It’s Not A Parade, It’s A March!:
Subjectivities, Spectatorship, and Contested Spaces of the Toronto Dyke March

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto

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Abstract

In this thesis I address the following questions: (1) How do dykes take up space in public in contemporary cities? (2) How does the ‘marching dyke’ emerge as a subject and what kind of subject is it? (3) How, in turn, do marching dykes affect space? In order to examine these questions I focus on the Toronto Dyke March to ask how it emerged in this particular time and place. The answer to each of these questions is paradoxical. I argue that the Dyke March is a complex, complicated and contradictory site of politics, protest and identity. Investigating ‘marching dykes’ reveals how the subject of the Dyke March is imagined in multiple and conflicting ways.

The Toronto Dyke March is an event which brings together thousands of queer women annually who march together in the streets of Toronto on the Saturday afternoon of Pride weekend. My research examines how the March emerged out of a history of activism and organizing and considers how the March has been made meaningful for queer women’s communities, identities, histories and spaces. My analysis draws together queer and feminist
poststructuralism, cultural geography literature on sexuality and space, and the history of
sexuality in Canada. I combine a Foucaultian genealogy with visual ethnography, interviews and
archival research.

I argue that the Dyke March is an event which is intentionally meaningful in its claims to
particular spaces and subjectivities. This research draws connections across various bodies of
scholarship and offers an interdisciplinary contribution to the literature, contributing to
discussions of queer women’s visibility and representation. Although my analysis is focused on
Toronto as a particular site, it offers insight into broader queer women’s activist organizing
efforts and queer activism in Canada.
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INTRODUCTION

Alison Bechdel’s (2008) *The Essential Dykes To Watch Out For* opens with the “Cartoonist’s Introduction,” in which Bechdel reflects on her twenty-five year writing and drawing career of the bi-monthly strip *Dykes To Watch Out For*. Bechdel explores her own discovery of activist lesbian culture in the early 1980s in New York City and the thrill she experienced in these moments. Finding this community of women was extraordinary to her, and she jokes that she not only wanted to have sex with all of these women, but “even more compelling was a desire to capture them, somehow. To pin down their... essence” (xxii). She humourously explores how she wanted to glean a “universal lesbian essence” (xiv), a task which she simultaneously recognized as impossible. Bechdel’s expression of that moment of discovery, of coming out, and of those moments in which she found herself surrounded with political, radical, activist women – all of these resonate deeply with me. In reading Bechdel’s work, I am reminded of my own experiences of coming to “discover” the queer women’s communities that were all around me. For me, this experience can not be isolated to any one particular moment in time, but is an experience that continues to happen over and over, in ways that are both familiar and new. Beyond this, Bechdel’s work resonates with my curiosity to figure out what it means to be a queer woman, even though, as I have found, the answer is always slightly intangible. The Toronto Dyke March functions as a site for me to make the kind of inquiries about the queer, political, activist women by whom I am so fascinated. It is also a site of history, of political organizing, and of activism, and all of these motivate my inquiry.

The Toronto Dyke March was formatively important for my own sense of queer identity, community and culture. A major part of why I find a phenomenon such as the Toronto Dyke
March fascinating is that I was raised on a steady dose of protest culture. I grew up attending International Women’s Day Marches throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. I remember, at age 12, watching women dance topless on the escalators as we took over the Toronto Eaton’s Centre to protest Alfred Sung’s exploitation of workers. I remember, at age 8 or 9, when my mother explained to me the symbolism of the wire clothes hangers that we threw in a pile outside the Campaign Life Coalition at the height of heated debates around the legalization of abortion in Canada. I understood our participation at International Woman’s Day as feminist work, and I proudly declared myself as a feminist to my unsuspecting school-aged classmates. What I did not realize at the time was that I was being raised not just among feminist communities, but among queer women’s communities and spaces. My childhood days of collecting political buttons during the International Women’s Day Fair at Ryerson University, chosen for both their array of colour and purpose, usually had messages that were a bit beyond me. This has, however, left me with an impressive collection of gay rights activism buttons that pre-date any conceptualizations or realizations of my own sexuality.

From an early age attending International Women’s Day Marches and Take Back the Night rallies, I have always found the “taking it to the streets” kind of activist action and disruption both appealing and invigorating. I think taking up space in the streets, in the midst of hundreds or thousands of people, is one of the places I feel most happy and energized. There is something amazing about the feeling of exhilaration and thrill, mixed in with a slight fear of the consequences of prospective civil disobedience, in that moment when I take a step off of the curb, from the pedestrian-designated space of the sidewalk, onto the roadway. When, as a group, we are able to block traffic and disrupt the general movement and productivity of the day to day, we are able to communicate a message of dissatisfaction, of frustration, or of protest. While I am
a happy and committed (and, of course, disgruntled!) participant in a march to protest skyrocketing tuition fees or to take a stand against the American invasion of Iraq,¹ there is a crucial difference, to me, about the Dyke March. It is filled with queer women, shouting and dancing and laughing and strutting themselves proudly in the blazing sun on Toronto’s Yonge Street. Who better to take to the streets with than a group of sexy, political, activist, queer women? So, combining my fascination of queer women’s communities and activism with Bechdel’s curiosity to playfully question the ‘essences’ of queer women, I came to consider the Toronto Dyke March as a site of analysis for this dissertation. Within the frame of this project two important pieces of myself – my queerness, and my engagement with activism and activist cultures – come together.

I am writing this in a social and historical context in which the representation of lesbians, bisexual and queer women in popular culture has quickly increased, and so thinking about the relationship between dyke politics and visibility is ever more pressing. Examining the Dyke March in this moment is ever more important as I grapple with this heightened (though, of course, still incredibly limited in size and scope) queer women’s visibility. I began to think more and more about the Dyke March. How did the Dyke March come to be manifest in this form, in this space, or in this time and place? How did the Dyke March become its own event distinct from the Pride Parade? I am interested in the site of the Dyke March as a way to examine how sexuality and space confer in the public spectacle of the March. How did the March get established? What kinds of expectations are there of the Dyke March and its participants? The

¹In my old bedroom in my parents’ home, casually pinned to a cork board, there is a photograph of me at the age of ten, standing outside of Hamilton City Hall holding a poster that I had proudly made myself which reads: “No Blood For Oil.” My friends and I had organized an anti-war demonstration in downtown Hamilton to protest the 1990-1991 Gulf War.
Dyke March is particularly interesting to me because it is an event that is intentionally meaningful. The event is actively making claims to space, to gender, to sexuality as well as to class, to race, and to nationality. Finally, while I wanted to reflect on my own experiences of the Dyke March, I also wanted to know how other people experienced it. Why did it matter to them?

My first experience of the Dyke March was from the sidelines in 2002 – despite my feminist upbringing, I was admittedly working through my own internalized sexism and homophobia – and I wanted to be able to see what all of the fuss was about before I committed to joining in. I remember getting to Yonge Street early – before the traffic on the street had been cleared. There were some visibly queer people around, but there were no crowds. So I sat on the edge of the sidewalk and I waited. The road began to clear as traffic was diverted away from Yonge Street. Increasing numbers of people began to linger along the sidewalks, and gradually there were more and more people crowding around. And then it came – we heard the distant sounds of motorcycle engines revving and of women hooting and hollering. The Dykes on Bikes came riding down Yonge Street, honking their horns, cheering and waving. They were followed by what felt like thousands and thousands of women. Every year since, the Dyke March has became, dare I say, an “essential” (and sometimes the only) part of my Pride weekend.

Distinct from the Pride Parade, the Toronto Dyke March is an annual event which brings together thousands of women who march together in the streets. They gather at the intersection of Church and Hayden Streets, and at 2:00 on the Saturday afternoon of Pride weekend, led by Dykes on Bikes, the women march north to Bloor Street, west to Yonge Street, and south to Wood Street,2 after which they spill back eastwards towards Church Street to participate in the

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2Toronto’s gay neighbourhood is located at the intersections of Church and Wellesley Streets in downtown Toronto. Hayden Street, a short residential street, is north of Wellesley and south of Bloor Street, which is a major east-west running residential and commercial road under which one of the subway lines runs.
street fairs, beer gardens, and music tents. The March is made up of individuals, community organizations and a few sound trucks. Large vehicles such as flatbed trailers are not allowed in the March. According to the Pride Toronto website, the Dyke March is defined as:

a grassroots event where women and trans people in LGBTTIQQ2SA communities take over the streets of Toronto. The Dyke March is not a parade – it is a political demonstration of critical mass; a moment seized to revel in the strength, diversity and passion of LGBTTIQQ2SA women and trans folk. (Dyke March 2011)

Participation in the event is free. In recent years, Toronto Pride has become a huge tourism event for the city, featuring multiple performance stages, street parties, major corporate sponsorship, and a budget which surpasses one million dollars. The Toronto Dyke March, though officially a part of Pride Toronto, has continued to distinguish itself from the Pride Parade as a more grassroots and less corporate event.

One of my major concerns, as I approached the Dyke March as a site of study, was that I might ruin the event for myself. How might I experience the pleasure of marching, while simultaneously studying the process and the experience? At times, throughout this research process, the pleasure seeped away. But, it also seeped back in. Gathering with women in the moments before the 2009 March began, the Dykes on Bikes started to drive past me, and as they

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A section of Church Street, both north and south of Wellesley, hosts a number of gay commercial spaces. It is blocked off for a street festival for the duration of Pride weekend. Church is one block east of Yonge Street, which is one of the longest streets in the world and is a major commercial street in downtown Toronto and an important north-south thoroughfare. Yonge Street marks the division between the east and west sides of the city and another subway line. Wood Street is a short residential street south of Wellesley which connects Yonge to Church Street.
revved their engines, I felt the flicker of my stomach jumping in excitement. In this moment, and again and again throughout the research process, I realized that my experience of the Dyke March as both a source of personal and cultural importance and as a site of research was only heightening my experiences of each. In the current political and economic climate, in which the debates rage about whether Queers Against Israeli Apartheid ought to be included in Toronto Pride events and how this may or may not threaten the City of Toronto’s funding for Pride, and in which local activists continue to challenge the structure and institutionalization of the Dyke March as an annual phenomenon, I would argue that my research experience has only deepened my appreciation, pleasure, and political engagement with the complexity of the Dyke March phenomenon.

In the broadest sense, in this research investigates the significance of the Dyke March. The Dyke March is an interesting site of study because it is an event that is intentionally meaningful as distinct from the Pride Parade and other predominantly male spaces. It is an event which takes place in and makes claims to public space. It is also an event which both makes claims to and contributes to the meanings of queer women’s identities and subjectivities by bringing together thousands of women to march in the streets every year. Teasing out the ways in which these themes come together is the driving force of this project. There are, of course, no simple or final answers. In some ways, there is an assumed simplicity to the significance of the Dyke March. However, I argue that the Dyke March is a complex, complicated and contradictory site of politics, protest and identity. In this thesis, I raise questions about history, the subject, space, experience, and memory, and though each chapter of this dissertation begins with a relatively simple question, no chapter concludes with a simple answer.
Chapter Outline

In Chapter One, I outline key theoretical tools that I draw on for this analysis. I begin by examining the emergence of the homosexual as a particular kind of person in order to understand why the figure of the dyke becomes an important subject around which the Dyke March is organized. I outline key conceptual tools offered by feminist poststructuralism, including language and discourse, performativity, power, gender and the subject. This section is followed by a summary of the key possibilities and limitations of using queer theory for my research.

Though it is more orthodox to begin a dissertation with a review of the literature, I begin this project by reviewing the theoretical tools. I do this for two reasons. First, the body of literature and methodologies that I use are informed by many of the same theoretical approaches, and to begin with a clearer sense of the theory helps to elucidate the discussions in the literature and methodology sections. Second, while the literature review offers important context for the analysis presented in this dissertation and functions to ground this project in the relevant academic debates, I use this set of theoretical tools to read through the literature before then also reading through the archive and interviews. In a sense, the literature becomes a part of the archive that I examine.

In Chapter Two, I engage with geography literature which examines the intersection of sexuality and space. I illustrate how this literature emerged out of feminist geography, consider the socially constructed binary between public and private, and examine the multiple relationships between queer women and space. I conclude this chapter by summarizing the small but emerging body of research on Pride Parades and Dyke Marches.

In Chapter Three, I examine my methodological approach to this research project. I outline concepts of genealogy, visual ethnography, interviews and archival research, and consider
the possibilities and limitations of each in this context of analyzing the Dyke March.

In Chapter Four, I ask: How does the Toronto Dyke March emerge in this particular time and place? I begin by offering a historical context which precedes the emergence of the Dyke March, contextualizing the 1970s and 1980s and the struggles lesbians and feminists were experiencing within male, masculine and heteronormative organizing efforts. I include an examination of the first Dyke Marches in Canada – in Vancouver and Toronto, in 1981. I introduce the Lesbian Avengers and the work they did organizing Dykes on Washington in 1993, and how local Dyke Marches began to emerge in Toronto and in many cities across the U.S. in the following years. I conclude by offering the context in which the Toronto Dyke March emerges in 1996. In this chapter, I am committed to inserting queer women into history in order to understand how the Dyke March came to be in this time and place.

While Chapter Four presents as a cohesive narrative history of the Dyke March, in Chapter Five, I am interested in questioning presumptions of linearity. I challenge the attempt at offering a complete truth and acknowledge the limitation of what it is possible to know. Thus, I begin Chapter Five by deconstructing the idea that it is possible to create a new, coherent narrative in the previous chapter. I begin by troubling the concepts of memory of historical time lines. This chapter asks: How does the dyke, or the marching dyke, emerge as a subject? Here, I am interested in exploring the particular, multiple and conflicting understandings of who the subject of the Dyke March is imagined to be. I examine the language of ‘dyke’, and explore interview participants’ understandings of their own identities in the context of the March. These conversations lead to an analysis of the practices of exclusion in order to consider who are the insiders and who are the outsiders to the Dyke March? Imagining who is and who is not the subject of the Dyke March offers a way in which the suggestion of a historical narrative hinges
on the imagination of who the Dyke March serves. What, it might be asked, does the Dyke March tell us about ourselves?

It is worth noting that I do not understand my project to be about defining who dykes are. Rather, I am interested in the how the category of dyke functions in the context of the Dyke March as evident in my interview participants and archival research. In my call for participants (see Appendices A and B), I sought out people who had some experience with participation in the Dyke March. I wrote in my call: “Have you participated in the Toronto Dyke March? (In other words, have you marched, watched, embraced, been ambivalent about, contested, protested, critiqued or experienced or participated in the Dyke March and related Dyke Day activities in any other way?)” This long caveat was intended to acknowledge the multiple and complex relationships that people have with the language of dyke and with the Dyke March itself. Rather than attempting to offer a definition for who dykes are, instead, I am interested in how people, both in the interviews and in the archive, come to the term by (dis-)identifying with it from a range of different places and emotions.

In Chapter Six, I ask: How do dykes take up space in public? And what are the consequences? I explore the importance of laying claims to public space in order to create visibility and consider the kinds of tensions that result. I look at the question of spectatorship and how marching dykes both desire and contest questions of looking. Further, I consider the ways in which being in public speaks to how particular gendered, sexualized, classed and racialized bodies are understood as included and excluded from the space of the March and make links to questions of belonging.

In Chapter Seven, my final analysis chapter, I ask (How) does the Dyke March affect the space in which it occurs? I begin with an analysis of the space as a barrier-free March and
consider what this makes possible. I then consider the relationship between feeling, memory and space in order to consider how the Dyke March leaves its remnants in space and memory. Here, I consider how Dyke March participants relationships to space are both physical and emotional, and argue that the Dyke March marks the space and its marchers in ways that are both visible and invisible.

In my concluding chapter, I consider recent events since the conclusion of my formal data collection. This chapter is contextualized within debates that emerged in the 2010 and 2011 Pride seasons around inclusion of Queers Against Israeli Apartheid and the threats of cuts from City of Toronto funding. I consider the controversies that emerged in both years and the effects these had on Pride Toronto and the Dyke March. I also briefly examine a new Toronto Dyke March emergence, the 2010 Take Back the Dyke, in order to consider the consequences of my research in the contemporary moment. These events raise questions about the possibilities for what Pride and Dyke March organizing might look like in the future. The events, in combination with insights from this dissertation, offer a way to interrogate the values and ideologies that are important to Pride and Dyke March organizing in Toronto.
CHAPTER 1: THEORETICAL TOOLS AND PERSPECTIVES

1.1 Introduction

In order to examine the emergence of the Toronto Dyke March and the role that it has played in queer women’s subjectivities, communities, and histories, I begin this thesis by laying out the theoretical foundations upon which my thinking for this study rests. Central to this study is understanding how it is that sexuality has come to be so important to how we understand ourselves as people. This chapter begins by outlining how sexuality has come to be important to our social and cultural identities. I draw on Michel Foucault in order to show how the historical emergence of the ‘homosexual’ importantly figures into the emergence of sexual subjects, around whom events such as the Dyke March are organized. Following this, I outline key theoretical concepts from feminist poststructuralism, particularly based in the work of Judith Butler. I conclude this chapter by examining key concepts offered by queer theory. These theoretical approaches enable me to analyze how sexuality is a central organizing and identifying category in contemporary Western society. This is an important framework in order to understand how the subject of ‘dyke’ comes to be a significant organizing category for the emergence of the Toronto Dyke March.

1.2 The Emergence of Homosexuality as an Identity

The Toronto Dyke March is organized around the conceptualization of a dyke subject, a subject defined in terms of her gender and sexual identity. However, the idea that sexuality has any relevance to our understanding of ourselves or of our identities is a relatively recent way of thinking. It is only since the mid to late-1800s that sexuality has come to be understood as fundamental to a person’s identity in contemporary Western societies. How has this come to be?
As Jana Sawicki asks, “how is it that we, whether queer or not queer, have come to see the truth of ourselves as something that resides in our sexuality?” (2004: 165).

In the first volume of *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault ([1978] 1990) examines how it is that sex and sexuality have come to be such important parts of the identities and constructions of the self of the modern European subject. Foucault describes how the Victorian era was characterized by prudishness, repression and confined sexuality and by the triple edict of taboo, nonexistence and silence (5). Historians have called this period the age of repression, pointing out that it coincided with the development of capitalism. Foucault raises three doubts about this ‘repressive hypothesis’: i) is sexual repression truly an established historical fact? ii) do the workings of power really belong primarily to the category of repression? iii) did critical discourse act as a roadblock to power or is it a part of the same historical network? (10). He points out how, though attempts were made to repress and restrict sexuality and sexual practices, that it should not be assumed that this was effective (Mills 2003: 84). Rather, the repressive discourses effectively constituted “seemingly perverse forms of sexuality as possible” (85).

Foucault ([1978] 1990) examines the Victorian era in order to explore the discourses of sex, sexuality, and repression, and asks why it was that sex is silenced during this period. His project, in *The History of Sexuality*, is to interrogate how sex was put into discourse (11). He is speaking back to the powerful discourse of sexual repression by asking how power and knowledge are related to questions of sex and pleasure in the Western world. He begins by examining how the seventeenth century Catholic church’s confessional invited people to reflect on their transgressive thoughts and acts, thus inciting sex into discourse. Though this was a period characterized as sexually repressive, the confessional and its dissemination beyond the
church contributed to the proliferation of talk about sex.

Foucault argues that by the eighteenth century, sex became something to be managed and administered. At issue was how sex came to be understood as important for the policing and management of populations. Foucault argues that the administration of sex involves “a policing of sex: that is, not the rigor of a taboo, but the necessity of regulating sex through useful and public discourses” ([1978] 1990: 25). From the control and management of children’s sexuality in schools, to the increasing medicalization of sexuality, Foucault argues that what emerged was a “multiplicity of discourses” (33), and so rather than repressing sex, he reveals that the eighteenth century was a period in which sex was examined, discussed and analyzed in incredible depth, but “as the secret” (35). Sara Mills explains that “the seeming repression of sexual discussion and sexuality itself had an unintended effect, that is to increase the desire to speak about sexuality and increase the pleasure gained from violating these taboos” (2003: 84).

Through the eighteenth century, what emerged was the scrutiny of sexual relationships. This involved in part, the legitimation of the heterosexual, monogamous couple as the norm in contrast to the scrutiny of sexual perversity – the sexuality of children, the mad, the criminal and the homosexual (Foucault [1978] 1990: 38-40). What had once been characterized as criminalized and offensive acts were now perversions of a personhood. Foucault writes that

this new persecution of the peripheral sexualities entailed an incorporation of perversions and a new specification of individuals . . . The nineteenth-century homosexual became a personage, a past, a case history, and a childhood, in addition to being a type of life, a life form, and a morphology, with an indiscreet anatomy and possibly a mysterious physiology. Nothing that went into his total composition was unaffected by his sexuality.
In other words, sexuality was read onto the body and onto the individual. Understanding who a person was, at his or her core or essence, came to be dependant upon a simultaneous understanding of sexuality as integral to that essence. Foucault writes that “the sodomite had been a temporary aberration; the homosexual was now a species” (43). While same-sex sex acts had once been criminalized offenses, and acts that might be performed by anyone, with the so-called ‘invention’ of the homosexual, same-sex sex acts and desires became evidence of a type of personhood, and performance of same-sex sex acts became evidence of a personality. Sara Mills explains that “for the first time homosexuals and heterosexuals were constructed as distinct categories. Homosexuals began to be seen as particular types of people who were born as ‘inverts’, that is, pathologically perverse” (2003: 85).

Foucault writes of the emergence of the homosexual through religious and medical discourses. For other thinkers, such as John D’Emilio, the role of capitalism in the emergence of the homosexual is not a minor point. Though at the most fundamental level, D’Emilio and Foucault agree that, as D’Emilio writes, “gay men and lesbians have not always existed” (1997: 170), they offer divergent explanations for why this is so. While for Foucault the homosexual emerges as a kind of person or as a kind of identity because of the increasing medicalization of sexuality through the late 1800s and early 1900s, for D’Emilio, the homosexual emerges as a kind of person because of the development of capitalism and the free wage labour system (170).

In his work, D’Emilio argues that under capitalism, people are simultaneously exploited and autonomous – exploited for their labour and also free to sell their labour (1997: 170). He argues that in the expansion of capitalist systems, that notions of family structure and family life
experienced serious changes, and with these there have also been changes to the notion of gay identities and gay lives (170). He traces changes in the family household from what were once independent and self-sufficient family units run by the male in white colonial New England in the seventeenth century. By the nineteenth century, the influx of capitalism meant that people were increasingly working for wage labour outside of the home, thus substantially changing the structure and function of the family household (171). As D'Emilio explains, because the meaning of the family household changed over this period of two hundred years, so too did the meaning of sexual relationships between men and women. Birth rates dropped when large numbers of children were no longer needed for labour, and therefore expressions of sexuality were no longer so directly tied to procreation. D’Emilio argues that the separation of sexuality from procreation, as well as the decreased dependance on the labour of the internal family unit for economic self-sufficiency (because of increased labour outside of the home) meant that the meaning of sexual expression and activity changed to be more focused on “establishing intimacy, promoting happiness, and experiencing pleasure” (171). This process allowed for lives to be formed around emotional and erotic attractions, thus making it possible for lesbian and gay identities to emerge as sexual identities and for urban communities to be formed around these identities (172).

Interestingly, the moment of the late 1800s was also marked by the emergence of romantic love (see Seidman 1991). The Victorian era was characterized by a spiritual conception of love, and while sex was understood as an important aspect of marriage, sensuality threatened the spirituality of love and marriage (Seidman 2005: 106). Seidman argues Victorians urged “the desexualization of love and the desensualization of sex” (106). However, in the post-Victorian era, love and sex came to be understood as more deeply connected. As Seidman writes, “one
consequence of the ‘sexualization of love’ was that eroticism was conceived of as a source of romantic bonding” (104). As the social forces such as kinship and economic dependancy lessened in importance for the married couple in the early twentieth century, what increased was the importance of “mutual erotic fulfillment . . . to enhance intimate solidarity” (104). While same-sex attraction, or romantic friendship, was deemed somewhat acceptable during the Victorian era, in the post-Victorian era, the sexualization of love was increasingly idealized (106). This increasing idealization emerged alongside the emergence of the categories of heterosexuality and homosexuality, resulting in new ways of understanding the meaning and consequence of same-sex sexual desire and love.

What is remarkable about the moment of the late 1800s was that there was a shift from an understanding of sexual behaviour or sexual acts to the emergence of the homosexual as a kind of identity. D’Emilio argues that the change in the family household structure freed people to be able to live in household arrangements that no longer depended on the heterosexual family form (1997: 172). Foucault ([1978] 1990) emphasizes the role of medical discourse in understanding this change. To argue that the homosexual emerges in late 1800s is not to deny same-sex sex acts throughout history. Many gay and lesbian discourses have relied on the myth of what D’Emilio calls the “eternal homosexual” (1997: 170). In other words, many discourses of gay and lesbian liberation and anti-discrimination rely on the idea that gays and lesbians have been and are in every culture and time period throughout history. This myth has been helpful in the struggle for recognition in the face of various forms of homophobia which manifest through medical, religious, legal, and popular discourses. However, despite these kinds of commonsense myths which conceptualize sexuality as natural, universal, or innate; historical, geographical, and cultural variation illustrate a myriad of ways in which sexuality is embodied and understood.
What D’Emilio, Foucault and others demonstrate to us is that while there are numerous examples of same-sex sexual behaviour or same-sex sex acts throughout history and across cultures, these behaviours and acts have not always been associated with a person’s identity.

Similarly, David Halperin argues that sexuality is “a cultural effect” which has a relatively short history (1993: 416). He shows us how, in classical Athens, power relations were manifest in expressions of sexual relations between people. More important than current conceptualizations of gendered or sexualized objects of desire, in classical Athens, sex was “an action performed by a social superior upon a social inferior” (418). Crudely, we can understand that in terms of sexual relationships, people were divided into two groups – the penetrator and the penetrated – and the division was an embodiment of the superordinate and subordinate social groups. The penetrator, an adult male Athenian citizen, was socially dominant and his legitimate sexual relations could be with women, free post-pubescent males who were not yet citizens, foreigners and slaves (418). These people took on socially inferior roles and the insertive and receptive sexual roles. As Halperin argues, sexual desires in classical Athens were “shaped by the shared cultural definition of sex as an activity that generally occurred only between a citizen and a non-citizen, between a person invested with full civil status and a statutory minor” (419). The gendered or sexualized object of desire was not relevant to how the Athenians understood their identities, but rather sexual desire and behaviour was a reflection of social positions. Thus, while same-sex sex acts were common in classical Athens, they were not a reflection on identity or personhood, as we understand them today.

Alongside the emergence of sexuality and sexual identities, Ladelle McWhorter (2004) reveals how race was constructed in similar ways through the last few centuries. In the early sixteenth century, the notion of race was based on heritage and descent rather than on a
conceptualization of a biological identity (48). However, through the seventeenth century, there was a shift in the meaning of race as a way of classifying and (de)valueing people (49). By the early 1800s, scientists were concerned with biology and notions of process and development (50). Scientists attributed differences in human morphology to stages in biological development, therefore justifying social hierarchies based on both race and sex (50-51). McWhorter writes that “thus was biology a major force in the creation of the concept of race as graded type. . . . Races were ranked according to how developed, meaning how civilized, their representatives were thought to be” (51). Importantly, sexuality and race simultaneously emerged and “buttressed” (Somerville 2000: 17) one another. In other words, “race and sexuality are not merely mutually influential. They are historically codependent and mutually determinative” (McWhorter 2009: 14).

Further, Siobhan B. Somerville (1997) argues that theories of gender insubordination have been important in the understanding not only the emergence of the homosexual, but have also been critical to the construction of race. At the same time that bodies were being classified as homosexual and heterosexual in the United States, bodies were also being categorized as black and white (38). Somerville shows how race and racial definitions were as deeply embedded in racial ideologies as they were in gender ideologies (38). She argues that “the concurrent bifurcations of categories of race and sexuality were not only historically coincident but in fact structurally interdependent and perhaps mutually productive” (38). Somerville illustrates how the methodologies used by Havelock Ellis and other sexologists in the late nineteenth century drove dominant ideologies of the racialized and homosexual body (39). For example, Ellis and other sexologists believed that inversion might include visible bodily characteristics that would distinguish the homosexual from the heterosexual. Somerville shows how this logic was based
on a history of scientific studies of race, in which scientists believed that anatomical measurements would explain differences between racial groups, leading to the justification of racist practices including slavery. Ellis argued that an enlarged clitoris (with no clear criteria for comparison, his description was based on his own perceptions of normal and abnormal anatomy) was evidence of a phantom male body and thus evidence of lesbianism (42).

McWhorter argues that sexual and racial identities are both “products of normalizing power” (2004: 53). In other words, both emerged out of a system which was committed to measuring norms, deviations and categories of identity based on intelligence, sexuality, race, and so-called proper human development (53). These arise out of “normalizing disciplinary power/knowledge networks” which characterized the period and its control over populations (54).

Since the emergence of the homosexual as a type of person, discourses of sexuality in the last 150 years have been deeply committed to the medicalization of sexuality and sexual perversity. Because the homosexual emerged as a ‘type,’ whose sexuality distinguished ‘it’ from heteronormative social order, sexual ‘perversity’ became a site of study. More detailed accounts of the history of sexology have been undertaken by many scholars.³ Throughout sexology scholarship, debates arise around questions of perversion and inversion, evolutionary development, genetic or congenital predispositions, questions of the (un)natural and (ab)normal, and the relationship between these findings and whether or not homosexuals should be criminalized or subjected to medical and/or therapeutic treatment. What is particularly notable in this scholarship is how many of the pervasive contemporary discourses of sexuality and sexual

³For succinct summaries, see, for example, Jagose (1996) or Sullivan (2003).
identity are rooted in these early medical theories and discourses of sexuality (and, by proxy, of

The logic and conclusions of many early sexologists have continued to contribute to
much of the misinformation of about sex and sexuality today. However, the work of sexologists
was also important in challenging the criminalization of homosexuality. For example, Heinrich
Ulrichs argued that homosexuality was congenital, or biological, and so argued that if it was in a
person’s nature, same-sex sex should not be considered a sin, crime or evidence of insanity
(Sullivan 2003: 4). Debates amongst sexologists from the late 1800s to the present day have
largely centred around the question of nature versus nurture. Asking whether or not a person is
born gay has been a driving question of scientific examinations of sexuality. The way in which
this question has been explored and the answers that it generates have motivated much of the
struggle for decriminalization, recognition, and justice.

