lesbian spaces. Institutionalized racism in post-war Canada prevented gay men and lesbians of colour from holding jobs that might have given them the financial means to participate in the emerging bar culture of the 1940s and 1950s. Elise Chenier's (2004) work highlights that, during the war, few Asian-Canadian women were able to break into the wartime labour market and that African-Canadian women were the first to lose their jobs when the war ended. The Immigration Act also denied entry to those convicted of buggery or gross indecency laws and those on work visas could have their visas revoked if caught engaging in homosexual behaviour.

More primary research is needed to better understand the histories of Toronto's queer of colour populations. It is not enough simply to assert that systemic and societal racism prevented people of colour from fully participating in gay and lesbian social circuits. However, due to the time and length restrictions associated with my major paper, I am unable to fully uncover this history. It is my hope that the nuance extracted from these multiple histories of gay and lesbian movements in Toronto, and Canada more broadly, might inspire this research to be taken up elsewhere.

The Simultaneous Rise of the Village and Political Activism (1969 – 1978)

Gay men and lesbians became increasingly visible in Toronto through the 1970s because of two, overlapping developments: first, through the early formation of a distinguishable gay commercial and residential district, and second, the establishment of various gay activist organizations. The

partial decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 has been commonly cited as a driving force behind the expansion of gay and lesbian social life and political organizing. In 1967 the federal Liberals proposed changes to the Canadian Criminal Code that aimed to modernize Canadian laws. Among the changes were relaxed provisions on divorce and abortion, and the decriminalization of sex between two consenting adults, over the age of twenty-one, if done in private (Kinsman, 1996). The changes were introduced by then Justice Minister, Pierre Elliot Trudeau, who was widely quoted as saying, “the state has no place in the bedrooms of the nation” (as quoted in Warner, 2002, 46). This partial decriminalization, however, would not apply if the sexual acts were conducted in public, between individuals under the age of twenty-one, or if more than two people participated or were present. As Tim McCaskell (2016) recalls: “Decriminalization and legalization were two different things. Not prosecuting ‘indecent acts’ between two people in private if we were both over twenty-one did not mean we were legal. If someone saw you it was no longer private and therefore illegal. We still faced legally condoned discrimination, police harassment, violence, and socially sanctioned contempt (33). The changes to the Criminal Code were eventually ratified in May of 1969 and came into effect by August of that year (Kinsman, 1996; Warner, 2002). Grube (1997) argues that this event began the shift in Toronto’s gay life from being underground and highly secretive to above ground and increasingly visible.

For gay men in the 1970s, Yonge Street from Gerrard to Bloor became the epicentre of the gay social scene; the St. Charles Tavern (near College Street) and the Parkside Tavern (near Wellesley Street) were popular hotspots. Although these spaces were not gay-owned, the clientele at both venues had become predominantly gay by the 1970s (Berwick, 1994). In 1969 the Quest was opened by an openly gay man. The bar became a near overnight success amongst gay men (Grimson, 1983). The Quest thus emerged as one of the city’s first gay-owned and gay

operated bars. The opening of the Quest, and other gay-owned establishments allowed for the profits of popular gay bars to be funneled back into gay hands, albeit to a limited subset of middle class white men who could afford to operate these businesses. The popularity of these spaces marked the emergence of a less secretive form of socializing for Toronto's population of MSM. The era of discrete gatherings in hotel beverage rooms was ending.

The cluster of bars on or just off of Yonge Street was aided by the boom of high rise constructions that occurred along Yonge Street in the 1950s. The opening of the Yonge subway line in 1954 made the Yonge Street Corridor particularly attractive to developers. In addition, the financial decline of the neighbourhoods east of Yonge, caused by the exodus of heterosexual families opting for suburban life, meant that the area was ripe for redevelopment. The first development was City Park. The series of three high-rise buildings between Yonge and Church Streets between Alexander and Wood Streets was completed in 1954. In the next decade a similar complex, known as the Village Green, was built one block north (Berwick, 1994; Osbaldeston, 2017). The concentration of affordable, single occupant apartments just off of Yonge Street meant that a new form of bachelor community was formed in Toronto.

Tim McCaskell (2016) suggests that the construction of the two high-rise complexes formed the beginnings of Toronto's gay residential enclave. He implies that the expansion of the middle class following World War Two meant that a growing number of individuals (mostly white men) could afford to move out of family homes prior to marriage. Many found themselves in City Park and the Village Green. McCaskell humourously recalls learning about these high-rise developments: "I soon learned that the phallic, round high-rise at Alexander and Church streets were referred to as KY Towers, after the popular lubricant. This was the nucleus of what in the 1970s we called the gay ghetto" (2016, 22).

The dominance of men's spaces in Toronto's gay enclave had significant effects on lesbian socialization. The Yonge Street bars were, in theory, mixed spaces that served both men and women. Some of the bars such as St. Charles, The Quest and The Parkside even hosted women only nights. However, not all of these spaces were particularly friendly to women. Chris Bearchell, in an article for *The Body Politic*, writes that gay bars began to segregate around the early 1970s and began discouraging entry to women and people she refers to as transvestites. Some venues charged women more than men for entry, enforced dress codes, and some required women to be accompanied by male chaperones (Bearchell, 1981, 27; Ross, 1993).

Women continued to form their own spaces. The city's prominent lesbian bar, the Continental, closed in 1972 and was eventually replaced by a new form of lesbian bar culture. Bearchell (1981) refers to these venues as weekend-only lesbian clubs. She goes on to write that the restriction of these bars to the weekend reflected the economic limitations lesbian women experienced, leaving "fewer places and fewer times for the lesbian subculture to gather and be nurtured" (26). The Blue Jay, located at Pape and Gerrard, was one of these bars and became an important hub for working-class lesbians outside of the downtown core. Its owners, Patty and Robin, envisioned a bar exclusively for women that would not have a hostile environment like the Rideau and Continental had. They enforced a series of tactics such as a strict formal dress code to discourage fighting and established membership to restrict access to women who were known not to cause trouble (Bearchell, 1981; Ross, 1993). Fights did break out at The Blue Jay, but women who caused problems were often banned (Bond, 2017). The Blue Jay, unlike the Continental before it, had a dance floor and regularly featured live music, mostly performed by all-female bands (Nolan, 2017; Ross, 1993). Despite the sometimes violent atmosphere, bars like the Blue Jay became spaces that were: "Not solely a place to drink and engage in small talk, [but]

opened up new forms of sociality and new ways of being with one another as gay women” (Ross, 1993, 274).

Many of the weekend lesbian bars that operated during this period were short-lived. Bearchell (1981) asserts that the lesbian bar was a hard market to break into partially because of the limited economic resources of women. She also writes that many bars failed to attract a sustained lesbian clientele for varying and often undeterminable reasons. Owners also faced difficulties in obtaining operating licences. Lola Daoust, owner of the Cameo, a lesbian bar that opened in 1975, discussed her difficulties in obtaining a tavern licence to expand the profitability of her business. “The inspectors come in, say everything is cool, and then say, ‘but you’ve got to do this.’ I do it, but they still won’t give me the licence. ‘[I said,] look, if I was a man or had money to slip you under the table. I bet I’d get a licence.’ His reply, ‘maybe’” (as quoted in Bearchell, 1981); the bar did not ever make her money.

1970s gay spaces also continued to be difficult to navigate for gay men and lesbians of colour. However, just as in the previous decades, non-white gay men and lesbians developed strategies to overcome these barriers to entry. For Art Zoccole, a two-spirit man of Italian and Ojibwe descent, racism in Toronto’s bar scene necessitated a low profile. “Some aboriginal people came to the bars, but at first I didn’t know who they were. Everybody tried to keep a low profile in those days. There was a lot of racism – you’d be taunted by other patrons yelling rude remarks” (Zoccole, 2017, 27). He goes on to say that his experiences with white men in bars like the St. Charles were limited to two possibilities: racism and fetishism. “But there were also Caucasian guys who were totally enthralled by us: it was the ‘noble Indian’ versus the ‘drunken Indian’” (Zoccole, 2017, 27). LeZlie Lee Kam’s own experience at the Quest echoes Zoccole’s commentary: “Fags of colour were exoticized [sic] back then. In Quest there was this cage, and only men were

allowed to dance in the cage. So, because I looked like a fag and I could pass, my friend used to get me into the cage and then I'd have dollar bills tucked in my waistband so I would buy drinks for the rest of the night" (Lee Kam, interview, 2017).

Similar experiences of racism have also been recorded about Toronto's lesbian bars, including The Blue Jay. As Faith Nolan, a Canadian-born Black woman, describes: "Queer Black and Indigenous people were met with a lot of racism... people didn't want to go out with someone who wasn't white. Everything else was exotic, unless you had a fetish" (Nolan, 2017). Pam Godfrey notes that many women of colour were met with hostility. "If a Native woman got drunk in a bar, she was treated badly. I can remember being out with a Black woman at the Blue Jay and her being the only one asked for ID. And it always seemed like Black women were getting beaten up at certain times" (as quoted in Ross, 1993, 275). Godfrey's statement reveals that racism wasn't simply restricted to unwelcoming attitudes or derogatory remarks, but was also enacted through physical violence.

I did not find evidence of many gay bars or social spaces in the 1970s that were friendly to people of colour. However, there was some evidence that gay men of colour, in particular, were able to carve out spaces for themselves in select bars. For example, an excerpt in *FAB Magazine* suggests popular The Quest earned a reputation as being a space frequented by Asian and Black MSM (Rowlson, 2005). While racism and economic barriers were clearly important, LeZlie's personal history highlights how cultural practices should also be considered: "I started working at Manulife insurance in 1976. I moved out from home and got my own apartment. In West Indian culture and many other cultures outside of North America and Europe, a girl child does not leave the household unless she is getting married. 'What would people say?'" (Lee Kam, interview, 2017). More research is needed to determine exactly how people of colour accessed or were

barred from gay-identified social spaces during this period and how gay men and lesbians of colour have developed outside of white gay-identified spaces.

While the physical landscape of a largely white, male-dominated gay community was taking shape along Yonge Street, a landscape of gay activism was forming simultaneously. Catherine Jean Nash (2005, 2006) documents two forms of gay activist organization in the 1970s and 1980s. Nash categorizes the two movements as assimilationist and liberationist. While both forms of political organizing had differing views as how to best achieve political legitimacy, they shared the same distaste for the developing gay enclave. The emergence of Toronto's gay enclave and the reactions that it elicited from these gay and lesbian political activists followed a different historical trajectory than seen in other cities. Many gay urban histories have explored how gay identity development and enclave formation were symbiotic processes. For example, as Castells (1983) had argued, the emergence of the gay enclave in San Francisco was the result of the deliberate efforts of gay men to establish residential and commercial territory in the city. Nash, however, states that: "At least in the 1970s, the gay movement sought to dismantle rather than affirm expressly gay-associated spaces and neighbourhoods. The gay village in Toronto evolved despite rather than because of the gay movements efforts and intentions" (2006, 2).

The more assimilationist form of gay activism emerged through the establishment of the City's homophile associations. The University of Toronto Homophile Association (UTHA) established itself in 1969 as a campus organization dedicated to educating the UofT community about homosexuality in an effort to combat discrimination. The Community Homophile Association of Toronto (CHAT) followed in 1970 with the goal of providing support to the gay and lesbian community beyond the university's reach. CHAT worked to establish social services, legal aid, a distress hotline and community events (Warner, 2002). By 1974, CHAT was the city's most

established gay organization (McCaskell, 2016). The political approach adopted by UTHA and CHAT was conservative in nature. Both organizations believed they could accomplish their goals of gaining social legitimacy by working within existing institutions rather than through protest. UTHA and CHAT's political messaging was oriented to demonstrating to the general public that homosexuals were similar to heterosexuals with the exception of choice in sexual partners. They minimized or rejected the idea that homosexual lives were distinct from heterosexuals. Assimilationists thus saw bar culture and cruising as detrimental to the fight for political equality (Nash, 2005; 2006). As Nash notes, their condemnation of Toronto's emerging gay commercial district was severe. CHAT: "Regarded existing gay social spaces as locations constituting a deviant and impoverished homosexual identity. Toronto's so-called gay ghetto... was a tool by which mainstream society oppressed and marginalized homosexuals" (Nash, 2005, 119). The assimilationist movement in Toronto, however, was relatively short-lived as the seceding liberationist movement began to form in 1971 (Nash, 2005; 2006; Warner, 2002).

Liberationist gay activism began with the formation of organizations such as *The Body Politic* (TBP), a gay liberationist newspaper, and was followed by Toronto's chapter of the Gay Alliance Towards Equality (GATE) and the Coalition of Gay Rights in Ontario (CGRO). Nash (2005) argues that the liberationist perspective differed from assimilationism because of its central tenet; "the release of human sexuality from what they regarded as the bondage of the current sex/gender system with its prescribed sexualized and gendered social roles" (120). Liberationists pushed their agenda by orchestrating public demonstrations, meetings, conferences, and protests of anti-gay media establishments. As Warner (2002) describes, the movement worked with the notion that gay political organizing needed to be loud and proud. Despite the liberationist preference for in-your-face tactics, activists believed the city's gay commercial

district detracted from their calls for human rights protections. The dominant view held by liberationists was that all gay men and lesbians should be politically involved, and as such, that “shallow” bar culture was a distraction from gay political actualization. Liberationists advocated for gay men and lesbians to frequent events and spaces created by gay and lesbian political organizations instead of bars (Nash, 2005; 2006; Warner, 2002).

By the early 1970s, some individuals within liberationist organizations began to see legal recognition through human rights protection as the best path to achieving liberation. This shift marks a movement away from challenging the state’s sex-gender system towards the establishment of a place for gay men and lesbians in existing institutions. Kinsman (2017) points to an article written by Brian Waite, a founding member of TBP Collective, in *The Body Politic* in 1972. Waite’s argument centers on the idea that priorities should be shifted towards human rights recognition. “I feel strongly that the movement in Ontario will greatly strengthen itself if we organize jointly to demand the inclusion of the term ‘sexual orientation’ in the Ontario Human Rights Code. Winning this demand will give life to the words ‘gay pride’. It will impel and enable thousands more brothers and sisters to join us in future campaigns for full sexual liberation for humankind” (Waite, 1972, 19).

Waite’s use of “sexual orientation” is particularly important. Kinsman (2017) asserts that Waite invokes the term to help construct homosexuals as a recognizable group with a shared experience of oppression much like any other minority group. Waite provides the caveat that human rights recognition is not the only step to liberation. Human rights protection would allow for the movement to grow in number because gay men and lesbians would not have to fear repercussions like job loss and eviction for being openly gay and politically active. An expanded

base of activism would afford the movement the clout necessary to return to a pursuit of liberation more effectively (Kinsman, 2017).

Rights-based activism began to take hold of the mainstream gay movement's political agenda by the mid-1970s. Mainstream activism focused its attention on a series of discrimination cases between 1975 and 1984 (Warner, 2002). One of the most publicized cases of this period occurred in 1976 with the firing of John Damien, a racing steward, by the Ontario Racing Commission. Damien was terminated from his position when the commission learned he was gay. His doctor had outed him to his employer (McCaskell, 2016; Warner, 2002). Damien's case was used by organizations like GATE to demonstrate the need for legal recognition in Ontario's Human Rights Code. Sexual orientation was not included in the Human Rights Code as grounds for non-discrimination, which meant that Damien's case would not be heard by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. Instead, Damien sued the Ontario Racing Commission for one million dollars on the basis of wrongful termination. Warner (2002) asserts that, "Activists who supported Damien thought that he was the right person with the ideal circumstances to sway public opinion to secure a Human Rights Code amendment" (144).

The way in which John Damien's case was publically constructed was problematic to those who were unwavering in their liberationist politics. Kinsman (2017), borrowing from comments made by Gillian Chase of Toronto-based feminist newspaper *The Other Woman*, writes that the emerging human rights strategy privileged white, respectable, and middle class individuals. Respectability meant that sexual practices were de-emphasized in order to equate homosexuals with heterosexuals with the exception of preference of same-sex partners. This is especially true in John Damien's case: For example, Damien was quoted in *TBP* as saying, "I've never flaunted my gayness... I just led my own private life and that was it" (as quoted in McCaskell, 2016, 52).

For some, the continued proliferation of gay businesses and services into the late 1970s was seen as the further sanitization of gay identities. The emergence of a recognizable network of gay commercial spaces had inspired discussions related to gay capitalism supported by a niche gay market: middle class white gay men with disposable income who wished to spend their money at gay-friendly businesses. In 1976, an article by Ken Waxman in *Toronto Life* cites the success of several businesses (owned by both heterosexuals and homosexuals) that served the city's gay population. Waxman muses about the profitability of these businesses, estimating that the gay market must be a multi-million dollar industry. In a review of the article, Michael Lynch, writing for *The Body Politic*, criticizes Waxman for perpetuating the stereotype that homosexual individuals spend more money on consumer goods and entertainment than their heterosexual counterparts. Lynch makes it clear that Waxman's article is not an endorsement for the gay community, but rather an exposé on the capitalist exploitation of an untapped market: "At first I thought Waxman was showing one aspect of gayness, of acceptable gayness. But on rereading I found no indication that gay is acceptable except in consumerist terms. Here too, 'business is business.' You are what you spend" (Lynch, 1976, 3).

Kinsman (2017) refers to this period as the dawn of the neoliberal queer. The rise of the gay market allowed for neoliberal capitalist practices to redefine gay community formation (152). Yet, as Lynch and others have pointed out, the acceptance of gay dollars in the marketplace did not translate to the acceptance of gay people into general society. Gay people were still not protected by the Human Rights Code and were regularly subject to police harassment (Lynch, 1976; Kinsman, 1996; 2017). Further, the "money talks" argument demonstrated in Waxman's article aligns with an attempt to dismiss liberationist activists, like those of TBP Collective, as "self-righteous" and "left-wing" (Lynch, 1976, 34). What Ken

Waxman's *Gay Capitalism* and its critics elucidate is how mainstream gay identity in Toronto came to represent respectable middle-class ideals and worked to position true liberationists as representative of fringe interests.