As the category of the homosexual emerged as a category of identity or personhood, this
raised questions about how and why homosexuals were legally persecuted. Annamarie Jagose
writes that “it is no accident that the homophile movements originate in the same period in which
homosexuality crystallised as an identity, when for the first time in was possible to be a
homosexual” (1996: 22). If, as many sexologists in the late 1800s and early 1900s were arguing,
homosexuality was an innate, biological characteristic of humanity, then the logic followed that it
should be not be subjected to legal penalty. In 1897, Magnus Hirschfeld, a German neurologist,
founded the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, an organization aimed at abolishing
homosexuality from the German penal code by arguing that homosexuality was harmless (23).
Through the 1900s, similar organizations emerged in Europe and the United States, advocating
for the decriminalization of homosexuality. Early organizations, such as the Chicago Society for
Human Rights, the Mattachine Society, and the Daughters of Bilitis did some of the important early homophile movement organizing. Both the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis, which formed in the 1950s, focused their work on changing public attitudes towards homosexuality by circulating magazines, newsletters and broadsheets (27). These organizations relied on early sexological thinking, which understood homosexuality as congenital, though as abnormality or as sickness (27-28).

Jagose (1996) points out that many have critiqued the homophile movement of the 1950s for being conservative, contrasting it with the more progressive gay liberation movement which emerged through the 1960s and 1970s. However, many of the issues, struggles and strategies of these two movements overlap. Sullivan (2003: 23) claims that one of the key differences between the homophile and gay liberation movements was that the homophile organizations were more concerned with the question of assimilation with mainstream culture and de-emphasizing differences. In the gay liberation movement, by contrast, the emphasis more generally was on differences. As Sullivan writes, “for liberationists, then, the imperative was to experience homosexuality as something positive in and through the creation of alternative values, beliefs, lifestyles, institutions, communities” (29). Unlike earlier thought based in sexologists’ belief in homosexuality as congenital, gay liberationists argued that sexuality was a choice. They wanted

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4The Chicago Society for Human Rights was established in 1924 and founded by Henry Gerber, who was influenced by Magnus Hirschfeld’s work. The Society was the first gay rights organization in the United States to have state recognition. The Society only lasted a few months, but is today recognized for its early contribution to the gay liberation movement.

5The Mattachine Society, founded by Harry Hay, was established in 1950. It was one of the earliest homophile organizations in the United States, formed to protect and improve homosexual rights. The Society lasted eleven years until it splintered regionally.

6The Daughters of Bilitis was the first lesbian rights organization to form in the United States in San Francisco in 1955. The Daughters of Bilitis was conceptualized as a social space for lesbians which provided support and education on gay rights and history. The group lasted fourteen years.
to de-emphasize how the consequence of an understanding of sexuality as congenital led to the ongoing victimization and pitying of homosexuality. Gay liberationists were concerned with organizing homosexuals politically and encouraging them to be proud rather than shameful of who they were and of their differences. The question of choice also fueled the anti-gay movement, which argued that if sexuality was a choice, then people should always choose the morally right heterosexuality (30). The gay liberation movement emerged alongside sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s and contributed to general notions of sexual and political liberation from rigid gender and sexuality categories.

The question of whether sexuality is a matter of nature or nurture continues to be debated in academic and popular culture. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick articulates part of the tension in the ongoing struggle to denaturalize sexuality when she writes that:

So for gay and gay-loving people, even though the space of cultural malleability is the only conceivable theatre for our effective politics, every step of this constructivist nature/culture argument holds danger: it is so difficult to intervene in the seemingly natural trajectory that begins by identifying a place of cultural malleability; continues by inventing an ethical or therapeutic mandate for cultural manipulation; and ends in the overarching, hygienic Western fantasy of a world without any more homosexuals in it. (1990: 42)

Throughout this history of debate, despite the numerous scholarly contributions which argue against this position, heterosexuality is regularly universalized as normal, natural, and unmarked, in contrast to its binary opposite, homosexuality. While the homosexual emerged as a kind of
person, so too did the heterosexual, though in popular, medical and legal discourses, the heterosexual has been and continues to be regularly naturalized (Jagose 1996: 16-17). The assumed universalization and naturalization of sexual identities make them more difficult to analyze and to recognize as socially constructed. Jagose writes that “it is particularly hard to denaturalise something like sexuality, whose very claim to naturalisation is intimately connected with an individual sense of self, with how each of us imagines our own sexuality to be primary, elemental and private” (17). The projects of many theorists and researchers have been to illustrate how sexuality and sexual identities are historically, geographically and socially contingent. My project emerges from this work, as well as out of the theoretical contributions made by feminist poststructuralists, who challenged ideas of binary categories, fixity, and naturalized notions of gender and sexuality.

1.3 Feminist Poststructuralism

Poststructuralism is a multifaceted theoretical response to structuralism. Structuralism, in linguistic terms, assumes that we can find the meaning of a sign by understanding it in relation to another sign within the same system. In other words, structuralism relies on the logic of binary oppositions – that we can find meaning in a word, an action, or an object, by understanding it in relation to its opposite (Edgar and Sedgwick 2002: 237). Examples of binary opposites include male/female, masculine/feminine, heterosexual/homosexual and nature/culture. Further, structuralists argue that there are universal truths that underlie our cultural understandings of the world. The aim of structuralist analysis is to identify these truths and their structural interdependence. Structuralism also gives primacy to structures, rather than to individuals and agency, and views these as opposites. By contrast, poststructuralists deconstruct these binary oppositions and avoid making claims to a universal truth. Feminist poststructuralists are also
interested in questioning both universalizing theoretical claims in regard to gender and sexuality and the supposed neutrality of rationality (Rosenberg 2004:41).

Structuralist arguments and thinking hold a lot of popular currency in our everyday world, and are often implicit in common sense understandings which “become fixed and widely accepted as true” (Weedon 1997: 74). This makes the deconstructive work of feminist poststructuralism that much more challenging. As Elizabeth Adams St. Pierre (2000a) explains, women usually fall on the ‘wrong’ side of binaries, and women’s knowledges and experiences are most often those which are readily discounted and de-valued by structuralist and humanist ways of knowing. As St. Pierre writes:

Those who find discomfort in poststructuralism – its critiques of foundationalism, absolute knowledge, a single truth, power, a transcendent rationality, a subject defined in advance of living, etc. – often ignore how uncomfortable humanism has made many of the rest of us, women in particular. Those on the wrong sides of humanism’s binaries may be eager for access to analyses that can shift those power relations. (506)

Feminist poststructuralism questions the systems of knowledge and ways of knowing which continue to reinforce how women, people of colour, and queers are regularly deemed lesser-than. Poststructuralists effectively show the instability of binary constructs and raise important questions about the limitations of universalizing truth-claims. As Belsey writes, “Poststructuralists don’t (normally) doubt that there is a world: their anxiety concerns what we can claim to know about it with any certainty” (2002: 71). By rejecting universal truths, the tools of poststructuralism help us to understand how particular discourses become dominant and
accepted as truth, but similarly, how these same discourses are historically, culturally and geographically contingent.

Butler and Scott (1992) identify how one of the challenges of poststructuralist thinking is that it does not necessarily offer a particular position, perspective or interpretation in a debate. They write that “poststructuralism is not, strictly speaking, a position, but rather a critical interrogation of the exclusionary operations by which ‘positions’ are established” (xiv). In other words, poststructuralism offers a set of analytical tools for raising questions about power, discourse, the subject and subjectivity, and for questioning claims to universality, master narratives, and ‘truth’. By analyzing the ways in which some discourses emerge and become pervasive, how discourses conflate and contradict one another, the relationship between power and knowledge, the formation of the subject and its discursive emergences, poststructuralists tend to complicate the matter, rather than simplifying it. Poststructuralists encourage an engagement with complications and contradictions and accept these as important learning moments. Sharon Rosenberg writes that “poststructural feminisms encourage us, as writers and readers, to live with paradoxes, to endeavour to hold contradictions, and to learn from what we might not otherwise have thought” (2004: 36).

Poststructuralism does not provide comfortable answers, but instead continues to question, destabilize and unpack the very categories of our lives that we have come to understand as ‘normal’ or ‘natural’. Feminist poststructuralist analysis helps to illustrate the false construction of binaries, and the way in which the dominant “half” of the binary is regularly constructed as natural or normal in relation to the “other half”, or, of the “other”. In other words, feminist poststructuralists critique how, for example, masculinity and heterosexuality are naturalized and normalized in contrast to femininity and queer sexualities. The moments in
which identities, characteristics, or attributes begin to seem ‘normal’ or ‘natural’ are the most focused targets of poststructuralists’ critical interrogations. However, this often leaves poststructuralists amidst potential contradictions and paradoxes. As Judith Butler writes:

Butler here identifies how, when we question the construction of binaries and norms, the paradox is that we must simultaneously find a way to live in realities which continue to recognize and value them. These paradoxes and contradictions can be troubling, but they also offer productive possibilities. It is from within their constructive possibilities that poststructuralism emerges, as it allows for the ability to live with and learn from sometimes ambivalent and/or contradictory moments.

1.3.1 Language and Discourse

Poststructuralists show us what Dionne Brand means when she writes that “no language is neutral” (1990: 19). In contrast to pervasive notions of language that view it as a neutral means of representing the world, feminist poststructuralists argue that language “constitutes the world in which we live” (Rosenberg 2004: 41). There are social meanings built into the language that we use in our everyday, and language communicates not just the content of the message, but deeper meanings that reflect pervasive cultural norms and ideas. Language produces signs (such as words) which have related signifiers (the meaning), but there is not an inherent relationship
between the sign and the signifier. Rather, we learn the conventional relationships when we learn language. Deconstructing the assumed link between the sign and the signifier illustrates that deeply embedded in language is a whole system of social, historical and cultural meanings.

Discourse, in poststructuralist terms, is more than a sentence or a linguistic utterance. Discourse is also about the meanings and effects of utterances and includes written and unwritten rules and practices. For Foucault, discourse is embedded in and productive of materiality. A poststructural discourse analysis examines how it is that we understand and construct ourselves in the social world by attending to what is said and what it is possible to say, but also what is not said, and what it is not possible to say. Following Foucault, such an analysis considers the relationships between power, knowledge and truth in order to understand how subjects are produced and disciplined through our social and historic practices (Rosenberg 2004: 43). Indeed, “we can read (for) discourses through their traces, through what they produce as ‘the real’” (43). Discourses are not solitary or universal, but, like power, discourses exist in webs, and are multiple and complex. As Foucault writes, “we are dealing less with a discourse on sex than with a multiplicity of discourses produced by a whole series of mechanisms operating in different institutions” ([1978] 1990: 33).

Analyzing discourse in this way is helpful for unpacking concepts such as sex, gender and sexuality and for tracing their operations and effects. Feminist poststructuralists use discursive analysis to examine the complicating, collaborating, contradicting and resistant discourses of categories such as femininity, heterosexuality, or nationality, for example, in order to reveal how these fragile categories are tenuously assembled. Judith Butler argues that “‘intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice, and desire” (1999: 23). In other words, the manifestation of this
intelligibility assumes that a person who is identified as female will embody femininity, identify as heterosexual and will only have sexual desire for the male and masculine. Our sexes and genders are recognizable, or rendered intelligible, within dominant discourses of sex and gender, in which a heteronormative sex and gender dichotomy dictate their very structure. Understanding how heteronormativity functions to structure and constrain gender is one way of understanding how the discourses around gender function in everyday life.

1.3.2 Performativity

Butler argues that it is through the repetition of a gender performance, or of gender norms, that genders become naturalized. Gender is “the repeated stylization of the body” which is naturalized over time (Butler 1999: 43-44). Performativity is the continuously repeated acts and gestures that are articulated with the effect of a coherent formation of the gendered being. This is what Butler (1993) calls the naturalization of gender since ‘normatively’ gendered beings become naturalized in society. In other words, we regularly perform our genders in ways that continue to confirm ourselves within the constructs of our genders. The constructed division between nature and culture parallels the assumed divisions between sex and gender, and masculinity and femininity (5).

The norms of gender binaries and relations which operate in the form of heterosexuality, and which are pervasive in our society are compulsory performances – “such norms are continually haunted by their own inefficacy; hence, the anxiously repeated effort to install and augment their jurisdiction” (Butler 1993: 237). The anxiety about repeating the gender performance illustrates how fragile this ‘naturalized truth’ really is. As Butler explains, “that this reiteration is necessary is a sign that materialization is never quite complete, that bodies never quite comply with the norms by which their materialization is impelled” (2). Because the body
can never fully materialize into its categorical norm, this raises doubts about the hegemonic constructions of sex, gender and sexuality which pervade much of the current dominant way of thinking (2). Sex, gender and sexuality are discursively produced through their performance. Indeed, “the norm of sex takes hold to the extent that it is ‘cited’ as such as norm, but it also derives its power through the citations that it compels” (13).

Butler also shows how the interrelationship of the norms of sex, gender, sexuality and race are contingent upon one another. She argues that it is through the performative norms of the category of sex that bodies become culturally intelligible (1993: 2). Through the very repetition of sets of norms which produce gender, the performativity becomes invisible: “Performativity is thus not a singular ‘act,’ for it is always a reiteration of a norm or set of norms, and to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present, it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition” (12). Thus, performativity reveals the instability of sex and gender categories.

Butler (1993, 1996, 1999) offers the example of drag to illustrate the difference between performance and performativity. A drag queen might perform femininity as well as or more convincingly than a woman might, but the drag queen is not really read as a woman, but as a man performing a woman. Drag then exposes the instability of the everyday performativity of gender. As Sara Salih explains, “by highlighting the disjunction between the body of the performer and the gender that is being performed, parodic performances such as drag effectively reveal the imitative nature of all gender identities” (2002: 65). Thus, drag has the potential to perform gender subversively, although drag and the exposure of heteronormativity are not necessarily always subversive (Butler 1993: 231). Heterosexuality can be parodied and denaturalized in such a way that it “reidealize[s] heterosexual norms without calling them into question” (231). Butler
understands performativity “not as the act by which a subject brings into being what she/he names, but, rather, as that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains” (2). Though drag is useful to illustrate a kind of performative moment of gender, gender is performed by everyone. Performativity is at work when gendered subjects repeatedly ‘act’ their genders. Further, the process of repeated imitation is “not the imitation of a real sex but an imitation of an ideal that is its own projection, that does not exist anywhere else. This gender ideal can never be stabilized, but must ceaselessly be repeated with each performance of gender” (Elam 1994: 50). It is interesting to consider how the subjects of the Dyke March reiterate, challenge, conform and contest particular performances of gender. The performativity of the Dyke March by its participants is a repeated, annual performance, and one which is simultaneously replicated from year to year, but one which is also malleable and changeable. I explore these themes in later analysis chapters.

Gender as performance might suggest an agent ‘behind’ the performance. However, Butler argues that there is no doer of the deed, rather, the doer and the doing constitute each other, they simultaneously ‘make’ one another. Butler argues that the doer is formed by doing: “We become subjects from our performances and the performances of others towards us. The gendered performances in which we engage are performances in accordance with a script” (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon 2002: 99). The repeated series of acts are so widely and collectively convincing that they appear to be a natural and organic manifestation of sex.

1.3.3 Power

Gender performances are tied to and produce different power effects. Foucault ([1978] 1990) argues that rather than conceptualizing power in a dichotomous way, in which someone has power and another person does not, instead, power can be understood as web – with multiple
expressions of agency and resistance manifesting in a variety of ways. Foucault argues that power exists in a web or network of discourses. He writes that,

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (Foucault 1980: 98)

Foucault ([1978] 1990) offers five points in his description of power. First, he argues that power is not held, but that it is exercised from many points. Secondly, power relations do not exist outside of other relations, but are the effects as well as internal conditions of them. Third, he argues that power comes from below – that power is not in a binary relation nor is it top-down. Fourth, Foucault argues that power relations are “both intentional and nonsubjective” (94), that power relations are always calculated and that there is goal in the playing out of power relations. Lastly, Foucault argues that “where there is power, there is resistance” (95) and that there are always many points of resistance. Rather than conceptualizing the individual as repressed by power relations, Foucault argues that individuals are “the effects or instances of power relations” (Mills 2004: 19). The individual is “constituted by power relations” (20) rather than functioning as a site upon which power works to oppress. Foucault then argues that power is not
unidirectional, but instead moves in all directions.

Power is expressed through relationships, and relations of power are expressed both consciously and unconsciously (Rosenberg 2004: 46-47). Rosenberg argues that “the workings of relationships of power are complicated, uneven, and contextual” (47). Power is both restrictive and productive; power has multiple origins, directions and manifestations (48). Ladelle McWhorter explains how an understanding of power is a critical component of understanding how it is that sex and sexuality have come to be important to how we understand ourselves as subjects (2004: 41). She writes that “power, then, is productive of situations and identities, which means that as configurations of power shift, social structures and individual sense of self shift as well” (43). Understanding power as dynamic relationships is helpful for understanding how the subject of the ‘marching dyke’ emerges in the Dyke March. Foucault argues that “the individual is an effect of power . . . The individual which power has constituted is at the same time its vehicle” (1980: 98). In other words, the subject of the Dyke March is both constituted by power relations and is also the vehicle of power relations.

For Foucault, power and knowledge are intricately related and he uses the expression ‘power/knowledge’ to articulate this close and interdependent connection. He writes that “power produces knowledge. . . that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations” ([1977] 1995: 27). Foucault’s model of power is helpful for challenging the complex ways in which grand narratives of identity, social struggles, and social justice can be understood in more complex and multiple ways. As St. Pierre writes, “resistance and freedom are daily, ongoing practices” (2000a: 493), and this is especially clear for the lives of people for whom the grand narratives have failed or
been inadequate. Understanding power relations and power/knowledge is especially useful for conceptualizing how the Dyke March functions within local politics, and further, how themes of subjectivity and performativity are at work in the March.

1.3.4 Gender and the Subject

This research focuses on a Dyke March, and thus, implicitly, is concerned with a particular subset of gendered beings, of dykes, who may or may not fall into the broad category of woman. Yet, while it is an analysis of women and of dykes, it is also an examination of how some are able to embody the category, while others cannot or do not. My study reveals how such boundaries are contested and defended. As Diane Elam explains, “we operate everyday under the assumption that we readily understand to which group the word ‘women’ refers” (1994: 27). Poststructuralist feminists also remind us that, as Elam writes, “‘women’ is a permanently contested site of meaning” (32).

Multiple discourses are always at work and constitute the individual at moments in space and time “both through their own and others’ acts of speaking/writing” (Davies 2005: 57). The individual, as a subject, is therefore constituted through discourse (75). While discourses can be contradictory, this does not undo the individual’s subjectivity. Indeed, Davies argues that “one’s subjectivity is therefore necessarily contradictory” (57). She further argues that:

What poststructuralist theorizing enables us to see is that the very specificity of those experiences, and their intensity, need not be the markers of a bounded self, but, rather, the moments at which an experiencing being comes to know the possibilities being made available by virtue of their presence within the collectivity, albeit a collectivity that constitutes itself through discourses in which the individual experiencing subject is made
A dyke subjectivity might emerge, temporarily, or conditionally, out of a network of discourses which capture what it means to experience being a dyke, both through an individual’s experience as a dyke, as well as from the web of discourses which attach meaning to what it means to embody the subject position of the dyke. During the Dyke March, thousands of women march and participate in a collective moment together under some understanding of the rubric of a dyke subjectivity. I will show how this is a subjectivity that is inherently both coherent and contradictory. I argue that this simultaneous coherence and contradiction offer exciting political possibilities for how individuals can both participate in and enact resistance to the Dyke March. It also is the grounds for tension and conflict, as individuals dispute questions such as those of (non)belonging. The multiple spatial and temporal sites of power, discourse, performativity and subjectivity at work in the Dyke March therefore make it an exciting site of research.

1.4 Queer Theory

Poststructuralism is central to queer theory and seems to underlie its most productive possibilities. In order to investigate what it means to ‘think queer’, I begin this section by unpacking the language of ‘queer’ and the theoretical interventions made by queer theory. Historically, ‘queer’ was a word used to shame, but since the late 1980s the term has been reclaimed and used as an identity marker, for self-identification. Perhaps most commonly, queer is currently used as an umbrella term to include a wide range of people who identify outside of the norms of their sex, gender or sexuality. Queer has also come to include the ever-extending alphabet or acronym of identity, including, for example, LGBTTIQQ2S to stand in for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersex, queer, questioning and two-spirited. This list is
only the beginning of the number of possible identities that might be included in such a moniker. Thus, in one way, ‘queer’ is offered as a simplified term to attempt to bring all of these identities together. Indeed, as Judith Butler writes, the term queer “has been precisely the discursive rallying point for younger lesbians and gay men and, in yet other contexts, for lesbian interventions and, in yet other contexts, for bisexuals and straights for whom the term expresses an affiliation with anti-homophobic politics” (1993: 230). Further, Michael Warner purposefully uses ‘queer’ capaciously “in order to suggest how many ways people can find themselves at odds with straight culture” (1999: 38).

Nikki Sullivan argues that “Queer (Theory) is constructed as a sort of vague and indefinable set of practices and (political) positions that has the potential to challenge normative knowledges and identities” (2003: 43-44). Emerging from/alongside feminist poststructuralism, queer theory challenges normative constructions of identity and rejects universals. As Sullivan writes, “Poststructuralism is most often associated with a rejection, or at least a critique, of humanist logic and aspirations,” and further, it is “critical of universalising explanations” (39). Queer theory certainly rejects that same humanist logic and is critical in particular of normalizing efforts and explanations. Queer theory ultimately challenges binaries which establish ‘the norm’ in contrast to ‘the other’, with a particular focus on the deconstruction of binaries framed around gender, sex, and sexuality. As Diana Fuss so aptly writes, “sexual identities [are] rarely secure” (1991: 3), and part of the work of queer theory is to reveal these insecurities. Queer theory is particularly inspired by the work of Judith Butler, who asks “how do non-normative sexual practices call into question the stability of gender as a category of analysis?” (1999: xi).

Some researchers offer alternatives to the ‘queer’ umbrella. For example, in Meredith Pilling’s study of twelve individuals’ experiences in women’s public washrooms, she identifies
her participants as ‘(gender)queers’ in order to indicate that “they identify as queer in terms of sexuality, but also in terms of gender” (2006: 29). What this example suggests is that one word will never quite function effectively as an identifier for everyone, particularly, perhaps, for gender or sexuality-based categories that have been blown open beyond their binary confinements. However, the example also illustrates the practicality of needing to communicate something through language, even if it remains inadequate.

Judith Butler examines what it means to identify as a lesbian, joking that she told her friends, when on her way to speak at a conference on homosexuality, that she was “off to Yale to be a lesbian” (1991: 18). She tells this story jokingly because obviously she was a lesbian both before and after the talk, but that she found something particular about how she temporarily felt like she was a lesbian “in some more thorough and totalizing way” (18). She uses this example to begin to unsettle any stable understanding of the category of ‘I’ and of ‘lesbian’. Here, she argues that “it is precisely the repetition of that play that establishes as well the instability of the very category that it constitutes” (18). Thus, there is something performative about her role as a lesbian at the conference which reveals a lesbian subjectivity. There is something similar at work in the performance of the Dyke March.

Internal to understandings of queer is the continued attempt to destabilize secured identity categories. ‘Queer’ can offer a fluid and unfixed category which begins to elude the normative ways in which identity categories are typically constructed and asserted. But the troubling of identity categories also brings about pleasure. As Judith Butler writes:

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7 I similarly have a friend who lovingly teases me by calling me the ‘lesbian ethnographer’. In this, I think she is somehow imagining that I am trying to learn something more about lesbian cultures and communities that surround me. She is simultaneously, though, indicating to me the performative roles that I play as queer, as a woman, and as a researcher.
I’m permanently troubled by identity categories, consider them to be invariable stumbling-blocks, and understand them, even promote them, as sites of necessary trouble. In fact, if the category were to offer no trouble, it would cease to be interesting to me: it is precisely the pleasure produced by the instability of those categories which sustains the various erotic practices that make me a candidate for the category to begin with. (1991: 14)

Here, Butler is emphasizing both the necessary troubling of bounded categories while simultaneously suggesting that their insecurity is what makes them most interesting, and perhaps, most productive. I find Butler’s articulation of this insecurity compelling for the purposes of this research both because this kind of ambivalence challenges humanist master narratives and because it allows for the possibility that truth claims are always contingent, contextual, and contested. Butler (1993) does not necessarily argue that we need to be rid of identity categories, but she challenges how it is that we come to understand ourselves to be insiders of a particular identity such as queer or dyke. Butler highlights the importance of being ‘out’ and claiming identity categories, yet how, simultaneously, these very performative moments create exclusions. Indeed, the Dyke March is one of these performative moments of simultaneous identity claims and forms of exclusion. Butler asks:

For whom is outness a historically available and affordable option? Is there an unmarked class character to the demand for universal ‘outness’? Who is represented by which use of the term, and who is excluded? For whom does the term present an impossible conflict between racial, ethnic, or religious affiliation and sexual politics? What kinds of politics
are enabled by what kinds of usages, and which are backgrounded or erased from view?

(1993: 227)

Though on the surface, exclusionary practices seem to be at odds with many social justice agendas, they can also play an important role for creating community in particular times and places. The possibilities and limitations opened up by ‘queer’ and queer politics are manifested in a number of ways in the context of the Dyke March. As will be explored in later chapters, questions of inclusion and exclusion are at work in how particular bodies are understood to belong or not belong according to assumptions about gender, sexuality, and race.

Questions of inclusion and exclusion are also manifest in how organizers of the Dyke March explicitly ask men to show their support for the March as observers rather than as participants. There is an important political mobilization at work for the Dyke March here which hinges on an exclusionary practice. Further, while identity categories continue to offer important moments of political mobilization, Butler (1993) encourages their simultaneous destabilization. She argues that the “temporary totalization performed by identity categories is a necessary error” (230), suggesting, in part, that there are times when closure is necessary. In other words, rather than conceptualizing identity categories as fixed, it is more useful to understand how they are fluid and flexible. This flexibility can offer an exciting potential for political organizing, as people might rally together spatially and temporally under a category, such as ‘dyke’, in order to effect political change, but they are not forever fixed to this momentary identity. This raises broader questions for contemporary political culture: Do effective politics require identity categories? How stable do identities need to be in order to be effective?

Certainly, queer’s simplicity as an umbrella term is accompanied by a critique of its
limitations. Marla Morris argues that queer “is at once too inclusive and yet not inclusive enough” (2003: 194), while Nikki Sullivan writes that this umbrella use of the word “veils over the differences between, for example, lesbianism and gayness, between ‘women’, between transsexualism and cross-dressing, and ignores differences of class, race, age and so on, once again positing sexuality as a unified and unifying factor” (2003: 44). At the same time, each identity category, such as woman, lesbian, transsexual, and so on, has its own limitations, the potential to falsely assume a kind of homogeneity, as each term problematically sets up terms of inclusion and exclusion. The other possible limitation presented by queer is that it is set up in contrast to the heteronormative ‘norm’ and continues to re-establish the binaries that it claims to challenge and disrupt (Sullivan 2003; Walters 1996). A necessary ‘error’ of identity categories is that they function, in part, by creating a fantasy of coherence and sameness (Butler 1993). Suzanna Danuta Walters (1996) warns against the substitution of queer for ‘gay and lesbian’, as she is particularly concerned about the erasure of gender differences. Her main critique of queer “is that it often (and once again) erases lesbian specificity and the enormous difference that gender makes, evacuates the importance of feminism, and rewrites the history of lesbian feminism and feminism generally” (843). While she is encouraged by that fact that queer offers a possible expansion of the understanding of sexuality, she warns that “too often, gender is not complicated but merely ignored, dismissed, or ‘transcended’” (845).

Queer is criticized by some for removing any potential ‘otherness’ beyond the otherness of sexuality, and in particular, for being guilty of continuing to reify gay white male identities and politics, which results in “groups traditionally privileged in mainstream society remain[ing] privileged even in marginalized and activist communities” (Kumashiro 2003: 366). This kind of mainstreaming effect has inspired many to continue to challenge the possibilities of gay or queer
identities. For example, Alan Sears argues that in the contemporary moment, queer is commodified to such an extent that only particular kinds of people are visible as queer through their “deployment of particular market goods and services” (2005: 108).

Queer has indeed become increasingly commercialized. This is evident in popular culture, for example, with the television program *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, in which five gay men were juxtaposed against the one straight man, reinforcing the sexuality binary and using queer as “nothing more than a fashionable accessory” (Kooijman 2005: 107). So while queer was used provocatively in the show’s title to grab its audience’s attention, it did not challenge fixed identity categories and leant itself easily to its own commodification. As Manalansan IV writes, “shows like *Will and Grace* and *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* enable the parsing of identity wherein freedom to be gay is mobilized through niche marketing” (2005: 143). Queer continues to be increasingly commercialized in popular culture, on television shows, advertisements, and the continued move towards the commercialization of queer comes alongside increased marketing towards the pink economy. As increases in rights of citizenship continue, so too does the corporate pursuit of the gay community as a source of money, also known as the pink dollar, or the pink economy. The “pink dollar” refers to the money and business directed at the gay community. Bell and Binnie argue that the “pink economy” is “the commercial presence and power of gay men and lesbians [which] makes a strong foundation on

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8 *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy* was a weekly self-improvement television series (2003-2007) which featured five gay men who transformed a straight man from “drab to fab” over the course of an episode by giving him a lifestyle makeover in the areas of fashion, food and wine, interior design, grooming and culture.

9 *Will and Grace* was a television sitcom that ran for eight seasons (1998-2006) and featured a relationship between a gay male character, Will, and his friend, sometimes roommate, and straight female character, Grace. The show was one of the more successful programs to feature a gay person as a main character.
which to base rights claims, given the marketized logic that links economic power to political power” (2000: 6). The space of the Pride Parade in Toronto is deeply implicated in this process. As Toronto Pride organizers struggle, on an annual basis, to secure sufficient funding to put on the event, they are also subject to a critique that they are pandering to market forces and commercializing Pride. Though the Dyke March is an official part of Toronto Pride events, it continues to attempt to distinguish itself from this corporate mainstreaming. I explore this theme in more detail later in this thesis, as many of the people that I interviewed understand this resistance to corporatization to be important in their understanding of their March experience.

Resistance to the corporatization of queer is ongoing. Alan Sears, for example, calls for a form of queer anti-capitalism in the spirit of liberationist politics and sexual freedom (2005: 109). Further, as Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz write,

the contemporary mainstreaming of gay and lesbian identity – as a mass-mediated consumer lifestyle and embattled legal category – demands a renewed queer studies ever vigilant to the fact that sexuality is intersectional, not extraneous to other modes of difference, and calibrated to a firm understanding of queer as a political metaphor without a fixed referent. (2005: 1)

Though an acknowledgment of the limitations of queer is necessary, queer continues to maintain the potential for political mobilization. As Eng, Halberstam and Muñoz further elaborate,

That queerness remains open to a continuing critique of its exclusionary operations has always been one of the field’s key theoretical and political promises. What might be
called the ‘subjectless’ critique of queer studies disallows any positing for a proper subject of or object for the field by insisting that queer has no fixed political referent. (3)

The provisional assertions of queer, and by extension, dyke, are arguably, solidified in some moments, and more in flux in others, depending on historic, cultural or geographical contingency of the moment. While thousands of people come together under the rubric of ‘marching dykes’ during the Dyke March, for example, this same group of people might not otherwise find coherence or solidarity in other spaces or moments.

Queer’s political, cultural and analytical potential is rooted in its flexibility. ‘Queer’ somehow suggests a vague sense of identity which “signals something more (post), more complicated, more in your face, more slippery” (Morris 2003: 195). Certainly it is this slippery and fluid potential that has offered some of the more exciting ‘queer’ projects of disruption. Queer, although often used as a noun or adjective, can also be “used as a verb, to queer. To queer is to seek to trouble, undo or unfix categories” (Peters 2005: 102). Queer as a verb then actively seeks to challenge possible borders, confinements, and limitations. As Sullivan explains, queer “comes to be understood as a deconstructive practice that is not undertaken by an already constituted subject, and does not, in turn, furnish the subject with a nameable identity” (2003: 50). This fluidity and flexibility can be difficult to grasp, given queer’s inability and unwillingness to be fully named or articulated.

Despite (or, perhaps, alongside) its commercial uses, queer continues to be politically and theoretically productive. Judith (Jack) Halberstam’s (2005) In A Queer Time and Place sets up a challenge to the reader to rethink space and time, and suggests that a queer reading of time and a queer reading of space are co-dependant – in other words, that we can only reconceptualize
space by also reconceptualizing time, or vice versa. Halberstam argues for the usefulness of the broader framework of postmodernism as it offers a simultaneous crisis and opportunity in which to reform and recreate meaning in cultural production. Halberstam suggests that because queer subcultures are outside of the “paradigmatic markers of life experience” (2), queer subcultures offer a way of thinking ‘queer,’ of thinking beyond the boundaries of heteronormative, culturally prescribed social traditions and understandings as they relate to space and time. She proposes notions of queer time and queer space in which she uses ‘queer’ as the non-normative in reference to sexual identity, body, community and/or activity (6). Queer time is the temporality outside of the heteronormative structures of family and reproduction; queer space is the spatiality of place-making, of creating/re-creating/understanding/re-understanding spaces of and by queer people (6). Halberstam then offers a way to move forward, using ‘queer’ as a tool to continue to think outside of and beyond what is already known or established. In her argument, thinking queer, without forgetting all of its potential limitations, offers potentially new and exciting ways to continue to deconstruct, to trouble, and even to play with socially normative understandings of the world. Judith Butler argues along similar lines that “the political deconstruction of ‘queer’ ought not to paralyze the use of such terms, but ideally, to extend its range, to make us consider at what expense and for what purposes the terms are used, and through what relations of power such categories have been wrought” (1993: 229). It is in this spirit that I employ an understanding of ‘thinking queer’ in this study.

In this section, I have examined the usefulness of queer theory as well as the function and politics of the category of queer. I am, however, also interested in an interrogation of dyke and the political possibilities that it offers. I have shown the many discussions of the function, efficacy and limitations of ‘queer’. My review of the literature, however, revealed no such
thorough theoretical investigation of the term ‘dyke’. This is, therefore, one of the gaps in the literature which I hope to address. In Chapter Five, I offer a discussion of dyke and of its political usage, its function, its possibilities and limitations. Like queer, dyke is difficult to pin down, and is an identity category that remains contentious and complex, and thus politically exciting. In Chapter Five, I examine who the subject of dyke is imagined to be. I do this by interrogating descriptions and personal accounts of dyke as an identity category based on discussions with interview participants and the limited emergences of the category in popular and scholarly literature. In this discussion, I do not offer definitive claims to the meaning of dyke, nor do I fix who the dyke is imagined to be. Rather, I theorize dyke, and the possibilities of ‘thinking dyke’, and reveal the complex ways in which participants in my study align themselves with or distance themselves from the category of dyke. This discussion and engagement with dyke is one of the contributions that I offer with this study and is examined in more detail in Chapter Five.

1.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I outlined the key theoretical and conceptual concepts upon which I will build an analysis of the Toronto Dyke March. I showed how the homosexual emerges as a kind of person in the late 1800s, enabling how an understanding of the emergence of the emerges is an important figure around which the Dyke March is organized. I then outlined key tools offered by feminist poststructuralism, including language and discourse, performativity, power, gender and the subject. This section was followed by a summary of key possibilities and limitations offered by queer theory. In the next chapter, I summarize the two specific strands of critical literature which inform this study: the cultural geography literature on sexuality and space, and the emerging literature on Pride Parades and Dyke Marches.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I review debates on sexuality and space within geography. I examine the social construction of space and trace how geographers have discussed the construction of public/private binaries. I then outline how scholarship on sexuality emerged from feminist and critical geographies and examine the changing understandings of the relationship between gender, sexuality, race and space. The chapter concludes by considering queer geographies, and is followed by a review of the small but growing literature on Pride Parades and the even more limited body of work on Dyke Marches. My engagement with the literature in this chapter is informed by the theoretical tools introduced in the previous chapter. Concepts from and debates within geography are useful for an analysis of the Toronto Dyke March because they interrogate the relationship between social space and subjectivity as they relate to gender, sexuality and race. Thinking about the social-spatial intervention of the Toronto Dyke March is also useful for understanding how the politics, activism and performance of the Dyke March mark a moment in both space and time in the geography of the City of Toronto.

2.2 The Social Construction of Space: Women In Public, Women In Private

The conceptual tools offered by feminist theory, queer theory and poststructuralism inform how geographers have explored sexuality and space, contextualizing how questions in the field are posed. It is important to remember, however, that a poststructuralist reading “never arrives at a final or complete meaning, since meaning is never self-present but is a process continually taking place” (Salih 2002: 21). Geographical inquiries into queer bodies and queer spaces make use of the theoretical tools outlined in the previous chapter in order to conduct a
Since the 1980s, and particularly in the 1990s, a body of literature emerged out of social and cultural geography which interrogates how sexuality impacts conceptions, perceptions, and experiences of space. Spaces can have multiple meanings. Spaces can be understood in terms of their purpose or use, for example, as residential or commercial spaces. Spaces can also be understood in more abstract ways, as ambiguous, unstable, temporary, and mixed (Nash 2001: 241). Spaces are not always just one way or another, and this is because “space is the product of interrelations” and is “constituted through interactions” (Massey 2005: 9). In other words, as Massey explains, when we understand bodies, identities, subjectivities and spaces as constructed and as ever-changing, this is a rejection of essentialist thinking which is based on the idea that categories are fixed and unchanging (10). Massey stresses the “relational constructedness of things” (10) and argues that spaces are produced through the relationship of people, identities, entities and places. As Lynda Johnston argues, “bodies and places are mutually constituted and hence bodies are gendered and sexualized according to particular times and places” (2005: 31).

Spaces are commonly conceptualized as either public or private. There is a rich literature in geography which undermines how the public/private binary is a naturalized and gendered construction. As Nancy Duncan argues, the division between public and private is rooted in an understanding that the private is ideally made up of: “the domestic, the embodied, the natural, the family, property, the ‘shadowy interior of the household’, personal life, intimacy, passion, sexuality, ‘the good life’, care, a haven, unwaged labour, reproduction and immanence” (1996: 128), while the public is ideally made up of “the disembodied, the abstract, the cultural, rationality, critical public discourse, citizenship, civil society, justice, the market place, waged labour, production, the polis, the state, action, militarism, heroism and transcendence” (128).
This binary has been examined in great detail by feminist scholars, who have written on the organization and gendered effects of this split between the public and private realm, examining issues such as women and sex work (e.g. Brock 1998; Ross 2009) or the division of paid and unpaid labour in and outside of the home (e.g. Armstrong and Armstrong 2010; Fox 1980; Sangster 2010).

Susan Ruddick argues that the widely-held assumption that “public spaces are universally accessible to a civic public” (1996: 133) is problematic. While public spaces are frequently conceptualized as open to everyone, this ideology does not hold true in practice. This illustrates how the public/private binary and the boundaries separating them are “constructed, contested, and continually reconstructed” (Mitchell 1996:128). An examination of any marginalized group in the context of space makes it clear that this public/private binary is always already unstable. Spaces are regulated by assumptions about who does and does not belong in them, and discussions of public space are dependent on the inclusion and exclusion of certain bodies. As Nirmal Puwar writes,

Some bodies are deemed as having the right to belong, while others are marked out as trespassers, who are, in accordance with how both spaces and bodies are imagined (politically, historically and conceptually), circumscribed as being ‘out of place’.

(2004: 8)

Contextualized by racialized, gendered, sexualized, classed, aged, and able-bodied understandings, particular bodies are understood to belong in certain spaces, while other bodies are contested and marked as outsiders. This division serves to maintain power structures which
continue to systematically maintain the marginalization of the ‘other’.

The public/private dichotomy is deeply gendered, maintaining polarized characteristics which are regularly associated with a division between femininity (as private) and masculinity (as public) (Duncan 1996; Ruddick 1996). Sue Ruddick points out that women have often been excluded from the public life of cities, and that suburbia “has had, in the past, the effect of relegating women to the home, away from the city and the public sphere” (1996: 136). Michael Warner suggests that because of this binary,

Women, accustomed to being the spectacle displayed to male desire, often experience the visibility of public space as a kind of intimate vulnerability. Men, by contrast, often feel their masculinity challenged when their bodies are on display as objects of erotic desire. (2002: 24)

What Michael Warner is suggesting here is a very gendered dynamic between bodies and their relationship to space. If traditional masculinity is challenged by the display of male bodies in public space, this is confirmed through the performance of Pride Parades, which are a loud articulation of gay masculinity, bodies and eroticism. Women’s bodies on display in the Dyke March, however are not necessarily a challenge to femininity, since, as Warner writes, women are accustomed to being spectacles. Yet, as I will show in the chapters that follow, there is complexity and ambiguity here, as women struggle over the interpretation of their bodies on display in the spectacle of the Dyke March and attempt to address questions of power, resistance and vulnerability. This is further complicated by the massing of women’s bodies in the Dyke March, which, I argue, can be viewed as forms of strategy to exert a sense of strength and
decrease the sense of individual vulnerability.

This dynamic is layered even further by the historical differences of what it means for racialized bodies to be on display or to be the spectacle. The history of colonial encounters has resulted, in part, in the construction of people of colour as the racialized Other (Hall 1997:239). Colonial and imperial projects involved encounters between white European explorers and “exotic” Black and First Nations people and cultures, including the stealing of objects, bodies and body parts to be put on display. Perhaps the most famous example is Saartje Baartman, also known as the Hottentot Venus, a Khoikhoi woman whose body was literally put on display in the early 1800s for Europeans, who were captivated by her enlarged buttocks and labia (Somerville 1997:41).\footnote{After her death, Baartman’s body parts were preserved and put on display in a museum in France until the mid-1970s. Her remains were returned to South Africa in the early 2000.} After her death, European audiences could gaze at her genitalia which were put on display after her body’s dissection (Gilman 1985: 215). Quite literally on display as a spectacle, Baartman was reduced to her anatomy and her marked difference from white European women (Hall 1997: 265). Further, as Gilman writes, “Sarah Bartmann’s sexual parts, her genitalia and her buttocks, serve as the central image for the black female throughout the nineteenth century” (1985: 216). Katherine McKittrick’s analysis of the sale of Black bodies as slaves on the auction block further confirms an understanding of blackness and the black subject as “inferior and worthy of objectification and enslavement” (2006: 79). The Black woman’s body was sexualized when her naked or partially naked body was displayed on the auction block as the sale of her body was partly about the owner’s desire to reproduce a larger slave population (86). The history of the Black body as a spectacle and the naturalization of difference (Hall 1997) continues to perpetuate oversimplified and stereotypical differences between races. The Othered body on
display is also often the object of fetishistic desire and fantasy (266-268). Thus, the project of conceptualizing what it means to be a woman of colour as the object of spectacle in the Dyke March is confounded by historically contingent gendered, (hetero)sexualized and racialized understandings of difference, identity and desire.

Many geographers seek to trouble the public-private binary, exploring how women’s ‘private’ spaces are indeed more ‘public’ than they first appear. For example, the ‘private’ home, typically viewed as a feminine preserve, is also often the site of domestic violence (Duncan 1996: 131). The home can also be restrictive to lesbians’ identities and lives for those who feel confined living with heterosexual family members, and some may also experience various forms of violence or abuse from those family members because of their sexual identity (Johnston and Valentine 2005). Women are not typically understood to be part of the public realm, and this perception is evident even in language use. A ‘public woman’ is understood to be a sex worker (as opposed to a ‘public man’ who is a statesman), and she disrupts the public/private binary by challenging popular conceptions of respectability because she sexually serves men who are not her husband and beyond the home (Duncan 1996: 139). A ‘public woman’, or sex worker, thus threatens not just the tenuous division of the public/private realm, but is also a threat to social and moral order. As Hubbard, Matthews and Scoular write, “different techniques of state-sponsored governmentality and surveillance have been used to contain, exclude or control prostitutes on the assumption they threaten social cohesion” (2008: 137). They show that in the European Union, it is migrant women who currently make up the majority of sex workers (139). Women of colour and migrant women are constructed as threats to the social and moral order of Western cities and nations.

This public/private distinction has historically serious implications for women of colour.
White men have traditionally occupied the space of the public realm, and though women and people of colour increasingly occupy public spaces, what this reveals is the way in which white (heterosexual) masculinities are what “pass as the universal human” (Puwar 2004: 8, also see Bérubé 2001; Dyer 1997). In the Western world, the possibilities and meanings of access to public and private spaces have historically been differentiated according to gender, class, sexuality and race, based on colonialism and imperialism (McClintock 1995). Indeed, as Puwar argues, “‘race’ and colonialism have been central to the formation of (imperial) public masculinity and femininity” (2004: 11). Summarizing Charles Mills, Puwar explains that in the contemporary moment, even though personhood is no longer formally equated with whiteness or masculinity, personhood is now “a matter of social, political, cultural and economic privilege, based on a legacy of colonial conquest. Just as the legacy of the sexual contract continues to have ramifications for the social position of women, long after the formal inclusion of women in the social contract, similarly the legacy of the racial contract continues in an informal sense” (22-23). Further, poor and working-class women have historically been in the space of the public realm but in ways that maintained both social and physical infrastructures of the space which were dominated by white masculinities (24-25).

2.3 Sexualities, Spaces, and Queer Geographies

Much of the initial work in the field of sexuality and space was a response to Manuel Castells’ (1983) study of lesbian and gay communities in San Francisco. Castells argued that gay men and gay male culture dominated queer commercial and neighbourhood spaces because men are territorial and lesbians do not make territorially-based communities (140). His basis for this argument was that women are poorer than men and have fewer economic choices, that women are more committed to political activism, and that therefore lesbians instead rely on informal
inter-personal networks rather than territorially based ones (in Podmore 2007; Valentine 2000a). Castells writes that lesbians “are ‘placeless’ and much more radical in their struggle” (1983: 140). Many studies have challenged how Castells essentialized gender in space, arguing that “lesbians do create spatially concentrated communities but that these neighbourhoods are often composed of clusters of lesbian households and sometimes countercultural institutions such as alternative bookstores or co-operative stores rather than commercial bars and institutions” (Valentine 2000a: 3). This kind of juxtaposition of the use of space raises an interesting dynamic in which men seem to be understood in relation to culture and the market, while women seem to be understood in relation to grassroots and countercultural organizations. This duality is evidenced in official description of the Toronto Dyke March, in which it is defined as a “grassroots events” (Dyke March 2011). Does this description of the Dyke March suggests an essentialist construction of how dykes take up both social and physical spaces in Toronto? Or does it speak to a manifestation of an activist, grassroots, political movement? Or, perhaps, it simultaneously suggests the possibilities for both?

Contrary to Castells’ work, in the context of her work in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Linda Peake contends that while lesbian residential communities tend to be low profile, they are important to the definition of the social character of a space (1993: 426). She argues that lesbians create territorially-based residential communities, explaining that “the formation of a lesbian residential area represents a political act aimed at securing access to residential areas of the city which are not mediated through relations with men” (427). Also contrary to Castells’ claim, Tamar Rothenburg (1995) argues that the Park Slope neighbourhood in Brooklyn, New York, was gentrified at the same time that a large lesbian population moved into the area beginning in the 1970s. She argues that lesbians who gathered residentially to live in the area in
fact managed to displace themselves through the unintended process of gentrifying the Park Slope neighbourhood. She writes that

lesbians are much like other ‘named’ groups that have been credited, for better or for worse, with initiating the gentrification of a neighbourhood – such as artists or moderate-income professionals: in a crude sense, victims of their own success. (178)

The works by Peake (1993) and Rothenburg (2005), among others (e.g. Adler and Brenner 1992; Bouthillette 1997; Elwood 2000; Johnston and Valentine 2005; Nash 2001), offer examples of how lesbians form territorially-based residential neighbourhoods. Beyond the residential domain, Julie Podmore’s (2006, 2007) work suggests that lesbian residential living in Montréal’s Plateau Mont-Royal in the 1980s was actually created around a lesbian commercial space consisting primarily of cafés, bookstores and bars. She argues that “lesbians have produced visible, territorially based enclaves centred on commercial activity” (2006: 598-599). In other words, the creation of domestic and commercial lesbian spaces in this time and place provides evidence that, contrary to Castells, lesbians can indeed be territorial. These kinds of mapping projects offer interesting ways of re-reading how spaces are socialized and sexualized, and also offer an interruption into how queer people have historically been made invisible in space.

As I discuss later, women in Toronto remain frustrated by a perceived lack of queer women’s spaces. While the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood is widely recognized as the heart of the city’s gay community, it is commonly characterized as a white, professional, gay male space. An ongoing point of discussion through my interviews, and in popular media more generally, is to question where to find queer women (white women and women of colour) in the
city. While I do not propose to offer a clear answer to this question here, others have begun to
trace the spaces of queer women in Toronto, including their involvement in residential
neighbourhoods or among queer community organizations (see, for example, Mejaski 2010). The
Dyke March does serve as a temporary transgression in space, and as a moment in which queer
women can be found, in large numbers, once a year, in the City of Toronto.

One of the key contributors to the literature on ‘sexuality and space’ is Gill Valentine
spatial analyses. As I have summarized elsewhere (Burgess 2005), Valentine argues that beyond
reflections of the power imbalances in gender relations, spaces are also characterized by power
imbalances between sexualities, and that a dominant heterosexuality is “powerfully expressed in
space” (1993a: 395). Not only is space heterosexualized and gendered, but contrary to an
assumption of sexuality as ‘appropriately’ located in private space, heterosexuality is also on
display and performed in ‘public’ space. She writes that because of the forces of
heteronormativity and homophobia, the expression of heterosexuality is assumed to be natural
and expected, and it is not, therefore, recognized as public: “such is the strength of the
assumption of the ‘naturalness’ of heterosexual hegemony, that most people are oblivious to the
way it operates as a process of power relations in all spaces” (396). Chris Brickell offers another
way of thinking about this: he argues that “heterosexuality is invisibly visible. Heterosexuality is
visible in that it is (often) all there is, yet it is also invisible in that it is not recognised as
heterosexuality” (2000: 166). Examples of manifestations of this include heterosexual couples
holding hands and kissing in the streets, billboards which portray heterosexual relationships and
nuclear families, or music that plays through the speakers in a store which confirms heterosexual
desire (Valentine 1996: 146). As a result, Valentine (1996) argues that lesbians are made to feel
‘out of place’ in everyday spaces because of the dominance of heteronormativity. Public displays of sexuality or desire that fall outside of these norms are considered to be ‘out of place’ and more noticeable since they challenge hetero-dominant forms of sexual expression. As Michael Warner argues, “Being publicly known as homosexual is never the same as being publicly known as heterosexual; the latter always goes without saying and troubles nothing, whereas the former carries echoes of pathologized visibility” (2002: 52).

Further, beyond feeling ‘out of place’, many people’s identities are policed or modified in heteronormative spaces. Judith Butler argues that “under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality” (1999: xii). Gill Valentine (2000b) offers a personal narrative exploring various forms of threatening harassment and hate mail that she received at work and at home during the late 1990s. While she had been ‘out’ as a geographer, writing and working as a ‘lesbian geographer’, she had maintained the kind of binary existence (gay in public/closeted in the privacy of the family) that she had herself written about extensively (83-84). The extremely haunting harassment that she experienced endangered her safety and obliterated any possibility at maintaining personal privacy, as her identity was surveilled, monitored, policed, and threatened.

Some particularly interesting work on bathrooms also illustrates how women who are misread as men in washroom spaces are often subjected to abusive and violent reactions from other women. Kath Browne (2004) argues that people who live in gender ambiguous bodies often encounter discrimination and hostility. Studying the experiences of gender ambiguous women in washroom spaces, she offers the term ‘genderism’ to describe the “often unnamed instances of discrimination based on the discontinuities between the sex/gender with which an individual identifies, and how others, in a variety of spaces, read their sex/gender” (332). She
explores the experiences of discrimination and harassment from other women who strictly policed and guarded public washroom spaces. Meredith Pilling’s (2006) study of (gender)queer experiences in washroom space supports Browne’s argument, and explores how people at times negotiate and compromise their own bodies in space to avoid confrontation. Some individuals, for example, employ strategies such as making their breasts more visible, or having a friend with a more feminine appearance accompany them to the washroom to make themselves feel more safe. Strategies through which women walk or dress differently to indicate that they are women are what Browne calls “practices through which women . . . reaffirm their embodied sites” in order that their bodies “make sense” (2006: 138). Further, these examples in washroom spaces illustrate how invested many people are in maintaining clearly marked heteronormative and gender-normative spaces as ‘natural’ (for further discussion, see Cavanagh 2010). As Ali Grant argues, “the mutual constitution of sexualities and spaces is made most visible when the hegemonic heterosexuality of everyday environments is disrupted by the presence of deviant and/or unintelligible bodies” (1997: 116). The Dyke March is a place in which these kinds of tensions play out in sometimes difficult and sometimes fun and playful ways. As I will be discussing, many people think quite consciously about how their bodies will be on display during

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11 On February 9, 2011, the Canadian Parliament passed the third and final reading of Bill C-389, an Act to amend i) Canadian Human Rights to include gender identity and gender expression as prohibited grounds of discrimination, and ii) the Criminal Code to protect trans people from hate speech. More colloquially referred to as the Trans Rights Bill, it was presented as a private members’ bill by NDP MP Bill Siksay. Though the bill reached the Senate, it still needed to be passed in order for it to receive Royal Assent and become law. However, on March 26, 2011, Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Conservative minority government was found to be in contempt of Parliament and the government was defeated. As a result, Bill C-389 will not make its way through Senate. During public debates about the legitimacy of the bill, groups such as REAL Women of Canada, a socially conservative lobby group, argued that the bill would give legal justification for pedophiles and sex criminals to spend time and access people vulnerable in public washrooms, showers and change rooms (REAL Women of Canada 2010). These debates revealed both how trans identities are equated with criminal identities and behaviours, but also the way in which the expectations over spaces such as washrooms are heavily monitored, controlled and protected.
the March.

2.4 Claiming Spaces

Despite the fact that heterosexuality continues to pervasively dominate public spaces, those spaces continue to be important to the development of identities and communities. As Ruddick writes, “interactions in and through public space are crucial to the formation and maintenance of social identities” (1996: 135). Connections made between people in and through space have continued to be critical to upsetting how normalized heterosexual spatial formations are in everyday places. Drawing on Butler’s theorizing of gender, Grant argues that “by taking/making space in this way we expose the façade of the heterosexuality of that space and the requirement that it be made straight through repetitive heteronormative acts” (1997: 121).

Despite experiencing marginalization or even exclusion from so-called public spaces, however, many queer people have navigated through, disrupted, and/or reclaimed heteronormative spaces. Valentine offers an interesting example of this kind of ‘taking up’ of public space in her analysis of the effect that performance artist k.d. lang’s music has to not only “articulate sexual identities and communities but also... facilitate the production of [non-hetero]sexualized space” (1995: 474). Recounting a lesbian interviewee’s story, she explains a scenario in which the interviewee was in a store and heard a k.d. lang song playing over the speakers. She smiled to herself because she was hearing ‘lesbian’ music in a public space. Briefly looking up, she caught the eye of another woman in the store and they shared a knowing look. Valentine argues that these two women created a momentary queer space within usually heterosexualized store space (479-480). While perhaps this example was only a momentary queering of space and time, Valentine suggests that this kind of interaction can disrupt heteronormative space to those who are ‘in the know’.
Many people raise the question as to whether temporary spatial transgressions offer enough to challenge the widespread spatial dominance of heteronormativity. Valentine’s (1995) discussion of the potential transgression offered by k.d. lang’s music is an initial suggestion of the kinds of spatial interventions that can be made. What this example illustrates is how unstable heterosexual spaces really are, especially for these two women who shared a knowing glance in what would always otherwise be understood to be a straight space. Because they were both ‘in the know’, the space’s assumed universality crumbled, if only for these two women in that moment, despite the way in which the heteronormative structure of the space remained fairly stable, because their crumbling is measured in relation to the heteronormative expectations of space. These kinds of temporary moments occur regularly and often and are what Ali Grant calls “the more fleeting transgressive spaces created by temporary ruptures in the everyday heterosexual façade” (1997: 118). It is important to consider the potential broader significance of these more fleeting, temporary transgressions in the context of history of a growing social movement centred around queer identities. Are these moments isolated to personal day to day experiences? At what point do they begin to constitute the politically queer moment? Pride Parades and Dyke Marches certainly take up more space, and more loudly, than a furtive glance between two people. In what ways might the Dyke March be conceptualized as a temporary moment within the broader context of queer organizing and city life in Toronto more generally?

Many spaces have been designated as ‘queer’ spaces, particularly in urban areas. Obvious examples include bathhouses, queer clubs and bars, or gay neighbourhoods/villages. These spatial interventions have been called queer because they are spaces designated for queer people, and queer bodies take up these spaces. Mark Casey argues that “claims to gay and lesbian identified spaces are often about accessing limited spaces in which gay men and lesbians
feel they are able to, (and are safe to) perform their sexual identities, relationships and lifestyles” (2004: 451). These spaces are in part about creating queer visibility, which has been and remains an essential part of queer movement politics. As Julie Podmore writes, “queer politics places a great deal of emphasis on ‘becoming visible’ as queer subjects. While the primary objective is to be visible to a mainstream public, a secondary aim is to be more visible to each other” (2001: 347). And certainly, two women sharing a knowing look while listening to k.d. lang offers the opportunity for these women to become visible to each other. Thus, in many ways, the very act of taking up space, however fleeting and temporary, is an important contestation of understandings of space.

In another examination of how queer bodies take up space is Tiffany Muller (2007) exploration of Women’s National Basketball Association (WNBA) games in Minnesota as a lesbian space. She argues that despite the overt attempts of some teams to create a Christian, heteronomative, family-based space, lesbian WNBA fans form a sense of lesbian community at the games. Further, despite resistance from some of the WNBA teams and media advertising to make direct links to the local lesbian community, the large number of lesbians in regular attendance at games “motivates lesbian fans to assume an imagined connection based on observable symbols and practices” (21). Here, queer women’s insistence on creating spaces transcends attempts at keeping them out of the space.

Another example of creating explicitly queer space is the bathhouse. Gay men’s bathhouses in North America, often open at all hours of the day and night, have for decades offered gay men an indoor space for exploring and experiencing sexuality and sexual activity (Tattelman 2000). More recently in Toronto, women’s bathhouses have been set up as one night events a few times a year in rented gay men’s bathhouses, creating temporal claims to queer
women’s spaces (Nash and Bain 2007a, 2007b). Bathhouses are also spaces which have been heavily monitored and policed and have historically been the focus of police raids. The most famous examples include the simultaneous raids of four bathhouses in 1981 as well as the raid of the Toronto women’s bathhouse in 2000, though there are many other examples before and after these dates. The legal and moral regulation of bathhouses by authorities suggests that both the queerness and overt performance of sexual activity continue to threaten heteronormative identities and practices.