Lesbian Feminist Politics of the 1970s

Lesbian feminist politics of the 1970s emerged from a desire amongst lesbians to establish their own organizations. Becki Ross (1995) writes that lesbian feminism is based in principles of second wave feminism such as abortion rights, birth control, access to child care, and wages for housework. Lesbians in mainstream feminist organizations, however, struggled against homophobia; they also felt as though their causes were tokenised or considered secondary. Some lesbian feminists thought that collaboration with gay men, who shared a similar experience of marginalization due to sexual preference, would be a better fit for their cause. Yet, lesbian feminists also found it difficult to find a voice within male dominated gay activist organizations like CHAT. In 1973, CHAT's Women's Committee separated from the organization writing, "as lesbians we are oppressed both as cunts and dykes. Until the gays of CHAT see the necessity of struggling against sexism, until the structure of CHAT is revolutionized, then CHAT will reflect the status quo through legalization and acceptance. It is imperative that CHAT confront its own sexism" (as quoted in Ross, 1995).

The desire for autonomous lesbian organizations, separate from male gay activism, also stemmed from differences in priorities. Ross (1995) writes that many lesbians did not see the liberation of public sexual expression as a major priority in comparison to women's sexualities were not policed in the same way that gay men were. Additionally, the human rights campaigns, or efforts to attain equality with heterosexuals, did not properly address the dual oppressions many lesbians faced as both homosexuals and women (37).

In October of 1977 Toronto lesbian feminists congregated at CHAT's office to discuss the formation of their own autonomous organization. Following this meeting, the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) was formed and held bi-weekly general meetings to develop a course of action. By early 1978 the women had found a home at 342 Jarvis Street near, but not in, the emerging Village. LOOT's first formal self-description was published in its first newsletter in March of 1977 and stated the following: "LOOT is an umbrella organization for lesbians. It serves social, recreational, personal, cultural, political and educational purposes for the women involved. It simply allows lesbians to meet and get together with other lesbians who share her interests. All lesbians are welcome" (Ross, 1995, 73). The last line of the quote is significant because not all lesbians held the same political perspective. LOOT's mission was to be an organization that could be inclusive of lesbians of all political affiliations (Ross, 1995).

LOOT's ranks of lesbian feminists viewed the commercialization of gay life as problematic. Many lesbian feminists held the perspective that the emerging residential and commercial gay enclave served the interests of an exclusive group of middle-class gay men. Lesbian feminists also held a negative view of lesbian bar culture at venues like The Continental. Bar culture, from the lesbian feminist perspective, represented the ways in which the dominant heterosexual majority had pushed lesbian women to the fringes of society. Further, they viewed butch/femme culture as the reproduction of patriarchal social structures in their community. Bar-going women were seen as a-political and were perceived to be an obstacle to the lesbian feminist movement. As Phil Masters asserted, "there were so few of us back then that you felt betrayed by women who weren't supporting you and your feminist analysis of the world" (as quoted in Ross, 1995).

The conditions facing Toronto's gay and lesbian population from the early 1900s to the late 1970s changed dramatically. By the end of the seventy year period, Toronto's gay men and

lesbians were becoming increasingly visible. The partial decriminalization of homosexuality in 1969 catalyzed a number of activist organizations that found new confidence to advocate for equality. During this period, the city's gay enclave was also beginning to take shape. A series of high rise rental towers along the Yonge Street corridor created a bachelor subculture that resulted in the density of single middle class men; some of whom would have patronized the several bars on Yonge Street that were known to be popular spaces for MSM. By the end of the 1970s the conditions were set for spatial and political influence of the city's middle class, white gay population to grow considerably.

CHAPTER 2: From Gay Enclave to Commercial District

By 1978, Toronto's Gay Village was beginning to take shape, albeit in a less spatially ordered manner than what we see today. The approximate boundaries of the Village extended from Yonge Street to the east, Jarvis to the west, Bloor to the north, and Carlton to the south. The 1980s, however, was a period of significant change for the spatial influence of the city's gay and lesbian communities. The emergence of the so called "pink market" created an environment where middle class white gay men were seen as consumers and, thus, a market waiting to be exploited. Consequently, the late seventies and early eighties saw the increasing dominance of gay business owners who began to directly influence both the spatial and political trajectories of Toronto's LGBTQ communities. This chapter will document how the influence of gay capitalism guided the gay enclave's transformation into the Village. I will weave together the spatial, social, and political contexts by which the Church-Wellesley Village evolved from an underworld network of beverage rooms and dance halls to a marketed entertainment district. The purpose of this narrative is to demonstrate the way in which the spatialization of gay life was formulated to serve the interests of middle class white gay men. This chapter will also pay special attention to those who have contested the village and have resisted the hegemony of homonormative gay culture.

Shifting Perspectives on the Gay Enclave (1978 - 1985)

The anti-enclave and anti-gay capitalist sentiments held by liberationist activists changed dramatically following a string of significant events in 1977 and early 1978. The first event was the rape and murder of a teenage Portuguese immigrant, Emmanuel Jaques. The crimes had been committed by gay men. The subsequent reporting was sensational and characterized the event as a gay orgy slaying (McCaskell, 2016). The city, for years leading up to the Jaques murder, had focused efforts on cleaning up Yonge Street's Sin Strip. Ed Jackson (2017) asserts that newly elected reformist mayor David Crombie faced considerable public pressure to crack down on the

disreputable businesses such as strip clubs and body-rub parlours that lined Yonge Street between Dundas and Queen. However, despite the introduction of new bylaws and licencing mechanisms, the city's tactics were largely ineffectual. This situation changed with the discovery of Jaques' body in one of the Yonge Street buildings. The city employed various tactics to expedite the closure of the businesses in question. As Jackson writes, "City inspectors slapped sex-trade businesses with a blizzard of fire, health, and building code infraction citations... The Morality Bureau stepped up efforts to lay bawdy-house charges, employing the little-used provincial Disorderly Houses Act to force landlords to close tenant businesses convicted under the statute (2017, 168). Within two months of intensified policing and inspection only four of the forty businesses in question were still operating.

The second event occurred with the release of the December/January issue of *The Body Politic*. The issue included a provocative article penned by Gerald Hannon, which sought to challenge the stereotype that associated gay men with pedophilia. The article was titled, "Men Loving Boys Loving Men." The article was found by Toronto Sun columnist Claire Hoy who wrote a series of inflammatory articles using Hannon's piece to demonstrate the alleged danger the gay community in Toronto posed to the general public. Hoy's coverage of the article, in connection with the Jaques murder, ignited a severe and immediate wave of backlash against the gay community (Jackson, 2017; McCaskell, 2016).

The Body Politic's offices were raided on December 30, 1977, in direct response to the publication of "Men Loving Boys." In the raid, police seized financial and advertising records, corporate files, and subscription lists as evidence; all of which were critical materials to the organization's functioning. Charges for the use of mail to distribute obscene material and possession of obscene material for distribution were eventually laid against three of the

organization's key members. The raid and charges launched TBP, a non-profit organization, into a lengthy and costly legal battle that many believed had been orchestrated to run the paper out of business (Jackson, 2017; McCaskell, 2016; Nash, 2014; Ross, 1995). This raid, however, was just the first in a series of additional police raids and crack-downs.

Toronto's police force began to turn its attention to the city's bathhouses with a reputation of serving gay clientele in the late 1970s. At this time, many of these bathhouses were not located in the Village but around the downtown core. Toronto police had learned from its sweep of Yonge Street and by watching the Montréal police force's raids of bathhouses leading up to the 1976 Olympics that the Criminal Code's common bawdy house laws could be applied to bathhouses. Specifically, the police force relied upon the manipulation of the law's ambiguous definition of indecent acts to charge owners and operators as keepers and clientele as found-ins (Jackson, 2017; McCaskell, 2016). The Barracks Bathhouse was the first target in 1978 and was followed by a similar raid of the Hot Tub Club in 1979. The biggest event occurred on February 5, 1981, when Toronto Police carried out their plan for Operation Soap, which saw the highly coordinated raid of four downtown bathhouses known to be frequented by a gay clientele. On that night the police arrested nearly three hundred individuals (Jackson, 2017; McCaskell, 2016; Warner, 2002). A significant protest was organized the following night with over 1500 people marching towards the site of 52 Division to protest the mass arrest. Despite the concessions made by Mayor Art Eggleton for an investigation to be conducted on the incident, the police proceeded to raid two more bathhouses later in the year (Warner, 2002).

The wave of significant and targeted anti-gay police campaigns combined with a rise of social conservatism in the late 1970s changed the way gay activist groups articulated their claims for equal human rights protections. Ironically, prior to the release of Hannon's

controversial article, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had been set to discuss the addition of sexual orientation to Ontario's Human Rights Code. However, the process never started. The new chair of the commission, appointed by conservative Premier Bill Davis, determined that it was not an appropriate time to deal with sexual orientation in the wake of the Jaques murder and negative nation-wide press coverage of *TBP* article (McCaskell, 2016). The mainstream gay rights movement began to reformulate its strategy.

One particularly noticeable change within gay activism was the way in which gay owned and operated businesses were perceived by liberationist groups. The morning after the first raid on the Barracks bathhouse in 1978, a meeting was organized between representatives of liberationist group GATE, TBP, bath owners, and the Lambda Business Council (McCaskell, 2016). The Lambda Business Council was formed in early 1978 as Canada's first organization representing gay business owners. The organization produced directory booklets listing bars, baths, restaurants, and services that identified as gay to: "consolidate a sense of gay identity and community" (Kinsman, 1996, 293). The meeting was called between these organizations and individuals to discuss the police action against the community. Tim McCaskell (2016) summarizes the meeting's significance as the following, "It really did seem that we were under attack. 'Legitimate' businesses began to feel that they, too, could be targeted. The traditional gulf between activists and the commercial ghetto was narrowing" (97-98). The raids were framed by both activists and business interests as a mutual threat. With this acknowledgement, the Right to Privacy Commission (RTPC) was formed as an alliance between both parties (Nash, 2014).

The new alliance significantly altered the way in which the mainstream gay rights movement would organize itself into the future. At the onset, the formation of the RTPC was viewed as problematic by some liberationists. Some feared that the RTPC would be dominated by

business owners who would seek to protect their own interests while also gaining the financial support of the broader gay community. *TBP Collective*, in particular, published articles related to this concern. They feared that gay businessmen would exploit community fears about police harassment for their personal financial gain. The RTPC, however, went on to frame the bathhouse as an important institution within the gay community (Nash, 2014). As Nash asserts, "by claiming the baths and bars as legitimate and important institutions of the gay community the RTPC legitimized these commercial spaces as integral to the gay movement and to gay and lesbian identity" (2014, 97).

The RTPC narrative began to suggest that an act of police aggression towards a gay business represented an attack on the gay community as a whole (Kinsman, 1996). For its part, the Lambda Business Council was active in publically drawing links between police aggression towards businesses and aggressive towards members of the community. Lambda president Richard Brown, in a *Globe and Mail* article from 1981 stated: "We have police coming into bars, threatening bar owners with charges under the Liquor Licence Act for minor infractions. We have police who are watching queer-bashing going on outside our bars and they're turning to the people who are being beaten and saying, 'don't complain to us, we are not interested'" (quoted in *Globe and Mail*, 1981).

The additional raids in 1979 and 1981 seemed to dispel liberationist concerns related to the unification of business and political activism. McCaskell (2016) writes that raids had acted as a rallying cry to unite business owners, activists, and "a-political" gay men to face a common enemy. By 1981, articles in support of the gay commercial scene began to appear in *The Body Politic*. Toronto's mainstream gay movement had come to accept gay commercial spaces as a fundamental component of gay and lesbian organizing and identity (Kinsman, 1996; Nash, 2014).

The RTPC organized discussion groups and fundraisers within bars and baths, which became seen as important social gathering spaces. The Toronto Gay Community Council (TGCC) was eventually formed in 1981 with the goal of sharing community information and generating debates on important issues. The organization provided an avenue for the facilitation of discussion between individuals with differing interests including political activist organizations, recreational organizations, and businesses. The TGCC eventually developed a more assertive role as a public facing voice for the gay community (McCaskell, 2016, 154-155). Kinsman, however, notes that many gay businesses did not cater to everyone: "The development of the gay ghetto has favoured gay men over lesbians and some gay men over others. It has favoured the white and the middle class over the old, the young, the non-white, the disabled, the working class and the poor" (1996, 302). Thus, the benefits associated with the acceptance of the emerging gay commercial district within political activism were limited.

The 519 is a particularly important site in Toronto's history of gay activism. The community centre, which had been acquired by the city in 1975, had accepted an application from an organization representing gay youth in 1976. The facility quickly became a hub of gay activism. The 519 became the home base for activist organizations like the RTPC following the first wave of bathhouse raids in 1978. The 519 would continue to accommodate additional LGBTQ organizations into the 1980s including groups like Zami (The 519).

Mainstream gay rights activism following the raids in the late 1970s and early 1980s became increasingly reliant on identity politics. Kinsman (1996) asserts that mainstream activists continued to emphasize sexual orientation as the unifying characteristic among gay men and lesbians regardless of race, class, or gender. Toronto's various political organizations renewed efforts to secure the inclusion of sexual orientation into Ontario's Human Rights Code. Securing

this right was seen as a way to bring an end to the police force's repeated assaults on the community. Nash (2005) argues that mainstream activists reformulated their rhetoric by returning to the argument that sexual orientation was a unifying characteristic among gay men and lesbians that constituted a minority group. The argument expanded to describe gays and lesbians as a quasi-ethnic minority similar to other ethnic minority communities in the city who faced discrimination on the basis of their race.

The ethnic minority argument intensified following the shooting of Albert Johnson, a Jamaican man, who was killed in his own home by police who were responding to an alleged domestic dispute. Members of Toronto's Black community and other minority groups argued that Johnson's death was racially motivated and demonstrated racial prejudice within the city's police force. Nash (2005) notes that gay activists saw public debates about Johnson's death as an opportunity to link gay and lesbian issues into public discussions about police misconduct in the city. An editorial included in the October 1979 issue of *TBP* sums up this strategy: "Gay people know very well how much power the police have, and how they can abuse it. By supporting the organizational efforts of the Black and immigrant communities, we can, together, hope to check that power" (1979, 7).

The reformulation of gay activist discourse had additional effects on the perception of the gay enclave. Specifically, the enclave became envisioned as a geographically tangible site that legitimized the gay and lesbian community's claims to minority status. An article written by Chris Bearchell and Ed Jackson (1980) makes this point clear. "More and more of us will continue to socialize with other gay people. And we will socialize in a growing number of places that cater to our special needs. We will increasingly live in areas of the city widely known as gay neighbourhoods. We will, in short, continue to grow into a stronger and more visible community,

held together as much by common experiences as by an idea" (25). Bearchell and Jackson distinguish their idea of a growing gay residential and commercial district as different from what they deemed to be the "insular ghetto" of the past. Their argument suggests that a geographical concentration of a gay and lesbian community in the city would provide the appropriate circumstances to increase the movement's organizational abilities and visibility.

The ethnic minority discourse eventually became central to gay activism's fight for the inclusion of sexual orientation in Ontario's Human Rights Code. The employment of this particular strategy had distinct consequences. Nash (2005) argues that the Human Rights framework required gay liberationists to move away from ideas of gender and sexuality were fluid. To secure Human Rights legislation, activists were required to construct sexual orientation as a defining characteristic (120). In other words, liberationists abandoned their previous goals of challenging dominant sex/gender binaries in favour of a new socially constructed binary: the homosexual as a "born this way" identity, akin to other ethnic groups. As Kinsman (1996) writes, "this assumption of a common lesbian or gay identity – which emphasizes the unitary character of this identity – has stood in the way of recognizing and dealing with the many differences and lines of oppression within lesbian and gay community formation" (300). Kinsman goes on to argue that the homogenized gay and lesbian identity had also become coded as white, adult, and middle-class. Nash (2005) writes that the political agenda adopted by mainstream activist organizations of this period was presented as politics for all despite the dominance of white, middle class, male interests and the movement's apparent departure from more truly liberationist ideologies.

Not all activists strayed from their liberationist politics. Organizations like Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE), a liberationist organization, continued to work to challenge the dominant sex gender system that regulated sexuality in Canada. GLARE

organized the first Pride Day in June, 1981 at the Grange Park. The day was organized to revive a version of Pride that had existed in the 1970s in response to the bathhouse raids earlier that year. The event was a mix of protest and fun in the form of dancing and saw a series of speeches given by a series of community activists like Lorna Weir, Michael Riordan and Marianna Valverde. The event's success contributed to its growth into an annual protest and celebration.

Challenging the White Male Dominance of Mainstream Gay Activism

White, male, middle class hegemony in gay activist organizations in the late 1970s and 1980s did not go unchallenged. The 1980s in particular saw the continued presence of lesbian feminist organizations and the emergence of organizations representing gay and lesbians of colour who worked to increase their visibility and organize in support of their unique interests. Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) emerged out of liberationist group Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE) in the early 1980s. The group was formed following the folding of LOOT and the closing of popular lesbian feminist bar Fly by Night and prompted by the rise of right-wing conservatism in Ontario.

LAR's role as a lesbian feminist organization served the important purpose of providing lesbian feminists a forum to develop strategies to advocate for their distinct interests. LAR's priorities were centered on increasing lesbian visibility through activism (Burgess, 2017). One of LAR's initiatives was to draw attention to the police harassment of lesbians. A letter addressed to the Metro Inquiry into Police-Gay Relations in Toronto in August of 1981 recounts how lesbians, like gay men, were also victims of police harassment. The document outlines thirteen incidences of police harassment towards lesbians ranging from 1976 to 1981. The recorded incidents include the selective enforcement of liquor laws, the false arrest, physical abuse, and illegal detainment of

four women from The Brunswick House in 1976, and several incidents where police officers stood by and watched gay-bashings take place instead of intervening.

Part of LAR's significance is the tactics the organization used to increase lesbian visibility. For example, LAR organized Toronto's first dyke march in October of 1981. A flyer advertising the march referred to the event as a march and dance for, "lesbian power, pride and visibility" (Burgess, 2017). The march paraded from The 519 on Church Street and made several stops at key sites of importance to Toronto's lesbian community and places that were deemed to be problematic. Amy Gottlieb, a member of LAR, stated that the march was intended to draw attention to, "lesbian protest against police harassment, lesbian solidarity with gay men on the bath raids protest, child custody cases of lesbian mothers and the exclusion of lesbians from the Ontario Human Rights Code" (as quoted in Burgess, 2017, 103).