A persistent question here is whether or not the mere presence of queer bodies makes a space queer. This tension is clearly articulated by Jana Sawicki who asks “Are visibility and identity necessarily traps? Or are they, instead, paramount for those of us denied the right to speak with authority as queer subjects in the public sphere?” (2004: 177). Or, can they be both? Can these effects of visibility function simultaneously? Together, do both of these effects embody a poststructuralist contradiction?

The consequences of making claims to queer spaces are critiqued for their potential to reify homo/heterosexual binaries. For example, Affrica Taylor writes that “from a queer stance, the very idea of a gay or lesbian ghetto, set up in opposition to the straight world, simply reinforces the rigid heterosexual/homosexual binary, and thus limits the possibilities of both our sexualities and the spaces in which we can belong” (1997: 10). Taylor is critical of the functions of both heteronormativity and homonormativity.

Further, queer spaces are also often complicit in reifying queerness as whiteness. Natalie Oswin argues that much of the literature in the area of sexuality and space does not consider the ways in which bodies are both sexualized and raced, and this results in the problematic assumption that “queers are sexualized while non-whites are raced” (2008: 94). Male
homonormative spaces, such as Church Street in Toronto, are “always potentially hegemonic white queer space[s]” (Walcott 2007: 234; see also Nero 2005). Walcott elaborates on this when he writes that “the shorthand logic of gay ghettos is that there are spaces of community based on sexual practices and that other kinds of social categories of identity take a back seat to that of sexual identity” (2007: 236-237). Indeed, Jasbir Puar (2002) troubles the use of the term “gay ghetto” which erases the realities of race and class in poor neighbourhoods usually described as ghettos. She writes that

The current usages of the term ‘gay ghetto,’ most associated with white, upper- and middle-class gay male enclaves, is an awkward and troubling appropriation of a metaphor of urban space closely associated with isolated and racialized communities; the class and commodification practices of gay neighbourhoods in no way resembles the impoverished and demonized spaces of poor ethnic enclaves. (Puar 2002: 936)

The notion of claiming spaces as queer are firmly rooted in colonial histories. As Jasbir Puar argues, “situating the claiming of space – any space, even the claiming of queer space – as a process informed by histories of colonization, these histories operating in tandem with the disruptive and potentially transgressive specifics at hand” (936). This raises an interesting tension for queer women’s communities, and for Dyke March organizing, between trying to find communities and mark out spaces which might be differentiated from dominant white and male spaces while at the same time resisting the repetition of colonial tendencies.

White male homonormativity, and its intimate relationship with neoliberalism (see Duggan 2002; Richardson 2005), serves as an important political reminder of queer’s limitations.
However, as I outlined in the previous chapter, queer theory simultaneously engages queer’s limitations with its political possibilities. In the context of the Dyke March, in the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, what kinds of consequences might this have for an analysis of its temporal and spatial intervention? How do women understand the ways in which they, individually and collectively, take up/queer/dyke space?

It is worth noting here that some more recent work in the cultural geography literature considers the relationship between space and affect. Geographers have drawn from the contributions made by scholars such as Sara Ahmed, who considers the relationship between emotions in relation to issues such as terrorism or migration (2004) as well as how one’s happiness is dependent upon and related to the happiness of others (2010). She argues that this results in the sense of “responsibility to be happy for others” (9) and considers the broader social implications for feminists, for queer familial relationships, and for migrant communities. Ann Cvetkovich (2003)’s “archive of feelings” interrogates the connection between feelings and cultural texts, with a particular focus on accounts of trauma in the everyday. The burgeoning field of affect also includes Eve Kosofsky Sedwick (2003)’s work on performativity and pedagogy, and Sally Munt’s work on shame, an emotion that she describes as “sticky... when it brushes you it tends to leave a residue” (2007: 2).

Drawing on theorists such as these, geographers consider the relationship between emotions and our social and physical spaces. Nigel Thrift (2004) describes how affect is built into the structure of cities, arguing that cities are purposely engineered to create particular feelings among their populations. He argues that “affective response can be designed into spaces often out of what seems like very little at all. Though affective response can clearly never be guaranteed, the fact is that this is no longer a random process either” (68). Thrift’s link between
the physical space of the city and the affective response is further illustrated by scholars such as Kraft and Adey (2008), who examine two buildings and the emotional connections and reactions experienced by the people in each in order to argue that the architectural structure is an important component of each building’s use and meaning. Further examinations of the relationship between geography and emotions are well examined in two edited collections: Davidson, Bondi and Smith’s (2005) *Emotional Geographies*, and Smith et al.’s (2009) *Emotion, Place and Culture*. This body of literature is important to my last analysis chapter, in which I consider how the Dyke March affects space, pushing the question beyond physical or visible changes towards questions of memory and emotion.

2.5 Pride Literature

Pride Parades and Dyke Marches represent obvious examples of queer claims to space. These are events which typically take over main urban streets (and often, during week-long celebrations, also take over bars, clubs, galleries, and commercial neighbourhoods) for celebrations of identity and protests against oppression and discrimination. As Lynda Johnston writes, “[Gay Pride] Parades can be read as public deconstructive spatial tactics, a queering of the street” (2001: 190). Writing about the Montréal Pride parade of 1991, Bell and Valentine also argue that when queers took to the streets which were typically designated as straight spaces, they “inevitably *queered* the streets” (1995: 18). Pride events have played important roles for queer identity formation. Kevin Markwell, who writes about participation and attendance at Mardi Gras in Sydney, Australia, argues that for many people Mardi Gras is a “major yearly event that helps define their gay or lesbian identity” (2002: 84).

Similar to Halberstam’s (2005) conceptualization of queer time, Markwell also offers ‘gay times’ to mean “time-spaces during which gay and lesbian themes and issues become
prominent in a broad social context” (2002: 89). He suggests that the Sydney Mardi Gras is one such gay time-space, in which the queering of both space and time are isolated and distinct from the usual heteronormative rest of the year. Markwell suggests that this kind of isolated queer time-space poses a potential danger of ‘temporal containment’ – while Mardi Gras offers more exposure for queer issues, this exposure is temporary, and throughout the rest of the year, inadequate (89). The queer time/space possibilities offered by both Halberstam and Markwell offer important avenues for thinking about how the Dyke March queers/dykes space. Does the Dyke March only temporally queer space, as Markwell suggests of Mardi Gras? Or does it (have the potential) to go beyond this, to queerly exceed and transform those temporal boundaries?

While the literature across several disciplines thus far remains sparse on Dyke March events, geographers have begun to explore pride parades in order to consider the kinds of spatial disruptions that the parades offer to otherwise heteronormative spaces. For example, Chris Brickell’s (2000) study examines media representations of Pride Parades in New Zealand. He suggests that gays and lesbians have left the privacy of the home and have invaded the public streets, and further, that gays and lesbians have invaded the private minds of heterosexual people. Brickell uses this analysis to demonstrate how public spaces have been designated as heterosexual, and people found in public spaces are assumed to be heterosexual. Thus, when queer identities are made public, as in the case of Pride Parades, they are understood to be out of their rightful, private or closeted place.

Kath Browne’s study of Pride, conducted in Dublin and Brighton, argues that Pride events offer a juxtaposition of serious politics with more “carnivelesque playfulness” (2007: 66). This juxtaposition offers an interesting complexity to Pride events in order to consider how individuals negotiate Pride spaces which are both celebratory and commercial (67). Part of this
dynamic is evidenced in the gradual transition from marches to parades, from rallies to parties. This raises an obvious question about the political differences between the Toronto Pride Parade and Dyke March. How do participants perceive the differences or similarities of the purposes of each of these moments? How do they negotiate the paradox of the politics with the parties? According to Huque (2007), parades serve three general purposes: parades function as celebration, as ritual, and as festival. In the city of Toronto, parades are regularly demarcated with the use of metallic barricades to keep the paraders and spectators separated. This has come under heavy critique from Caribana participants, who advocate for a more participatory experience between the two groups (for further discussion, see Huque 2007). Ironically, in contrast, the Santa Claus Parade remains a barrier-free parade. As I illustrate in more detail in Chapter Six, Toronto Dyke March participants insist on maintaining the event as a march rather than as a parade. For participants, this comes to symbolize a difference of political purpose and the manner and meaning of participation in the manifestation of the March.

Analyses of Pride and its political manifestations are also addressed by scholars in queer tourism. Exploring the effects of World Pride in Rome in 2000 during the Vatican’s Jubilee, Michael Luongo (2002) investigates whether Rome can or will ever become one of the major cities on the queer tourism market. The World Pride organizers had certainly hoped to increase gay tourism in Rome in order that the city be at “the level of other international gay destinations” (175). What is perhaps most evident in his analysis is the important role of capitalism and market forces in this kind of Pride event, as World Pride seemed to depend heavily on the “more traditional type of gay or lesbian tourist” (170) characterized largely as American or Northern European upper-middle-class white men. Luongo writes that “a visit to Rome during World Pride would be a vacation with a political purpose, but a vacation nonetheless” (170). Toronto is
scheduled to host World Pride in 2014, and so the development of Pride events over the next few years will likely raise similar kinds of questions, while Toronto Pride is increasingly commodified. This also raises the questions of how the Dyke March will or will not be reconfigured in the space.

A major contributor to the literature on Pride Parades is Lynda Johnston (2001, 2002, 2005, 2007), who primarily investigates the New Zealand HERO parade and Mardi Gras pride parade in Sydney, Australia, but also includes research from pride events in the UK and Italy. In her 2005 book *Queering Tourism: Paradoxical Performances at Gay Pride Parades*, she argues that gay pride parades around the world offer both possibilities and paradoxes for gendered and sexualized bodies and spaces. The chronology of her chapters builds in conjunction with the increasing spatial scale of her analysis – from bodies to streets to suburbs to cities. Johnston sets out to trouble (or, to ‘queer’) the discipline of tourism studies. She challenges the formulation of knowledge that is valued in tourism studies, particularly that which is based on the self-knowing Cartesian subject. She is critical of how tourism studies’ attempt at legitimacy has involved the continued exclusion of what she refers to as subjects who are associated with embodiment (2), such as women and queer people. Gay tourism has focused on the profitable economic possibilities in queer communities, which has only added to the continued Othering of these bodies. Johnston here explores how space is gendered and sexualized and she does this by arguing that the spaces taken up by pride parades complicate binaries, and that pride parades are a site in which heteronormative tourist spaces are challenged by paraders.

Johnston provides a strong critique of what she calls the emerging new category of citizenship: ‘the normal gay citizen’ (2005: 114). She is critical of how many queer people are eager to integrate or assimilate into heteronormative culture when she writes that “parades and
queer celebrations may be understood as enabling new forms of neoliberal cultural citizenship, where queers may want to buy into it” (114). This sentiment is expressed by others, including John Grundy, who argues that the Toronto Pride Parade is today less concerned with political organizing than with catering to marketing and city tourism which constructs queerness as just another type of “ethno-cultural diversity” (2004: 28). While pride parades were originally about marking moments of protest against homophobia, Johnston argues that pride parades are now much more like carnivals and performances for the audiences who line the streets (38) and that the sexual politics in pride parades are much less apparent today. In part, the increasing visibility of sexuality in Western urban centres can be attributed to the successes of the gay rights movement and the resulting economic recognition of the potential for the pink dollar (100). She suggests that “bodies on display for tourism depend on particular commodifiable experiences. Within a context of gay pride parades, a tension and contradiction is maintained between parading bodies, as tourism commodities, and political displays of pride” (Johnston 2002: 75). Thus Johnston pushes the reader to think about the relationship between bodies, subjectivities and the commercialization of queer sexualities.

Johnston’s (2005) study offers a particular analysis of how bodies produce spaces, and spaces produce bodies. She suggests that central to the subjectivity of pride parade participants is the way in which the parades function as tourist sites/sights (31). The bodies participating in Pride, both as participants and observers are each constituted by the other (32). While tourists might enjoy participating in Pride as observers, Johnston argues that paraders have the opportunity to disrupt the “prepared tourist scripts” (34) by parodying hypermasculinity and hyperfemininity and “confus[ing] traditional or ‘natural’ corporeal indicators” of gender (48). Therefore, she concludes that bodies in parades are contradictory sites, always being
reconstituted in the web of competing discourses at work (52). In this sense, the function of the parade serves to illustrate Butler’s conception of performativity. Johnston argues that various subject positions at Pride are produced by power and that “the performances of subject positions are iterative and therein lies the potential for disruption as there is no guarantee that its repetition will be successful” (29). Pride events then offer exciting possibilities for rethinking how performativity and subjectivity function with the networks of power and discourse in order to offer new ways of conceptualizing sexuality and space.

However, Johnston (2002) also points to a paradox in the moment of parade spectatorship in which the bodies of the (presumably) straight tourists are physically separated from the queer bodies of paraders. Johnston argues that division between tourists and parade participants are maintained at HERO and Sydney Mardi Gras by spatial structures, including road barriers and parade officials. She suggests that this separation might lend itself to an increased popularity of the parades, allowing straight observers to maintain themselves as straight since they can keep their distance from the queers inside the parade (78). When bodies cannot be distinguished as gay or straight, however, they are the most threatening to borders. Thus, she argues, it is “only when gay bodies are clearly marked as different, as in gay pride parades, does this border become visible and therefore less threatening to the dominant culture” (84). I extend this discussion in more detail when I examine the implications of the barrier-free Toronto Dyke March and the possibilities and limitations offered by this use of space.

Johnston (2005) also introduces the notion that Pride Scotland is an “accidental tourist event” as it is a tourist attraction outside of and marginal to the local and national tourism promotions (36-38). Her 2007 article “Mobilizing Pride/Shame: Lesbians, Tourism and Parades” furthers this idea in order to examine how pride and shame function simultaneously for parade
participants and observers at Pride Scotland. She details how a women’s drumming band from Edinburgh who participated in the Pride Parade negotiated their interactions with both pride and shame, which she argues is productive because “it brings the subject into being at the same time as the subject is isolated” (Johnston 2007: 42). She shows that Pride Scotland is marginal to the city’s promotion of tourism, and suggests that “marginality tends to structure most gay pride parades and indeed, may be a primary political reason for parades” (2007: 36).

Cities that promote Pride events certainly take on the status of desirable international gay and lesbian tourist destinations. Markwell argues that this is true of Mardi Gras in Sydney, which has come to be understood as a “place that not only is tolerant of homosexuality but appears openly to embrace and, to some extent, promote gay and lesbian cultures” (2002: 94). In more recent years, Toronto has actively marketed Pride as a travel destination, and Pride weekend is one of Toronto’s busiest weekends for tourism (Weir in Gallant 2010). In a 2010 study produced by Pride Toronto, over a quarter of Pride attendees were estimated as from outside of the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) and were credited with the estimated $43.2 million spent over the course of the Pride long weekend (Gallant 2010). The continued increase in corporate involvement and financial accountability in Pride Toronto’s organizing has had an effect on the justifications for Pride events and the tone that they take. The link between Pride events and local tourism publicity of the events seems critical in many ways to what a parade might look like. How do local or national discourses get wrapped up into the discourses of Pride celebrations and how they might be experienced?

Arising out of official local government support for Toronto Pride is a general, yet problematic, discourse of tolerance for queer people in Canada, a view that is wrapped up in relatively recent federal government legislation on same-sex marriage. Indeed, Toronto has
become an informal same-sex marriage capital. In his study of Mardi Gras in Sydney, Markwell warns that “it is naive to conflate public visibility with social progress” adding that “the high level of public visibility that Mardi Gras now enjoys may conceal systemic oppression, homophobia, and discrimination” (2002: 83), all of which are certainly at work in Toronto as well. Sheer visibility and queering/dyking space have made important political inroads in movement politics and the challenges to heteronormative space. But Markwell’s point identifies a complexity that shapes contemporary queer politics and is certainly a comment on recent political understandings of and challenges to the current queer climate in Toronto. Paralleled to this discussion is the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada. While some claim it as the last major form of legalized and institutional discrimination impeding equality, the legalization of marriage does not address the continued everyday experiences of social and institutional marginalization and oppression, nor does it address how it is only those who enter into this state-legislated relationship who can access the kinds of services and bonuses that accompany married couple status (Lenon 2008). Michael Warner argues that until recently, gay movement organizing has been concerned primarily with “stav[ing] off the pathologization of gay life,” but that “now we are faced with activists who see the normalization of queer life precisely as their role” (1999: 114). How might these kinds of paradoxical discourses be functioning within the Toronto Dyke March?

2.6 Dyke March Literature

The small but growing body of literature on Dyke Marches includes work in geography, but also in a variety of other disciplines. One of the main focuses of this literature explores the history of the relationship between the Lesbian Avengers and the Dyke March on Washington (Schulman 1994; Walsh 2004). I examine this in more detail in Chapter Four.
A dissertation by Elizabeth Gail Currans (2007) examines various public performances in the forms of protest, vigils and celebrations in order to consider gendered and racialized bodies in these protest spaces. In this work, she includes a chapter which contrasts the relationship between performativity, ritual and spirituality in two different Dyke Marches: the Sistahs Steppin’ in Pride in Oakland, California and the Dyke March in New York City. While both Dyke Marches serve to challenge questions of homonormativity, heteronormativity, and male dominance in Pride celebrations, they are manifest in distinct ways. Currans argues that the Sistahs Steppin’ in Pride is an alterative Dyke March to the San Francisco Dyke March, and that it is predominantly made up of the Black queer women’s community in Oakland (183) who are committed to emotional healing and using spirituality to work towards anti-racism. By contrast, Currans illustrates how the New York City Dyke March is predominantly attended by white women, engages in a political celebration of (white) dyke identity, and actively functions without permits or sponsors. Though each March takes on a different shape and feel, she argues that they are both “public festivities [which] are symbolic struggles to achieve greater visibility for queer women based on the assumption that greater visibility will diminish social, legal and political discrimination” (183).

Lastly, two recent articles on the Chicago Dyke March examine questions of conflict within movement organizing. Japonica Brown-Saracino and Amin Ghaziani are interested in examining the “constraints of culture” (2009: 51) as they argue that while the Dyke March in Chicago was originally organized in an attempt to create a more welcoming and inclusive environment, distinct from the city’s Pride Parade, the March “unwittingly replicated the same systems of exclusion that incited the March” (52). They argue that within social movement culture, there are contradictions which complicate attempts at creating alliances and strategies
(52). Similarly Amin Ghaziani and Gary Alan Fine (2008) examine infighting and its relationship to the competing ideologies which are at work in the Chicago Dyke March. While certainly topically relevant, these articles offer a different focus than the one I want to explore in this dissertation. While I do explore how ideological tensions at the level of the organizing committee worked their way into broader discourses around the Dyke March, I am less interested in the micro-politics internal to Toronto Dyke March organizing than in the role the March has played more broadly for the people and communities who participate in it.

2.7 Conclusion

The Dyke March, while straddling the paradoxical discourses of queer political challenge versus normalization, seems to offer queer challenges in the name of dyke subjectivity. The Dyke March continues to embody something ‘queer’ in its more productively possible utterances. Here, I understand queer as Jean Bruce describes it:

> Queering is an activity, as well as an analytical model, that invites us to reconsider the most central and highly held values of a society; queering makes the ordinary appear strange and can provide an opportunity to rethink the logic of the sexual hegemony of social and political institutions. (2003: 164)

This understanding of queer offers the possibility to challenge, interrupt and disrupt how hetero- and gender-normative social forces circulate. It offers exciting discourses of resistance, which, in terms of the Toronto Dyke March, help me to think within the networks of power and resistance at work on the street, amongst individuals, and on bodies. Queer is, by no means, perfect. Nor should it be. Queer remains, quite poststructurally, a tool of contradictions and paradoxes.
Natalie Oswin offers an exciting challenge, as she argues that

we need to take complicity more seriously within queer studies. . . Instead of thinking complicit space as total and negative, we might reconceptualize it as ambivalent and porous, as an undetermined set of processes that simultaneously enables both resistance and capitulation. (2005: 84)

Oswin is articulating a challenge to work with queer studies from a poststructural theoretical perspective. This offers exciting paradoxes and productive possibilities for my study.

As I listened to women who have helped to organize and who have participated in the Toronto Dyke March, I came to see that part of the impetus of Dyke March organizing has been to interrupt how spaces are constituted based around questions of inclusion and exclusion. David Sibley writes that “who is felt to belong and not to belong contributes in an important way to the shaping of social space” (1995: xiv). When spaces are, with some regularity, perceived to be masculine and heterosexual, white and ableist, this has consequences for queer transgressions and for queer bodies to take up public spaces in new ways. Spatial and temporal challenges to this kind of domination play an important role in challenging categorical borders and binaries which are always already “notoriously unstable” (Fuss 1991: 3). As I will detail in the following chapters, as the spatial dominance of heterosexuality is disrupted by queer interventions on the street, these spatial interventions make it clear that “(hetero)sexed space [is] an artefact; clearly not a backdrop which is ‘just there’, but something which must be produced and maintained through heteronormative repetition and regulation” (Grant 1997: 117). So, then, what happens to spaces, identities, performativities, and subjectivities when dykes go public in a march? And
why does the Toronto Dyke March emerge in this time and place? What politics of place and space does the Dyke March struggle with and attempt to engage with, refuse, or articulate?
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

I began this thesis by introducing a set of theoretical tools and then used these to read through the review of the literature on sexuality and space. This literature also serves as a theoretical foundation by providing methodological tools for conducting a spatial analysis of the Dyke March in Toronto. Similarly, feminist poststructuralism and Foucaultian thought, while deeply theoretical, offer tools for analysis and methodological frameworks for conducting a genealogy of the Dyke March. In this research, the boundary between theory and methodology remains fluid and porous and the distinction between them is tenuous at best. They are differentiated by chapter breaks as an organizational strategy rather than as a demonstration of their concrete separation. In this chapter, I outline my methodological approach as well as the more concrete set of methods that I used in this study. I employed multiple methods for this research, including genealogy and visual ethnography, which involved participant observation, interviews and archival research. I outline each method in this chapter and explore the tensions and productive possibilities that emerge from their simultaneous use.

3.2 Genealogy

In order to think about how the Dyke March comes into being as a phenomenon in Toronto, and, further, about how the expectations of the Dyke March create a particular kind of meaningful experience, I rely on Foucault’s notion of genealogy as a methodological approach. Rather than conducting a linear historical investigation of the Dyke March, a genealogy allows me to explore both its historical and contemporary components while also considering how multiple discourses are at work in shaping the event and its subjects.
Most Foucaultian scholars explain the concept of genealogy in contrast to archaeology, in part because the move from an archaeological analysis to a genealogical analysis seems to have been a progression in Foucault’s own work (Gutting 2005; Mills 2003). Foucault is interested in how history is constructed and constituted, as well as the ways in which histories are full of moments of continuity and disruption (Kendall and Wickham 1999: 24). When thinking about historical investigation, Kendall and Wickham encourage their readers “not to let history stop, not to let history settle on a patch of sensibleness in a field of strangeness” (23). They argue that scholars ought to find a problem rather than a period in history worth investigating (22), and that not letting histories stop is a way of thinking about historical investigations in non-traditional and non-linear ways. Certainly, a chronology of events is not without its usefulness and merit, but what is most interesting about a Foucaultian investigation into history is the exploration of discourses that are at work, of the broader systems of knowledge and understanding that shape and are shaped by power and knowledge in any given moment of time or place. Foucault argued against subject-centred history (Foucault 1984b: 59). Rather than focusing on particular individuals or heroes, Foucault’s investigations sharpen in on the moments “when there are radical and shocking changes in direction in the way that phenomena are thought about and the ways that events are interpreted” (Mills 2003: 27). Subjects are the effects of history, not its makers.

Part of the historical project of Foucault’s work is to explore and uncover what he calls subjugated knowledges – those knowledges that encompass “the historical contents that have been buried and disguised in a functionalist coherence or formal systemisation” (Foucault 1980: 81). He argues that these subjugated knowledges have been “disqualified as inadequate” (82) and that subjugated knowledges differ from the dominant discourses of knowledge and
understanding of the world. It is in the re-emergence of subjugated knowledges, which he describes as popular and local knowledges, and which are “incapable of unanimity” (82), from which the critiques of dominant discourses can emerge, critiques such as those of psychiatry, madness, the prison, or sexuality. Foucault argues that subjugated knowledges “were concerned with a historical knowledge of struggles . . . [which] have been confined to the margins of knowledge” (83). Genealogical methods can be employed as a tool to uncover or to gain access to these subjugated knowledges.

Foucault encourages us to think about how an understanding of the past is not only helpful for understanding that past, but more importantly, what an understanding of the past means for the present. How does an understanding of the past help us to understand what is happening in the current moment? As Jana Sawicki explains by way of example, Foucault’s genealogical work in The Use of Pleasure does not suggest a return to Greek ethics or morals, but rather Foucault’s genealogy suggests “using the past to highlight the features of the present” (2004: 170). How does an understanding of the meaning-making process of sexual acts in Ancient Greece help us to understand meaning-making around sexual acts in this current time and place? Rather than using this analysis to make truth claims, Foucault uses the genealogical analysis to understand how it is that particular utterances or statements come to be taken as the truth (Mills 2003: 25). By extension, I ask: how does an understanding of the meaning-making process of dyke subjectivity and dyke organizing from the recent past (the mid-1990s) help us to understand them in the contemporary moment?

Two distinct strategies of the genealogical approach include descent and emergence. Foucault is critical of history’s emphasis on the “origin” as a moment or person in time as a starting point or beginning. Foucault’s critique can be mobilized in the context of queer histories
in North America by examining the usual emphasis that is placed on the Stonewall riots of 1969 or the Toronto bathhouse raids of 1981 as moments of origin for the gay liberation movement. However, instead of focusing on these origin moments as starting points or beginnings, Foucault argues that history develops as a result of a number of moments, movements, people and incidents, and builds on and echoes past experiences and events. Rather than beginning with an ‘origin’ at which a person or event ‘began’ a series of events in order to get to the present, Foucault suggests a descending analysis which “moves backwards revealing numberless beginnings and multiple changes” (Tamboukou 2003: 199), or in other words, revealing the emergences. Emergence emphasizes not only that history is not linear, but that at any given moment, there are many axes of power relations acting on that moment (200). In the context of Stonewall riots or the Toronto bathhouse raids, for example, a Foucaultian genealogist would examine the circulating discourses, moments, events, people and power relationships that came before and after – including examining issues such as previous police raids on gay baths and bars or the social and historical context of gay rights, gay activism and the policing of gay spaces. This would then help the genealogist understand how Stonewall or the bathhouse raids might emerge and come to be accepted as moments of origin in contemporary discourse.

In order to uncover the emergences, Foucault argues that:

An examination of descent also permits the discovery, under the unique aspect of a trait or a concept, of the myriad events through which – thanks to which, against which – they were formed. Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things. . . On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper
dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations – or conversely, the complete reversals – the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being does not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents. (1984a: 81)

Foucault’s genealogical project is challenging for my project because it asks that I not accept stories of origin of the Toronto Dyke March as ‘truths’ despite the fact that they have come to be common-sense ways of knowing. In my genealogical analysis, I try to reconceptualize these moments. Rather than asking “when did the Dyke March begin?” I ask “how does the Dyke March emerge?” and consider how there are multiple conditions, moments and conflicting discourses in the tracing of this story. These are not just discrepancies in the recalling of history, but are departures in the telling of the narrative which reveal how histories are never linear, but always bumpy and fractured. In the following chapters, I trace the conditions of the emergence of the Toronto Dyke March, and then ask how it is that the marching dyke emerges as a subject. Further, I seek to examine the multiple layers of subjugated knowledges at work in the March, considering how it is conceptualized as an alternative to the Pride Parade. I also trace how particular bodies are included or excluded from the Dyke March based on the complex power relations which consider how bodies are gendered, sexualized, and raced. As Foucault writes, “Let us give the term genealogy to the union of erudite knowledge and local memories which allow us to establish a historical knowledge of struggles and to make use of this knowledge tactically today” (1980: 83). It is within this call to the scholar that I develop my genealogical analysis of the Toronto Dyke March.
3.3 Ethnography

This project is informed by ethnographic research. Traditional ethnography comes from a modernist tradition (Tamboukou and Ball 2003: 3), and the ethnographic researcher often makes claims to absolute knowledge and truth of the lives and experiences of those studied. However, as I draw from the thinking of poststructural ethnographers, I grapple with the complexity of gathering data, stories and experiences and representing these in the final research project in such a way that they avoid universal truth claims. Poststructural ethnographers, informed by thinkers such as Foucault, draw attention to moments of uncertainty and argue that there are multiple ways of knowing and multiple truths of the world. As Deborah Britzman writes, “for poststructuralists, representation is always in crisis, knowledge is constitutive of power, and agency is the constitutive effect, and not the originator, of situated practices and histories” (2000: 30).

For this project, I draw on Sarah Pink’s definition of ethnography, which she explains as:

an approach to experiencing, interpreting and representing culture and society that informs and is informed by sets of different disciplinary agendas and theoretical principles. Rather than a method for the collection of data, ethnography is a process of creating and representing knowledge (about society, culture and individuals) that is based on ethnographers’ own experiences. It does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but should aim to offer versions of ethnographers’ experiences of reality that are as loyal as possible to the context, negotiations and intersubjectivities through which the knowledge was produced. (2007: 22)
My ethnographic research and observations are, indeed, limited by my experiences and perspectives. I do not make claims to having found the objective truth of the Dyke March, or of being able to speak conclusively about the subjectivities of its participants. Nor do I claim to know or fully represent the experiences of my interview participants. Rather, I am interested in thinking about how the Dyke March tells us something about who marching dykes are and how they are becoming certain subjects by marching. In other words, I am interested in how the Dyke March is discursively produced through participant interviews and archival texts. Deborah Britzman conducted an ethnography of the experiences of student teachers, in which she explains that rather than trying “to represent ‘the real story of learning to teach’” she tried to focus on “how ‘the real’ of teaching is produced as ‘the real story’” (2000: 31). Similarly, in my research, I am trying to move beyond representing the real story of Dyke March and what it means to be a marching dyke. Instead, I focus on how the ‘real’ of the Dyke March and of marching dyke subjectivities are produced as ‘real stories’. What ethnography can do for me in this research process is to foster “the task of tracking the processes by which power/knowledge is produced at a local level” (S. Brown 2003: 70).

Britzman (2000) lists three of the attractive qualities that she finds in ethnographic research. She argues that “ethnography is both a process and a product,” that “good ethnographic texts tell stories that invariably embody qualities of a novel,” and that “ethnography takes the reader into an actual world to reveal the cultural knowledge working in a particular place and time as it is lived through the subjectivities of its inhabitants” (27). As Britzman explains, these qualities promise the production of truth, suggesting that the ethnographer can offer accurate and truthful accounts based on the research experience and on the accounts of her participants (28). Drawing on poststructural theory, however, she disrupts the assumptions about truth claims and
cohesive narratives offered by traditional ethnographies. As Britzman writes, “the ground upon which ethnography is built turns out to be a contested and fictive geography” (28). Indeed, she argues that in a poststructural ethnography, “the authority of ethnography, the ethnographer, and the reader is always suspect” (28). In this research, I am assembling and engaging with a rich set of narratives about the Dyke March in order to think about how the March works and who the participants imagine themselves to be.

Many scholars have observed that ethnography and genealogy may initially appear to be at methodological odds with one another because of their distinct disciplinary histories and practices (see, for example, Tamboukou and Ball’s [2003] edited collection). However, they can work in complimentary and productive ways in the search for understanding the power/knowledge relationship. As Stephanie Brown argues, “I am advocating ethnographies that take the very processes of knowledge production as their object” (2003: 74). This point is more fully elaborated upon by Kari Dehli, who explains that

Ethnography attends to the textures and ambivalence of particular lives and places in ways that can and should make a mess of neat categories and tidy analytical schemas. But while ethnography can defy generalization and certainty in one way, genealogy insists on ‘making the familiar strange’ in other ways, making us re-think or un-think the categories and procedures through which we know and account for experience and identity, including ethnographic knowledge and accounts. (2003: 136-137)

While ethnography and genealogy have distinct roots, I draw on many scholars who argue that, despite their differences, poststructural genealogies and ethnographies can work productively
together (Britzman 2000; Dehli 2003; St. Pierre 2000a; Tamboukou and Ball 2003). Tamboukou and Ball argue that genealogy and ethnography share what they call “several orientations and points of reference” (2003: 3). Both genealogy and ethnography are forms of research that can challenge universalism and the assumed relationships between “reason, knowledge, progress, and freedom” (4), and further, which can challenge positivist, scientific research models (5). They can also both be based in critical perspectives that understand knowledge and truth as situational, allowing for the possibility to think the unthinkable (4). Both genealogy and ethnography are able to problematize how dominant systems of knowledge and power relations become the common-sense ways of knowing in the world and therefore challenge forms of power/knowledge that are manifest in our day to day lives (5). In these ways, working genealogy and ethnography together offer some exciting and productive possibilities. Indeed, “the tensions produced by epistemological incongruities can be used creatively to escape from the theory or research ‘as usual’ and to evade the seductive tyrannies of comfortable binaries” (10).

One of the points of tension between ethnography and genealogy is how the researcher is positioned in each. As Tamboukou and Ball explain, the ethnographer is both inside and outside of the research process, simultaneously participating in and reflectively distancing herself away from the focus of study (2003: 11). The genealogist critiques the possibility that the researcher might be able to distance herself from the process and is skeptical about “the possibility of ever standing outside ‘the social’” (12). The ethnographer is traditionally posed to discover, to research and to address a particular social problem, while the genealogist understands the social problem as emerging as one of many possible and contestable interpretations (12-13). This is a rupture which may not have an immediate resolution, but a tension which offers contradictory possibilities from which the research process might emerge. Britzman’s reflections are useful
It is not the ethnographer’s work to ‘bestow’ or to ‘disavow’ the verisimilitudes of others. Instead, the problem is to theorize the modes of intelligibility that constitute subjects. The problem is not one where the ethnographer authenticates a particular truth. Rather, the ethnographer traces, but not without argument, the circulation of competing regimes of truth. (2000: 36, emphasis added)

Here, Britzman is arguing for an ethnographic research project which uses, as its foundation, a poststructuralist, genealogically-informed inquiry. I understand myself as a researcher committed to both genealogical and ethnographic methodologies. Following Britzman, I am interested in how particular truths about the Dyke March emerge and circulate, in how the Dyke March organizes its various modes of intelligibility. By interrogating the stories told to me by interview participants, the written word in the archive, and my own participatory experiences in the Dyke March, I am attempting to interrogate these modes of intelligibility that constitute the subject of the Dyke March. What truths are told about the Dyke March and its marchers? Further, I want to understand why the Dyke March is a consciously important social-spatial intervention in both Pride celebrations and in the city of Toronto. Together, genealogy and ethnography offer the tools for analysis which enable these questions to be asked.

3.3.1 Participant Observation

For this research, I participated in the Toronto Dyke March events of 2008 and 2009. I audio-recorded field notes of my own experiences and observations. What is captured in this thesis is connected to my own experiences as an ethnographer and as a Dyke March participant.
While I seek to represent how particular realities come to be understood as true, in the Foucaultian sense, I am aware that my own experiences, both of those in this ethnography and of previous Marches, have shaped my interpretation of the ethnography, and further have shaped the interviews and interpretations of them. In other words, though this is not unique to this methodological approach, I consciously understand myself to be an active participant in the production of knowledge in this research.

I further characterize my approach as a visual ethnography in which I photographed and video recorded the Dyke March. As Sarah Pink explains, “when ethnographers produce photographs or video, these visual texts, as well as the experience of producing and discussing them, become part of their ethnographic knowledge” (2007: 21). I wanted to be able to watch and participate in events as much as possible, and taking traditional fieldnotes during the day would have hindered this possibility given how quickly the events occur. Taking field notes would have meant looking away to write, and I would have likely missed moments or experiences that happened abruptly. Instead, I made use of photography and videorecording “as a notebook” and “as memory, illustration and testimony for ethnographic description” (Canal 2004: 32). This allowed me to participate in the events as well as record them for my own notes. The purpose of collecting the images was to help my own recollection of the events throughout the day. I was challenged, as a researcher, to try to capture some of the ephemeral quality of the Dyke March, and photography and video recording seemed like the best way to record this brief moment in time and space so that I might better reflect on events afterwards. Using cameras also helped me to document the visual and audio impact of the Dyke March, adding an important dimension to memories and written descriptions. Obviously the images that I recorded frame perceptions of the events from my perspective. As Sarah Pink writes,
the inevitable interlinking between personal and professional understandings, agendas and intentions means that ethnographers’ professional approaches to visual images and technologies cannot essentially be separated from their personal approaches and a reflexive approach to one’s own visual practices is important for ethnographic and artistic work. (2007: 33)

Visual ethnographers need to be conscious and conscientious about the contexts and conventions of photography at the local level (Pink 2007: 41). Sarah Pink explains that in the context of her own research of bullfights in Spain, photography was quite common – people took photographs during the events, and bullfighters were often photographed by fans before, during and after fights. Thus, “in this research context public photography was freely permitted and acceptable” (54). Similarly, in contemporary Toronto and similar North American cities, the number of recording devices in public spaces are increasing, from cameras and videorecorders, to the same technologies on cell phones, and using these technologies in public spaces is relatively commonplace. Further, at Pride events, like at any large-scale public event in Toronto, taking pictures and videorecording has become not only common, but expected. Many of the spectators who line the streets of the Dyke March have cameras. While a video camera on a tripod might have been somewhat more exceptional, given the relatively large mass of spectators and media reporters present, a video camera was not so out of the ordinary. However, as I examine below, the increased presence of recording technology has implications for how people participate in the Dyke March, as people are conscious of the increasing ways in which images of themselves can move quickly through both news and social media.

I have spent a lot of time thinking about the act of photographing events at the Dyke
March because of the history of hostility encountered by participants in relation to men who seek to take photographs of topless women. Many participants have complained about the large number of cameras which line the streets of the March, particularly when they are held by men who are “hoping to snap shots of bare-breasted babes or girl-on-girl action” (Xtra staff 2006). Artist Gaye Chan has a web project titled “Turn the Gays (Gaze) Around!!” in which she assembles photographs from various contributors of what she calls the Dyke March paparazzi (Chan n.d.). The pictures on her website are explicitly not focused on the content of the March, but instead are of the people on the sidewalks who are taking pictures. Many of the people that I interviewed have had negative experiences with voyeurism, usually connected to cameras, and Chan’s web project is an example of trying to reclaim the space for dykes.

However, photography at the Dyke March is not limited to this kind of hostile experience. Many women who participate in the March, either by marching or watching, bring cameras. Many people bring cameras to document themselves and their friends at the event for their own memories and purposes. At the end of our interview, one interview participant, Sarah Martin, generously gave me a disk full of all of her digital photographs of the Dyke March over the years. Frances, another interview participant, used her photographs to help her to remember events as distinct from one year to the next. So while I am conscious of the kind of violation that some cameras enact at the March, photographs are important to many people for a variety of reasons. They were also important for me to develop my own reflections and field notes, and served as an important tool for my own memory of the events. Further, the large number of photographs and videos which are widely available over the Internet have been useful for me, in a more general sense, to try to re-immerse myself in the moments, spaces, and feelings that I experience during the Dyke March; they allow me to see the March from other perspectives.
The ethical issue raised by the presence of cameras heightened similar questions raised more generally by participant observation. It was not feasible for me to receive informed consent, either formal or informal, from participants or observers at the Dyke March. According to article 2.3 of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, “research involving observation of participants in, for example, political rallies, demonstrations or public meetings should not require REB review since it can be expected that the participants are seeking public visibility” (CIHR, NSERC and SSHRC 2005: 34). Given the public nature of the Dyke March, whether it is characterized as a demonstration or parade, seeking consent from participants was not necessary. Certainly it is true that people in attendance at the Dyke March and related events are participating in a public event which is open to the public and news media for all to see. The Dyke March is in part about making ‘queer’ public and about queering public space. However, the introduction of cameras into my documentation of the event complicated the matter for me. The Tri-Council Policy Statement warns that researchers need to be “aware that, in some jurisdictions, publication of identifying information – for example a photograph taken in a public place but focused on a private individual who was not expecting this action – may be interpreted in a civil suit as an invasion of privacy” (35). While I do not think that it could be reasonably argued that anyone in attendance at the Dyke March could have any expectation of privacy, the point raised here hinted at a more subtle issue for me. Sarah Pink emphasizes that “in order to prevent harm being caused, a researcher needs a good understanding of local notions of harm and anxiety, how these may be experienced and how they relate to images” (2007: 55). With this in mind, I was very aware of the history of cameras and voyeurism at the Dyke March, or of “icky spectatorship,” as I came to call it during interviews. I suspected that many people risk attending events at Pride, but hope
not to be “caught” on camera and end up on the evening news, for fear that they may be outed to people who do not already know that they are queer. This suspicion was confirmed by some of my interview participants, and it became apparent that visibility at the Dyke March was a major concern for many people. Therefore the issue of visibility and being seen at the event, and the implications this might have in the rest of their lives, continues to be of concern. Because I was not doing an analysis of the photographs and video as images or texts, but instead was relying on these as memory cues, they are not included in my finished research product. As a result, I decided that photographs and videorecording were only for my own use.

For the events in 2008, I spent time on the Friday evening before Saturday’s Dyke March walking along the March route, trying to prepare myself for the events to come the next day and to think about how space was being used and transformed. I chose a spot where I would set up my camera. On the Saturday, I set up a tripod for my video camera on the west side of Yonge Street, just south of Charles Street. This left my hands free for still photography with a digital camera, and allowed me some mobility to take photographs from different angles, which was useful when people stepped out in front of the video camera. With the use of both cameras (as well as another digital camera in the hands of my partner, who stood next to me and served as my unofficial assistant), I simply tried to photograph as much as I could, trying to “capture” as many of the groups, signs, people, and moments that passed me by. Following the Dyke March, I went to the beer garden, because I had a sense from previous personal experiences and casual

\[\text{\textsuperscript{12}}\text{At 2:00, the time of the Dyke March, the sun is usually very hot and there are very few viewing areas that are in the shade. As the afternoon progresses, the buildings on the west side of the street provide shade on the sidewalk. However, spectators on the west side of the street must wait until the conclusion of the Dyke March in order to cross Yonge Street and access the Pride spaces. Spectators on the east side of the street do not get the relief from shade in the later afternoon, but do have the mobility available to them to leave the viewing area to go and participate in other Pride events. As it turned out, this strategy was less relevant for Dyke March spectatorship than it is for the Pride Parade, which can regularly take several hours to pass by.}\]
conversations that the beer garden played an important role in Dyke Day events for many women. However, the beer garden felt strange and unfamiliar as it was not a space that I had regularly attended in the past and I was unsure about what to ‘look for’. I then walked around the neighbourhood, exploring booths, simultaneously participating and observing what was around me.

I found my experience of observing the 2008 Dyke March to be stressful and difficult. With the exception of my first year at the Dyke March, in all of my previous Dyke March experiences I had participated as a marcher, and always had felt a surge of excitement and passion during the March. My experience as a researcher was frustrating, as I was trying to both capture an “enjoyable experience” as a participant, while simultaneously trying to “think like a researcher.” I found myself overwhelmed with a sense of uncertainty about what a “real researcher” might look for. What was I, as an ethnographer, supposed to be looking for? What was I observing? Throughout the process, though I understood that all researchers have doubts in the moments of research, what was more interesting to me was how I came to realize that my doubts stemmed from questioning the traditional ethnographic process. What I was doing was navigating my way through my data collection and reflecting on my positionality, while also questioning the traditional authoritative voice of the researcher.

In 2009, I was committed to recapturing the empowering and exciting feelings from participating in the Dyke March. I went early and spent time near the intersection of Church and Hayden Streets where people gather before the March. I participated as a marcher. I brought my camera and used it to photograph the participants around me and ‘observable’ moments during the route. I also found myself photographing many people with cameras who were on the sidelines, in the spirit of the Turn the Gays (Gaze) Around! (Chan n.d.) web project. I
encountered a range of stunned and surprised reactions to my own camera’s lens pointed towards them. I felt better about participating in the Dyke March and when the Dykes on Bikes’ engines roared, I felt the surge of excitement. I was relieved to know that my research had not killed my enjoyment of the March. This was important to me because, while I was interested in thinking critically about the Dyke March, I was also quite invested in the pleasure that it brings me. For the rest of the day, I wandered around the booths and stages and took in the events and experiences.

I offer these ethnographic summaries of my experiences of researching the Dyke March as a way of inserting myself into the research project. My own narratives help to crumble the notion that the ethnographer is the detached and all-knowing researcher. I think my ethnographic ambivalence reveals, in part, how the ethnographer is always human, is part of the world that she’s studying, and brings with her a particular positionality. While this is traditionally conceived of in terms of the components of identity (gender, race, class, sexuality, etc.), it is also important to remember that the researcher is always also a learner. As Britzman writes,

Poststructuralism disturbs the ethnographer’s confidence in ‘knowing’ experience or in possessing the writerly power to do anything else but borrow discourses and tack them onto other discourses. For the poststructuralist, ‘being there’ does not guarantee the truth. Thus, the tradition of ethnographic authority derived from participant observation becomes a site of doubt, rather than a confirmation of what exists prior to representation. These positions undermine the ethnographic belief that ‘reality’ is somehow out there waiting to be captured by language. (2000: 32)
Not only does poststructuralist ethnography disturb the positionality of the authoritative ethnographer at the conclusion of the study, but it does so at the beginning and in the middle of it as well. As I have reflected on my ethnographic notes, videos and images throughout the research process, I have come to understand the importance they have played as memory. Reviewing the images has functioned effectively as a memory cue so I can re-see the signs, crowds and spaces that I occupied and that surrounded me during the day’s events. While I might not have known exactly ‘how’ to be a researcher, allowing myself to work from within this uncertainty in the moment of data collection was incredibly useful. I came to understand that many of my doubts were in fact about the ways in which I was struggling to step outside of traditional research processes – instead, I was looking for ways to try and do it differently. While it is possible that not knowing how to be an ethnographer meant that I overlooked some things, perhaps it also allowed me to see other things and kept me from being too narrow-minded during my data collection.

3.3.2 Interviews

While the visual ethnography served as a documentation of the Dyke March and related events, interviews served as biographical accounts of experiences and reflections. Interviews offered the opportunity to understand participants’ meaning-making experiences, as well as their political engagement with the Dyke March. I conducted 30 interviews with 31 people. All interviews were one-on-one interviews with the exception of one two-on-one interview. Interviews ranged from 25 minutes to over 2 hours in length, depending on people’s knowledge, experiences, and how much they liked to talk and tell stories. I conducted semi-structured interviews for this project. By semi-structured, I borrow from Berg (2004: 81), who explains that in the semi-standardized interview there are questions and topics predetermined by the
researcher, but the researcher does not need to adhere rigidly to the interview schedule; rather, she may digress in order to more fully explore an idea that comes up in the course of the interview. Further, I used open-ended questions. As Hollway and Jefferson explain, in the qualitative interview process, the researcher should “use open-ended not closed questions, the more open the better” (2000: 34) in order to elicit more in the participants’ responses (see Appendix D for my Interview Guide).

I spoke with a variety of people about their experiences with the Dyke March, including March organizers, people who have consistently participated in the March, people who have attended some of the first Marches, people who have never marched, and people who have been alienated from or felt rejected by the March. I spoke with people with a wide variety of opinions and ideas about the March’s purpose and meaning. Some of the participants were people I knew, others were strangers. I was initially interested in speaking with women who do not attend the March at all, but who attend the Pride Parade on the Sunday. These women were particularly difficult to find, I think, because in principle, recruiting people who do not do something is more difficult than recruiting people who do. I can only speculate inconclusively as to why people may have not been interested in speaking with me, regardless of their levels of participation in the Dyke March.

I recruited participants through snowball sampling and word of mouth. I began by circulating my call for participants (see Appendix A) via email to all of the people that I knew who I thought might be interested or who might know people who were interested in speaking with me. Many replied and told me that they had forwarded my email to people and lists of people that they knew. The responses to my call for participants often cited friends who had forwarded the email to them. I was overwhelmed by the fast and massive response to my call.
My research ethics proposal was approved on June 17, 2008. I sent out my initial call for participants a week later and very quickly was fielding interest in the project.

As Kennedy with Davis write about their own researcher positionality, “the common bond of lesbianism and familiarity with the social context did not make positioning ourselves in relation to the complex and powerful forces of class, race, and gender oppression – not to mention homophobia – easy” (1996: 173). While I think that my own queer and woman identities lent me some credibility as a researcher on a topic about queer women, it did not necessarily always serve in this way, especially for people who did not know me. I recognize that my other identity markers, including my whiteness and class, meant that I was more easily exposed to other people who are part of similar social groups.

I was incredibly overwhelmed with how quickly I accumulated a large number of people who expressed interest in participating in my research. Many people replied promptly and eagerly to my call, and in less than two months I had conducted nineteen of my interviews. I believe that this was partly due to my timing, as I was able to send out my call for participants at the height of the 2008 Pride season. However, of that first group of nineteen, seventeen participants identified as white, identities that I did not know until the time of our face-to-face interview. I still remain unclear as to why only two participants of colour approached me. Any guesses as to why this was the case would only be conjecture. My calls for participants were circulated widely, and I know that friends had circulated my call to listservs which were made up of all or mostly people of colour. In other words, people of colour were included and targeted in my initial recruitment efforts. I am aware that my whiteness may have functioned as a deterrent for some people, who might not trust me, or who may have been suspicious that my research might not benefit communities of colour.
After I had completed the first nineteen interviews, I stopped accepting new requests for interviews. I sent out a new call for participants which specifically addressed people of colour (see Appendix B). I sent this call to the same initial list of people as the first call, hoping that the increased specificity might encourage previously reluctant participants to step forward. I also emailed the group of people who had expressed interest in participating in the research but with whom I had not yet scheduled interviews. Drawing on my social contacts, I asked friends to forward the call to listservs that circulated among people of colour. I also created leaflets with a printed version of my call for participants and left them on tables for distribution at 2009 Mpenzi: Black Women’s International Film and Video Festival, as well as at 2009 Inside Out Lesbian and Gay Film and Video Festival. I was successful in recruiting more people of colour into my study, and in the end eleven of thirty-one participants identified as people of colour. I would have been more satisfied with a larger number of people of colour. However, because of the early surge in interest, I had quite quickly accumulated a large collection of data and I wanted to be sure that I would have the opportunity to work closely with all of it. It is also worth noting that diversity among participants went beyond race, and there was diversity across gender, sex and sexuality, ability, age and life experiences. Future research projects that I conduct will consider more carefully at the outset how I might target diverse populations in interview recruitment.

Interview participants ranged in ages from eighteen to sixty-four years old. Nineteen participants identified as white, with some specifying as French, Polish, Jewish or of unknown origins. One participant identified as Métis; one as biracial, Micmac and Scottish; one as mixed race, half Indian and half British; three as Black; four as Chinese, three identified as from Hong Kong; and one as South Asian. Participants identified a wide range of gender and sexual
identities, though the majority identified as female or woman, and as lesbian, dyke, bisexual or queer. Many pointed out the limitations of available identity categories for themselves, and some embodied this articulation by identifying as genderqueer or by referencing a sense of flux around their gender and sexual identities. Most participants identified as able-bodied, though some identified disabilities. Class identities ranged from poverty or working-class to solidly middle-class, and some participants spoke about moving between classes. My demographic position as a graduate student with the potential for upward mobility connected me to a high number of participants who were recently or currently enrolled in graduate level education. All of the participants had attended some form of post-secondary training, whether or not they had completed it or it was in progress, and at least 17 participants were enrolled in or had completed a graduate degree. Participants had a very high level of education, and this is likely related to my networks. I cannot speak to whether or not this is a reflection of March participants more generally.\footnote{In Appendix E, I have included brief sketches of each interview participant to give the reader a fuller sense of the individual. Because of the complexities of identities and the limitations of categorizations, I have found that offering these autobiographical sketches is a more practical way in which to paint a picture of those involved in the research process. It also allows me to be more brief with introductions of each participant in the analysis, to avoid weighing down the analysis with biographical details. While these details are very important, they can serve as a distraction to the point trying to be made in the analysis.}

I offered confidentiality to all participants in this study in my Letter of Informed Consent (Appendix C). However, confidentiality was not always desirable. In her study of a 1970s lesbian community in Toronto, Becki Ross (1995) explains that most researchers who conduct interviews with lesbians have been very careful about ensuring confidentiality for their participants (see, for example, Kennedy and Davis 1993). It is often the case that people are not ‘out’ in all aspects and areas of their lives, and so the real threat of breaking confidentiality for
these researchers is even more pressing. Knowing the pressures and dangers present in potential participants’ lives requires me to ensure confidentiality to all. That said, in Ross’ study, she found that all but one of the participants she interviewed insisted that their real names appear in her study, because, as she writes, “they argued strongly for visibility on strictly political grounds as a way of lesbianly claiming pride in themselves and their community” (1995: 18). Keeping this in mind, I offered the option for participants to be identified by their real name or by a pseudonym, and I asked those requesting confidentiality to choose a pseudonym for themselves. For those participants who were not sure about whether or not they wanted to be identified by their real name, I encouraged them to opt for a pseudonym. In this research, participants who are identified by pseudonyms are only identified with a first name, and otherwise I use participants’ full names. All identifying links between names and data was stored safely in my home office.

I asked participants to choose the location for the interview so that they would feel more comfortable. Most interviews were conducted in person in a coffee shop or restaurant, and some were conducted in participants’ homes. Most of the interviews were conducted in Toronto, though three were conducted in Hamilton. One interview was conducted over email, and another over the phone. All interviews were conducted between July 1, 2008 and November 20, 2009. All interviews were transcribed verbatim. Interview participants were asked if they would like to review the transcript, and for those who opted to do so, they were emailed to the participants before they were incorporated into my analysis. This meant that participants could play a more active role in reflecting on the content of our conversation and remove any details that they did not want me to use. Though most changes made by participants were relatively minor, correcting their stories and accounts of events, a few asked for more revealing details about their lives to be removed to protect their anonymity.
Kennedy with Davis’ (1996) approach to researching the lesbian community in Buffalo in the 1940s and 1950s recognizes that while they were not a part of the community at that time, that they had come into the community in later years. This connection and occasional temporal overlap with community members helped the researchers to make connections and bridge some of the power hierarchies in the research. One approach they took with their participants was to explain that they “wanted to know more about [their] history, and to record that history for future generations” (1996: 177). While I did not participate in the Dyke March or the dyke community in the 1990s and even very early 2000s, I do now participate in these communities and similarly have a vested interest in participating and engaging with the living history of the Dyke March and community. I expressed this commitment to the historical project to participants, who were quite receptive and enthusiastic about this particular aspect of the project.

The stories told by my interview participants revealed the discourses, subject positions, and power relations which circulate amongst queer women’s communities in Toronto. There were many stories of shared understandings of, for example, the significance of the Dyke March, which emerged quite regularly as a theme. There were of course also stories of dissent – stories which helped to reveal how no single understanding of the Dyke March is a full and complete picture. I looked for common themes and moments of similarity and difference and these form the basis of my analysis.

I take the words spoken by my interview participants to be their truths. I am not interested in ‘proving’ my participants right or wrong, or in suggesting that I have a better or deeper understanding of their lives than they do. I share Elizabeth St. Pierre’s (2000b) research interest. She writes: “I have become increasingly interested in how women construct their subjectivities within the limits and possibilities of the discourses and cultural practices that are
available to them” (258). I am similarly interested in reflecting on how people understand the Dyke March and dyke subjectivities in the context of the circulating discourses and cultural practices available in the contemporary moment. This interest reveals a tension between poststructural theory and ethnographic practices. As St. Pierre asks:

How in the world can I presume to continue to interpret the lives of my participants, lives they have lived for decades within one theoretical description of the world, using another theoretical description that is committed to the persistent critique of all claims to truth, including the truth of their lives, the Truth of the logos? What does this mean? What kind of ethnographer am I? What kind of feminist am I? (2000b: 273)

St. Pierre’s reflection is complex. What I hope I am able to do in this research is to legitimize the experiences and truths of people’s lives. St. Pierre’s further reflections are useful here, as she comments on the different theoretical lenses that researchers and their participants might use to view and understand the world. She writes,

I expect that each researcher will have to struggle in this unintelligible space, taking notes of the features of the landscape in order to tell us about the spikes and chasms and rhizomes of the map that precedes her territory. All I can say is that even though disjunction is a place of discomfort, it is also a site of affirmation, since there is the possibility of living differently. (275)

As I spent time re-listening to the interviews and re-reading the interview transcripts, I focused
on finding common themes, common stories and common experiences. I also searched for
disjunctures in the stories told, for fissures in the way in which people accounted for themselves,
and for contrasting experiences amongst participants. I was less interested in searching for a
cohesive narrative to bring all of the transcripts together than I was in looking for how the
interview participants’ stories revealed discourses, subject positions and relations of
power/knowledge. I was similarly interested in the overlaps and contradictions between the
interview participants and the materials found in the archive.

3.3.3 Digging in the Archive

Research that did not directly involve participants was based on an analysis of news and
media archives of the Toronto Dyke March, including The Body Politic,\textsuperscript{14} Xtra!,\textsuperscript{15} and Siren.\textsuperscript{16} A
difficulty that I encountered in my research process was that the Canadian Lesbian and Gay
Archive closed in May 2008 for a major move to a new home. Their reopening was delayed
many times until September of 2009. While I had hoped to be able to get working on the archive
immediately after completing my thesis proposal, particularly to gain access to the Xtra! and The
Body Politic archives, I found myself stalled. In the meantime, I was fortunate to find an archive

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\textsuperscript{14} The Body Politic was a Canadian monthly gay liberation periodical printed on newsprint, based out of Toronto. It ran from 1971-1987. The magazine was published by a collective, who in 1975, were incorporated as Pink Triangle Press.

\textsuperscript{15} Xtra! is a currently a bi-monthly gay magazine printed on newsprint. It began in 1984 as a four page tabloid in The Body Politic, but when that publication folded, Xtra! began to publish in the form of a longer newsprint magazine. Xtra! is published in Toronto by Pink Triangle Press. In 1993, it expanded to Ottawa and Vancouver and now prints three papers: Xtra!, Capital Xtra! and Xtra! West.

\textsuperscript{16} Siren was a bi-monthly Canadian magazine which was aimed at lesbians and published in Toronto. It ran from 1995-2004.
in the Sexual Diversity Studies Program at University College at the University of Toronto.\textsuperscript{17}

I went through all of the issues of all of the newspapers from their beginning in 1971 until the summer of 2009. While the Dyke March did not emerge as an event until many years after the first publication in \textit{Xtra!}, going through these papers was an incredibly useful way to feel more connected to the moments and events that were making it into gay news. Though I have read many secondary historical accounts of the 1970-1990s, I felt more closely connected to the everyday-ness of the local histories by reviewing these newspapers. I used a scanner to copy any article that mentioned Dyke March.\textsuperscript{18} Both \textit{The Body Politic} and \textit{Xtra!} have been critiqued over the years for being publications predominantly by and about gay men. The very limited coverage of the first Dyke Marches, either in 1981 or in 1996, are evidence of the minimal coverage of women’s organizing and activism.