LAR also worked to challenge the limitations and sexism that existed within Toronto's mainstream gay organizations that were dominated by middle class, white, gay men. An article in *TBP* in September 1982 documents a growing rift between gay liberationist organizations and lesbian feminists in the city. GLARE organized a community forum to address growing tensions between gay activists and lesbian activists (*The Body Politic*, 1982). A booklet entitled *Gay Men and Feminism: A Discussion* was published following the forum. The booklet includes pieces by several activists who discuss the state of relations between gay men and lesbians and presented ideas to address rising tensions.

Lesbian feminists in the early 1980s also worked to question the human rights strategy that had been adopted by mainstream gay activist organizations. Activist Lorna Weir's piece in the *Gay Men and Feminism* booklet critiques gay liberationists focus on human rights code protection. She argues that the shift towards a rights-based strategy is limited in its reach. The

strategy may help to curb police harassment and may strengthen the gay ghetto, but would not change the “social contempt” felt towards gay men in broader society (10). She recommends the gay movement return to its roots of challenging what she calls “compulsory heterosexuality,” which is the regulation of sexuality in state institutions and the enforcement of heterosexual norms in the media and professional realm. Weir asserts that challenging heterosexism in society is a greater objective that could align both causes. LAR eventually folded in 1983, but, in its short run, the organization was successful in advocating for lesbian issues in a stream of activism that was dominated by men.

Many of Toronto’s mainstream gay activist organizations also failed to address issues affecting gays and lesbians of colour. Toronto’s population of racial minorities began to grow in the 1970s and 1980s following changes to Canada’s immigration laws. By extension, the city’s gay and lesbian communities of colour also grew. Yet, many mainstream activist organizations remained dominated by white bodies and many displayed racist tendencies. *TBP*, in particular, found itself embroiled in several controversies, which would call attention to racism within its ranks. An article titled “Race, Moustaches and Sexual Prejudice” published in the June 1983 edition of *TBP* trivialized issues of racism in sexual preference. The author, Ken Popert, argued against the Collective’s prior decision to not publish an advertisement for a pornography magazine that only featured white models and referred to itself as “unethnic.” Although he admitted that the advertisement perpetuated racial prejudice within the community, he argued that the paper should not censor sexual desire (Popert, 1983). His argument positioned the freedom of sexual expression, no matter how racially insensitive, as more important than challenging racism within the community.

Popert's article elicited deservedly severe criticism from various sources. In a written statement, Eng K. Ching argued that the failure to properly address racism within the gay community was detrimental to liberation as a whole: "For me, gay liberation does not stop at men loving men or women loving women. It provides me with the condition from which I act towards the end of all other kinds of oppression. By refusing to struggle against racism in our homosexuality, we let straight society define our sexuality and also block the further advances of gay liberation" (as quoted in Tim McCaskell, 2016, 187). Others argued that Popert's article sought to absolve white gay men of the responsibility for the racism that had manifested in their expressions of sexual desire.

A second incident occurred in 1985 when *TBP* published a racially charged classified ad submitted by a white man who advertised his search for a young Black man to be his "house boy." Following outrage related to the publishing of the racially charged ad, TBP Collective agreed to host a meeting to discuss the ad with members of Zami, a group representing lesbians and gay men from the Caribbean, Gay Asians Toronto, and Lesbians of Colour. The meeting did not go well. Many members of the Collective chose not to attend. Further, two key members of the Collective, Ken Popert and Gerald Hannon once again argued for the prioritization of sexual liberation over the need to challenge racism within the community (McCaskell, 2016, Warner, 2002).

The condemnation of TBP's position was clear and pointed. As one man put it, "why is the fulfillment of your desire more important than the struggle of my oppression? If the philosophy of TBP collective is sexual liberationism at any cost, then please do not call yourself a gay liberation journal 'cos I'm part of the gay liberation, and when your liberation oppresses my life, it ain't no liberation" (quoted in Warner, 2002, 319). Richard Fung argued that: "it also does not surprise me

that by advocating sexual liberationism as its main priority over community organizing, the paper maintains the colour, class and, up to recently, gender of the people who work there... non-white lesbians and gays are just not seen as totally gay. We are outsiders, our interests are appendices” (as quoted in Warner, 2002, 319). Fung’s comments draw a connection between the organization’s failure to properly address issues of race and the number of white, middle class, men who formed the majority of the Collective.

Several organizations emerged in the 1980s in response to the lack of representation of queers of colour within mainstream gay activism. Gay Asians Toronto (GAT) was formed by Richard Fung in 1979. Fung notes that prior to the establishment of this group there was little space for gay Asians to organize in Toronto. “Back then, when you saw another Asian in a gay bar – and there’d only ever be one or at most two others – you never quite knew whether it was okay to acknowledge each other” (1997, 44). GAT provided a forum for gay Asians to discuss their alienation from the city’s various Asian communities, but also to address racism and exclusion within mainstream gay activist organizations. Alan Li summarized the importance of organizations like GAT in Richard Fung’s documentary *Orientations*, “getting together with people of your own background and talking things out that way is different than just relating to the white gay community. It’s important to have a gay Asian organization because there are so many Asian groups in other fields and other interests, and there isn’t one for gayness in the Asian community” (*Orientations*, 1985).

GAT was also active in organizing some of the first Pride Day celebrations in the early 1980s (Li, 1997). The Pride Committee requested their assistance to organize Pride Day in 1982 after organizers had faced difficulty in obtaining a permit because of noise complaints from nearby residents and complaints filed by the area’s Chinese-Canadian community who had cited

their offense to public displays of homosexuality in their neighbourhood. Pride organizers turned to GAT to address the complaints made by the Chinese community and to demonstrate that Chinese people could also be gay. Alan Li was selected as Pride's keynote speaker and the parade was led through Chinatown by over twenty gay Asians (Li, 2017). Despite the important role GAT played in 1982's Pride celebrations, this remains the only year that Toronto's gay Asian community held a leadership role in Pride organizing.

African and Black Caribbean Canadian gays and lesbians also formed their own organizations in the 1980s. A communal house, located on Dewson Street, purchased by Black lesbian couple Makeda Silvera and Stephanie Martin in 1983, has been cited as the birthplace of many of these organizations. Like GAT, the organizations that emerged from the house on Dewson Street were formed in response to rejection by their families and respective communities as well as feelings of alienation from the white gay and lesbian community (Douglas, 2017; Silvera, 2017; *The Queer Nineties*, 1992). Zami, named for the creole word for lesbian, was the first organization to form out of the Dewson house. The organization was formed with the intention of increasing the visibility of Toronto's Black queer community. In an interview with documentarian Nancy Nicol, Douglas Stewart, an active member of Zami, stated the importance of providing visibility for the Black queer community;

It was a political supportive social organization. That is what it provided. So, it was a place where you could have political dialogue in terms of activist political dialogue. It was a place where people could come say, 'my mother's doing this,' or 'my parents aren't supporting me,' or 'I was kicked out of the house' and we would take them to supportive services. The other thing I think Zami did was connect people to the community. So people who would have normally not have come downtown, come to Church Street, by seeing something in the newspaper that said Black, right? And gay together, they came. (quoted in *the Queer Nineties*, 1992)

Zami met regularly at The 519 and hosted social events for Toronto's Black gay and lesbian community. Debbie Douglas (2017) writes that Zami became the visible Black queer organization in the city by becoming active participants in Pride Day marches as well as becoming the Black representative of the Inside Out Film Festival. She, however, notes that Zami eventually became a men's organization (177).

The Black Women's Collective (BWC) was formed in 1986 as a feminist organization. The BWC began to move away from the politics of sexual orientation and envisioned itself as a Black feminist organization (Douglas, 2017). Angela Robertson explained that the organization operated on ideas of what Kimberlé Crenshaw has dubbed intersectionality even before the word had become popular in activist and scholarly vernacular. Robertson asserted that BWC became more focused on racial inequality. The organization worked to challenge some of the following issues;

[I]t had to do with issues of racism and police violence. It also had to do with what was happening within the immigration system and with the school system. We were talking about labour issues and how racialized women, and Black women specifically, were earning less than [others] and were limited in their employment opportunities. We even challenged things like the domestic worker's scheme... the campaign was 'good enough to work, good enough to stay.' So, the sites of our activism wasn't always in queer organization, it was in organizing that was attached to our health, our material condition, and things around employment and access to education and we were in those spaces as out LGBTQ folk doing that work. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

BWC also worked to establish visibility within mainstream feminism. Douglas (2017) writes that the BWC's participation in the International Women's Day Committee was to challenge white feminists about issues of power and leadership (177). The BWC also produced its own newspaper called *Our Lives*.

Indigenous support organizations also began to form during this period. Art Zoccolle (2017) writes that he and friends Tomson Highway and Billy Merasty established a group in 1989 based

out of The 519. The group named itself the Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations in Toronto. Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations early efforts were focused on creating social opportunities for its members. The group's attention shifted, however, amidst the increasing spread of the HIV and AIDS pandemic of the 1980s and 1990s.

The Consequences of HIV and AIDS

HIV and AIDS significantly changed the way in which the gay movement organized itself in the 1980s and 1990s. By the early 1980s reports emerged out of major American cities about gay men developing Kaposi's Sarcoma (KS), a form of cancer. By 1982, Pneumocystis Pneumonia (PCP) was also emerging as a common ailment amongst gay men. Doctors had linked both KS and PCP to an immune disorder that was being spread largely between gay men. The disorder eventually was referred to as Gay Related Immune Deficiency (GRID) before being eventually renamed as Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) (McCaskell, 2016). Mainstream press coverage in relation to the emerging epidemic was overwhelmingly negative. Several reports blamed the syndrome on drug use and sexual promiscuity. Warner (2002) writes that the sexual liberation stance held by liberationist organizations began to be perceived as responsible for the spread of the illness.

By 1986, increased diagnoses of AIDS had made it a greater concern in Canada. Ottawa's Laboratory Centre for Disease Control reported that the number of known AIDS cases had increased to 788. Approximately 663 of the individuals living with AIDS were gay or bisexual men. Nearly half had died. Liberationist activists who had spent the previous decade fighting for human rights protection began to shift towards fighting AIDS. Political action, fund raising and public education campaigns became redirected, almost entirely, to AIDS advocacy and community education. He goes on to write that many grass roots activist organizations did not have the

resources to focus their efforts on multiple issues. Preventing the ravages of AIDS became the priority (Warner, 2002, 163; 250-251).

The AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) emerged as one of the first organizations in response to the growing AIDS crisis in the city in 1983. At its onset, the organization maintained the sex positive position that many liberationist organizations had held prior to the spread of the illness. While conservative and religious organizations encouraged abstinence, organizations like ACT developed education strategies that promoted safe sex. Ed Jackson gained notoriety for his unorthodox educational methods that eroticized safe sex practices, used colloquial language, and were designed to be fun and approachable (Warner, 2002, 251). The influence of liberationist activists began to shrink by the end of the 1980s as a result of increased government funding for AIDS groups. "AIDS organizations consequently grew ever more disconnected from the needs of gay men with AIDS, whom they saw as clients, and from the advocacy agendas of lesbian and gay organizations. Rejection of radical advocacy and a don't-rock-the-boat outlook took root" (Warner, 2002, 251).

A range of new organizations, formed by people living with AIDS, began in the mid-1980s in response to the depoliticization of mainstream AIDS groups. In Toronto, the Toronto People with AIDS (PWA) Foundation was formed in 1987 (Warner, 2002). Additionally, treatment-based activist organization AIDS Action Now (AAN) emerged in 1988 in response to the bureaucratic unresponsiveness of the federal health system. A growing number of medical treatments and trials became available in the United States that were proven effective at treating some ailments common amongst PWAs. However, access to these treatments for PWAs in the Canadian health care system was slowed because of Health Canada's standards of practice that required its own set of medical trials of individual treatments prior to the approval of its use in Canada. As Tim

McCaskell (2017) writes, "The government wouldn't establish standards of care, support research, or speed up access to new drugs. We felt like we were being left to die because of homophobia" (236).

The spread of HIV and AIDS had significant implications for organizations representing queers of colour people in Toronto. Many mainstream AIDS organizations struggled to provide adequate outreach and services to Toronto's communities of colour. Several groups emerged to meet the needs for people of colour facing HIV and AIDS. Some of these organizations included the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention (Black CAP), the Gay Asians AIDS Project (GAAP), and the Alliance for South Asian AIDS Prevention (ASAP), which all were formed in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Douglas Stewart of Zami and Black CAP has spoken of the significance of culturally specific AIDS organizations:

How HIV/AIDS was responded to speaks to the racialization of our world and our environment... When you look at HIV services and who it served initially, it wasn't just white gay men, but it was white gay men of a particular class and cultural connection. I'm talking about people who had privilege in terms of language, education and access. There's a lot of working class, street involved and homeless who weren't represented and now the system is adjusting for, right? (quoted in *The Queer Nineties*)

Stewart also argues that the spread of HIV and AIDS made it necessary for dialogue within Toronto's communities of colour about sexual diversity. He notes that the prominence of white gay activists in the media as well as the legacy of colonialism had led to the assumption that only white people were gay and that there were no gay Black people. Consequently, it was assumed that HIV and AIDS was a white sickness thrust upon Black people. Stewart recounts that educating Black communities about HIV and AIDS meant openly discussing and raising awareness that Black men could also be gay (quoted in *The Queer Nineties*, 1992).

HIV and AIDS significantly impacted the way in which organizations representing gays and lesbians of colour functioned. Alan Li, for example, argued that many of the mainstream (read white) AIDS organizations began to redirect Asian clients to GAAP for help. He states that mainstream organizations claimed they were "spread too thin, and didn't have time and resources to learn about the cultural particularities of the Asian community" (*The Queer Nineties*, 2009). Li (1997) writes that HIV and AIDS support and prevention work came to absorb the majority of GAT's time and resources and left little room for other services such as supporting individuals through their coming out processes and community building efforts. Art Zoccole's organization, Gays and Lesbians of the First Nations in Toronto also shifted towards HIV and AIDS work. Zoccole was offered a \$50,000 grant by the AIDS Bureau to begin focusing on HIV and AIDS programming (Zoccole, 2017).

The Professional Class, "The Village," and moments of diversity in the 1990s

The mainstream gay and lesbian movement continued to make significant strides in the late 1980s and 1990s despite the AIDS epidemic. However, as Gary Kinsman (1996) argues, the ethnic community model employed by mainstream activists continued to obscure class, gender, and race differences. The movement sought to achieve rights that would serve middle-class interests at the expense of working-class, racialized, and gender non-conforming members of the broader queer community. The first milestone achievement came in 1986 when the Ontario government passed legislation to include sexual orientation in the Human Rights Code. This meant that those who identified as homosexual could not be discriminated against because of their sexuality (McCaskell, 2016; Warner, 2002). The next frontier was securing the legal recognition of gay and lesbian partnerships and families. After a series of community forums the Coalition for Gay and

Lesbian Rights in Ontario (CLGRO) determined the family recognition was the next logical step in the fight for equality (*The Queer Nineties*, 2009).

The favouring of white and middle class interests was particularly evident in the Campaign for Equal Families (CEF) in the 1990s. The CEF began lobbying the leading Ontario NDP government in 1992 to introduce legislation that would change the definition of spouse to include same-sex partners. The NDP government responded by tabling Bill 167 to meet CEF demands. The change in spousal definition would grant same-sex couples the ability to adopt their partner's children and, if necessary, would allow for same-sex partners to make decisions about each other's health. Bill 167 would also entitle same-sex partners to each other's employment benefits. CEF developed a strategy to gain public support by demonstrating that homosexual families were just like the average heterosexual family in Ontario (*The Queer Nineties*, 2009).

Warner (2002) argues that CEF's agenda marked a departure from the previous liberationist politics that sought to challenge the heterosexist and patriarchal definition of family. He indicates that the laws regarding spousal benefits had originally been created to assist families where men were the sole providers. Liberationists had argued for a change to the definition of family so that benefits could be distributed on an individual or needs-related basis. Instead, CEF and other legal equality campaigns reverted to an assimilationist approach. Kinsman (1996) details this transition quite succinctly: "The emergence of this professional/managerial stratum has produced a social basis for a certain strategy of assimilation within heterosexual social relations through emphasizing that lesbians and gays are almost the same as heterosexuals... limiting lesbian and gay struggles to relatively narrow terrains." (299). This was certainly the case with CEF's campaign strategy. By equating same-sex families with heterosexual families, middle class gay men and lesbians could gain access to the tax benefits, pension plans, and employment

benefits enjoyed by their heterosexual counterparts. However, as Warner (2002) points out, not all gay men and lesbians held positions that provided such benefits. Although Bill 167 was defeated, the priorities of the new mainstream movement had clearly realigned to serve middle class interests.

The professional class's control of the mainstream gay rights movement made it increasingly difficult for marginalized communities to participate. Kinsman (1996) argues that movements like CEF favoured the contributions of those with political connections, legal skills, media experience, and connections to existing LGB organizations. Additionally, political agendas were made by those who had the time and monetary resources to dedicate themselves to political activism (McCaskell, 2016). The professional class thus established hegemony in the mainstream gay rights movement, determining that relationship recognition was the primary concern of all members of the queer community. However, the concerns and needs of those who could not bring these skills, connections, or resources to the table were largely ignored.

The severely limited involvement of racialized, differently abled, and working class gay and lesbians meant that their perspectives and needs were also rarely considered (Warner, 2002). Angela Robertson suggests that mainstream fights for legal recognition, like relationship recognition, or even same-sex marriage, often fail to address broader societal inequalities. "It's a priority for whom? It's a priority for whom in the LGBTQ community? Clearly if you have property I'm sure you want to protect your partner's [property] and [your] family, definitely. However, if you don't even have the opportunity to get work, to get property, to get that right, it means very little" (Robertson, interview, 2017). The mainstream movement's shift in focus towards capitalist ideals of wealth protection severely limited the inclusion of those who fell outside of Toronto's middle class.