I also went through the incomplete \textit{Siren} archive found in the New College Library at the University of Toronto. The University of Toronto’s collection is missing many issues of the newspaper from the later years, though it was especially in the first five years of its publication, which paralleled the first five years of the Toronto Dyke March, that these magazines were most important for my work and for which the collection was most complete. It was in these years that the coverage seems to have been fullest for the Dyke March, and the thrill of the first March is well-captured, as well as some of the ensuing controversies, such as whether or not the Dyke March would continue to be sustained as an event. Similarly, I scanned and copied all articles

\textsuperscript{17} I am grateful to Nicholas Matte for informing me that University College at the University of Toronto had its own complete archive of these papers, a donation from David Rayside’s personal collection. I am grateful to David Rayside for being the meticulous collector of the papers, and for knowing that they would be useful to someone, someday. They certainly have been to me.

\textsuperscript{18} I include articles, photo spreads, or advertisements explicitly for the Dyke March in this summary: I found a total of three (3) in \textit{The Body Politic} and thirty (30) in \textit{Xtra!}. 
about the Dyke March from this magazine. Scanning was useful so that I could easily revisit articles throughout the various stages of my analysis.

The results of this archival research resulted in assembling less material than I initially expected to find. I critically analyzed the articles that did mention the Dyke March in a similar way to the interview transcripts in order to understand the circulating discourses that emerged from them. They were useful for rich descriptions, for details of the historical moment, and also revealing in terms of how discourses, power relations and subjectivities emerged around dyke subjectivities and experiences. Some other assorted articles from the Toronto Star were located upon my visit to the Canadian Gay and Lesbian Archives. These were revealing in a different way. While the gay and lesbian newspapers revealed ‘insider’ perspectives, mainstream news sources revealed a perspective ‘outside’ of dyke organizing in Toronto. Combining the archive with the interview transcripts offered a greater diversity of perspectives on the Dyke March. March participants often made reference to or were familiar with representations in the media. Therefore, it was important for me to understand the circulating discourses that emerged from the news sources in combination with those from the interviews in order to develop a more complex understanding.

* * *

Using these methodological tools and sources of data, I set off to analyze the Toronto Dyke March. Collectively, I have memories, representations, and observations from the past and present with which to analyze the March. All of my data collection techniques contribute to the genealogy, though some certainly contribute to the historical record more directly than others.
The order in which I conducted my data collection ended up, somewhat intentionally, and somewhat unintentionally, to literally form a descending analysis. Once I had completed my proposal and submitted my ethics application, I was anxious to get started. At that time I also put out a call for participants to be interviewed and spent much of the summer interviewing people. Because of the delay in accessing the news archives, however, I was in fact unable to conduct a typical ascending analysis of the emergence of the March. Despite my theoretical leanings, I felt compelled to attempt to reconstruct a time line before I conducted my interviews. However, the delay in accessing the newspaper archive meant that I came to learn much of the history of events through disjointed stories and accounts, as told to me by interview participants. I was later able to piece together these histories with news sources once I gained access to the archive. It was partly because of this unexpected process that I came to understand how a theoretical positioning could be practiced.

In the following chapter, I ask how the Dyke March comes into being in this time and place? How did it emerge? I think my arrival to the answers to these questions is very much in the spirit of genealogy. I began my research by talking to people who, it might be argued, are the places of subjugated knowledge. Some, though few, knew much of the history of the Dyke March. From there, I was able to slowly piece together a sense of how and why the Toronto Dyke March has come to be the phenomenon that it is in this present time and place.

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20 I am grateful to the Research Ethics Board at the University of Toronto, particularly my anonymous reviewer, for quickly processing my ethics application in time for me to conduct research at the Dyke March of 2008.
CHAPTER 4: THE EMERGENCE OF THE TORONTO DYKE MARCH

4.1 Introduction

The Toronto Dyke March has come to be one of the major events during Pride, and occurs annually on the Saturday afternoon of the weekend preceding the Sunday Pride Parade. As I explained in my methodology chapter, I am interested in examining both the historical and contemporary components of the Dyke March, not as a way to reconstruct a neat and tidy linear narrative, but in order to examine the multiple discourses that are at work in shaping the Dyke March as a contemporary phenomenon. I am also committed to offering historical details which have not been highlighted in the historical record. In this and later chapters, I am, in part, looking for the subjugated knowledges, particularly the voices of queer women, to tell a story about how the Dyke March comes to be. The voices of queer women can be understood as subjugated both from mainstream heteronormativity and from white gay male homonormativity, but must also be understood as multiple, complex and layered. To think of subjugated knowledges in relation to the emergence of the Dyke March is to examine what Foucault calls a “historical knowledge of struggles” (1980: 83). Therefore, in this chapter I ask: How does the Dyke March emerge in this particular time and place?

I begin by considering the implications of reconstructing a time line while simultaneously problematizing the ‘truth’ of history and of the Dyke March. I then offer a brief historical context for the Canadian gay and lesbian liberation movement. I outline in greater detail the context leading up to the 1981 Dykes In the Street March in Toronto. I follow this with some historical material from the 1980s and early 1990s, and then explore the 1993 Dyke March on the White House, organized by the Lesbian Avengers as a part of the March on Washington. The
chapter concludes with a discussion of the 1996 emergence of the Toronto Dyke March.

4.2 The Trouble With and Uses of History

An important aspect of this research is to try to uncover a sense of the historical time line of events that led to the Toronto Dyke March becoming an annual event. In order to do this, I find myself needing to retell some of the stories of gay and lesbian liberation movement history, particularly those which have become a part of the movement’s ‘master narrative.’ I need to do this partly because I am writing back to the heteronormative local and national narratives which do not often include queer communities, unless they are instances which are heralded as moments of progress and used to indicate a kind of ‘enlightened’ national identity. I am thinking here, for example, of the ways in which the legalization of same-sex marriage in Canada has been discursively constructed in such a way that Canada is celebrated as a leader in social issues relating to human ‘diversity,’ quietly disregarding the long history of struggle, the more contemporary conservative backlash over marriage, and further disregarding the on-going ways in which marriage contributes to the continued perpetuation of inequities and the reinscription of whiteness and ability in Canada (see Lenon 2005; 2008; Thorpe 2005).

Gay and lesbian struggles are often left out of national and local narratives, and so retelling the stories of these struggles is one way of trying to queer these narratives. However, within the context of a story of gay and lesbian liberation movement history, there also emerges a white, gay, homonormative historical narrative which highlights the stories of some while excluding the stories of others. Why do we continue to retell the same dominant discourses of political movement histories? I am certainly not the only person to be struck by this conundrum. Becky Thompson (2002) describes her eagerness to engage with a body of literature which chronicles Second Wave feminism, but notes that upon reading it she found herself concerned
with how the continued retelling of this period in feminist organizing and activism had become a
hegemonic version of feminism, leaving out the voices and actions of women of colour, or
including them only as an add-on. In response, she reconstructs a time line of Second Wave
feminism which counters the hegemonic version, arguing that “constructing a multiracial
feminist movement time line and juxtaposing it with the normative time line reveals the
competing visions of what constitutes liberation and illuminates schisms in feminist
consciousness that are still with us today” (338). This important project reveals complexity and
multiplicity in an otherwise linear story.

A more comprehensive retelling of queer women’s histories is beyond the scope of my
research. I hope to be able to contribute to this larger project by inserting Dyke March moments
into the historical narratives in order to add new retellings of queer histories. I am committed to
uncovering both women’s and queer histories, and though there have been many scholars and
archivists committed to preserving memories, much still goes unrecorded, particularly around
queer women’s histories. As Becki Ross writes in the context of her own coming out process,
“when I first came out, even the immediate lesbian past seemed remote; I joined a collective state
of unknowing that is both personally disabling and politically dangerous” (1995: 4). Ross’s point
is reflective of both women’s and lesbians’ histories, as well as the histories of those who are
repeatedly marginalized because of differences of gender, sexuality, age, race, class and/or
ability. While I was initially surprised, in conversations with interview participants, by how few
had much or any sense of the Dyke March’s history, upon reflection, I realized that it was only
because of my own academic interest in the topic that I had personally come to know any of this
history. Many expressed surprise when I provided them with historical ‘facts’ about the March –
surprised that its history is not very long, or surprised that they had, for example, unknowingly
participated in the ‘first’ March. The historical trajectory offered in this chapter is thus a more traditional, chronological time line that serves to contribute to the remembering of queer women’s histories.

The caveat I offer here is that any chronology is always partial. Importantly, though, it is the reassembling of this time line that leads me to be able to ask further questions about truths and discourses that are at work in the Dyke March. By both reassembling and unraveling stories, I am searching for the ways that particular ‘truths’ about the Dyke March circulate and for the ways in which particular subject positions are called into being. I acknowledge that there are risks in the retelling of historical narratives – that I risk reinscribing some discourses and contributing to particular truth-telling, while observing others. I also understand that, as Joan Wallach Scott writes, “history is as much of the object of analytic attention as it is a method of analysis” (1988: 3). It is thus through these histories of gay and lesbian liberation, of lesbian feminist and queer activism, and of Dyke March narratives, that I have come to the analytical questions which shape the rest of this dissertation. It is in the understanding of particular ‘truths’ that my research enters into the moment, asks questions about what stories have not been told, and what other kinds of knowledges have continued to be subjugated.

During interviews, when I did make connections between participants’ experiences and historical moments, some individuals were more interested than others. As I will examine in the next chapter, while establishing a clear sense of a time line was important to some people, others seemed less concerned with remembering Dyke March histories in relation to a fixed and linear chronology. Rather, they recalled the March in relation to their own lives, lovers, friends and life experiences. The struggle against this kind of linearity is also illustrated in Becky Thompson’s (2002) work which challenges linear historical accounts of antiracist struggles within the feminist
movement. As Thompson so clearly demonstrates, “the struggle against racism is hardly linear [... and...] we must dig deep to represent the feminist movement that does justice to an antiracist vision” (351). Similarly, we must dig deep in queer histories in order to examine the emergence of the Dyke March in such a way that a multiplicity of queer women’s lives are highlighted and queer women’s invisibility is controverted.

Certain moments in our histories come to be thought of as more important than others, and some moments seem to more readily get written as moments of origin. In my literature reviews and data collection, Dyke Marches are not typically represented as moments of origin in the history of gay liberation. Throughout my research, references to Dykes Marches were almost always marginal and brief. One of the burning questions that motivated me to do this research was to consider why it was that the emergence of the Dyke March had not become one of these landmark moments in Canada’s, or Ontario’s, or even Toronto’s gay and lesbian history. But beyond this, I wonder why it is that it is so difficult to write the history of the Dyke March without contextualizing it within this dominant narrative? If the dominant discourse has not highlighted the Dyke March, then why does the telling of its emergence depend on this dominant discourse? Counter-discourses, of course, depend on dominant discourses – they are mutually constituted, for to be counter to something requires that something to exist in the first place. As Foucault reminds us,

we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. ([1978] 1990: 100)
Thus the Dyke March is as much a part of dominant discourses as it is counter to them. Indeed, multiple discourses circulate and are at work in the story of the Dyke March.

Challenging a dominant discourse in order to abstract a new version of the ‘truth’ requires understanding and speaking back to (and with) the dominant. I thus offer a speculative history in order to illustrate the truth that is currently at work. My own research is embedded within and needs to be understood within the context of this trajectory. I re-present some of the gay and lesbian liberation movement history, not to say that it is the definitive truth, nor to say that it is the only truth, but to show that it is in circulation. It is also about not denying its importance. As Becky Thompson writes, in the context of challenging dominant retellings of Second Wave feminism, “this does not mean that the work done within hegemonic feminism did not exist or was not useful” (2002: 349). Rather, an analysis of this work and of the dominant narratives can function to demonstrate the limitations. So in this chapter, I am in part re-telling a familiar story of gay and lesbian history, but with the understanding that I acknowledge the risks in this retelling. What I hope to do is contribute to and challenge these truth-tellings, and through this, examine how the emergence of the Dyke March requires an opening up of broader histories in order to ask questions about what other stories have not yet been told. Thompson argues that “now is the time to interrupt normative accounts before they begin to repeat themselves, each time, sounding more like ‘the truth’ simply because of the repetition of the retelling” (350). In the analysis that follows, I respond to Thompson’s call to interrupt these normative accounts in order to examine the complexity and multiplicity that is at work in the Toronto Dyke March.

**4.3 Early Historical Context**

A number of key texts have emerged in the last twenty years which explore questions of
queer politics, rights, and social movement organizing in Canada.\textsuperscript{21} Many scholars have committed their work to longer and fuller examinations of the gay and lesbian movement in the United States (e.g. Adam 1987; Cruikshank 1992) and in Canada (e.g. Kinsman 1996; M. Smith 1999; T. Warner 2002), and of a comparison of gay and lesbian politics between nations (e.g. Lahey 1999; Rayside 1998, 2008). I highlight some relevant post-World War II historical and geographically-relevant context for a fuller understanding of how the Dyke March emerges.

Prior to 1969, homosexual acts were considered criminal acts in Canada. Through the 1950s and 1960s, gay men and lesbians were understood to be threats to national security (Kinsman 2000: 143; Kinsman and Gentile 2010). Though Canadians did not experience the extremes of McCarthyism as they played out in the United States, there was a similar but quieter and more private kind of persecution going on in Canada (Kinsman in \textit{Stand Together} 2002). Within the national security campaigns, gay men and lesbians were perceived as dangerous to the social and sexual understanding of the nation and became the focus of RCMP investigations and interrogations (Kinsman 1996: 172). Gays and lesbians were thought to suffer from a character weakness which made them vulnerable to blackmail or compromise by Soviet foreign agents (172). Kinsman points out that the only people really trying to blackmail gays and lesbians at this time were the RCMP, who by 1958, were more concerned with the so-called threat of homosexuality than the threat of communism, particularly around those in federal employment

\footnote{\textsuperscript{21} Depending on the historical moment, different language is used to describe the identity politics associated with social and political organizing. I generally use ‘queer’ when making reference to all of the history of organizing efforts as well as in more contemporary efforts. I use the language of ‘gay’ or ‘gay and lesbian’ when it is more historically appropriate. When summarizing literature, I use the language used by the author for accuracy. For discussions about the changing politics of naming the LGBTQ social movement in the United States, see Ghaziani (2008 and 2011). Also see a debate between John Aravosis (2007) and Susan Stryker (2007) on the inclusion of T in LGBT in the context of the American Federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act.}
(in *Stand Together* 2002). Mary Louise Adams echoes this: “that homosexuals were identified as particularly dangerous by the guardians of national security suggests the importance of normative sexuality in the social and political landscape of postwar Canada” (1997: 24). Despite what Gary Kinsman describes as a time of suffocating conformity (*Stand Together* 2002), the 1950s are also observed by him as a time in which gay and lesbian social networks were becoming more established (Kinsman 1996: 161). There was an active resistance to the RCMP investigations, in which gays and lesbians would refuse to cooperate or actively transgress rules and policies (Kinsman 2000: 151). This persecution continued throughout the 1960s and, though intensely less so, into the 1970s.

By 1962, scientists claimed to have developed a technique to detect homosexuality. This technique became known as the “fruit machine” and was based in psychiatry and psychology, disciplines which at this time understood homosexuality to be a kind of disorder. The fruit machine was a battery of tests, including word association tests as well as tests which measured pupillary response to pornographic imagery (Kinsman 1995: 153-158; Kinsman 1996: 177-179). The fruit machine was implemented by the RCMP and was particularly intended to be used on people working in the civil service, the military and the RCMP. Major methodological problems were identified with the tests and the fruit machine test was declared inadequate by 1967 (Kinsman 1995: 159; Kinsman 1996: 181).

While persecution persisted, at the same time, gay and lesbian organizing was growing through the 1960s. According to Kinsman (1996: 224-225), while gay men’s networks grew in bars, steam baths and cruising areas, lesbians’ networks grew out of house parties, workplace

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22 Gary Kinsman explains that the project got the name “fruit machine” from “members of the RCMP who did not want to be recruited to be the ‘normals’ who were to be tested on it” (1996: 178).
networks, women’s sports teams and in butch/femme cultural spaces. As public community spaces such as bars and clubs became more visible, they were subjected to increased police surveillance and raiding (228). In response, gay and lesbian organizations began to form in both the U.S. and Canada through the 1960s. The 1960s is generally seen as “a period of ‘liberal’ reform and restructuring in a climate of general economic and social expansion and social struggle” (266). Discussions of law-reform occurred throughout this decade, and by August of 1969, Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau and the Canadian Parliament decriminalized homosexuality in Canada. Despite legal gains, homosexuality continued to be constructed as ‘sick’ and ‘deviant’ through this time. However, by the early 1970s, gay and lesbian organizing had achieved national recognition and was gaining significant momentum.

The impetus for expanded organizing efforts in the 1970s is tied to the emergence of the gay liberation movement, which is widely considered to have been sparked by the Stonewall Riots in New York City. The Stonewall Riots are most often remembered as a moment of origin. Beginning on the night of June 27, 1969 (technically the early morning hours of June 28), queers rioted for two nights and three days against the police, who had raided the Stonewall Inn, a gay and drag bar in Greenwich Village. While there were certainly important moments of queer organizing both before and after this event, the memory of the Stonewall Riots of 1969 has come to be symbolically pivotal and continues to be a source of pride for many queer people. 

Stonewall is often cited as the first large-scale display of resistance against ongoing police

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23 It is worth noting that in some contexts, homosexuality continues to be constructed as sick or deviant in the contemporary moment. Though this way of thinking is arguably what underlies most forms of homophobia, more explicit examples include the continued use of controversial “reparative” therapies such as conversion therapy, intended to change a person’s sexual orientation back to the so-called normal heterosexuality. This kind of therapy is based on the notion that homosexuality is a kind of mental disorder that can be fixed.
harassment and brutality as well as for queer liberation (e.g. Johnston 2005: 4). More than forty years later, cities around the world continue to host annual pride parade events in June or July in order to commemorate the event, to mark the continued struggles for queer rights, and to celebrate queer pride.

Though Stonewall has come to mark the beginnings of the gay liberation movement, many have critiqued representations of this event as a causal moment in history, or as a moment of origin (e.g. Armstrong and Crage 2006; Stryker 2008a). Indeed, there were many moments of struggle and organizing before Stonewall in which gay liberation was evidently at work. There were also many instances of police harassment, brutality and bar raids. Comparing Stonewall to other similar events which involved police repression around the same time in the U.S., Armstrong and Crage (2006: 729) argue that Stonewall was the first event to have both a high commemorability and a high mnemonic capacity. They argue that both time and place were important to the conscious production of Stonewall into the collective memory and that organizers effectively institutionalized its commemoration with the use of annual parades and the ability to convincingly claim it as the first major riot, even though it was not (725). In comparison to other incidents, such as the New Year’s Ball Raid in San Francisco in 1965, Gene Compton’s Cafeteria Riot in San Francisco in 1966, or the Black Cat Raid in Los Angeles

24 Johnston (2001: 190) notes that while Pride events in the Northern hemisphere are usually held in June and July, Pride events in the Southern hemisphere are usually held in February and March.

25 Six homophile organizations collectively held a New Year’s Day Ball on January 1, 1965 in San Francisco, and though they had informed police in advance of the event, the police harassed, intimidated, degraded and arrested Ball participants. In the legal battles after the event, organizers won the rights to have their privacy respected when lawfully assembling (Armstrong and Crage 2006: 730).

26 Susan Stryker’s (2008a: 65) lengthier discussion of the riots at Compton’s Cafeteria in San Francisco’s Tenderloin district, in which transgender women, gay men and prostitutes fought against police harassment, shows how these events bear remarkable similarities to those at Stonewall, though the Compton’s Cafeteria riots were not reported in local newspapers and police reports on the event have disappeared. Stryker
in 1967, activists either did not attempt to commemorate the event, the event was perceived to be too local, events did not make the news, or the moment was not perceived as relevant enough to the broader gay or homophile organizing efforts. The cumulation of frustration with previous raids, of anger about police brutality, and of building activist energies, and, perhaps also the heat of a late June night, resulted in the events at Stonewall. Stonewall is remembered in a collective memory while other events have virtually been forgotten (Armstrong and Crage 2006).

Armstrong and Crage argue that instead of understanding Stonewall as a moment of origin, Stonewall “is better viewed as an achievement of gay liberation” (725). They further point out that “gay liberation was a precondition for the recognition of the political potential of the situation at the Stonewall Inn” (743). The ‘truth’ of Stonewall, or the powerful and continued circulation of the discursive construction of Stonewall, has continued because of the success of organizers to commemorate the event. So while the Stonewall Riots were not the impetus for queer organizing, they have come to symbolize a landmark moment in North America in which gay resistance was made public.

As I have shown here, the significance of Stonewall as the moment of origin for the gay liberation movement has been critiqued by many. Martin F. Manalansan IV also shows how for Filipino-American gay men, Stonewall is not necessarily an important historical moment that marks their identity in the same way as it might for other Americans, in part because “the closet

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27 The Black Cat Tavern was a gay bar in Los Angeles. During New Year’s celebrations in 1967, plainclothes officers attacked patrons after they kissed for the new year. Police then followed bar patrons to New Faces, another nearby gay bar, and proceeded to beat bar patrons, workers, the manager and the owner. There was an active response from the gay community, who organized a press release and a protest against police brutality (Armstrong and Crage 2006: 734).
and the coming out process are not culturally constituted in the same way” (1995: 434). He describes the public display of gay identity in post-Stonewall events as “superfluous” (434) for the Filipino men in his study. Rather, these men understand the myth of the role of Stonewall as another part of American culture that needs to be navigated in their diasporic lives and experiences (435).

By the early 1970s, gays and lesbians were becoming increasingly visible and community building was growing. While Miriam Smith (2008: 185) argues that earlier homophile organizations of the 1960s were mostly composed of small groups of professionals (and are characterized as less radical), the gay liberation movement of the 1970s had more radical politics that were more attuned to left politics. (Descriptions of those invested in left politics are, curiously, not characterized according to class.) In Toronto, *The Body Politic*, a gay liberation newspaper was founded in 1971. The paper regularly included articles that related gay liberation with radical left politics, often explicitly exploring the connection between gay and socialist liberation. *The Body Politic* can be understood as an example of a very tangible production and circulation of discourses about sexuality. Tom Warner writes that:

In the short period between 1970 and 1974, the new ideology blossomed on several fronts: breaking through isolation and loneliness; rejecting the notions of sin, sickness, and criminality that previously defined homosexuality; fighting against oppression, discrimination, and harassment; asserting pride in same-sex sexuality as good and natural; engaging in aggressive public advocacy for social and legislative reform; and building both a community and a culture based on a commonly shared sexuality. Visibility and organizing became the objectives through which liberation would be attained. (2002: 61)
The early 1970s saw the formation of groups such as Toronto Gay Action, Gay Alliance Toward Equality (GATE), the Coalition for Gay Rights in Ontario, and the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Rights Coalition. These groups were working to make legal changes for gays and lesbians in Canada by focusing on access to rights and legal recognition. GATE, for example, fought for the right to recognition and for the insertion of sexual orientation into the Ontario Human Rights Code, the removal of gross indecency and buggery from the Criminal Code, the equalization of penalties for sexual assault between heterosexual and homosexual acts, the equalization of age of consent laws, the enabling of gays and lesbians to immigrate to Canada, and the end of discrimination in employment or promotion in public service (M. Smith 2008: 185-186). In August of 1971, the first gay demonstration in Canada in front of the Canadian Parliament buildings took place in Ottawa, bringing together twelve gay and lesbian groups under the name of the August 29th Gay Day Committee. Collectively, these groups presented a brief to Parliament with a list of reforms and changes they wanted from the federal government.

Gays and lesbians worked together in these organizations, though at the same time, many lesbians were involved in other organizing efforts. While lesbians struggled against sexism and for voice and visibility within gay organizations, they also struggled against homophobia within mainstream women’s organizations. Some lesbians organized separately as they were primarily concerned with lesbians’ issues. In the late 1970s, “the women’s movement in Toronto was for the most part a loose network of services and single-issue organizations” (Egan 1987: 109). Women’s groups sometimes came together in coalitions, but also were sometimes divided. There were debates, for example, around the political orientation of International Women’s Day, and about how to organize around issues such as reproductive rights, day care, the peace movement, violence against women, and racism and imperialism (Egan 1987). Homophobia and
transphobia were particularly difficult struggles within the women’s movement at this time. Tom Warner (2002) argues that in Canada, lesbian separatism did not manifest in the same ways that it did elsewhere. Instead, he argues that a form of lesbian autonomy emerged in which lesbians made a case that they needed to build their own spaces and communities, but also understood the importance of continuing to work with straight feminists and gay men around particular issues as well (82).

Lesbian groups and co-ops came and went during the early 1970s, including, for example, groups such as Wages Due Lesbians. Lesbians were also organizing conferences both on their own and with gay men. The first lesbian conference in Canada was held in Toronto at the YWCA in 1973 (T. Warner 2002: 82). Others were hosted in Montreal, Toronto and Vancouver and were social, cultural and political events. Tom Warner argues that one of the major differences between autonomous lesbian organizing, as contrasted with gay men’s organizing, was that lesbian groups did not work towards legal changes in this period. Instead, they were focused on creating spaces in which lesbians could feel safe being out (83). Becki Ross (1990a) disagrees and argues that in the 1970s across North America, groups of lesbians emerged in order to effect social and political change. Ross (1990a) notes that the emergence of this form of lesbian feminism distinguished itself from what were considered to be more conservative and assimilationist lesbian organizations from the previous generation, such as the Daughters of Bilitis. She argues that lesbians of this era were also trying to break ties from, or actively forget, the butch/femme bar culture of the previous generations, critiquing it for its mimicry of

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28 Wages Due Lesbians is an international organization that formed in 1975 as a subgroup of Wages for Housework. The Toronto chapter of the organization was quite active and worked to draw attention to how women’s unpaid domestic labour and dependence on men for income was particularly challenging for lesbians (Ross 1995: 53). Wages Due Lesbians continues to fight for wages for all unwaged work (International Wages Due Lesbian n.d.).
heterosexuality. Ross writes that “those with little knowledge of either of these two lesbian subcultures proclaimed the vertigo of starting from scratch” (76). In other words, Ross argues that a denial and forgetting of aspects of lesbian histories such as butch/femme cultures may have been somewhat intentional and strategic for reimagining new forms of identity and politics.

The establishment of the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) in 1976 is a clear example of an autonomous lesbian organization. LOOT shared a rented three-story house at 342 Jarvis Street with two other lesbian-run ventures: The Other Woman, a feminist newspaper, and the Three of Cups Coffeehouse. All together, these groups formed the first Canadian lesbian centre. From 1976 until 1980 when the organization folded, LOOT worked to “claim a collective, empowering public presence in Toronto” (Ross 1995: 11). Even the naming of the group was a political act, as Ross explains, because “against the dual legacy of invisibility and persecution, self-consciously naming oneself a lesbian feminist enacted a direct blow to the hegemonic discourse of female homosexual deviance and perversion” (15). LOOT was not without its own struggles and controversies, such as allowable lesbian behaviour and dress, a transphobic woman-born-woman policy, and the struggle of trying to raise lesbian visibility while simultaneously respecting the material reality that many needed to stay closeted in their everyday lives (Ross 1990a). Despite these challenges, LOOT served as a very important social, cultural and political organization, and hosted many events, meetings, counseling and phone support lines, as well as music practice space for Mama Quilla II, and other events for the

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29 This critique is certainly an oversimplification of butch/femme relationships and much writing has been done on this. For example, see Butler (1991) or Kennedy and Davis (1993).

30 Mama Quilla II was an all-lesbian rock band in Toronto made up of Linda Robitaille (saxophone), Maxine Walsh (congas), Linda Jain (drums), Lorraine Segato (vocals), Susan Cole (vocals and piano), Donna Marchand (guitar), and Susan Sturman (guitar) (Ross 1995: 281). The group was named after Sara Ellen Dunlop’s band Mama Quilla, a band from the early 1970s. The band practiced in the basement of 342 Jarvis
Toronto lesbian community.

An important story in the history of Toronto’s lesbian activism that of the Brunswick Four. On January 5, 1974 at the Brunswick House Tavern’s amateur night in downtown Toronto, Adrienne Potts and Pat Murphy sang “I Enjoy being a Dyke” to the tune of “I Enjoy Being a Girl” by South Pacific. Though they were ordered to leave by the bar’s management, they, along with friends Sue Wells and Heather Beyer, refused. Eight police officers dragged the four women from the bar and as a result, they were injured, harassed and detained. They were not charged, nor were they allowed to phone a lawyer and when they refused to leave the police station, Potts was punched by an officer and thrown to the ground (T. Warner 2002: 40). The women returned to the Brunswick House to find people who had witnessed their treatment by the police, but Beyer, Murphy and Potts were again confronted by the police and “were charged with creating a disturbance and obstructing the police” (McLeod 1996: 149). The community responded by organizing a legal defense fund for the women. Adrienne Potts was later convicted of causing a disturbance and was sentenced to three months probation (171). Murphy and Beyer were acquitted of causing a disturbance charges and Wells was never charged. As Tom Warner writes, “the community response to the police action and charges against the Brunswick Four indicated a radical change in the consciousness of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals, and of a hardening resolve to fight back” (2002: 40-41). In a way, this kind of event helped to strengthen lesbian community organizing in Toronto.

Despite the increasing resolve of the gay and lesbian community, towards the end of the 1970s and into the early 1980s, social and political conservativism grew in Ontario and Canada.
Police regularly conducted bathhouse raids in major cities across Canada as a way to intimidate gay community members (Adam 1987: 118). In August of 1977, twelve year old ‘shoeshine boy’ Emanuel Jaques31 was sexually assaulted and murdered by three men on Yonge Street in downtown Toronto. The event caused a significant amount of controversy and the media fallout erroneously made links between the political demands of the gay and lesbian movement and this event (Stand Together 2002).