The late 1980s and 1990s also saw the Church Wellesley Village neighbourhood become increasingly recognizable as the physical manifestation of Toronto's gay community. A series of new gay bars, attracted by cheaper rents, opened their doors on neighbouring Church Street in the late 1970s. 1984 marked the first year that Pride celebrations took place on Church Street at Cawthra Park located behind the 519. Additionally, "The steps," a notorious Church Street landmark, were constructed in 1984. The steps were built in front of Second Cup at the southwest corner of Church and Wellesley Streets. They quickly became a popular community hangout where people would meet, socialize, cruise, flirt and people watch. The steps earned such great recognition that they were spoofed by the CBC's sketch comedy show *Kids in the Hall* (Burgess, 2017; McCaskell, 2016). In 1989 the bar Woody's, which became a Church Street staple, opened its doors. The bar quickly established a loyal gay male clientele. It's reported that Woody's, at one time, had the third-highest beer sales of any licenced establishment in Ontario. A wave of vacancies in the late 1990s caused by the closure of Maple Leaf Gardens, several restaurants that had served the Gardens crowd, and CBC production facilities along Church Street created the opportunity for multiple new gay businesses to open on Church. The success of Woody's enticed several entrepreneurs to open gay-oriented bars to capitalize on the business that Woody's had attracted to the neighbourhood (Costa, 2014; Larocque, 2014).

The 519 also acted as a space that anchored the city's LGBT communities to Church Street. The centre served as host to various LGBT political and social organizations, served as a meeting place for various political demonstrations, and was the location of Toronto's AIDS memorial. Kyle Rae, a former GLARE member and 1981 Pride Day organizer, became the Executive Director of The 519 in 1987. In the role, Rae eventually became referred to as Mayor of Church Street.

Rae's tenure at The 519 brought about major changes for Toronto's gay community. Rae, in response to a spat of gay bashings in 1990, worked with 52 Division to establish a police presence on Church Street to protect bar goers and residents from homophobic violence (McCaskell, 2016; Rae, 2017). Rae, recounting the situation, has written about his efforts to build alliances with Toronto's police force. "Sgt. Jim Sneep dropped by [T]he 519 to discuss the situation. The division, he said, had no records of assaults occurring in the area. Sneep said he couldn't rectify the problem as long as the queer community, which had good reason not to trust the police, declined to report the assaults" (Rae, 2017, 197). The 519 established a gay-bashing hotline in which gay men and lesbians, who had been attacked, could report the details of their assaults. The 519 forwarded assault records to 52 Division. Rae notes that the police began to investigate the recorded assaults and, in some cases, arrests were made. The 519 also worked to establish a sensitivity training and education program for police officers from 52 Division. The program was eventually extended across the police force.

Community policing also began to be used as a tool by neighbourhood home and business owners to control the presence of perceived "undesirable" populations. In 1991 a community-police liaison was created and was complemented by a neighbourhood foot patrol program for Church and Wellesley. The community-police liaison was renamed as the Church Wellesley Community Patrol Advisory Committee, but the name soon changed again to the Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Police Advisory Committee. McCaskell (2016) argues that the change reflected a shift in the committee's representation. Instead of serving the broader gay and lesbian community, the committee was designed to reflect the interests of homeowners, tenants, institutions and businesses. A 1992 report on the election of the committee's members in *Xtra* made specific comments about the crowd's lack of diversity saying, "noticeably absent were faces

of colour and young people" (Barriere, 1992). Barriere's report also commented on the election promises made by committee nominees, which included promises to rid the neighbourhood of prostitutes and cruising in Cawthra Park (now Barbara Hall Park). Church and Wellesley, formerly a neighbourhood in decline, had become noticeably more middle class in the 1980s and 1990s (McCaskell, 2016).

Community frustrations reached a peak in March of 1999 when a group of approximately fifty community residents attended that month's Church Wellesley Neighbourhood Police Advisory Committee meeting. Residents were upset about a perceived lack of policing and slow response times to calls. The police's failure to attend the March Committee meeting pushed community frustrations over the edge. Residents told the committee that the presence of squeegee kids, panhandlers, and homeless people were hurting their property values (Newhook, 1999). Tyrone Newhook captured resident frustrations in a piece for *Xtra*, "we're paying high taxes. Myself, [sic] and my family are sick and tired" (Newhook, 1999). One resident threatened Kyle Rae's (now a city councillor) Council seat in the next election. Rae instituted a new Community Action Policing Project with 52 Division by the summer of 1999 to make police foot patrols a visible presence in the community in an attempt to remove unwanted individuals (McCaskell, 2016).

New alliances between 52 Division and Church Wellesley residents, however, did not mean that the city's queer community had resolved issues related to homophobia in the police force and police raids. The late 1990s saw a new wave of police raids on gay and lesbian establishments. The first raid occurred in February 1996 when police raided Remmington's, a gay men's strip club on Yonge Street. Police targeted Remmington's for an event they held called "The Monday Night Sperm Attack" in which performers would ejaculate on stage. Nineteen individuals, including

staff, dancers, and customers, were charged with bawdy house laws and other indecency charges (McCaskell, 2016). Councillor Rae worked to assuage community concerns that the raid marked a return of the policing tactics used during raids of the late 1970s and early 1980s.

The next event occurred at the Bijou, a gay porn theatre in 1999. The police arrested nineteen individuals and charged the bar with a liquor licence violation (McCaskell, 2016). Again, Rae attempted to ease community concerns. He argued that the arrests at the Bijou, in no way, represented a return to the old days of police raids. Rae also criticized activists that had organized a committee following the Bijou arrests. "There are some people who are one-tune activists. There's people who want to get angry and have a demonstration. That's what I used to do in '81 but now we've had changes to the Ontario Human Rights Code and we have a Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The world isn't 1981 anymore..." (as quoted in McCaskell, 2016, 365-366). Rae's comments drew significant pushback from individuals who felt that he had turned his back on the city's gay community. Anger directed towards Rae was clear at a community forum held at The 519 in response to the arrests. An article from *Now Magazine* reports that approximately two hundred people attended the meeting to express their concerns and frustrations. The article's author cites Rae's style of backroom politics and his relationship with 52 Division as the reasoning for the councillor's lack of responsiveness.

Rae's position as the unofficial mayor of Church Street represented the further shift toward the neighbourhood as a middle class space. His carefully brokered relationship with 52 Division had allowed for property and business owners to rely on the police to patrol the neighbourhood and remove any "unwanted" bodies from the streets. Residents had also successfully lobbied for Rae to clamp down on the noise coming from clubs in the neighbourhood (Kealy, 1996). A series of posters plastered along Church Street smeared Rae following his refusal

to speak out against the police. The posters accused Rae of privileging wealthy homeowners who “vote more often than squeegee kids” (quoted in McCaskell, 2016, 366). They also implied that Rae was working to sanitize Church Street by working with the police to close club backrooms (sex spaces in the back of gay bars) and to disrupt cruising in the area’s parks. In an article for *Eye* titled “Thanks for Nothing, Kyle,” popular gay performer, Sky Gilbert, railed against what he perceived to be Rae’s lack of concern for the community that had elected him, saying: “Rae has come out against gay sexual activity in parks in the Church and Wellesley area. He has also refused to fight for the survival of gay clubs (such as FLY, on Gloucester) when they’ve been threatened with closure. Instead he cites chapter and book of city rules and regulations, and watches gay spaces (inside and out) die” (Gilbert, 1999, 13).

The third police intervention occurred when the police raided Pussy Palace, a women’s bathhouse event at the Club Baths in September, 2000. The women-only bathhouse event was raided by five male police officers who searched the premises for approximately two hours. The officers moved through the venue intruding on women in various stages of undress and in the midst of sexual acts. Following the raid, two event volunteers were charged with liquor licence violations (Gallant, 2017). Outrage following the event centred on the gender of the officers. Kyle Rae’s tune also changed. He characterized the event as a panty raid and waste of public money (McCaskell, 2016). Openly gay member of Ontario’s provincial legislature, George Smitherman, accused Police Chief Julian Fantino of empowering Toronto police officers to conduct rogue raids against the LGBT community because of “a sense that he will protect them” (as quoted in McCaskell, 2016, 367).

The charges against two volunteers were eventually withdrawn. The judge ruled that the male officers had committed the equivalency of “visual rape.” The women present at Pussy

Palace had their reasonable expectation of privacy disrupted by police. The raid was determined to be the functional equivalent of a strip search and therefore a breach of Canadian law as the strip search of a woman cannot be conducted by a male officer. The court found the search to be, “unreasonable, outrageous and flagrant and sufficiently serious to warrant the exclusion of the evidence, forcing the crown to withdraw the charges” (Nash and Bain, 2007, 26).

McCaskell (2016) asserts that the series of police raids represented the police force’s test of their limits under new Police Chief Fantino. The public outrage to the Pussy Palace raids, including protests, press coverage, and condemnation from progressive politicians sent the message to 52 Division that they had gone too far. Yet, McCaskell argues that the message received was that the police should not target members of the community who could afford to enter private venues. However, “street kids, Black youth, and the homeless” in the community were still fair game (McCaskell, 2016, 368). The sequence of events in the late 1980s and 1990s that led to the establishment of Church Street as the city’s recognizable gay village coincided with the simultaneous gentrification of the neighbourhood.

CHAPTER 3: World City Village Branding and Homonationalism's Shadow on Church and Wellesley

By the end of the 1990s the Village had become an established gay neighbourhood in the city of Toronto. Gay business interests and political activism, historically opposed to each other, had, due to multiple forces, come to align in support for the development of the Village. The result was the production of a mainstream gay community that organized itself spatially, politically, and socially in favour of white middle class interests at the expense of marginalized queer populations. This final chapter has three central components. First, I will discuss how the rise of neoliberal city building principles accelerated the commodification of the Village through branding and tourism initiatives. The purpose of this discussion is to demonstrate how the Village has transformed into the entity it is today and to expose its problematic constitution. Attention will then be directed to the ways in which various groups have contested the homonormativity in the village. I will also focus on the spaces that have been created by LGBTQ communities that do not fit within the homonormative construction of queerness. Lastly, the final portion of the paper will be handed over to the voices of my ten interviewees. Their personal experiences, opinions, and desires for the future will narrate a discussion about the ways in which more inclusive queer spaces can be fostered in Toronto moving forward.

The Creative City - Entrepreneurial Toronto

The new millennium brought with it a new vision for the City of Toronto. The amalgamation of the city and its five neighbouring boroughs in 1998 triggered a slew of new policies and visioning documents designed to drive Toronto's growth as the new "Mega City." The proliferation of globalized neoliberal urban regeneration strategies had caught the attention of Toronto's politicians and bureaucrats, who saw the marketing of Toronto as a world-class city as the

solution to the decline of the municipality's industrial economy. The push promoted Toronto as a hub of arts and culture (Lehrer, Keil, and Kipfer, 2010).

World-class city strategies are a by-product of the neoliberal capitalism and globalization that has developed since the late 1970s. Saskia Sassen (2000) argues that the globalization of the world economic system has led to the hypermobility of capital, eased global communications, and neutralized the significance of place and distance. The city, she argues, has become more important than the nation in determining the economic performance of the nation as a whole. However, the flows of international capital now require cities to compete for economic investment and capital accumulation at the global scale. The rise of inter-urban competition has created a hierarchy of global cities fighting to maintain dominance or stay competitive within the global economic system (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, 2009; Sassen, 1998; 2000). Inter-urban competition has had significant effects on the urban landscape as cities develop new policy regimes to drive local economies through place-marketing, local boosterism, and gentrification strategies in order to foster market-oriented growth (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, 2009).

Scholars have pointed to globalization and inter-urban competition has led to significant reinvestment back into city centers and business districts through gentrification strategies. The "renewal" of urban centres has made way for place-marketing strategies that work to attract investment and tourism. Urban place-making strategies are a central fixture of a broader trend of entrepreneurialism that has come to dominate municipal governance and policy development. The entrepreneurial city is one that has plugged into or is attempting to establish itself in the global hierarchy of world cities. Like business owners, entrepreneurial cities work to establish themselves as reputable and attractive for investors and consumers (i.e. tourists) (Harvey, 1989). Paddison (1993) argues that although cities have long been advertised, new forms of city

marketing focus on rebuilding how a city is perceived as a form of image rehabilitation. This form of advertising has four central benefits: increasing competitiveness, attracting inward investment, improving its image and supporting the wellbeing of its population (341).

Increasingly, gay identities have become tied to place-making and broader world city strategies. Richard Florida and Gary Gates (2001) were amongst the first to directly correlate gay urban citizens to the overall economic performance of a city. They lump gay people in with a group of other diverse identities (immigrants, artists, and “bohemians”) as being key to the success of the technology industry. Florida and Gates studied the relationship between measures of diversity, tolerance, and high-technology in the fifty most populated metropolitan areas in the United States. Their results led them to the following conclusion: “The leading indicator of a metropolitan area’s high-technology success is large gay population” (1).

Florida argues that three T’s, which stand for talent, technology, and tolerance are what make up this cool-factor (2002). The last of these terms refers to the city’s inclusion of gay people. He asserts that second tier cities, such as Austin, Texas, have thrived because of their ability to successfully integrate the three T’s into their economic development (Florida, 2002). Despite significant critiques of Florida’s theories, his work is important as it acts as a simplified how-to guide aimed to revive the economies of cities that have struggled from downturns in the industrial-based economies of the west (Peck, 2005). Creative city strategies are now a normalized part of the planning vernacular, which has led to a rise in entrepreneurialism within municipal governments seeking to present their cities as cosmopolitan centres of art, culture, and diversity.

The prominence of place-making initiatives, tied in with creative city strategies, has led to the absorption of gay identities into an image of what cities worthy of both tourism and

investment should look like. City marketing has become a practice of re/producing symbols that mark a city as cosmopolitan, involving, for example, the preservation, branding and advertising of ethnic and other themed spaces within the city. By engaging in these branding tactics, a city is able to claim its status as a “world (or global) city” (Rushbrook, 2002). To successfully claim cosmopolitanism, Dereka Rushbrook (2002) argues that cities must emphasize their cultural capital. This is often represented through ethnic diversity, “in many instances, ‘queer space’ functions as one form of this ethnic diversity, tentatively promoted by cities both as equivalent to other ethnic neighbourhoods and as an independent indicator of cosmopolitanism” (183). Rushbrook notes that this form of marketing represents the commodification of space, and beyond that, of gay bodies themselves. She asserts that municipal efforts to appropriate gay villages have transformed many of these spaces into commodified, consumable products where “gay is on display.”

The election of the new megacity’s first mayor, businessman and political conservative Mel Lastman, ushered in a new form of political leadership that embodied neoliberal urbanism. Roger Keil and Stefan Kipfer (2002) write that Lastman expertly positioned himself as the defender of a city victimized by a province that had recently downloaded the financial responsibility for a number of social services onto the municipality; he simultaneously criticized the city’s urban poor. Lastman’s eccentric charisma was also channeled into his ambitions to mold Toronto into the image of a world-class city. During his tenure, the bombastic mayor threw his weight behind several international profile-building projects such as the 2008 Olympic bid and the multi-million dollar revitalization of the city’s formerly industrial waterfront to be done in partnership with the federal government (Kipfer and Keil, 2002; Lehrer and Laidley, 2009).

Lastman's grand vision for Toronto matched the stream of policy and visioning documents produced by the newly amalgamated city. New growth policies drafted by the city latched on to Richard Florida's alluring doctrine of the creative city. A string of reports released by the city in the mid-2000s is replete with Floridian rhetoric that clearly marks the city's shift in economic trajectory. The inclusion of Floridian logic is not subtle: some of the documents include direct quotations (City of Toronto, 2000; 2003; *Strategies for a Creative City*, 2006).

The new urban policy framework was designed to improve the city's liveability while also producing a marketable lifestyle image for the city of Toronto. The series of documents also emphasized the importance of Toronto's arts and culture scene to the city's future economic success. One of these documents, *Culture Plan for the Creative City* (2003), advocates for municipal funding of a diverse range of local festivals. Festivals were described as an essential element of the city's cultural capital; they spotlight the character of Toronto's various communities. Pride is listed as one of the festivals. The overwhelming tone of the city's rolodex of new planning policies rings of the adage, "if we build it, they will come."

Toronto's love for all things Florida continued into the late 2000s. When Florida moved to Toronto in 2007, Mayor David Miller publically welcomed him and his wife to the city. Florida was also a welcomed participant in the policy drafting process. At the provincial level he assisted in the development of a policy document entitled *Ontario in the Creative Age*. In 2009, he was personally invited by city council to participate in a special brainstorming session with the city's economic development committee in the midst of the economic uncertainty of the late 2000s recession (McCaskell, 2016). The significance of the embrace of Floridian urbanism to this paper relates to the value he associated to the so-called "gay index" in his doctrine. In this index, cities that demonstrate tolerance to their gay communities are successful competitors in the creative

economy. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Toronto's investment in its gay community dramatically increased during this period.

The Commodified Village

Toronto's creative city ambitions in the early 2000s coincided with the increased commodification of the Village. The Village had begun the process of fostering its identity as a relatively exclusive middle class urban playground for white, gender-conforming gay men. However, in the 2000s the Village began to take on an increasingly commercialized image with the help of financial investment from the city. The marketing and branding of the Church-Wellesley Village moved the neighbourhood towards the heteronormative lifestyle ideals of domesticity, consumerism, and other middle class ideals. Toronto's Village is, in Lisa Duggan's (2002) terms, a homonormative phenomenon.

Same sex marriage was legalized in 2003. This legal victory for Toronto's homonormative queers (white, middle class, and gender conforming queers) represented the removal of another obstacle that separated gay men and women from their heterosexual counterparts. The narrative of arrival that comes from the homonormative queer experience, however, differs drastically from racialized, trans, and gender non-conforming people who still face social and systematic inequalities. Dean Spade puts it the following way:

This thread that is about mainstream consumption and about the aspirational goals of a subset of white wealthy queers to perfect their getting rid of the final tiny barriers in their lives like being able to share their inheritance just-so or share their healthcare just-so versus the broader critiques about the root causes of queer and trans suffering from a racial and economic justice centered grassroots that has bigger problems with the system. (Spade, *Pride Denied*, 2016)

The mainstream homonormative version of queer life has dominated the way that LGBTQ identities have been perceived by the general population. Homonormative queerness has become

less political, and has ultimately gained relative acceptance and legitimacy in Toronto's general population. The privileges that have been granted to this exclusive group of queers can be seen in many ways.

Toronto's Church-Wellesley Village provides an example of the privileging of homonormative queers as it translates into the physical fabric of the city. The Village started to be branded and marketed when the Church-Wellesley Village Business Improvement Area (CWVBIA) was established in 2002. The following year, the BIA threw a party to unveil new rainbow themed street signs, plans for a new sculpture dedicated to the neighbourhood's origins, and to open the organization's new office on Church Street to the public. The event was also intended as a launch party for the CWVBIA's five year strategic plan. The event's flyer referred to the strategic plan as the opportunity for the BIA to establish a blueprint for the neighbourhood's growth. "Created through a community consultation process, public meetings and discussions with local businesses and community leaders, the strategic plan will address both capital development (i.e, streetscaping features) and operational matters, identify priorities and opportunities, [and] special event development" (CWVBIA, 2003). The flyer also reveals that the BIA's operating budget for that year was \$100,000 with \$45,000 earmarked for capital projects. It goes on to say that the city would match any money the BIA put towards capital projects such as streetscape improvements.