In November 1977, a controversial article titled “Men Loving Boys Loving Men” was published in The Body Politic magazine which fueled conservative accusations that gay men were pedophiles.32 Partly justified as a response to the article, on December 30, 1977, police invaded the offices of The Body Politic, causing massive destruction to the premises and seizing mailing lists and evidence of the distribution of ‘immoral and indecent’ materials (Adam 1987: 118). The Body Politic collective was eventually acquitted of all charges, but the case was kept in court for six years, putting a significant financial strain on the collective (Adam 1987: 119). The paper eventually folded in 1987 and was replaced by the bi-monthly publication Xtra!, which continues to be published today.

During this period, the religious right was effectively organizing across North America, especially in the United States. Tom Warner writes that “a cataclysmic convergence of the agendas of the religious right and social and political conservatives rocked lesbian and gay

31 Emanuel Jaques was the son of Portuguese immigrants, and his murder was also a marker of community formation for Toronto’s Portuguese community. While gay men were stereotyped as pedophiles and marked as degenerate, Jaques was simultaneously “mythologized . . . as the ‘innocent victim’” (Newman 2002: 131), resulting in the pitting of Portuguese and gay communities against one another. The Jaques case served, in part, as a justification for a Yonge Street ‘clean up’ (see Newman 2002).

32 For a more in-depth discussion and analysis of the moral panic and regulation around pedophilia, including an analysis of the relationships between men and boys, see Teixeira (2004).
liberation and queer communities in the late 1970s and early 1980s” (2002: 135). Anita Bryant, a famous singer and vocal gay rights opponent, launched the anti-gay rights campaign Save Our Children in Florida and across the U.S., in a sometimes successful attempt at prohibiting gays and lesbians from being hired in public schools. In Toronto, the conservative backlash was marked by Anita Bryant’s tour of Canadian cities in 1977 and 1978. Gays and lesbians organized the Coalition to Stop Anita Bryant which helped to counter some of the conservativism and homophobia. Though gays and lesbians both organized in the struggle against Anita Bryant, some lesbians were troubled by misogynistic and anti-woman responses to Bryant (Ross 1990a). This kind of dissent is not often told in the stories countering Anita Bryant, and writing this piece of sexism and resistance to sexism out of the history is quite troubling.

In 1978, the trials for the murder of Emmanuel Jaques and against The Body Politic garnered a significant amount of national media attention. In his sentencing in the Jaques case, the judge suggested that rather than needing protection in the Human Rights Code, that perhaps people needed to be protected from gays and lesbians (T. Warner 2002: 137). This was but one example of the dominant discourses of homophobia popularly circulating at the time. In the 1980 Toronto municipal election, gay activist and mayoral candidate George Hislop and outgoing mayor and gay rights defender John Sewell were targeted by local conservatives for ‘flaunting’ sexual preference. They were accused of trying to make Toronto the San Francisco of the north.33 Conservative candidate Art Eggleton split the left vote with his anti-gay rhetoric and won the election.

Through the late 1970s, police increased the number of bathhouse raids in Toronto. On

33 By this time in San Francisco, Harvey Milk had been elected as the only openly gay member of city council and was the first openly gay man to be elected in California. Harvey Milk was assassinated on November 27, 1978.
February 5, 1981, police simultaneously invaded four bathhouses, arresting 286 men as “found-ins” and 20 men as “keepers.” This was the third largest mass arrest in Canadian history.\(^\text{34}\)

During the raids, police brought crowbars and sledgehammers and caused a significant amount of property damage. The raids were perceived as an unprovoked attack on the whole of the gay and lesbian community (Stand Together 2002). The following night, the gay and lesbian community responded by holding a huge demonstration that began at Wellesley and Yonge Streets around midnight. Demonstrators marched south along Yonge Street without a formal permit, and people continued to join the demonstration as it moved through the streets. Demonstrators marched to 52 Division police station and were a very angry crowd. A few impromptu marshals managed to reroute the crowd to the parliament buildings at Queen’s Park. Loud protesters were met with severe police brutality and over 300 people were arrested. The bathhouse raids had sparked something among the Toronto gay and lesbian community, and this moment became known, in queer Canadian history, as the Canadian Stonewall (Fumia 2007: 10). Adam writes that “the unintended consequence of police actions was the revitalization of gay organizations that had fallen into some disarray in the 1970s” (1987: 120). George W. Smith (1988) points out that the raid revealed homophobia and heterosexism not only among the police force, but also at a systemic level within the Canadian Criminal Code.

This revitalization has had significant effects for gay and lesbian organizing. Early Pride celebrations in the 1970s in the United States were held at the end of June to commemorate Stonewall. Early Pride celebrations in Canada were held in August, marking the 1969 change to the Criminal Code and also marking the 1971 demonstration on Parliament Hill (T. Warner

\(^{34}\)The largest mass arrest in Canadian history was in June of 2010 at the G20 protests in Toronto when over one thousand people were arrested. The second largest mass arrest, of 497 people, was in 1970 when the federal government declared the War Measures Act in Québec.
2002: 84-85). Through the 1970s, although not marked annually, Toronto Pride events included picnics at Hanlan’s Point,\(^{35}\) film festivals and rallies (Pride Toronto 2011). Through the 1970s and 1980s, organizers continued to make requests to Toronto City Council for official recognition of Pride organizing and for permission to walk down Yonge Street, but these requests were repeatedly denied. In 1981, Lesbian and Gay Pride Day Toronto was legally incorporated as a not for profit organization. 1981 also marked the beginning of regularly scheduled annual Pride events which began in city parks, with increasing numbers of participants every year. Eventually Toronto Pride became a march, and later a parade, but it was not until ten years later, in 1991, that Toronto City Council officially proclaimed Pride Day (Pride Toronto 2011).

One theme that emerges in the retelling of gay and lesbian activist histories is the way in which queer organizing and more aggressive and physical forms of policing and regulation seem to function as catalysts for one another. The riots following Stonewall and the Toronto bathhouse raids are the more obvious examples of this. Rather than imagining this relationship as a simple binary, however, we can use Foucault to understand how policing and gay activism simultaneously draw on power and resistance. As Foucault writes,

Power’s condition of possibility, or in any case, the viewpoint which permits one to understand its exercise, even in its more ‘peripheral’ effects, and which also makes it

\(^{35}\) Hanlan’s Point refers to Hanlan’s Point Beach, located on Toronto Island and along the shores of Lake Ontario. In 2002, the City of Toronto declared Hanlan’s Point Beach as clothing-optional, though it has a history of being used as an unofficial clothing-optional beach as well as a gay men’s cruising space in the tree and bush-lined area next to the beach with informal access points. In the fall of 2010, formal access points were implemented based on ecological and environmental concerns about the protection of vegetation, sand dunes and the shoreline. This raises concerns about the elimination of what Gary Kinsman calls “quasi-public erotic spaces” (in Burrell 2010) and is reminiscent of a history of the policing of Hanlan’s Point and other popular gay cruising spaces in the name of development (see Grube 1997).
possible to use its mechanisms as a grid of intelligibility of the social order, must not be
sought in the primary existence of a central point, in a unique source of sovereignty from
which secondary and descendent forms would emanate; it is the moving substrate of force
relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the
latter are always local and unstable. ([1978] 1990: 93)

Many of the stories of queer organizing are told as a response to overt policing and regulation,
while policing and broader state regulation are also direct responses to queer organizing and the
disruption of heteronormativity. These mutually constituted actions and discourses are also
affected by the broader social and political contexts and climates at work. What might be asked
in this moment is: What is being regulated through the policing? And what is being activated
through policing? Forms of power, control and liberation are manifest in multiple and contested
ways. Power and resistance are always at work and erupt or emerge in ways that are unstable and
unpredictable.

4.4 “Look Over Here, Look Over There, Lesbians Are Everywhere!”: The 1981 Dyke
Marches

In 1981, over the weekend of May 16-18, over 500 women registered and attended the
fifth Binational Lesbian Conference in Vancouver, B.C. According to Chris Bearchell’s article
in The Body Politic, June 1981, the focus of the conference was the meaning of being out as a
lesbian movement. As a part of the conference, approximately two hundred women took to the
streets and marched, chanting “Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere.” At the
time, this march did not symbolize a particularly key moment in history, though it was noted by
Bearchell as “Canada’s first lesbian pride march” and was characterized as “one of the country’s
rowdiest and most boisterous demonstrations” (1981: 10). She writes:

“Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere.” The chant drew the attention of highrise dwellers who hung from their balconies gaping. Along the march route, the din of car horns followed the 200 women who wound their way from Robson’s [sic] Square through downtown streets to the West End Community Centre. (1981: 10)

Not much else seems to have been written about the March, though the same article by Bearchell is noted in Tom Warner’s (2002) history of Canadian queer activism. So while, in some ways, it might be argued that this was the moment of origin for the Dyke March or any kind of queer women’s march organizing, it does not seem to play an equal role in the lore of Canadian gay and lesbian activism as other events do, such as the 1971 demonstration on Parliament Hill, Anita Bryant’s visit to Toronto, the firing of John Damien from the Ontario Racing Commission in 1975 because he was a homosexual, or the bathhouse raids in Toronto.

In April of 1981 in Toronto, Gays and Lesbians Against the Right Everywhere (GLARE) held workshops about how to fight against the right wing. Based on discussions in these workshops, a lesbian conference was organized for May 9, 1981 in which lesbians from a variety

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36 The Vancouver Dyke March website states that the first Vancouver Dyke March occurred in 1979, though provides no other information or context (Vancouver Dyke March and Festival 2011). I have not found any other references to a March in this year. The website also explains that later Vancouver Dyke Marches were organized in the 1980s and 1990s, though states a minimal knowledge about these events (Vancouver Dyke March and Festival 2011). Further research on the history of Vancouver Dyke Marches is needed though is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

37 Toronto and other major urban centres in Canada are hubs of gay and lesbian activism throughout history, though there are many notable exceptions (see T. Warner 2002). In this research, I have focused on Toronto, given the object of my study, but interesting challenges to the historical record from voices outside of major urban centres in Canada are needed to challenge how the ‘main’ story of the history of gay and lesbian activism is Toronto- and urban-centric.
of social and political organizations attended and participated (LAR 1981: 1). One hundred women took part in a forum titled “Lesbians Fighting the Right” and the event seemed to encapsulate an energy: “There was an energy that day which had not been evident among lesbians in this city for quite a while. Now the trick was to keep that energy flowing” (LAR 1981: 1). From this forum, Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) was formed, particularly in response to the closing of both LOOT and the Fly By Night, a popular women’s bar, as well as in response to the sense of growing hostility from police, homophobic groups and, more generally, the right-wing. The massive bathhouse raids occurred in early 1981, and as Sharon D. Stone (1991) explains, even though the raids were not directed towards lesbians, lesbians were feeling increasingly under threat and felt the need to create their own organization. LAR was formed as a way of creating an organization which focused primarily and not secondarily on the concerns of lesbians. Stone writes that “LAR was envisioned as a primarily political organization, informed by a lesbian-feminist analysis of oppression” (237). The make-up of the organization was largely of lesbians with previous left-wing political organizing, feminist organizing, and political protest experience. LAR was dedicated “to protecting the emergence of a right wing backlash against gays and lesbians” and was committed to “giving visibility and a political voice to lesbians” (T. Warner 2002: 182). LAR was, in large part, formed in response to what was understood to be a “particularly repressive social climate of the early eighties” (Stone 1991: 238). Like LOOT, LAR served a dual purpose. While LOOT was more of a community service group, which also served as a way to meet and socialize with other lesbians, LAR was primarily intended to be a politically active organization, but also to serve as a social group (239). Stone writes that:

at the time of LAR’s formation, much was going on in the city to make lesbians feel
threatened and vulnerable, for example, the distribution of virulently anti-lesbian literature. There were fewer and fewer spaces left where it was safe to be openly lesbian. These circumstances were the impetus for the formation of LAR. (248)

LAR folded by 1983, but for the two years in which it organized, the group worked to be a grassroots organization which tried to make links between lesbian and gay, women’s, anti-racist, labour, reproductive-rights, anti-nuclear and anti-poverty movements (T. Warner 2002: 182). Though there were some early debates over LAR’s goals and strategies, LAR was action-oriented, and one of their major actions was the Dykes in the Streets March on October 17, 1981, in coordination with LOOT. LAR produced a pamphlet full of essays and speeches, and in the concluding article described the Dykes in the Streets March:

We organized Toronto’s first lesbian pride march so that lesbians could openly declare our pride and power, happily and without fear. Political dykes, street dykes, bar dykes, gay women, lesbian mothers, socialist feminists, radical feminists, lesbian separatists, working women . . . we were all there. (LAR 1981: 31)

Interestingly, the literature on the Toronto Dykes in the Streets March makes no reference to the lesbian march in Vancouver six months earlier.

In my thirty interviews, only two mentioned the 1981 March, and another acknowledged having heard of it. Cole, for example, who has been to every Dyke March since it began in 1996, told me that there had been a march in the early 1980s, but was fuzzy on the details. When I explained what I knew about the March, Cole said to me: “There were no such things as parades
back then. It was all marches with very heavy political issues.” It is worth noting the distinction that Cole makes here between marches and parades – here, the 1981 March organizing is characterized and underscored as a march, not as a parade. This signifies the importance of the political work of marching, rather than the more frivolous associations that are made with the concept of a parade.

In my interview with Lesha Van Der Bij, one of the two women who started the 1996 Dyke March in Toronto, I tried to establish her understanding of the historical context of the March. When I told her that there was a Dyke March in the early 1980s, she replied:

**Lesha Van Der Bij:** Someone mentioned that to me when I said I was the first one and they said we actually had one in the ‘80s. I’m like, ‘Oh, I don’t know anything about that.’

Lesha’s response to my question about the 1981 March as well as her memory of the moment is a clear example of Ross’s (1995) point about how lesbian histories are repeatedly forgotten.

Though no other interview participants spoke of the 1981 March, one of my interviewees, Amy Gottlieb, was a member of LAR and remembers participating in the Dykes In the Streets March. When I interviewed Amy, I did not yet know about the Dykes In the Streets March. She asked me how long the Dyke March had been going on, and when I replied that it had begun in the mid-1990s, she responded by reflecting on the importance of the event and then proceeded to explain to me that the Dyke March has a longer history than is generally acknowledged:

**Amy Gottlieb:** I think it’s a wonderful... my first response to it was: this is fantastic. We
need it. Absolutely, we need it. My second response to it was: this is not the first time that there’s been a Dyke March in Toronto and it was being portrayed in that way, which is: this is new, we’ve never done this before, first ever kind of thing. And I guess because I’ve been involved for many years within what we used to term the lesbian movement (but I would never put that kind of homogenizing label on it now), having been involved since the ’70s, I was a little taken aback because I think it’s important to know our history and sometimes things get hidden and erased or just not remembered for a variety of reasons.

Here Amy clearly articulates a frustration with how queer women’s histories continue to be forgotten. She acknowledges that this is not necessarily intentional – perhaps organizers are simply unaware of their histories – but that by ignoring them, either consciously or unconsciously, they are complicit in the forgetting.

The Dykes In the Streets March was held on Saturday, October 17, 1981,\(^{38}\) and according to the flyer advertising the event, it was a march and dance for lesbian power, pride and visibility. According to Anna Marushka’s report of the event in *The Body Politic*, three hundred and fifty women marched. The March, which was led by Dykes on Bikes, was organized by LAR. The ad for the March in *The Body Politic* also included the sentence: “Women Only Please.” Many women’s and lesbian groups participated in the March and men supported the women by standing on the sidelines and showering the women with confetti (LAR 1981: 31). The March began at the 519 Community Centre and then followed a route which passed local lesbian

\(^{38}\) There is very little writing about the Dykes In the Streets March. I have seen the March date listed as October 7, 1981. Whether or not this is a simple typo or an actual incorrect fact remains unclear to me, but the original flyer for the event strikes me as the most reliable source for this date.
landmarks and “wound through crowds of Saturday afternoon Yonge Street shoppers” (Marushka 1981: 13). As the LAR pamphlet describes:

So we danced down Bay Street, the financial heart of Canada, singing “We’re here because we’re queer” and chanting, in syncopated rhythm, “We are the D-D-Y-K-E-S” all the way to City Hall. It was magical. Nobody wanted to disperse. (LAR 1981: 31)

Referring to her copy of the March’s flyer, Amy Gottlieb explained how the March stopped to celebrate important lesbian landmarks in Toronto and to protest against people or places which were problematic. The March marked the following places:

- Quest, a gay men’s bar owned by Phil Stein, who was also the owner of the Fly by Night, a bar run by women in the back of Stage 212 on Dundas Street East near Jarvis Street. Phil Stein was responsible for the closure and eviction of the Fly by Night, so this stop was both about protesting against him and about figuring out how to enlarge public social spaces for lesbians in Toronto;
- the LOOT house at 342 Jarvis Street, which Amy described as “a pretty dynamic and amazing place in its time”;
- the YWCA McPhail House, a low-cost rental living space where many lesbians lived;
- Cinema 2000, which as Amy explains, was “to protest their pornographic, anti-woman movies, particularly the movie Snuff, which portrayed women being tortured and killed”;
- the Continental Hotel on the corner of Dundas and Elizabeth Streets, to celebrate an old lesbian bar which had since closed but which was a really strong part of the pre-1969
lesbian culture in Toronto;

- and Old City Hall, in order to address the issue of the legal system’s attitudes towards women and lesbians. Old City Hall was the March’s last stop in order “for the demonstration to emphasize 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” (Marushka 1981: 13).

The March, like LAR, was actively speaking out against the right-wing conservative moment, including a direct response to Renaissance International and Positive Parents, both of which were right-wing religiously-based groups actively organizing anti-gay agendas in Toronto. As she looked onto the back of the March’s flyer, Amy described how the March was really in response to a whole spectrum of right-wing organizing:

**Amy Gottlieb:** And then it was a response to the right wing, so Renaissance and Positive Parents, and a lot of people who were very active, very visibly, openly active in Toronto in the municipal elections in response to *The Body Politic* bust, around “Men Loving Boys Loving Men” and a whole censorship issue, the Emmanuel Jaques murder, and a whole anti-gay agenda that had developed around that, when George Hislop ran for City Council. I mean, there was a whole sort of thing that was happening at that point. Anita Bryant came up here in ’79 and there were a lot of big demonstrations that we organized against her and her whole anti-gay, anti-sex agenda. And so that was partly in here, and then there’s lesbian pride,

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39 For a more detailed analysis of lesbian bar culture in Toronto in the 1950s and 1960s, see Chenier (2004).
you know, we’re a part of the society and we’re everywhere and we have a right to be everywhere. And then visibility.

Amy draws attention to the many different issues that were pressing for lesbian activists at the time. She demonstrates the way that the March was designed to address this multiplicity of issues at work, and concludes by highlighting the importance of creating visibility for queer women’s communities. Amy goes on to describe what it felt like to participate in the Dykes In the Streets March:

**Amy Gottlieb:** But you know, it was really... there were 300 women on this march, and I remember marching down Bay Street at some point, we were right near Old City Hall and we were doing huge... I remember a lot of police escorts. And we were there in the middle of the street, or on the one side of the street, arms linked, yelling “Look over here, look over there, lesbians are everywhere!” and people were just looking at us like we were out of our minds! And it was, you know, it was relatively small in comparison to... [Pride events today]. [. . .] Anyway, it was pretty fantastically amazing. It was quite an achievement.

There is an emotional quality communicated in Amy’s words and her tone of voice when she describes her memory of the Dykes In the Streets March. Though I explore in more detail the emotional engagement with the Dyke March in Chapter Seven, it is worth noting Amy’s expression of a sense of achievement for having participated in this social and spatial intervention in Toronto streets.
The Vancouver and Toronto Marches in 1981 were the first lesbian specific marches in North America, but they did not become annual events, nor did they get recorded as moments to be commemorated. Perhaps more related to similar political marches of their time, rather than later annual Pride events, these marches are marked as specific temporal and spatial moments. Though no other Dyke Marches were organized by LAR, the group did participate in the Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in 1982 under LAR’s banner (Stone 1991: 241). LAR members were also actively involved in organizing many other events and workshops, including participating in International Women’s Day (IWD) events, working in part to create a visible lesbian pressure at the IWD March (LAR 1981: 32).

4.5 The 1980s and Early 1990s

The 1980s and early 1990s were marked by the emerging recognition of the serious realities of HIV and AIDS. Many people were dying, and gay male sexuality was linked directly to illness and disease, providing social conservatives with an excuse to continue to crack down on gay male spaces in the name of “public health.” As Miriam Smith argues, the rise of AIDS drew attention to the fact that people had no legal rights or recourse when their partners fell ill (2008: 188). Much of the energy in gay and lesbian organizing in this period was directed towards HIV/AIDS activism. Groups in the United States, such as ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power) and Queer Nation used direct-action tactics and civil disobedience to raise public attention and awareness to the issues. AIDS Action Now! was a group in Toronto that worked hard to get the federal government to pay attention to the issues affecting people living with HIV/AIDS (McCaskell 2006; M. Smith 2008: 188). Between the late 1980s and early 1990s, other HIV/AIDS groups were formed, many of which focused directly on particular racialized groups, such as the Black Coalition for AIDS Prevention and the Gay Asian AIDS Project.
There were also major rights-oriented struggles during this period. In 1982, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was entrenched into the Canadian constitution. Many equity groups found legal protection under Section 15 of the Charter. Yet, despite the efforts of MP Svend Robinson to have sexual orientation included, the Charter did not speak directly to issues of sexuality. It was agreed during Charter deliberations that the open-ended equality wording could be interpreted by the courts to be inclusive of other unnamed groups (M. Smith 1999: 67).

In the 1980s, the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario and the Right to Privacy Committee fought to have the Ontario Human Rights Code amended to prohibit discrimination against lesbians and gay men. The amendment was implemented by 1986. Becki Ross (1990b) describes how she sat in the galleries to witness the parliamentary debates over the amendment and how the struggles of gays and lesbians seemed absent. She writes:

Though one could conclude otherwise, the amendment itself did not magically appear on the parliamentary agenda: its actual existence was firmly rooted in, and served as a clear testament to, the historic efforts of countless lesbian and gay community activists [. . .] How neatly the parliamentarians danced over and made invisible the labour, the energy, the anguish of committed lesbian and gay activists. (133, 139)

These legal struggles are evidence of activists’ struggles over rights and access to rights – in other words, for gays and lesbians to be recognized in the law as equal citizens or subjects. It is also worth noting that EGALE (Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere) played a key role in the 1996 Canadian Human Rights Act amendment to include sexual orientation as a prohibited ground of discrimination (M. Smith 1999: 99).
As with all legislative changes, though they may be considered victories and a progressive step forward in the protection of human rights for all Canadians or Ontarians, the realities of homophobia and discrimination did not end overnight with the passing of these various legal changes and amendments. Ross (1990b) describes the 1986 passing of Bill 7 to amend the Ontario Human Rights Code to prohibit discrimination against gays and lesbians as a conditional victory. She writes:

Indeed, in relation to dominant state formation, this contradictory piece of state action does not carry the power to effect radical social change despite its apparently revolutionary character; and as such, does not in any significant way challenge entrenched liberal-democratic state authority. As an expression of state-interested accommodation, legal reform does not and cannot operate to root out and challenge the dominance of deep heterosexist and homophobic assumptions. In this way, legislative change is a necessary but wholly insufficient objective of many progressive movements. (142)

Rights-based activism continued with struggles against discrimination in a number of arenas, including, among other things, issues of employment, housing, same-sex partnerships, parenting rights, and spousal rights to Canada Pension Plan benefits.

Throughout this period, activists also fought for increased access to space. By the 1980s, the number of gay bars was increasing and the Church and Wellesley area in Toronto became established as a gay neighbourhood. Catherine Jean Nash (2006) argues that the establishment of

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40 In 1994, the Ontario government introduced Bill 167 to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples, but when the NDP, the Governing Party, called for a free vote, the Bill was defeated and activists were frustrated and angry and demonstrations in protest followed (see CLGRO 2011 for more details).
the gay village in Toronto was not a direct product of gay activism at the time, but instead emerged out of a variety of political conflicts, shifting ideologies and economic opportunities. Early assimilationist discourses of the 1960s and early 1970s argued against the creation of gay neighbourhoods as they understood these spaces to be segregated from mainstream heterosexual culture, a culture into which they wanted to be assimilated and accepted. Though not in agreement with the logic of assimilation, gay liberationists of the 1970s struggled against the creation of gay neighbourhoods because they saw such spaces as reinforcing a vision of homosexuality as suburban and middle-class, and further, as reinforcing a more conservative, business-oriented identity which they considered contrary to the struggles of the liberation movement (13). Rather than wanting to assimilate into mainstream heterosexual culture, liberationists wanted to confront and challenge heterosexual spatial dominance. Meanwhile, through the 1970s, there was an increase in gay acceptance by the heterosexual mainstream, in both the general development of gay commercial spaces and the general acceptance of these spaces.

After the bathhouse raids and the changing conservative climate, Nash (2006) argues that there was a marked change in the perception of the need for gay spaces in Toronto by gay liberation movement activists. Nash summarizes the sense that “the series of attacks on gay spaces was a blatant attempt to destroy the ability of gays and lesbians to meet and socialize and thereby sustain a legitimate community” (12). Contrary to the earlier sense that a gay neighbourhood would ghettoize the community, there was a changed feeling that “gay spaces were essential, rather than detrimental, to the formation of individual and collective gay and lesbian identities” (Nash 2005: 129). Though the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood claims to serve the GLBTQ community, it has always been a predominantly white male bar and club
scene. With some exceptions, the neighbourhood is not generally considered to be a space where queer women can find one another.

Through the 1980s and 1990s, lesbians were actively involved in feminist organizing, working to create lesbian visibility at events such as International Women’s Day. Lesbian feminists were also actively working with straight feminists to set up and defend abortion clinics in Toronto, which were constantly under attack.\textsuperscript{41} Lesbians were also involved in Take Back the Night events, the creation of women’s dances and other women’s and feminist initiatives.

By the early 1990s, there was a noticeable change in the representation of gays and lesbians in the media and popular culture. Amin Ghaziani notes that in the 1990s, “gay visibility exploded with the public coming out of celebrities such as k.d. lang and Melissa Etheridge” (2008: 129). The early 1990s were marked by first lesbian kisses on television and the increasing presence of gay characters on television shows, and a general all around increase in gay visibility in popular culture. Suzanna Danuta Walters points out that “it is easy to look at the proliferation of these liberal ‘gay-positive’ films and feel assured that they signal a fundamental shift in the cultural body politic” (2001: 149). She continues by explaining that in some ways, the increasing queer visibility in popular culture does signal changes to the way queer politics are playing out, but she cautions that this is not necessarily something to be celebrated. A particular kind of gay became visible – an image of the respectable gay citizen emerged – and this kind of representation has continued to play a role in the changing landscape of queer politics and its relationship to the heteronormative mainstream.

\textsuperscript{41} Attacks against abortion clinics were violent. For example, in 1992, Dr. Henry Morgentaler’s abortion clinic was bombed. The clinic shared a building with the Toronto Women’s Bookstore, a non-profit bookstore committed to feminist and anti-oppressive politics. The Bookstore remains in business in the same location on Harbord Street, just west of Spadina Avenue.
Alongside this change in popular culture was the emergence of Lesbian Chic, a glossy, feminine and sexy version of lesbian visibility that contrasted with earlier representations. As Walters writes,

If lesbians were previously depicted (if at all) as flannel-shirted, overweight, hairy-legged, ‘man-haters,’ then they are now being envisioned as the ultimate ‘90s party girl – perfectly coiffed and nattily attired, either enjoying the benefits of corporate culture or standard-bearers for a world-weary Gen-X hipness (2001: 161-162).

Though the early- to mid-1990s did see an increase in the number of images of lesbians and bisexual women in popular culture, they were usually extreme stereotypes – as ‘man-haters’ or as ‘lesbian chic’ – with limited plot and character possibilities. Disrupting these limitations was, in part, what motivated some of the lesbian activist organizing in this period.

4.6 The Lesbian Avengers and the 1993 Dyke March on the White House

In 1992, six women joined together in New York and founded the Lesbian Avengers. Anne-Christine D’Adesky, Marie Honan, Ann Maguire, Sarah Schulman, Ana Maria Simo and Maxine Wolfe decided that they wanted to create a grassroots lesbian organization interested in direct-action activism. They defined themselves as a “direct action group focused on issues vital to lesbian survival and visibility” (The Lesbian Avengers 2010a). Dawn Walsh (2004: 3) argues that, despite the emergence of Lesbian Chic, lesbians found themselves to be generally rendered invisible within social movements and in culture more broadly. The Avengers organized to battle this and worked to increase lesbian visibility. Further, the Lesbian Avengers promoted an “Activist Chic” in contrast to the prevailing Lesbian Chic that was predominant in popular
culture (Walsh 2004: 63). Activist chic was a humourous, intelligent, sex-positive, in your face kind of activism. Sally Munt argues that “the Lesbian Avengers were the inspirational figure for the 1990s politically progressive North American lesbian” (1998: 107). The Avengers drew from a familiar history of direct-action street protests and public interventions, out of the history of gay and lesbian activism and public interventions to bring about a very public lesbian visibility (Walsh 2004: 40). Some have argued that the Lesbian Avengers picked up from where the work of Queer Nation left off (Whittier 2006: 62). The name of the group was also significant. Discussing the figures of the amazon and the avenger as lesbian outlaws, Sally Munt argues that outlawry offers a simultaneous sense of belonging and affiliation and that “these figures have helped to coalesce cultural movements of lesbian feminists in the 1970s and queer lesbian activists in the 1990s” (1998: 96). She further argues that the lesbian warrior figures, of the amazon and avenger, “are the folk heroes, fantasy figures who carry a multi-symbolic load of aspiration” (102). It is this figure that the Lesbian Avengers drew on for their organizing efforts.