The statue commissioned by the BIA was unveiled in 2005. The statue represents the likeness of Alexander Wood. Wood was a Scottish-born merchant, magistrate, and held the position of Inspector-General of Public Accounts in the early 1800s. Wood found himself embroiled in a sex-scandal in 1810 when it was revealed that he had inspected the genitals of several men. Wood claimed that he was investigating rape claims made by a woman who did not

know the identity of her attacker, but had “used scissors to wound her attacker in the crotch” (Jackson, 2017, 92). The statue of Wood has solidified his place as an icon in Toronto’s gay mythology. That Wood at one point also owned much of the land the Village currently sits on adds a sense of mythical longevity to Toronto’s queer history. More recently the BIA has invested in further place-making initiatives including the installation of gateway markers at the northern and southern borders of the Village in 2013. The installations resembled large pillars that are spiraled and adorned with the colours of the rainbow. The money to fund the gateway pillars came from a joint partnership between the City of Toronto and the BIA. Additionally, The Church Street Mural Project was organized by Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam and project coordinator Syrus Marcus Ware in 2013 to commemorate the Village’s history as an LGBTQ neighbourhood. Multiple murals now are prominently featured on several of the Village’s facades (Salerno, 2013). The BIA has also been responsible for establishing public events to attract foot traffic to the neighbourhood. Perhaps the largest and most successful of these events has been the annual Halloween celebrations. Each year on October 31, Church Street is closed off to vehicular traffic and becomes a destination for people in costume and those who come to party and enjoy the spectacle (Costa, 2014).

The Village has also been the focus of City Planning initiatives designed to capitalize on the neighbourhood’s unique character. The first planning document was drafted in 2005 in a partnership between the CWVBIA and the city’s Economic Development department. I made multiple attempts to obtain this document but was unsuccessful. The document, however, laid the groundwork for a more ambitious planning project in the early 2010s. The *State of the Village* report, released in 2014 by The 519 in partnership with TD Bank, was the culmination of years’ worth of stakeholder interviews, public consultation, community walkthroughs, and a public

survey. The study was commissioned by The 519 to answer two questions: “What is the role of an ‘LGBTQ Village’ in a modern and progressive city?” and, “What must be done to support the Church-Wellesley Village to solidify its role as a major cultural community hub in the Toronto context?” (*State of the Village, 2014, 2*). The report situates its importance within the rhetoric of anxiety over the changes occurring in many North American gay villages. The study purpose outlines that Toronto’s Village is facing “forces of development, changes in societal norms, and the dispersal of LGBTQ hubs across the city...” that have put it in a transitional period. The report also notes that the study and findings were intended to “set a path towards building a stronger, healthier community prior to the international spotlight of World Pride 2014 and 2015 Pan Am Games” (*State of the Village, 2014, 2*).

The report, after providing a singular, whitewashed, celebratory narrative of the Village’s history, moves on to provide a series of recommendations for how the Village can be improved to retain its distinct cultural character for future generations. Among the recommendations was to have the city formally designate the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood as a cultural corridor. Another recommendation proposed a “shock treatment” to add dramatic streetscape changes to leverage the opportunity of World Pride and the Pan Am Games to raise Church Street’s profile. The report recommends a series of options for how to improve the neighbourhood. Specifically, it suggests adding additional attractions to the neighbourhood such as an arts and culture hub to the community to act as an anchor space as well as a space that could host additional neighbourhood festivals. The document also proposes a series of streetscape changes to liven the neighbourhood including colour blocking the buildings in rainbow colours, adding overhead décor like in Montreal’s Village Gai, widening the sidewalks, and the addition of extended sidewalk patios during the summer months (*State of the Village, 2014*).

Most of the recommendations from the report have yet to materialize. While at The 519, Amber Moyle was responsible for liaising between the BIA and the Church-Wellesley Neighbourhood Association (CWNA). She cites a lack of communication as the reasoning behind the lack of momentum on the report's recommendations.

I feel like there was an attempt there for a while with the murals and things I thought were good. They did try with those spiny things to try to make it look like it area. The neighbourhood association is very active. They're queer, and their houses are right there. So they're in it. They're good. It's just a lack of resources for them and working in tandem with the BIA. I just think it's a lack of people working together. It's not like the city councillor is oblivious to it. There's just not any communication happening. There is money behind it. The councillor has a big budget specifically for Church Street. But, she doesn't want to just throw money at something without knowing that these two groups are going to work well together on it. (Moyle, interview, 2017)

Not all of the place-making initiatives conjured up to preserve or enhance the Village have been implemented or effective. However, it is clear that the Village is seen as an important investment to local business interests, property owners, and the City of Toronto.

The city's investment in place-making and branding initiatives in the Village and coincide with the further sanitization of the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood. With the introduction of the BIA, neighbourhood residents began to work with the association to develop tactics to police the neighbourhood. One example was the removal of the steps. The infamous steps near the corner of Church and Wellesley were reconstructed in 2004 to inhibit homeless people, drug users, and youth from hanging around the neighbourhood. Allison Burgess (2017) writes that the process of removing the steps began as early as 2001. Increased policing, as part of a renewed effort to clean up Yonge Street, had pushed homeless people, drug dealers and users, and sex workers east to neighbouring Church Street. The businesses occupying the Churwell building, the site of the steps, received complaints from neighbourhood residents for allowing "undesirables" to loiter.

The Second Cup received the brunt of pressure from residents and the Business Association. To discourage loitering, the café changed its hours, installed bright lights outside, played classical music, and regularly hosed down the steps. In 2004 the steps were effectively removed when the owner of the Churwell building extended storefronts towards Church Street and installed a large brick pillar. Both design alterations rendered the steps inhospitable (Burgess, 2017). Rio Rodriguez, a member of the Marvelous Grounds collective, which is mapping queer and trans Black, Indigenous, and racialized histories Toronto, writes that the steps were “an outdoor place not oriented around admissible white gay consumer citizens: no one was turned away” (Haritaworn et al, 2017, 222). The removal of the steps marked the loss of accessible space for those excluded from the Village’s commercial spaces. The Village’s branding had enforced the idea that the Village was intended as a space for consumption, not community.

Additional efforts to rid the neighbourhood of “undesirables” was set in motion in 2012 with the renovation of Cawthra Square Park. The city had received complaints for several years about the presence of drug users and homeless people in the park. It had also earned a reputation of being a popular cruising space for men during the evening. Cawthra Square, in some ways, had filled the void that the steps had left behind. In 2013, Councillor Wong-Tam announced plans to revitalize the park. The new park, eventually named for former mayor Barbara Hall, was scheduled to open in time for World Pride in 2014 (Salerno, 2013; Smith, 1999).

The new park was carefully designed to discourage loitering and public sex. Additional lights were installed, shrubbery and trees were removed, and much of the park’s grassy surface was replaced with concrete. Despite the changes, residents and business owners have complained that the park still attracts drug users and homeless people. One business owner interviewed by the *Toronto Star* was quoted as saying “the park should welcome the whole

community, but the community is not just the needy; the community is everybody” (as quoted in Honderich, 2016). In the same article, Councillor Wong-Tam admitted that the parks renovation had seemingly made the park “worse.” The renovation of the Churwell building and Cawthra Square Park demonstrate an intensified regulation of public space in the 2000s. Whereas, in the 1990s police and community foot patrols were used to regulate public space, the new millennium had brought in more aggressive policies, such as those discussed, designed to protect middle class sensibilities and property values.

Recent efforts have also been made by the BIA to sanitize the Village of its sexualized elements. Amar Wahab (2015) writes about interventions made by the CWVBIA to modify the Church Street Fetish Fair. The BIA decided to rebrand the event in 2011 as the Church Street Village Fair in order to make it more family friendly. The organization chose to sanitize the event of select elements deemed too outrageous for the general public. Other events, such as fetish demonstrations and leather and BDSM activities were placed in venues outside the official fair boundaries. The more scandalous events were replaced with “extended patios, a mechanical bull ride, a Ferris wheel for kids, and games like gay men’s twister” (Wahab, 2015, 38). Interestingly, in a 2010 interview about the success of the Fetish Fair, then manager of the CWVBIA, David Wootton, praised the event’s status in the community. He stated the fair had grown on a yearly basis since its first run in 2004. The event had made a 53 percent jump in attendance between 2008 and 2009 with more expected to be drawn to the festival that year. Wootton boasted about more than just the numbers, “the fair has a political agenda, it does brand this neighbourhood – it keeps sex in the Village. We need to keep a certain amount of that so that members of the global community know we still identify with sexual freedom and sexual practice” (as quoted in Zanin,

2010). The fair's rebranding is in steep contradiction to Wootton's comments made just a year earlier.

Members of Toronto's Leather Pride organized a march through the 2011 Church Street Village Fair to protest the BIA's sanitization of the event. Participants marched down Church saying, "We're here! We're Queer! We're Kinky!" (Wahab, 2015, 39). Event organizers referred to the march through as Toronto's first Leather Pride parade. Wahab (2015) argues that the rhetoric of queerness employed by Leather Pride demonstrators has been subsumed into the debate of nationalism and citizenship that rests on an islamophobic foundation.

In 2012 the Fetish Fair was officially cancelled by the BIA after a unanimous vote by its members. Wootton's tune had changed, "Our concern this year is keeping doors open because, as you know, more and more businesses are leaving the street. We don't want to see the Village die. We figure our job here is to ensure that we do as much as we can to bring traffic and return traffic into the area... man cannot live on queer dollars alone" (as quoted in Houston, 2012). Wootton had resigned himself to the idea that protecting normative middle-class ideals of consumerism was more important than embracing sexual diversity. Ironically, the changes that the BIA had made to the fair in 2011 did not attract greater attendance. The event still failed to appeal to families and those affected by the rebranding did not attend in protest of the changes.

Pride, an extension of homonormativity and the homonationalist project

The mainstreaming of Pride is significantly tied to the branding and commercialization of Church Street. Pride began to grow on a yearly basis following its movement to Church Street in 1984. The first official Pride Parade was organized in 1998 and became a staple element of yearly Pride celebrations. Pride's corporate origins can be traced back to 1987. "Ramses flogged its condoms to a community now shifting to safer sex. Re/Max sensed a new real estate market. And Molson's

realized we drank a lot of beer” (McCaskell, 2017, 327). By 1989 efforts were made by the Pride Committee and Kyle Rae to designate Pride Day as an officially recognized event by the City of Toronto. Mayor Art Eggleton stood against official designation. Court proceedings also failed. Pride Day was eventually proclaimed by the city in 1991 on its tenth anniversary (McCaskell, 2016; 2017, 326-329).

The acknowledgement of Pride as an economy booster began to take root in municipal politics in 1998 following the city’s amalgamation. Barbara Hall, Metro Toronto’s openly gay mayor, had always walked in the Pride Parade during her tenure as mayor. Mayor Mel Lastman had to be convinced. Kyle Rae, once again, has been cited as being instrumental in convincing Lastman to participate in the parade. The councillor appealed to Lastman’s sensibilities as a businessman, noting that Pride festivities were a huge revenue generator for the city’s economy (Barber, 1998). Lastman agreed to march in the Pride Parade. He justified his decision to angry constituents saying, “I’m sorry, but I represent all communities in Toronto. I represent all neighbourhoods. If you don’t like it, don’t vote for me. That’s all” (as quoted in Barber, 1998). Despite the tone of common-sense inclusivity, Lastman’s decision came down to business-sense. That year it was estimated that 700,000 people participated in Pride events, injecting over forty million dollars into the city’s economy (McCaskell, 2016).

Pride has continued to grow in size and scale in recent years. Along with its growth have come additional events. It now regularly features a Dyke March, which was formally added in 1996, and a Trans March which began in 2009 (Burgess, 2017; Donato, 2016). Pride has also become considerably more corporatized. Pride became a licenced trademark belonging to Pride Toronto in 2000. This meant that Pride Toronto gained the ability to charge organizations and corporations to brand their products with Pride-related logos. It also means that the organization

has greater control over Pride events and can pursue legal action against groups who use Pride Toronto's branding without paying the licencing fees. In 2015, Pride Toronto moved to trademark the Dyke March and the Trans March. Pride Toronto asserted that attempts to trademark the terms were in response to individuals with malicious intent, who had also moved to trademark the term to exploit grassroots organizations. However, critics argued that Pride Toronto has diluted the ability of radical organizations to organize their own events. Laura Krahn, a former Team Leader for Pride Toronto said the following about the organization's control over Pride events, "Pride Toronto has monopolized the gay and lesbian liberation movement in Toronto and so now they sit on all the resources as well. The flip side is that a lack of community engagement allows Pride Toronto to tell us that their support is needed to run a Dyke March in the first place. We could be organizing a rad(ical) queer festival of our own" (as quoted in Milloy, 2015).

For many members of Toronto's LGBTQ2I communities, corporatization has diluted the political statement that the marches and other events were intended to represent. Recalling Pride's transition from protest to party, Andrew Zealley noted that the change was sudden. "I remember seeing Pride, maybe there was a cusp of maybe two years where Pride seemed quite radical and all of the sudden it really shifted. I wonder what year it would've been. It probably started shifting around 1995 or 1996. That's when they started putting barricades up on the sidewalks." He went on to reminisce about one particular float from Buddies in Bad Times Theatre: "Everybody had dressed in these kind of pointy-tit Gautier things. They were waving big dildos around. It was confrontational. It was a very provocative float. Two or three years later - nothing" (Zealley, interview, 2017). Susan, having recently attended the 2017 Dyke March prior to our conversation, noted that the event lacked a cohesive political message:

I was looking for a political rally at the end so I was standing and there was a drumming circle and that was the end of the march, but it wasn't even clearly the end of the march. It just dissipated. There was no statement. The beginning of the march did not have so much as a banner saying Dyke March. There was no political speech. We're here, we're queer, get used to it – nothing. It was pronounced a-political. (Susan, interview, 2017)

For Angela Robertson, strong corporate influence within Pride hasn't just watered down political statements, but, in some instances, has actively distanced Pride from confrontational political messaging:

Pride has cozied up to the City in particular ways and cozied up to different corporations in particular ways for them to demonstrate their social purpose mission and for the City to demonstrate its inclusiveness through its alliance with Pride, which meant that when community folks, like myself, and others demand that Pride remain a space of activism and a space of resistance to homophobia and transphobia is when those spaces that seek to claim us the city and corporations become uncomfortable. That's not their marketing goal. Their goal isn't about fighting homophobia, their marketing goal isn't about fighting transphobia, their marketing goal isn't about having employment equity for LGBTQ people explicitly in their institutions. Their marketing goal is simply to speak to issues of diversity and getting these diverse dollars that they see Pride bringing to the city. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

The overwhelming response from my research participants was that Pride's corporatization has been detrimental. However, some felt that the growing corporate presence, in some ways, may have increased the visibility of the city's various LGBTQ2+ communities. Yet, As Nicki Ward put it, "you don't need corporate support to get a bunch of people together to walk down the street. It's just not necessary" (interview, 2016). The corporatization of Pride ultimately marks the festival's movement towards a celebration of capitalist homonationalism.

World Pride, held in Toronto in 2014, stands out as a prime example of Pride's transition into a homonationalist project. Tim McCaskell (2016) demonstrates that the motivation behind the decision to host World Pride was part of a strategy that saw the city wanting to attract the international gay tourist dollar. That motivation, however, carries significant geographic, gender, racial and class implications. First, the gay tourist market largely hails from Europe and other

settler states. Second, World Pride events are largely marketed to a male audience. Finally, the ability to travel and participate in Pride festivities requires a certain level of disposable income (452).

The City of Toronto, in particular, was criticized for increasing policing in the Village and surrounding low-income neighbourhoods in Toronto's downtown east neighbourhoods leading up to World Pride. The Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy (TAVIS) was employed by the city to render the city "safe and secure" for incoming tourists, consumers, and Pride revelers. TAVIS was introduced in Toronto in 2006 as a policing program designed to target specific high-crime neighbourhoods during the summer months. Among the key TAVIS objectives are the reduction of violence, increased community safety, and the improved quality of life for members of high-risk communities (Public Safety Canada, 2013). Queer Ontario condemned the use of TAVIS policing in the name of World Pride in an open letter on their website. The organization stated that the policing methods explicitly targeted some of the city's most vulnerable populations such as the homeless, sex-workers, and drug users as part of an effort to cleanse the city of supposed undesirable populations. Queer Ontario went on to stress that TAVIS did little to address the social and economic marginalization of those targeted by the policing strategy (Queer Ontario, 2014). Reports revealed that TAVIS officers patrolling the Village and surrounding neighbourhoods had arrested eighteen individuals and laid forty-four charges in its first week in mid-June of 2014 (Watson, 2014).

Pride Denied, a documentary released in 2016, critically explores the controversy behind World Pride in Toronto. The following quote from the film emphasizes the separation of an event like World Pride from Pride Day's original political intentions in 1981. World Pride also exposes the internal contradictions that exist within Pride as a whole. For example, while Toronto Pride is

marketed as a celebration of inclusivity, the reality is that Pride has become a celebration that privileges homonormative queer communities.

Tim McCaskell (2016), in a chapter on homonationalism in his book *Queer Progress*, discusses how Pride celebrations have swayed to satisfy the needs of the mainstream gay (and heterosexual) majority and to further the corporatization of the event. Beginning in 2010, Blockorama, a Black queer, trans, and allies celebration has been displaced to smaller, less accessible locations to make way for corporate sponsored events in the main Pride area around Church and Wellesley. That same year the annual Dyke March was diverted from its regular route, which would have concluded in the Village, to Queen's Park for extended activities (blocks away from the village). This decision was made to make room for Aqua Pride, a corporate sponsored, male-oriented, admission-only circuit party.

Toronto Pride also fits within a national agenda of homonationalism. The Parade, in particular, has become a staple for politicians looking to appeal to LGBTQ voters. 2016 marked the first year in which a sitting Canadian Prime Minister marched in Toronto's Pride Parade. Speaking at the pride flag raising at Parliament Hill on June 1, 2016, Justin Trudeau was quoted as saying, "Canada is united in its defence of rights and in standing up for LGBTQ rights; this is what we are truly celebrating today" (as quoted in King, 2016). The Prime Minister also marched in parades in Montréal and Vancouver and repeated his Pride tour again in 2017. Dani Araya described Trudeau's history-making decision to march in Pride parades across the country as strategic to Canada's positioning in the Trump era;

[The Trudeau Liberals] would be so dumb to not show that contrast of culture [with the United States]. The tourism that will happen. Canada is getting so much more tourism. There's probably a different kind of advertising or messaging and media that's created for people that are leaving as refugees or people that are leaving. Perhaps it's that America was their first choice, but now, Canada is looking pretty hot. Even in the winter. The Prime

Minister. The laws and protections. The spaces we have, the cities including Toronto and Montréal. If Canada doesn't try to capitalize in a way on that, it would be stupid. But the whole Pride thing. How he went to all those different Prides. I think if he does that every year, I think it would be a cool strategy and commentary on his part to be part of that tradition. (Araya, interview, 2017)

The LGBTQ-positive messaging from the Prime Minister's team works to distract from ongoing problems that plague the Liberal Government's national inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women, the alarming rates of suicide and deplorable conditions within Canada's reserves, and other social injustices that are perpetuated by the Canadian Government. Pride, in theory, represents the political visibility of LGBTQ2I people and the struggle that various queer communities have faced. Yet, it must be recognized the fight is not over for many LGBTQ2I peoples. Many of my research participants argued that politics must be reintroduced into Pride. In recent years, some notable political statements have been made. The contestations and protests that have followed Toronto Pride in response to the festival's homonationalist tone will be discussed further at the end of this chapter.

Queer Beyond the Village

Queer spaces in Toronto are not confined to the Church-Wellesley neighbourhood. Toronto's west end began to take on a queer presence as early as the late 1970s and early 1980s. Andrew Zealley recalls this period of time with fondness:

There was a very obvious and vital merging of the art community, the music community, and the queer political community. *The Body Politic* was on Duncan and just a block North of Duncan was the Art Metropole. I started working there in 1980. I was writing music reviews for *The Body Politic* and hanging out at Art Metropole with all the arty fags there. Then this kind of amazing thing was happening in places like the Beverly and the Cabana Room and all these kind of lowlife bars on Queen Street at the time. That was a really critical moment when all those things got together. (Zealley, interview, 2017)

Zealley credits Will Munro with building the west end's status as a queer neighbourhood in the 1990s. Munro was responsible for organizing Vazaleen, a recurring party first organized at the El

Mocambo on Spadina Avenue, which eventually found its home at the Beaver, a queer bar located near Queen and Dufferin Streets in the Parkdale neighbourhood. Alexander McClelland (2017), a close friend and former lover of Munro, writes that the event challenged the heterogeneity and sameness of the Village: "We sought community in our feeling of difference from the norm. Vazaleen marked a do-it-yourself shift in the orientation of queer nightlife in the city" (247). For Zealley, although Munro died in 2010, his legacy has sustained the west end's reputation as "Queer West." Today, places like the Gladstone Hotel at Gladstone and Queen Streets, The Steady near Bloor and Lansdowne Streets, and The Beaver (in its original location) stand out as bars that regularly host a queer crowd in the city's west end. The presence of these venues in Toronto's west end has ultimately contributed to the gentrification of these spaces.

Catherine Jean Nash (2013b) has written about some of the problems associated with the queer migration to the west end. In her article, *Queering Neighbourhoods*, Nash examines why self-identified queer women and genderqueer individuals chose to live and socialize in Toronto's Queer West Neighbourhood. Nash's research found that many of her participants preferred Queer West to the Village. Nash's participants described the Village as an overly commercialized space that represented a vapid party culture. The Village was also described as a space dominated by white, middle class men. In contrast, Queer West was characterized as having inherited the political character that the Village had seemingly lost. Nash, however, points to the contradictory nature of her interviewee's statements. Specifically, although many participants celebrated Queer West's supposed queerness as a racially and ethnically diverse community, participants acknowledged that the neighbourhood was becoming increasingly white. As one participant put it, "a healthy city needs, like need[s], to have queers... that's where all the interesting stuff has happened and that's where people are always going to want to go" (as quoted in Nash, 2013b,

211). The conceptualization of the west end as a queer neighbourhood by new queer residents has resulted in the gentrification of the neighbourhood. New venues serving a queer clientele have raised neighbourhood prices for food and drink and raised rents as Queer West becomes more in-demand. Ultimately, Nash's article demonstrates how the gentrification of Queer West has turned the neighbourhood into an increasingly commodified and exclusive space in its own right.

Queer West's reputation as a trendy neighbourhood has made it a mainstream destination for the city's LGBTQ2I community. Nash (2013a) suggests that the attention of millennial gay men has shifted away from the Village in recent years. Citing a controversial article published in a weekly Toronto magazine, *The Grid* in 2011, Nash documents a twenty-one year old man's arguments as to why the city's Village has become increasingly irrelevant to millennial gays. In his article, Paul Aguirre-Livingston refers to himself and others like him as post-modernist (post-mo) gays. The post-mo identity aligns with what Michael Warner (1999) has called the "post-gay." Post-gay is the separation of the individual from their sexuality. As Aguirre-Livingston puts it, "I am a writer who happens to be gay, not the other way around" (as quoted in Nash, 2013a, 246).

The post-gay is distanced from the previous generation's struggle for social acceptance, the fight for human rights, and the deadly AIDS epidemic. As a result, Toronto's gay enclave stands as a relic that reflects the needs of the previous generation, but has failed to maintain the interest of post-gays. Instead, post-gays enjoy trendy mixed neighbourhoods like Toronto's Parkdale and Leslieville (Nash, 2013a). This supposed post-modernist gay identity extends almost exclusively to those who are young, white, middle class, gender-conforming gay men. Post-modernist gays are those who are able to conform to homonormative ideals and therefore enjoy a relatively high degree of social and economic mobility.

The LGBTQ2I nightlife scene in Queer West revolves largely around queer parties that happen on a monthly basis. Parties like Business Women's Special, Hot Nuts, and Big Primpin' are monthly queer parties that cater largely to a male clientele. Other monthly parties like Toastr, Cream, and Cherry Bomb are organized by and for queer women. In addition, Yes Yes Y'all has become a popular nomadic monthly queer party with a focus on the city's African-Canadian and Caribbean LGBTQ communities. Several of these parties use queer terminology to advertise themselves as inclusive parties for various LGBTQ communities. However, despite the tone of inclusivity, many of these events are occupied by cisgender male bodies. During our discussion on Queer Spaces, Amber Moyle mentioned that the crowd in attendance for Yes Yes Y'all's eighth anniversary party seemed to have changed from its earlier days:

The Yes Yes Y'all crowd is getting very diverse I noticed the last time I was there. It was definitely a female focused hip hop night [when it started], [but] when I went there [last] it was maybe twenty-five percent women. There was a lot of what I would think were straight people. It was something about the crowd. It didn't seem that queer to me that night. It was their eight year anniversary. I don't know if that brought a different crowd. They switched venues as well... It was definitely a different crowd. There was also [previously] a very strong Black community turn out that would happen at Yes Yes Y'all and the last time I was there it was not as predominant, so I don't know what that means for the crowd there. (Moyle, interview, 2017)

Dani Araya, however, views Queer West's social mixture as a sign of the expansion of queer-positive spaces in the city. "I think it's just a different mix, a different generation, you know... urbanite or city dwelling people. City people don't seem to have that much judgement, or at least overt judgement. People just let live in a way" (Araya, interview, 2017). Araya's favourite bar in the city has become the Fountain on Dundas West, which she described as a witchy bar with a cool atmosphere. She claims she has learned about the spaces she frequents through word of mouth. Although she doesn't identify herself as a partier, she said that when she goes out she tends to prefer neighbourhoods like Queen West, College West, and Dundas West to the Village.

The shift westward has not represented the end of the Village's prominence as the city's LGBTQ neighbourhood. Instead, Queer West perhaps stands out as a different permutation of what queer space can be in a growing city.

The queer scene in Toronto may be expanding in some ways, but it is shrinking in others. Noticeably missing from Toronto's LGBTQ map are distinct lesbian spaces. Many of the fledgling east end lesbian bars that operated in the 1980s had closed their doors by the end of the decade. 547 Parliament Street was the site of various lesbian bars throughout the 1990s and early 2000s. During its tenure as a lesbian bar, it was known as the Purple Onion, The Rose Café, and Pope Joan. The space was maintained as a women's only venue until 1993 when the owners determined the policy was no longer sustainable. After one final name change to Foxy's and Coyote's, the bar eventually closed in the mid-2000s.

Slack Alice (later Slacks), located on Church Street, operated in the Village from 1997 to 2013 (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2015). Reflecting on her time at Slacks, Amber Moyle spoke about the crowd that could typically be found at the bar: "definitely a younger crowd. [It was] mostly women... there was a good mix beyond just white people. There was a good mixture of diversity. Perhaps it was because of the hip hop music, which gave it some edge" (interview, 2017). Slacks enforced a policy that worked to maintain the bar as women's space. However, Moyle stated that the policy was a double-edged sword, that amounted to a policing of the venue. She shared a story of her difficulty trying to get a male friend, visiting from out of town, into the bar. She was told that her friend would need to be accompanied by five or more women to be granted entry. Yet, Moyle conceded that the policy may have been what maintained Slacks' presence as a distinct lesbian bar on Church Street for the length of time that it was open. Moyle noted that the policy was taken too far in some instances, "they would ask certain people for IDs

and if you were trans you might have a problem getting in there” (Moyle, 2017). Slacks’ closure in 2013 marked the departure of lesbian bars from the Village and Toronto as a whole. Today lesbian space in Toronto consists of monthly queer parties and a number of LGBTQ-friendly bars spread throughout the city.

Fostering Community Outside of Homonormativity

The Church-Wellesley Village has not been a welcoming space for Toronto’s queer of colour communities. As Angela Robertson phrased it, “brown bodies on Church Street are suspect. It’s almost like, ‘do you realize where you are? Maybe you got lost somewhere and you need to be redirected elsewhere because you really can’t belong.’ It’s like a house that belongs to someone else that us, as queer of colour, get invited to occasionally, but we somehow always get reminded that we are only guests” (2017). Elaborating on her statement, Angela went on to say that the Village has had some POC spaces and events hosted by and for the city’s queer of colour communities. However, she specified that anti-Black racism in the Village is particularly prevalent.

It was also about finding space that we could even rent. The notion that if we were to occupy a night in a bar space on Church that the owners of the space may have concerns about what could happen in their space because of the large congregation of Black and Brown bodies. They think we can disrupt and create upheaval, be threatening, and or be violent and therefore put their business at risk or they would need more security. That was always a thing. Where there are Black and Brown bodies there is more security, which creates more tension (Robertson, interview, 2017)

Racism in Toronto’s Gay Village exposes how the neighbourhood is not the bastion of inclusivity that it has been marketed to be.

Toronto’s queer of colour communities have carved out their own spaces for socialization and partying in response to the racism that persists within the Village. A series of clubs, parties, and festivals was created the 1990s and 2000s with the intention of providing space for Toronto’s

queer of colour communities. Two clubs were particularly popular: Club Manhattan and the Red Spot. Club Manhattan was located on Balmuto Street near Yonge and Bloor Streets. Polly Watkis and Janet Campbell, two queer Black women, ran the club and organized a weekly queer party on Saturday nights starting in 1999. The event lasted four years (Pandya, 2009). Robertson, remembering nights at Club Manhattan, described its significance as a place: “where we knew that we could come and commune, find community and find each other” (interview, 2017).

The Red Spot, located on Church Street, just south of Wellesley Street, was another bar that was a welcoming and inclusive space for queers of colour in the late 1990s. The bar, run by Tamil owners, was host to a multitude of events. Some of these events included Funkasia, held on the third Sunday of every month, which featured Bollywood music, Doux-Doux, a Caribbean party, and a recurring Latinx drag queen night (Pearson Clarke, 2017). One of my research participants, LeZlie Lee Kam, recalled hosting her own monthly event at the Red Spot called Island Spice in 1999:

Island Spice came about because a lot of my friends back then were Filipinas. They had a night. I decided I wanted something that was Caribbean. I spoke to a friend and we came up with Island Spice. The focus was on Soca because it had to be a Trini thing. The focus was on Soca and then there was Reggae and then because a lot of my friends were also South Asian there was Bhangra. The main thing was that it had to have a Trini flavour. Then I tried to feature performers of colour. My DJs were all of colour. My thing was to have a Trini event on Church Street. (Lee Kam, interview, 2017)

LeZlie smiled when speaking about the success of her event: “Every time it happened it was packed. People started hearing about it from Ottawa. If somebody was in town. I remember talking to a group that came in from Detroit. People heard about it. If they were in town they came” (interview, 2017). In a time before social media, information about events, like those at The Red Spot, were spread by word-of-mouth, postering, and phone trees (Lee Kam, interview, 2017; Pearson Clarke, 2017).

Some queer of colour nightlife events were nomadic. Popular Black queer DJ, DJ Blackcat, started his career in the 1990s and earned a following that gave him the ability to host events in different spaces around the city (Hall, 2013; Robertson, 2017). The late 1990s and early 2000s also saw the pre-eminence of several Black drag queens who earned a loyal following of their own. Performers like Chris Edwards and Michelle Ross held court in several Church Street venues. Although Edwards passed away tragically in 2016, Ross still draws crowds to her legendary performances (Walcott, 2014; *Divas Love Me Forever*, 2001).

Desh Pardesh, a queer South Asian festival, also stands out as a significant site of community for queers of colour in Toronto. Desh Pardesh started in 1988 as a one day event organized by Khush: South Asian Gay Men of Toronto. Sharon Fernandez (2017) describes the first event as an informal celebration of South Asian food, fashion and culture held at The 519. Desh Pardesh's popularity grew yearly and eventually became a non-profit in 1991. The organization came to represent broader causes affecting the South Asian community beyond homophobia. However, despite the shift in attention, the festival still regularly featured queer South Asian artists and performers and maintained its distinct queer presence (Fernandez, 2017). Desh Pardesh eventually folded in 2001.

Blackness Yes! is a second organization that has provided space for the queer of colour community in Toronto. Blackness Yes! is the organization that hosts Blockorama, an annual all-day dance party during Pride Week that celebrates Black queer and Trans Pride (Lord, 2017). Speaking of the significance of Blockorama, Angela Robertson referred back to the liminality experienced by Black people in the Village:

We will just create spaces to make ourselves visible wherever we are so that we are less tied to coming into someone else's house and now about building our own house. I use Blockorama as an example of this. What we felt was that we had the event called Pride,

but that many of us as queers of colour weren't able to find a home in Pride. We felt we needed to create a space that visibly said we're here and we're queer and we're proud, you know? We're part of the community. We wanted it to be where younger folks could find us and each other. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

Blockorama held its first event in the parking lot across the Street from Wellesley Subway Station during Pride in 1998. The parking lot was transformed into a space that reflected Black queer culture and featured DJs, Black drag queens, and steelpan performers. In an interview, Zuberi reflected on the success of the first event, "What I remember most is that the space was overflowing with large crowds of Black queer people all celebrating, dancing, laughing and having fun. During the live steelpan segment, I looked up from my steelpan to see my father playing right beside me. In that moment, I knew that Blockorama had exceeded my expectations" (as quoted in Lord, 2017, 341).

Today, Blockorama enjoys a nearly twenty-year history as a staple in Toronto Pride. The event provides much needed space for Toronto's Black queer and Trans population and many other racialized communities. Spaces like Club Manhattan and the Red Spot, nomadic parties, and events like Desh Pardesh and Blockorama all stem from members of Toronto's queer of colour communities who have worked to fill the void left by the homonormative mainstream gay culture that has excluded them.

People who are trans in Toronto still face significant obstacles for equality. A report titled *Transgender People in Ontario, Canada: Statistics from the Trans Pulse Project to Inform Human Rights Policy*, produced in 2015, reveals the disadvantages that Trans Ontarians face due to systematic and societal discrimination. The report details statistics related to employment barriers, health care discrimination, violence, and the mental health consequences of discrimination. The report found that the median income for trans Ontarians was \$15,000. Yet,

nearly half of the research participants had completed post-secondary education. The report states that these findings represent significant underemployment which underscores the economic marginalization of trans people in Ontario (6). The findings also reveal that fear of discrimination deters many trans Ontarians from seeking medical attention. Additionally, an alarming forty-three percent of research participants had attempted suicide. Nicki Ward, a transwoman in her fifties, commented on her status as an elder within Toronto's trans community. "I'm a member of the senior's pride network. I'm unusual that I'm an elder in the Trans community. Most trans people don't survive. Forty-seven is considered old. I'm now approaching fifty-five and that makes me a very senior trans woman. We just don't live very long" (interview, 2017).

The human rights of trans Canadians have only recently been recognized by the Canadian legal system. Bill C-16 passed through the Senate on June 15, 2017. The Bill updates the Canadian Human Rights Act and Criminal Code to include gender identity and gender expression as recognized terms. The updates now make it illegal to discriminate against trans or gender non-conforming individuals. Hate speech and hate crime laws now also include provisions for incidents involving trans individuals (Tasker, 2017).

Nicki Ward's story demonstrates why the new laws are necessary. Prior to coming out as trans, Ward enjoyed a well-paying position as the Vice President of a small insurance brokerage on Bay Street. However, after coming out Ward was fired from her job and lost connections with her family. "I couldn't get housing anywhere. I couldn't find employment anywhere. I was successful in my former life, but all of that dried up immediately when I came out as trans" (Ward, interview, 2017). During our conversation, she also spoke about the isolation Trans people experience from the LGBTQ community. She shared stories about being spat on by lesbians who

referred to themselves as “real women” and fetishized by gay men who inappropriately could not distinguish between a transwoman and a drag queen. As a poet and artist, Ward has also had to keep her identity secret when submitting written work to feminist publications. Ward describes life as a transwoman as life in a tertiary class of outliers. She says that the movement away from the Village has perpetuated this feeling. “I think that after gay marriage was legalized and being gay was mainstreamed in Canada, that the exodus of the Church Wellesley area, which was the old heartland, began with those most affluent and those who remain - we’re left behind yet again” (Ward, interview, 2017).

The Trans March has become an important way for Toronto’s trans community to increase its visibility and call attention to the inequalities still experienced by the city’s trans population. The first March occurred in 2009 when Karah Mathiason led a small group from Bloor and Church Streets to Church and Wellesley Streets. The first event was not officially recognized by Pride Toronto (Donato, 2016). In an article for *Vice*, Nicki Ward, highlighted the obstacles the Trans March encountered in subsequent years. “In 2010, they used ‘cattle gates’ to attempt to funnel marchers into a beer garden. In 2011, they used cisgendered volunteers to misdirect marchers. In 2012, they pushed marchers through market stalls that were still under construction” (2013). In 2013 the Trans March paraded down Yonge Street for the first time, but not without opposition from Pride Toronto. Pride organizers claimed that the City had objected to the March stating that the event was not legal or safe. Pride Toronto also printed and distributed flyers with an incorrect parade route that showed it ending up in a beer garden. Despite opposition and the spread of misinformation, the Trans March now regularly marches down Yonge Street (Ward, 2013).

The City of Toronto has a variety of organizations and programs designed to assist trans people with their health, employment, and social needs. The 519 offers a range of programs

including Meal Trans, a program that offers meals on Monday nights to low income members of the trans community. The 519 also offers mentoring programs for trans sex workers, trans people of colour, and other members of the city's trans community. Additionally, Sherbourne Health Centre has become an important organization for trans and gender non-conforming people in Toronto. The health centre provides a range of services including preparation and referrals for transition-related surgeries, post-transition respite care, support groups, and training services for healthcare providers in Ontario.

Dani Araya shared some of her experiences with social spaces and events for trans people in Toronto. She cautiously spoke about one bar, outside of the Village, that has earned its reputation as a trans bar. "It's a safe space where Trans girls can go meet guys and do business. But like, it's undercover. It's underground in a way. It's a safe space for them to do their business and guys know where to find them. This space kind of provides a kind of undercover [environment], but it's not supposed to be. It's not supposed to be known as that" (2017). While there is this particular bar and some sporadic events, she argued that there aren't enough and that many events lack variety.

I feel like there are not enough Trans specific places. I think there's still kind of this stereotype that kind of objectifying of the community. It's all about sex. If it's a Trans party, it's because we need people to hook up with trans people. That's not always what trans youth want. Where are the parties where Trans people can just chill and network or just whatever? Play video games. Whatever the theme is, it shouldn't just be all about hooking up. (Araya, interview, 2017).

Araya went on to distinguish between events held by bars versus those held by grassroots groups and organizations. She argued that the bar and club parties marketed towards young transwomen are the events that have taken on an oversexualized atmosphere. Additionally these parties often involved alcohol and required money for participation. In contrast, the social events

organized by grassroots groups and organizations were more oriented towards fostering friendship and community amongst participants. Araya also spoke about positive experiences in other bars in the city. She stated that a word-of-mouth network of trans-friendly bars is popping up in the city. Yet, despite recent progress in human rights legislation, health and social services, and social spaces for trans people, much more is needed to create true equality for trans people in Toronto.

Protest, Resistance to normativity, and claims for inclusivity

Attempts to sanitize and depoliticize mainstream gay life in Toronto have not silenced the contestation and protest of inequality within Toronto's LGBTQ2I community and within the broader society. Pride, in particular, has been an important site of protest. Although Pride's focus has been reoriented towards being a marketable, family and tourist friendly festival of consumption, some critical political statements have been made in recent years. LeZlie Lee Kam shared a story of one political statement she was involved in with an organization called World Majority Lesbians (WML) in 1999. WML engaged in fundraising efforts to rent a flatbed truck for the parade. Lee Kam joked that it was her dream to have one of the big trucks, "just like the white boys had" (2017). The women strung up a banner on the side of the truck that read, "Stop Police Racism. End the Criminalization of Peoples of Colour" (*The Queer Nineties*, 1992). The banner was in response to an advertisement displayed on TTC vehicles that said, "Stop Crime on the TTC" (Lee Kam, interview, 2017). The ad used the image of two Latino men. Lee Kam shared with me how her protest banner did not sit well with Pride Organizers nor Toronto Police;

We figured since we have this big truck in the parade we're going to put up a sign of protest and the cops came. First they came in their uniforms and said take it down. We said no. Then, they sent these two white women, who were undercover cops, and they said to take it down. When negotiating with them they put their hands on their guns. It was really intimidating. Even Pride came to us and asked to take down the sign. We had asked

all of our friends to come with cameras. We told the media to surround us, so the cops didn't realize that their pictures were being taken. We had to come up with strategies to keep ourselves safe. We defied all odds and we went into the parade with our sign. (Lee Kam, interview, 2017).

It is unclear whether or not any immediate action was taken by the TTC to remove the racist ads. However, the banner had clearly captured police attention. What the World Majority Lesbian's confrontation by Pride organizers and the police demonstrates how homonormativity is enforced and maintained. A simple banner that confronted racism within Toronto's public transit agency and police force was apparently too political for 1999.

More recently, a group called Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) received significant pushback following their participation in the Pride Parade in 2009. QuAIA's main message is opposition to Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the military force that Israel has used against Palestine. QuAIA's goal was to also raise awareness of homonationalism in Canada. Canada's support of Israel, and by association, with the atrocities committed against Palestine, was being overshadowed by Canada's endorsement of homonormative queer populations. During the 2009 March, Martin Gladstone, a real estate lawyer, filmed QuAIA's march and heavily edited his footage to slander the organization by labeling QuAIA as an anti-Semitic hate group. Media coverage of QuAIA's political messaging was also sensationalized. Various conservative Jewish organizations lobbied the city to cut Pride funding if QuAIA was allowed to march in the Pride Parade in 2010. They argued that QuAIA's use of the term "Israeli Apartheid" amounted to a human rights violation against the city's Jewish community.

The city eventually ruled that QuAIA's movement did not represent a human rights violation, but the battle between the organization and conservative groups like Toronto's B'nai Brith was a five year process, which saw QuAIA's visibility and involvement in Pride events vary

due to the very real possibility that Toronto City Council would vote to withdraw Pride's funding (Gentile and Kinsman, 2015; McCaskell, 2016). In the end, QuAIA did march in the 2010 Pride Parade. Yet, the backlash was not over. Motions put forward by conservative suburban Councillors Giorgio Mammoliti and Rob Ford sought to place conditions on Pride's funding the following year. Neither motion materialized.

In response to the tensions created by the vitriolic language spread in the media and through City Hall, a Community Advisory Panel (CAP) was assembled by Pride Toronto to address how best to proceed with Pride celebrations in the future. The CAP was made up of independent community leaders and allies who were tasked with the responsibility of conducting community consultations. The consultations resulted in a final report with strategic recommendations "designed to protect and advance the overall objectives of Pride Toronto" (Community Advisory Panel, 2011, 6). Specifically, the Panel conducted six large public meetings. Three meetings were intended for the broader LGBT community, while the other three were intended for trans, racialized, and female communities. The panel conducted over forty targeted consultations with community groups and individuals. An online survey also captured over sixteen hundred responses. Lastly, the Panel consulted Pride organizations in other cities such as Montreal, New York, San Francisco, Sydney, and Tel Aviv.

The CAP report found that Pride's "bigger is better" approach to festivities had resulted in the organization's departure from its original goals and principles of celebration, information, education and culture that are listed in the organization's articles of incorporation. The report provided a list of one hundred and thirty-three recommendations as to how Pride Toronto could be improved (Community Advisory Panel, 2011). The long list of recommendations included a call to downsize the event's programming and suggested ways for the organization to foster better

community relations and establish a Trans lens to better integrate various LGBTQ2I communities. McCaskell (2016), however, points out that no mention was made of QuAIA's right to participate in Pride. Instead, the CAP report recommended a dispute resolution process that would be triggered in the event of future complaints.

Pride continued to grow in size in the years following the CAP report in spite of its recommendations. Pride's corporate presence has also not waned. In response, alternate Pride events have been organized by grassroots organizations who have attempted to reclaim Pride as a political event. In 2010, Take Back the Dyke (TBDT), an alternative Dyke March was organized in an effort to separate the Dyke March from Pride Toronto's control. The March was scheduled for the same date and time as Pride Toronto's version of the Dyke March. Allison Burgess (2017) writes that the TBDT organizers, in reaction to the QuAIA dispute, had concerns about, "the right to access queer spaces and the right to gather without corporate or city money dictating the terms" (109). The TBDT March ultimately became symbolic of the refusal to ask for permission to take to the streets. TBDT gathered in Nathan Phillips Square and proceeded to march along Queen Street, University Avenue and concluded in Queens Park. TBDT has not become an annual event.

Other alternative Pride events have become yearly. The Night March, an event intended to bring Pride back to its political roots, began in 2012 and has occurred annually on the first night of Pride Week ever since (Watson, 2015). The March has been described as a community-focused peaceful protest that makes space for those who have been pushed aside by the mainstream gay rights movement because their needs aren't well funded and are not prioritized. The event receives no funding from Pride or private corporations (*Pride Denied*, 2016).

Black Lives Matter Toronto's (BLMTO) sit-in demonstration during the 2016 Pride Parade marks one of the largest political statements in recent history. Leading up to the 2016 Parade, Pride Toronto had chosen BLMTO as the Parade's honour guest, a tokenistic gesture. BLMTO used the opportunity to stage a sit-in that paused the parade at Yonge and College Streets. The sit-in's purpose was to draw attention to what Alexandria Williams, one of BLMTO's co-founders, called, "[the] forgetting that we haven't all made it to the point of queer liberation. That not all communities who participate in Pride are actually able to be free in that celebration" (as quoted in Battersby, 2016). BLMTO used megaphones to call Toronto Pride out for its anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity. The group brought with them a series of demands and refused to move until Pride Toronto would publically agree to meet the demands at subsequent Prides. Some of the demands included that uniformed police officers not be permitted to march in the parade and increased funding for Blockorama and other culturally diverse programming at Pride. After about a half-an-hour, Pride executives signed off on BLMTO's demands (Battersby, 2016).

Positive progress was immediate in the fallout of the BLM sit-in. Chantelois resigned from his position amid allegations of racism in August that year. The following year, at Pride Toronto's annual general meeting, Pride Toronto's board members voted to approve all of the demands that BLM had made at the 2016 Parade, including the banning of uniformed police officers from future Pride Parades. The following month, the board appointed Pride Toronto's first Black executive director, Olivia Nuamah (Beeston, 2017; Martis, 2017; Sachgau, 2016). However, despite the apparent progress, the backlash towards Pride Toronto's decision was severe and ugly. Conservative newspaper *The Toronto Sun* published a series of news reports slandering Black Lives Matter (Levy, 2017; Snobelen, 2017).

For many of my research participants, the public backlash against BLM's protest brought the mainstream gay community's racism to the surface. Dani Araya phrased it the following way: "The Black Lives Matter stuff showed how overtly racist people can be and how spaces for intersectional queer people and trans people has not been a priority. Especially when money is involved" (interview, 2017). A string of articles attempted to refer to the police ban as a discriminatory practice. For Tim McCaskell, it was clear that the disconnect between white, middle class queers and queers of colour had become too great. The police ban just happened to be the issue that drew attention to this widening gulf.

Black Lives Matters terms is that yes, we want to be in pride, but we don't want the cops to be there. So that puts them nose to nose with the more mainstream queers who think of cops as people who protect their property. But if you don't have property, you know, that really isn't an issue to you. If that armed group is really harassing you, then it's a very different kind of relationship. (McCaskell, interview, 2017)

Andrew Zealley discussed the irony of how many white, middle class queers, who had experienced the bathhouse raids of 1981 and had experienced other episodes of police harassment, failed to sympathize with Black Lives Matter.

Just last week I was at a meeting with People with AIDS and I brought up the black lives matter protest as an example of how activism still works and is still relevant. The issues are still there. Immediately someone started to complain about Black Lives Matter. It was another man that was sixty and he comes from a very intelligent position. He owned and operated two bathhouses. He has been around, but he is of the mind that we fought for all of this and now we have it. 'Why do we have to stir it up again?' What does it mean to have it? Nothing is carved in stone. So I think that Black Lives Matter really showed something important in that protest. (Zealley, interview, 2017)

Police Chief Mark Saunders publically agreed to the terms set by BLM. Yet, ugly rhetoric still dominated media coverage of the debate. A motion was put forward by Councillor John Campbell to withdraw Pride's funding ahead of Pride Week 2017. Campbell, a cisgender, heterosexual, middle class white man told the Toronto Star that the Police ban from Pride went against the

essence of Pride, saying, “whether officers are straight or gay, the parade is a lot about being proud of your identity and what Pride has done is tell police officers to deny their identity.” He later added, “[Pride] can make any political statement they want, but as they come to the City of Toronto looking for money, they’re.... [going] to be held up to scrutiny” (as quoted in Rider, 2017). During our discussion, Ward pointed out that Pride Toronto and the City had ignored the recommendations made by the 2011 CAP report when debating Pride’s funding. “The QuAIA discussion is no different than the police discussion. No difference at all. What’s depressing is that there is actually a process to stop that from happening [the triggers established in the CAP Report], which is absolutely being ignored. Rage replaces actual sane adult behaviour” (interview, 2017). Campbell’s motion was unsuccessful, and Pride went on with its funding. However, the language from Campbell and other conservative councillors was clear. To the City, and its middle class population of white queers, Pride has become a party and any group who stood in the way of the party are to be labeled as troublemakers.

Public protest and political statements made during Pride have worked to inject politics back into the spectacle and have drawn much needed attention to social injustices that continue to occur in Toronto and the nation more broadly. Many of these protests, while calling attention to issues of homonationalism, corporatization, and racism, often bring the true severity of these issues to the surface. What political statements like those made by QuAIA and BLM have done is caused broader LGBTQ2I communities to confront homonormativity and the inequality that exists in Toronto. Conversely, the severe backlash generated by such political statements have exposed how deeply homonormativity and homonationalism have been entrenched in Toronto’s queer culture. As Andrew Zealley said, BLM’s protest demonstrated how activism remains

relevant and necessary in 2017, and will remain so into the future. Angela Robertson viewed the BLM protest as a sign of hope for the future.

The most recent piece that makes me hopeful is the pushback recently with Black Lives Matter at Pride. One, it was good that Black Lives Matter was a group that was affirmed as a group within the Pride march. I think that the interruption that Black Lives Matter did and the community response after that was also hopeful because there are folks that said, "who the hell is this group to come in and mash up our Pride?" We saw the fallout from that. Even in the midst of that fallout is the community largely, I think more on the majority, coming out to support the demands that Black Lives Matter made that now has resulted in Pride taking some of the stance it is taking around the police being removed from the parade. It happened because the LGBTQ community said this is what we want in our Pride. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

It becomes the responsibility of those within Toronto's queer communities who have privilege to recognize their privilege and support communities that have been marginalized and excluded. Until this responsibility has been accepted by the mainstream LGBTQ community, protests and political statements will continue to be necessary. The achievements made by the LGBTQ2+ community should be recognized and celebrated. But, the narrative of arrival and equality as represented by the Village and annual Pride celebrations is false.

The State of the Village: Understanding where queer space stands today

The final section of this chapter will turn to an understanding of how queer space is currently understood by my research participants. This discussion will follow two trajectories: First, how my participants view the current state of the Village and its limitations, and second, how my participants envision the future of the city's queer space. The ideas presented by my interviewees are intended to inspire a more inclusive vision for queer space in Toronto's future.

Many of my research participants expressed frustration about the homonormative nature of the Village. "There are limitations. You can come here and express your idea of what it is to be queer, whatever that particular image or identity you have, but because [the Village] cater[s] to

those very specific established identities, it doesn't necessarily expand beyond that" (Zealley, interview, 2017). Dani Araya argued that the representations of normative queer identities have been perpetuated in the media with shows like *Queer as Folk*. Further, Andil Gosine argued that the branding of the Village has given the city the permission to claim ownership of the Village:

The designation is late because it was already a gay village before the city designated it that way. This designation is just catching up to what is happening. Maybe it's detrimental in ways that it produces more singular narratives. There's more control over representations and what is acceptable and what's the face it wants to put forward. Even if it wasn't brought in, the business associations do that anyway. (Gosine, interview, 2017)

The limited range of identities welcomed in the Village had rendered the space unwelcoming for LeZlie Lee Kam:

I don't see me. I don't see us. People, LGBTQ people of colour, well, I'll use queer loosely. We don't have a space. So, when you walk up and down Church Street still, unless it's a specific thing that is happening, it's still all white. The spaces are still all white. Even coming here to the 519, it's still all white... Most recently I did a presentation with Sprint and the room was all white people. Of all those three groups they have all said 519 doesn't represent them. It's kind of ironic because even though the 519 is the biggest LGBTQ hub it is really not representative to many people. They also have the biggest refugee program, which to me speaks volumes. I'm glad they have that here. But, for me, on Church Street, when it's designated LGBTQ, that's for you. That's not for me. (Lee Kam, interview, 2017)

Importantly, several participants reflected on the false narrative of arrival and achievement that stems from having the Village as a recognized gay neighbourhood in the city. For Andrew Zealley the Village has fostered a sense of complacency amongst the city's homonormative population: "It's a bit of a plateau. So, a lot of people come here and they achieve that liberation about being in the gay village, but it doesn't expand beyond that" (interview, 2017). Multiple participants commented on the harm that can come from associating the Village with equality for all LGBTQ2+ populations.

It's not always a victory to have recognition, especially with something like the Village. There are a lot of things that are great about not being recognized. It's also the

recognition of the fluidity of sexuality. It's playing catch up to reality. The fight against homophobia has been positioned as a fight to claim identity. But the fight, really, should be about not caring about who sleeps with who. It's hard when you claim identities. When you look at your own experience, you have a range of experiences... I think the focus has to be on the discrimination and not on the identity. (Gosine, interview, 2017)

[T]here's the harm of untruth, that [the Village isn't inclusive]. It stratifies. Certain people are welcome, certain people are policed or carded more than others. You know, there's that kind of, I guess from my vantage point, the kind of annoyance of being deployed for municipal advertising and the tourist industry. It doesn't do me any harm, but it pisses me off. I guess that notion does hide the real racism and class stratification that does exist and is affecting people's lives... The fact that the Village is being deployed as the pinnacle of inclusive space makes that conversation harder to have because people don't understand it. White people just don't experience policing in the same way. When stuff is outside their experience they don't get it. (McCaskell, interview, 2017)

Some participants also reflected on the Village's positive elements. Several participants spoke about The 519's refugee program. The 519 provides resettlement services to LGBTQ2l people who have fled their home countries because of fears of homophobic violence or persecution. The program offers settlement counselling, referrals to immigration officials, assistance with finding accommodations, and networking events. Tim McCaskell referred to the Village's importance as a space that acts as a beacon for the city's LGBTQ2l communities.

It has a beacon effect. It's not a harm, but an advantage. All of the queer refugee and reception programs that run out of the 519. Since everyone knows that's the queer part of town people know where to go. If there was no such part of town then you wouldn't know where to go. Similarly, with all the griping about problems with pride that kind of visibility means that it is that coming out experience for many many people. That's where you try to sneak down to. (McCaskell, interview, 2017)

Sylvia Maracle agreed with McCaskell's sentiments. She argued that it's important to have a space in the city where younger generations of LGBTQ2l people can go, with relative safety, to, "not be under the nose of mom and dad" to explore their identity (interview, 2017). My participants made it clear that the Village still serves a purpose in the city. However, many felt that the neighbourhood has become too branded and commodified. It became clear over the

course of my discussions that a new focus on community building and inclusivity, outside of consumption, is needed to maximize the Village's relevance.

My research participants had many ideas for how queer space, and the Village, could be improved in the city to be more inclusive of the range of queer communities that live in Toronto. Opinions were split as to the level of involvement the city should have in fostering queer space. Some expressed concerns related to the ability of The 519, a city agency, to truly cater to the community's diverse interests. "I think the city struggles all the time with the fact that fifty-two percent of Toronto is not white. I think that Toronto could certainly do better, but sometimes. Institutions don't always create that space. Sometimes people who have power and privilege have to say, how do we change this?" (Maracle, interview, 2017). Additionally, some argued that The 519 is too frequently used as a way for the city to falsely advocate its support for the LGBTQ community while simultaneously committing injustices elsewhere. Nicki Ward, a 519 board member, synthesized this concern in the following comment;

[The 519] has long been used by the City of Toronto as a distraction. So, cops are arresting gay men, for example, who are having sex in Marie Curtis Park. It's like, "but look, 519." [At this moment Nicki jangled her keys.] They spend one and a half billion dollars on policing and slightly under half a million dollars on the 519. The 519 does good work, but it is used by the municipality to justify terrible practices elsewhere like carding [and] police harassment of LGBT people. (Ward, interview, 2017)

Angela Robertson's thoughts aligned with Ward's. She agreed that The 519 has been used as a symbol of support for the community. She argued that the city's LGBTQ communities need to demand more from the city. However, she went on to say that, "I think sometimes we accept the offering of this space and this centre and we don't use that in a transformative way to challenge the "hand that gave it to us" because we're fearful of losing it if we are to challenge it. So, I think that has maybe been our failing" (Robertson, interview, 2017). The overwhelming feeling from my

participants was that there is a need for community space for the city's queer population that is not solely controlled by the city.

A common theme during my interviews was that my participants had picked up on a void that exists within the established queer community spaces in the city. Several pointed to the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives as a resource that could be improved to better serve the community. The CLGA is a long running archive dedicated to the preservation of materials pertaining to gay history in Canada. The archives are an important resource and have been particularly helpful in the development of this research project. Yet, my participants expressed their desire for more. Sylvia Maracle shared her disappointment with the CLGA's lack of outreach. She suggested a program where the CLGA would provide outreach to the city's youth to join CLGA archivists for storytelling sessions about the city's queer history. In a similar vein, Angela Robertson suggested the creation of a speaker's series or community forum as a method of fostering community in the Village. For Angela, the LGBTQ community needs to engage in intersectional conversations such as the following;

What's happening with LGBTQ people internationally and the threats that were made around how we curtail and limit immigration and who gets seen as a legitimate refugee and not. What happens with trans folks and the violence that trans folks experience and the threat of violence that trans sex workers experience. That's a conversation that we should have. It's not just the conversation about the policing of trans folks off of Maitland. That's kind of what happened. We began talking about the trans folks who are sex workers on Maitland who are creating a disturbance for the neighbourhood and the conversation is one about policing trans workers outside of the safety of the hood or the Village as opposed to what is it that the Village needs to do to foster better support around income, access to health care, and access to safe space as sex workers. Those are the kinds of things that we could do differently. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

My participants implied that community building initiatives and activities should take place in the Village. The 519, CLGA, and Pride Toronto were all implicated as potential hosts and sponsors of such events. Amber Moyle suggested that there is a need for collaboration between the city's

organizations. Her background in event planning made her long for networking events for LGBTQ businesses, service providers, and various community groups. Her vision for a more inclusive Village would see collaboration between community organizations and local businesses to create low-cost safe space for networking and social events.

Some interviewees mentioned their support for some of the businesses in the Village. Glad Day Book Store, the world's oldest LGBTQ bookstore, was singled out by several participants as being a space in the Village that has worked towards promoting greater inclusivity. Glad Day currently hosts queer events and community discussions. LeZlie Lee Kam noted that Glad Day is owned by a collective of individuals who hold stake in the business. Many of the people on the collective are queer people of colour, which has lent to the space's queer and inclusive environment. Tim McCaskell and Andrew Zealley argued that spaces that allow for non-normative sex are important spaces in the community. In particular, he cited the importance of bathhouses like Steamworks and the Cellar. For Andrew, Black Eagle, with its dark room, is another noteworthy Village establishment.

Some participants spoke of the need for more community spaces and events that are not centered on the consumption of alcohol and drugs. For LeZlie, who struggled with alcohol addiction, the Village's bar-centric focus is a barrier to queers who are not comfortable in spaces that serve alcohol. Tim McCaskell also noted that the focus on alcohol excludes younger queers who are not of legal drinking age. As Sylvia Maracle put it: "People want a destination, but they don't always want the destination to be a bar" (2017). The comments made by LeZlie, Tim and Sylvia echo existing academic research that has discussed the high rates of drug and alcohol abuse in LGBTQ communities in North America (Amadio, 2006; Kelly et al, 2012). Some research

has also correlated drug and alcohol consumption with the increased transmission of HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (Buttram and Kurtz, 2013).

Angela Robertson and Andil Gosine both focused in on the misconception that Toronto's LGBTQ community only exists within the city's downtown neighbourhoods. Both Angela and Andil were clear that LGBTQ populations exist all over the city. Some individuals choose not to associate with the Village or downtown queer spaces. In contrast, many LGBTQ people of colour, particularly queer of colour and low income queers cannot afford to live downtown and may not be able to afford frequent nights out to participate in the city's queer offerings. Angela, however, believes that some progress has been made:

You have youth LGBTQ groups in Scarborough that are operating within community centre settings. That I think has come about because the activism that may have emerged in the centre bolstered folks to claim space in the community where they live and to demand that the funded agencies in the communities where they live, live true to the agreements that they signed with funders about making equitable spaces for all. I think some of it has to do with clusters within schools that have migrated out into the community. I don't believe that it has come about because the agencies have just seen it fit to do the right thing. I think that it is definitely shifting. That's a good thing. (Robertson, interview, 2017)

Several participants also noted that increasing class stratification in Toronto has exacerbated issues related to the accessibility of Toronto's queer spaces. David Hulchanski's (2010) *Three Cities Within Toronto* report clearly demonstrated that income disparity has dramatically increased in Toronto. The rich have gotten richer and the poor, poorer. Meanwhile, the middle class has shrunk significantly. Andil Gosine discussed his concern about the city's future saying that skyrocketing house prices and rapidly increasing rents have pushed people into the suburbs. He went on to say that the city runs the risk of becoming a sterile playground for the wealthy. Part of the blame for rising unaffordability and a lack of access to downtown amenities have been placed on the city's lack of funding for social housing and public transit. Most of my participants

emphasized the need for the city, and other levels of government, to step up with greater funding for social services to better promote social equality in Toronto.

The final theme that emerged from my discussions about improving the queer space in Toronto revolved around representation. Several participants noted a lack of people of colour and trans people in positions of authority. Nicki Ward expressed her personal concern over the fact that Canada has never had a trans politician elected to office. She argued that Canada's handling of trans issues has been skewed by the lack of representation. Specifically she pointed to the fact that debates, at the federal level, relating to the drafting of non-discrimination laws for trans people rarely included the voices of trans people themselves. Many supposed experts called to testify were not trans individuals themselves. Several participants felt that city has failed to properly support the city's diverse communities. For many, this lack of support stands in opposition to the city's marketing of its diversity. For Andil Gosine the city's diverse aspirations are not all bad, but diverse representation must be achieved:

You just have to look at who runs the city. Look at the makeup of the elected officials. Also look at the department heads at universities. My huge department for example, there's just a handful of people of colour. We have classes full of people of colour and just a few professors. You can tell that it's far from equal. On the other hand I think it's still good that Toronto has [aspirations for equality and diversity]. That aspiration allows us to point out that they've failed to do what they said they would do. (Gosine, interview, 2017)

The narrative that has emerged from my interviews is clear. The Village, as it currently operates, is not adequate to support the needs of the city's diverse LGBTQ communities. However, there is hope. All of my participants felt that the Village, in one form or another, has important spaces or characteristics. All agreed that the Village can be improved to focus on fostering intersectionality and the sponsorship events that have a distinctly queer flavour. These are short term goals that can be achieved with the work of grassroots organizations. Some of these goals can also be

achieved by the community demanding that organizations like The 519 and Pride Toronto step up and provide year-round programming for the city's diverse LGBTQ populations. For their part, the city, as well as the province and the feds, needs to properly invest in social housing, public transit, and other forms of social services that will improve the quality of life for the city's queer of colour and working class queer communities. The city also needs to see the greater representation of minority populations of people in power. Nothing that was discussed in my conversations with these incredibly intelligent individuals is an impossible goal. I hold onto hope that Toronto can foster more inclusive queer spaces in the near future.

CONCLUSION

This paper has attempted to present a more complex history of queer space in the City of Toronto than the one generally celebrated in, and as, "The Village." The history that I have documented challenges the conventional celebratory narrative that has framed the idea that the development of the city's Village is a testament to increasing acceptance of LGBTQ2I people, and has exposed how the Village is a highly contested space. I have also demonstrated how alliances between business interests and white middle class queers have fostered the development of the Village as a recognizable commercial district. My research has illustrated how white, middle class cisgender queers evolved from contemptable urban outlaws to celebrated urban citizens, and how this transformation has impacted the physical landscape of gay space in the city. My re-telling of queer history also demonstrates how the city has capitalized on the success of the Church-Wellesley Village and contributed to its transformation to its current state as a commodified site of homonationalism that fits well within the world city narrative. This case study stands as one example of the way in which cities have appropriated LGBTQ2I identities to market themselves as cosmopolitan centres worthy of multiple forms of capital investment.

My research has highlighted alternate, and conflictual, histories that are often excluded from the mainstream re-telling of Toronto's queer history. Women, queer of colour, trans and gender non-conforming individuals may be excluded from a sense of belonging and ownership in the Village, but each of these groups has managed to form community and establish space in Toronto. I have also spotlighted the work that non-homonormative groups have done to challenge the erasures and exclusions perpetuated by Toronto's mainstream gay community: LGBTQ2I communities have always contested this space, and this contestation continues in current spatial conditions of neoliberal homonormativity and homonationalism. However, more

work is needed to fill in gaps related to trans, Indigenous, and Black feminist histories that have not been adequately addressed in this paper.

Today, the Church-Wellesley Village is in transition. Approximately ten new high-rise condo developments are either proposed or under construction along Church Street between Carlton and Charles Streets. This recent wave of new development has raised concerns in the community and in local media outlets that the Village may be erased by the fast-paced redevelopment of the neighbourhood (Costa, 2013; Leong, 2011; Teital 2017). Anxiety related to the effects of development on the Church-Wellesley Village has intensified with the closure and demolition of Zipperz/Cellblock, a gay bar that had operated at the corner of Church and Carlton for eighteen years (Pfaff, 2016). Additionally, the proposed development of a large swath of property located at the northwest corner of Church and Wellesley intersection, the Village's epicentre, has shaken the perceived immutability of the neighbourhood's reputation as a gay enclave.

Several of my research participants pointed to the numerous retail vacancies on Church Street as a sign of the neighbourhood's decline. However, some implied that the lengthy storefront vacancies may be, in part, manufactured by landlords looking to cash in on the neighbourhood's development boom. Amber Moyle suggested that the dramatic increase of property values in the city's core has driven landowners to sell their land to condominium developers. She also argued that the Village is particularly vulnerable because land ownership in the neighbourhood is distributed amongst relatively few people: "The buildings at the northwest corner of Church and Wellesley were owned by one family. I think that's the same thing across the way. I think one person owns the Ladybug building from the Pizza Pizza up. When you think about Church Street, it's just about two people that own [it]" (2017). Both Moyle and Nicki Ward implied

that some Church Street landlords have engaged in practices that have discouraged new businesses from opening on Church Street. Ward phrased this phenomenon in the following way: “It’s cheaper to keep the place empty and sell out to a condo developer than it is to stimulate local business” (2017). She expressed that it has become increasingly difficult for small business owners to establish themselves in the Village due to the exorbitant cost of renting street-level storefront space along Church Street.

The wave of development on Church Street does not currently comply with the city’s zoning by-laws. In many cases, the city has stood in opposition to high-rise developments on Church Street. However, the city has repeatedly lost to developers who have been granted the approval to build their developments on appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board, the oversight body that adjudicates planning disputes. The City, to date, has maintained its position that the Village is a site of cultural significance and an economic hub in the city.

Anxiety related to the Village’s faltering longevity was not shared by my research participants. All, in some form, stated that the decline of the Village presents an opportunity to think differently about queer space in Toronto. For Andrew Zealley, the era of distinct and defined queer neighbourhoods has passed:

I honestly, if I had to have a bottom line, I don't think [the demise of the Village] is an issue because I think it is inevitable to some extent. The community is an organic and moving thing. I think it's better for us to really own our difference and continue to find ways to express that difference on our terms. That means seeking out space and producing space that works for us. Us being a collective us. It's just a matter of being resourceful. The move West was an important move, but those spaces are being subject to gentrification and development even more quickly. So that kind of laying down roots, I think the answer is in nomadism or something. (Zealley, interview, 2017).

Sylvia Maracle emphasized the need for Toronto, in the face of a declining gay village, to think proactively about planning for queer youth:

[The redevelopment of the Village is the] nature of the evolution of urban development, if you will. So the question becomes, as we build villages all around us that we call condos, how do we begin to think about community spaces where younger gay people, who are being raised in those environments, can find people with shared experiences and form community or seek counselling. I'm not sure that kind of planning happens. We're planning for daycares and we're planning for public spaces in buildings and we want all kinds of things, but are we considering community spaces that are both social and recreational spaces? (Maracle, interview, 2017)

Dani Araya argued that the Village's decline may represent an opportunity to challenge conceptions of what queer space can be within the mainstream community;

We've had such a kind of good few decades of The 519 and the Church Street area providing a sense of inclusivity and safety, which I don't think is the reality, but it has built up a comfort zone where people don't want to break out of that space. It's kind of a nest where people don't want to venture off and create new spaces and challenge themselves even. We shouldn't have to just be limited to this space. (Araya, interview, 2017)

The decline of the Village may be an inevitable part of Toronto's lifecycle as a city experiencing incredible growth. However, as many of my participants were quick to point out, there will always be queer people in the City, and their presence will always alter space. Future avenues of research should continue to explore the way that queer space manifests itself in urban centres. It is my hope that future research will continue to approach queer space with an understanding of the diversity that exists within LGBTQ2I communities.

This paper has used Toronto as a case study to challenge the celebratory script that dominates contemporary narratives and scholarship relating to Gay Villages. The history of Toronto's Village demonstrates that urban gay enclaves are not inevitable and often faced contestation and protest within gay communities. Toronto's history also demonstrates the foundation of exclusion upon which many gay villages rest. This paper has also elucidated how contemporary branded gay commercial districts are the product of neoliberal world city strategies that have caused cities to embrace the homonormative queer community because of

its economic value. Ultimately, as this paper demonstrates, the celebratory narrative of inclusion is false. Toronto's history, past and present exposes the illegitimacy of this oft-repeated rhetoric. It is my hope that this paper inspires conversation about how queer space can be thought of differently in the future.

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APPENDIX A

The following is a list of my interviewees and a brief description of their credentials:

Dani Araya

Dani Araya identifies as a Mestiza trans woman. Born and raised in Toronto, Araya now works for The 519 in their education and training department.

Andil Gosine

Andil Gosine identifies as a cisgender gay man of Trinidadian roots. He currently is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York University.

LeZlie Lee Kam

LeZlie Lee Kam identifies as Brown, Trini, Carib, and Callaloo. She proudly proclaims herself to be a Dyke. Lee Kam is currently a community advocate for the Senior Pride Network. She also regularly volunteers for The 519, Pride Toronto, and several other organizations.

Sylvia Maracle

Sylvia Maracle is of Mohawk decent from the Tyendinaga Mohawk. She identifies both as a lesbian and Two-Spirit. She currently sits as the Executive Director of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

Tim McCaskell

Tim McCaskell identifies as a cisgender gay man of Caucasian heritage. He is a long-time activist and author. He has a long career of activism includes writing for *The Body Politic* and was a founding member of QuAIA. Mr. McCaskell's materials were critical to the writing of this research paper.

Amber Moyle

Amber Moyle identifies as a Caucasian, cisgender, lesbian. Moyle currently works for Pride Toronto as the Director of Development and Special Events.

Angela Robertson

Angela Robertson identifies as a Jamaican, cisgender, lesbian. Ms. Robertson is currently the executive director of the Central Toronto Community Health Centre. Robertson's activism extends decades and includes roles within the Black Women's Collective and Blockorama.

Susan

Susan is a lesbian feminist activist. Susan requested to have her identity kept confidential.

Nicki Ward

Nicki Ward identifies as a Caucasian trans woman. Ward's activism has involved her in the organization of the first Trans March on Yonge Street in 2013. She currently sits on The 519's Board of Directors.

Andrew Zealley

Andrew Zealley identifies as a cisgender gay man of Caucasian heritage. He is an accomplished artist, academic, and activist who are currently pursuing his doctoral degree at York University in the Faculty of Environmental Studies.