The Lesbian Avengers and their legacy are credited with the emergence of a Dyke March as an annual event in New York and other cities (Walsh 2004). When the program for the 1993 National March on Washington for Lesbian, Gay and Bi Equal Rights and Liberation came out, the Avengers were critical of the fact that there was no scheduling for any women-only events (Walsh 2004: 104). In response, The Avengers organized the Dyke March on the White House.

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42 Perhaps the issue of invisibility of lesbians, raised so effectively by the Avengers, is most clearly echoed in the absence of any mention of the group or their activities in Amin Ghaziani’s (2008) The Dividends of Dissent, which offers a comprehensive examination of the four lesbian and gay Marches on Washington. Though he offers an incredibly detailed and in-depth analysis of the organizing and infighting at the Marches, the absence of the 1993 Avengers’ Dyke March on the White House is quite stark. Amin Ghaziani has also co-authored two publications on the Chicago Dyke March which do offer a historical link to the work of the Avengers (see Brown-Saracino and Ghaziani 2009 and Ghaziani and Fine 2008). However, given the wider potential circulation for his book, the rendering invisible of this piece of history is worth noting.
on April 24, 1993, on the eve of the larger March on Washington. In the few weeks leading up to these events, the Avengers coordinated with lesbian groups across the U.S. in order to create visibility and a women-only space during the events. A few days before the March, the Avengers distributed cards in Washington, announcing the Dyke March event. Sarah Schulman writes that “our little cards were received with overwhelming excitement and it began to occur to us that we were going to get more than the three or four thousand dykes we had anticipated” (1994: 286). It is estimated that 20,000 women marched in this Dyke March, without a permit, from Dupont Circle to the White House. This was followed by fire-eating in front of the White House. Schulman argues that this was the “largest lesbian event in the history of the world” (286). The Avengers distributed information while at Washington on how to form a lesbian direct action group (286). Following the March on Washington, Lesbian Avenger chapters sprung up all around the United States (Walsh 2004: 106), as well as in the UK (Munt 1998: 109) and in Canada (E. Brown 1995: 15). In the few years following this event, many cities across North America, including Toronto, began to hold Dyke Marches during or associated with their Pride events and celebrations.

After the March on Washington, the Avengers returned to New York and began planning a Dyke March for New York City, which was held the day before the Pride Parade on June 26, 1993 (Walsh 2004: 106). In 1994, in commemoration of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Stonewall Riots, Pride celebrations were larger than usual in NYC and the Avengers planned the International Dyke March for 1994. Avenger groups from across the U.S. were invited to join in (107). It was estimated that between 5,000 and 20,000 women attended the 1994 International

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43 Fire-eating and the general use of fire during protests and demonstrations became a symbol for the Lesbian Avengers (see The Lesbian Avengers 2010b for more details).
Dyke March on Saturday June 25, and though the marching was delayed by the police, who attempted to contain the group and control traffic, the Dyke March eventually took over Fifth Avenue and was credited with being the largest permit-less march on Fifth Avenue since the anti-Vietnam protests (107). Though the International Dyke March drew a large crowd, and despite the widespread circulation of press releases about the event, news reporting on the event was limited to a short piece in the *New York Times* (Branner 1994: 1). Instead, the press focused on Sunday’s International March on the United Nations resulting in a widespread news invisibility of this queer women’s event (1). Since 1994, New York City Dyke March organizers have continued to fight for visibility, and the Dyke March has become an annual event the city’s Pride celebrations.

### 4.7 The Emergence of the 1996 Toronto Dyke March

The Dyke March on Washington, and ensuing Dyke Marches in New York City, played a direct role in the emergence of the Dyke March in Toronto. Lesha Van Der Bij, one of the co-organizers who started the Dyke March in Toronto in 1996, published an article in *Siren*, a free magazine for lesbians, to invite women in Toronto to participate in the Dyke March. In the article, she describes how in the summer of 1995, she and a friend went to New York City for Pride weekend. Having recently come out, Lesha portrayed the New York City Dyke March as “transformative” (1996: 21). She enthusiastically described the large number of women marching in the street, despite the police’s attempt to keep the women to the sidewalks. Lesha Van Der Bij writes: “All were there in solidarity. The feeling was one of intoxication” (21). Lesha Van Der Bij was also one of my interviewees. Repeating to me how transformative the

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44In this study, Lesha Vanderbij and Lesha Van Der Bij are the same person. Lesha used the second spelling when she introduced herself to me, but the first spelling appears on the newspaper articles.
experience was for her, she explained,

**Lesha Van Der Bij:** I participated in the Dyke March [in New York City]. They had one there probably for a number of years and it was a real transformative experience for me and when I came back I was wearing some shirt with two women kissing on it and my one roommate was, like his eyes were kind of bugging out of his head, like he had no idea. And so it was just totally transformative. I went back to school, at law school in the fall, was totally out. It was a huge experience for me, like I just became very comfortable and totally different person and I’ve been totally out ever since. I’ve never ever been closeted in any respect of my life since then.

For Lesha, her experience in the New York Dyke March marked a significant change in her own life, in which the March distinguished the difference between her former closeted self and her newly out self. This is further exemplified by her statement in the *Siren* article, in which she wrote: “But I can say with clarity that I left New York that weekend a different person. The feelings of discomfort and unease about my sexuality that I had carried for years were left behind . . . For the first time in my life, I felt proud to be a lesbian” (21).

Lesha Van Der Bij explained to me that she felt a sense of disappointment when, a week later, she attended Toronto Pride in 1995. She felt that the Pride Parade was for and about men and that there were hardly any women in the Parade. She described her experience of Toronto Pride as “a real let down” and she wanted to do something in Toronto that was specifically for women. Six months later, she approached the Pride Committee with the idea of doing a Dyke
March in 1996 in order to create a specifically women-focused event during Pride, and this was how the Toronto Dyke March began. Interestingly, Lesha drew on the Toronto Pride Committee and sought permission for city permits. This contrasts the organizing style of the Lesbian Avengers, who demanded space and organized by networking more directly with lesbian organizations. Lesha’s interest was to capture the sense of excitement and transformation that she had experienced around the women’s event in New York and incorporate these into Toronto Pride, but she did so by asking for permission from both the Pride Committee and the City of Toronto for a permit.

Though Lesha’s organizing efforts began by contacting Toronto Pride organizers, she and co-organizer Lisa Hayes made connections within the queer women’s community to announce the new Dyke March to the Toronto community. One way she did this was by inviting well-known local lesbian community members to play key roles in the March.

**Lesha Van Der Bij:** Yeah I remember Deb Parent\(^45\) was there, she was in the back of a truck screaming her lungs out, getting people going. We actually had Elvira Kurt\(^46\) in the back of the same pickup truck doing a comic routine. I had approached her at some comic thing where she was doing Buddies in Bad Times and I just asked her to do it out of the back of this truck which I can’t even

\(^{45}\) Deb Parent is a well-known Toronto lesbian activist who was the first out lesbian to work at the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre in the 1970s, and who was a member of LAR in the early 1980s. She helped to organize dyke dances through the 1980s and 1990s and has been actively involved in Take Back the Night and Dyke Marches by leading each on a sound truck to play music and energize marchers. In 2007, Deb Parent was awarded a City of Toronto Access, Equity and Human Rights Award for her ongoing contributions (Toronto 2007).

\(^{46}\) Elvira Kurt is a Canadian comedian and out lesbian.
I don’t see me approaching Elvira Kurt and saying would you like to do a comedy routine at the back of a truck in the middle of the pouring rain? But she was all up for it, she did it, she did this little routine there. Yeah, and then we did our March, we had our little banner...

The organizers also used publications such as *Siren* and *Xtra!* to announce the new Dyke March to the Toronto community. Rachela, one of my interview participants, read about the Dyke March in *Siren* and recalled the enthusiasm that was expressed in the article.

**Rachela:** And they were so enthusiastic about it and I remember the write up about it and they were like, ‘we went to New York City and they had a Dyke March and it was so cool’. I think it was New York City. Maybe it was San Francisco but I thought it was New York: “...and it was so cool and we thought it was absolutely amazing and we want to do something like that here.”

Rachela’s memory shows how the article offered an effective way of communicating both an invitation to and an enthusiasm for the Dyke March. Here, the use of news media was critical in the circulation of the discursive production of what the Toronto Dyke March could and should be. Communicating a story of coming out and a sense of elation from the March experience, Lesha set the tone for the emergence of the Toronto Dyke March. From its inception, the Toronto Dyke March organizers offered a narrative of what the Dyke March might come to mean and symbolize for the queer women’s community in Toronto. That narrative became one of the dominant narratives of the Toronto Dyke March.
Lesha told me about the challenges of accessing street space in the first year of the Dyke March. The police would not let the March go down either Yonge or Church Streets because the marching women were not deemed to be important enough. The police refused to close the street and argued that if they had less than one hundred women,\(^\text{47}\) that the March would have to stay on the sidewalk. Contrary to concerns that very few women would show up, it was estimated that approximately 5,000 women participated in the 1996 March (Vanderbij 1997: 17). The March began in front of the 519 Community Centre on Church Street, headed north to Bloor Street and turned east, and then moved southbound on Sherbourne Street, and returning to Church Street by moving westbound along Wellesley Street.

Lesha explains that as a result of the large participant numbers and overall success of the first Dyke March, they were granted a lot more credibility, and, by the second year, the police agreed to close Yonge Street for the March. This is an aspect of the New York Dyke March that did not get translated to Toronto. In New York, the Dyke March was and continues to be a permit-less event. By contrast, from the first year that Lesha and Lisa organized the Toronto Dyke March, they sought permission to hold the event in the streets, and when they did not get permission, they abided by the police. This moment is an illustration of the very overt ways in which spaces are regulated and, in this case, literally policed. The Toronto Dyke March, from its inception, abided by City of Toronto police and space policies.

There was some animosity expressed towards Lesha and Lisa over the creation of the women-only policy for the March. Some, like Lesha, argued that lesbians needed a space of their

\(^{47}\) During my interview, Lesha quoted one hundred women as the minimum needed, but in her 1997 article in *Siren*, she said a minimum of fifty women were needed. She also casually acknowledged how arbitrary the quoted participation numbers were, many of which she provided to the media, and laughing about how she really had no way of effectively making these estimations.
own in order to create visibility, while others argued that separating the Dyke March from Pride
“just foregrounds the political infighting within lesbian and gay communities” (Ryan 1999: 18).
There were also many women who wanted the March to have a more political driving force, but
Lesha argued that the very act of marching collectively as out lesbians in the street was a political
project unto itself. This tension over the definition and meaning of the Dyke March has
continued to be repeated over the years of the Dyke March’s manifestation. It informs some of
the discussions that will be examined in more detail in the following analysis chapters.

The first March was also marked by a heavy, rainy downpour, and this created a strong
memory for many of my interview participants. As Lesha explained,

**Lesha Van Der Bij:** It was pretty amazing, that first year was pretty exciting because I
was so excited that we had enough people to walk on the street and that women
came in the rain.

Many other women noted the rain as well. Farzana, for example, now associates the Dyke March
with the rain because of the rain from the 1996 March. Similarly, Jean recalled the 1996 Dyke
March as exciting and very wet because it was raining really hard.

**Jean:** Never have I marched in the rain as the rain of the Dyke March. […] It poured
rain. Poured rain. We were wet, wet, wet and people were like ‘we don’t care
that we’re wet because we’re so excited and happy that there’s a Dyke March.
And so it was, yeah, it was great and very wet.
Despite the weather, a large number of women attended the 1996 Dyke March. What future Dyke March organizers have realized over the years is that, no matter what the year’s politics, weather, or tensions, thousands of women will show up to march in the Toronto Dyke March.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have offered a relatively “tidy” historical narrative of queer activism in Canada and Toronto. This provides an important historical context for understanding the changing political, legal and social climates out of which queer women’s organizing and Dyke March events emerge. I began the chapter by troubling how particular historical narratives become dominant, obscuring and silencing the voices and narratives of others. This chapter is therefore a historical account of how the Toronto Dyke March came into being. I offered early historical context from the 1950s-70s to understand the social and political conditions which preceded it. I then examined the emergence of the 1981 Dykes In the Streets March. This was followed by context from the 1980s and early 1990s to illustrate the quickly changing social and political landscape in Toronto and Canada. I concluded the chapter by analyzing the conditions in which the 1996 Dyke March emerged to become an annual event.

One of the differences between the 1981 and 1996 Marches was that from its very inception, the 1996 Dyke March was proclaimed as an annual event, in the subheading to the Siren article “Dyke March: Toronto’s First Annual.” While the 1981 March marked a particular moment in time, it seems as though the organizers had no intention or desire to have the March become an annual or repeated event. The emergence of the 1996 Dyke March, however, was marked from the very beginning as an event that was thought to bear repeating, as an intervention into an already established annual event, as a way to create a space and place for women with the broader Pride festivities.
In the following chapter, I consider in more detail how the creation of a cohesive narrative can be deconstructed. I begin by questioning the function of history and memory and explore how the marching dyke emerges as a subject. By asking about the subject of the Dyke March, I reveal how a cohesive historical narrative hinges on an imagined understanding of who the Dyke March does or does not serve.
CHAPTER 5: “IT’S A WORD THAT’S OFFENSIVE TO MY MOTHER AND IS REAL TO ME”: NAMING THE SUBJECT OF THE DYKE MARCH

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented a somewhat linear history of the Dyke March. I argued that the March came into being through a double emergence, and I offered the historical contexts necessary for understanding the social and political moments out of and into which the Dyke March has come to be an annual event in Toronto. In offering this history, I provided a rather structured time line and relied on a conventional practice of the retelling of gay histories. The retelling of these histories remains important to the project of ensuring that already marginalized histories are not forgotten. This is particularly the case for women’s histories, which are very often obscured or written out of the record. However, while I argue that it is important to correct historical chronologies by including those who have been made invisible with them, in this chapter, I want to trouble this model of historical retelling. In doing so, I am not disputing the importance and relevance of this history. Rather, I am interested in exploring other ways that we might come to understand the multiple and historical meanings of the Dyke March. How, for example, is the March remembered, in different ways, by its participants? And what do these memories say about who marching dykes imagine themselves to be?

Questioning the historical chronology of the Dyke March is therefore further motivated by a consideration of who is the subject of the Toronto Dyke March. The story of how and when the Dyke March happens is always and already the story of who we are or imagine ourselves to be. At work in the Dyke March is a subject-making process in which writers of documents in the archive and interview participants are telling me something about who they imagine and desire
themselves to be. As they recall the March, they are constructing the subjecthood of ‘dyke.’ This construction, in turn, reveals multiple stories of the Dyke March.

In this chapter, I undertake a genealogical analysis in order to show how interview participants reveal different subject-making processes constituted in, by, and through the Dyke March. I argue that who the interview participants are or desire to be is also a story about the desire of a community. The chronology offered in the previous chapter ended in 1996 when the Toronto Dyke March began as an annual event. It is from here that I now turn to the stories told by interview participants. What emerges from this analysis are multiple and simultaneously contradictory understandings of the history and of the retelling of who ‘marching dykes’ in Toronto are.

5.2 Troubling History

I begin this chapter by exploring experiential memories in order to ask questions about the purpose of history and the importance of memory and remembering. In this section, I ask: What are we using history for? In a discussion about Foucault’s historical questions, Todd May argues that:

If we are to take history seriously, and to take ourselves seriously as historical beings, we must recognize the contingency of history. We must come to grips with the fact that history did not have [to] take the routes that it did, that it might have happened otherwise. And that we, as products of that history, might have happened differently as well. (2005: 66-67)

Foucault argues that history is useful as a way of coming to understand who we used to be, or,
who we think we used to be, and who we are or think we are now. In the examination of the past, and in the retelling of history, we must remember that histories are always contingent. There is not just one version of historical ‘truth’. Rather, there are multiple versions and multiple truths. Indeed, “to approach our present as though it were reducible to a unitary explanation is to approach it sloppily, without concern for detail, without responsiveness to the practices and the archives among which we live” (May 2005: 72). My genealogy of the Dyke March takes these multiplicities into account. Flynn explains that “unlike the continuities of a theory of origins, genealogy underscores the jolts and surprises of history, the chance occurrences” (2005: 34). Tracing the emergences of the Dyke March is a way to consider these jolts and surprises.

Though my project is committed to these multiplicities, I did not always see it in this way throughout the course of my research. As I began the process of conducting interviews, I was particularly concerned with establishing a clear time line and with drawing the link between people’s memories and the historical trajectory. I found myself trying to establish the connection between people’s memories of a particular event or moment with a particular year. I believe this was motivated, in part, by the lack of historical information available to me about the Dyke March and more generally about women’s activism in Toronto. As I illustrated in the previous chapter, though many have worked to establish a written record, it is a long and ongoing project to which I was eager to contribute. I was also motivated by my own nostalgic and celebratory fascination for activist energies and histories of which I have been a part, but especially for those that precede me. The third part of this motivation was that I began conducting my interviews before I had spent a lot of time in the archives, digging through old copies of The Body Politic and Xtra!. My first interview took place in early July 2009, with my research ethics approval freshly in hand and in the midst of the 2009 Pride season. I was eager to begin talking to people,
and to catch them at the height of Pride and Dyke March energies. I was hoping that their experiences of previous Marches might be more at the forefront of their minds. The assembling of a coherent Dyke March time line was a goal at the outset of my research.

I am continuously reminded about the forgetting/misremembering/factually incorrect versions of women’s histories, and though I am committed to re-imagining our relationships to history and memory, I do not believe this to be a substitute for some of the factual details of our lives. Most recently, for example, I was reading the introduction to Benjamin Shepard’s (2010) *Queer Political Performance and Protest: Play, Pleasure and Social Movement*. In this work, Shepard provides a fascinating examination of queer political struggle by examining the ever-important notions of pleasure and play. He begins his book by offering a historical context for the annual New York City Drag March and contextualizes the Drag March’s history of protest without official permits by drawing a connection to the NYC Dyke March. He writes: “In 1993, the first Dyke March in the US was held, without a permit, the Saturday before Pride” (5). While I think he is offering a parallel history to permit-less forms of protest, I find myself wondering about how the history of the 1993 Dyke March on the White House can get left out of this story. This is a minor detail in Shepard’s work, but symbolized to me, a broader concern about the relationship between queer women and the historical record.\(^{48}\)

My keen attempt at reconstructing histories were encouraged by the confirmation from some of my interview participants that Dyke March histories were rather swiftly going unnoted and unrecorded. During my conversation with Margaret Robinson, who was a Dyke March co-

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\(^{48}\) In a casual conversation with Nicholas Matte, he sadly pointed out to me that local Toronto lesbian activist Chris Bearchell had died in 2007, but that no one had sat down with her to do an oral history project. Though her written words and quoted statements have certainly been important contributions to the written record, Matte’s point is a continued reminder to me about lost queer women’s histories.
chair for two years, we explored the themes of forgotten histories and the lack of memory around
the March. Margaret told me that for a number of years, she did not even know the last names of
the two women who had first organized the March:

**Margaret Robinson:** Well for years we didn’t even know what Lesha and Lisa’s last
names were. I mean I had heard of these fictional women and then eventually I
got to meet them. I was like ‘oh wow, you’re the people who made this event
happen!’ It’s like meeting a celebrity.

During our conversations, we also got years mixed up. Margaret pointed out to me that part of
the reason that this confusion remains is that there was a general lack of consistent record
keeping around the Dyke March. At one point, Margaret was told to keep the Dyke March
records at the Pride Toronto offices rather than in the organizers’ own homes. However, when
she returned to the Pride offices six months later, all of the files were changed, disorganized, or
lost.

**Margaret Robinson:** So I go and I put my files there, I go back like six months later to
check something and they’re all gone or disorganized or changed and I go “So
where are the Dyke March files?” “Oh some of it was just crap and we just threw
it away.” “Well it might have been irrelevant to you but it’s stuff we needed.” [. .
. ] When it comes to the actual feminist herstory or being able to tell what’s
relevant to organizing the March, they have no clue. And the only people you can
actually trust to do that reliably are individual people that you can hold
Margaret’s story is evidence that, quite often, women’s activities and actions are not deemed to be very important, and that people do not keep good track of their work. Thus, there is also a heavy reliance on individualized work and actions to both organize and keep records. These both contribute to the repeated forgetting of queer women and their histories.

In my discussion with Lesha van Der Bij, one of the two founding co-chairs of the Dyke March, I noted a different problem of chronology. She explained to me that she first attended the Dyke March in New York City, and this became the inspiration for the Toronto March. While she was fairly certain that she had organized the March in Toronto the subsequent year, she figured this out by counting backwards, and only then did she feel more sure that she had attended the Dyke March in New York in 1995. During the interview, the difference between the 1994 and 1995 March struck me as important. I knew that the Dyke March on Washington was in 1993, and I also knew that the first Dyke March in New York City took place later that same year. I therefore understood the New York City Dyke March to be a relatively recent phenomenon relative to the 1996 Toronto Dyke March, and this struck me as important given that it functioned as the source of inspiration for the Toronto March via Lesha’s experiences. Interestingly, Lesha Van Der Bij had assumed that the New York March had been going on for many years. In her 1999 letter to the editors of *Siren magazine*, as well as in my interview with her, Lesha reconfirmed her sense that the Dyke March had a long history. She wrote that “The Dyke March was based on a long tradition of Dyke Marches in New York and San Francisco” (3). The assumption that the Dyke March had a unspecified long history, combined with the lack of knowledge about the 1981 Dyke Marches in Toronto and Vancouver, really spoke to the sense
of repeated forgetting of lesbian histories, or what Becki Ross describes as the “vertigo of starting from scratch” (1990b: 76). Ross further argues that “among those of us privileged enough to be out and to have access to these resources [including the avails of the institutions of queer communities in urban centres, such as bookstores, newspapers, and magazines; queer community events; organizations and support groups], there is little collective knowledge of how they came to exist, who was responsible for their genesis, and how fragile they continue to be” (1995: 4). Though in more recent years, many scholars and activists have committed their work to these histories, it is a slow and ongoing project, particularly in the context of continued forgetting of queer and women’s histories.

As I interviewed people and as I dug through the archive, I began to trouble how histories are reconstructed. Thinking about the notion of ‘experience’ helped me to consider the ways in which simultaneous truths are built. How do experiences work to produce their own sets of memories and stories, and, as such, function as the founding for the making of a movement? In this chapter, I explore the participants’ embodied, visceral accounts of the Dyke March in order to examine how experience becomes memory. I draw on the experiences of interview participants, not to validate their experiences at the expense of other evidence, nor to present experience as an uncontestable form or truth telling, but instead to reveal how particular discourses circulate and subject positions emerge. Indeed, as Joan W. Scott argues, “it is precisely this kind of appeal to experience as uncontestable evidence and as an originary point of explanation – as foundation upon which analysis is based – that weakens the critical thrust of histories of difference” (1992: 24). Rather, following Scott, I draw on the experiences of interview participants as “a way of exploring how difference is established, how it operates, how and in what ways it constitutes subjects who see and act in the world” (25). This is not about the
creation of a universality of knowledge. I turn to Donna Haraway (1991). She insists, “I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims” (195).

The voices of difference have been used as evidence to challenge dominant tellings of history. As Scott (1992: 25) points out, histories built on experiential evidence have been useful for challenging how, for example, homosexuality has been silenced and repressed throughout history. According to Scott, drawing on experience as evidence tells us that “differences exist” (25) but does not tell us about the “historical processes that, through discourse, position subjects and produce their experiences” (25). I am interested in thinking about how the experiences of interview participants offer alternate ways of understanding the meanings of history, and from this, to consider the various forms of subjectivity and subject positions that emerge from these meanings. How do “situated knowledges” (Haraway 1991: 188) affect our conception of what it means to know what we know, or how we come to know what we know of our histories? How do situated knowledges challenge dominant historical truth-tellings and disrupt the repeated obscuring of queer women’s histories?

In many instances, my attempts to uncover the links between interview participants’ memories and my reassembly of a Dyke March chronology were satisfied, as some were able to easily assign dates to their memories. Some interview participants knew exactly which year they first participated in the Dyke March. Rebecca, for example, remembered first attending the Dyke March when she was 17 years old after having come out to her family. George also had a very clear memory of his arduous relationship with the Dyke March alongside his story about his gender transition as he explained to me his story of gradually being excluded from the March. My initial assumptions about the importance of establishing a clear time line were satisfied by
these kinds of clear, chronologically associated memories. However, I came to realize that each person’s story was less a story about the Dyke March and more a story of their own lives, and that the Dyke March, though important to many, was a (repeated) moment in their lives, a happening that connected their stories together. The stories they were telling me were less about the Dyke March and more about the kinds of subjecthoods that emerged or were made possible by the Dyke March.

This was further complicated by the fact that many interview participants could not offer me any chronological clarity, nor were they invested or interested in it. Some would ask me about historical moments, which put me in the interesting position of offering historical context to participants while simultaneously asking them for that context. Some asked me when the first Dyke March happened, and many who attended the 1996 March did not know it had been the first. However, most did not seem overly concerned about this. During an interview, when I would try to connect a person’s memory with a year, in an attempt to see the historical arc of the March, I was usually met with fairly fuzzy memories about time lines, but clearer memories about relationships, events, or emotional experiences. Frances, for example, told me that she thinks she first attended the Dyke March in 1998, though as she begins telling me stories, finds herself confused by her own time line:

Frances: See, I’m actually a little confused about my Pride history and it really bothers me that I can’t remember it ‘cause I would have sworn I went in ‘97 too, but I don’t think I went to the Dyke March so... but I remember distinctly in 1998.

Frances also has a very clear memory of the 1999 Dyke March because it was the first time she
attended Pride festivities while dating someone. For the same reason, she missed the March.

Frances: ... so yeah that was my first year going to Pride with someone and we missed Dyke March that year. We fucked. (Laughs). And I remember thinking it’s so short, how come it was so short? We didn’t date for that long but we managed to have sex on the day of the Dyke March and we missed it.

Indeed, Frances’ sexual relationship with a woman was important to her, and seemed even more important in a context in which she tells me about her coming out process and her desire to find both community and a woman to date. She tells me that she was happy to finally attend Pride with someone, but this very partnership resulted in her missing the Dyke March, but provided a very clear date-associated memory for her.

For many participants, their relationship to the Dyke March and its histories were less about the arbitrary association of memories to particular years, but rather about associations between memories and other experiences, relationships, and personal stories. Kinsman and Gentile write that:

Remembering and memory are produced socially and reflexively. The liberal individualist notion that memory is some sort of asocial and ahistorical essence is not consistent with how memory works as a social practice. Memory always has a social and historical character. Our experiences are remembered through social language and through how we make sense of them to ourselves and to others. (2010: 37)
It was this revelation that allowed me to think more clearly about the role of experience at the Dyke March, and how experience allowed particular kinds of subject positions to emerge at the March. If memories are social and historical, the consequences of participants’ foggy memories might reveal more about personal narratives than they do about Dyke March histories. Nonetheless, the memories that cue these personal narratives are useful for understanding the subject-making processes at work in or through the Dyke March. The fogginess of participants’ memories offers more nuanced and complex perspectives to the subject-making process.

The other kind of linearity that emerged about the Dyke March were narratives of progress. This narrative functions in two obvious ways. In the first, the theme of progress was evident in the way that the Dyke March plays a role in people’s coming out stories and as a marker of personal progress and identity affirmation. This was illustrated by Lesha Van Der Bij’s article in *Siren* that I elaborated on in the previous chapter. In the article, Lesha articulates how her attendance at the NYC Dyke March confirmed her identity and it was a desire to share this kind of feeling and energy that prompted her to replicate the March in Toronto. In this article, a clear discourse of personal progress is articulated, and it was repeated by a number of my interview participants. For example, for a person like Pearl, who has few other queer events or communities in her life, the Dyke March serves as a setting which confirms who she understands herself to be.

Pearl: I think it has been important. I think that in some ways it’s only a day, right, it’s only an event, but for me, it’s felt like a really big deal. [. . .] It, along with other queer events, has been sometimes a little overly important than it should because they’re my few infrequent touchstones. Yeah so it has been important for me in
Similarly, for people who attend the Dyke March near the time of their coming out, the Dyke March takes on a more significant role in that process. For Catherine, the Dyke March is a way in which she can very publicly claim her queer identity, especially in the context of her life, in which she is in a relationship and shares parenting responsibilities with a man. For Lucy, the Dyke March was particularly notable because attending the March was the first time that she made such a public statement about her sexuality.

**Lucy:** It was the first big public event that I was in that identified as bi and being publicly part of a bi women’s group, and it was so scary and so empowering, and after I participated in that, like I said, I wore buttons and I got one button that I wore to the conference the next week that said “Nobody knows I’m bi.” So it was just really fun to be a part of that and to allow myself the freedom to let that be part of who I am.

The discourse of the Dyke March as a place that affirms and confirms people’s identities, particularly when they do not have other venues in which to do so, is well-illustrated by these interview participant narratives. This is, of course, not necessarily true for all Dyke March participants. While the Dyke March was important to many of the people I interviewed, it did not always play a role in their coming out process or in affirming their sense of identity. For example, as Rebecca explained to me, “I kind of knew who I was before I knew there was a Dyke March.” However, the Dyke March more generally affirmed many people’s sense of themselves.
as lesbians, bisexual or queer women. This also included an affirmation of identity for some trans women, which changed over time. As Sarah Martin explained to me, “The first couple of years for me it was ‘Let’s go and support them.’ And as time went on it’s ‘Hey, I’m one of them’.”

The narrative of personal progress is further emphasized by participants who explained a changing relationship with the Dyke March over time. Many explained how the Dyke March had once been very significant for them, but as they became increasingly comfortable with their senses of self and identity, the Dyke March became less important. For example, thinking about the relationship between the Dyke March and the role it plays in her own identity, Riley expresses how it was more important in the first year or two that she attended because those were more formative years when she was more newly out and the March gave her a stronger sense of a collective queer community. She says:

Riley: I think going to the Dyke March was both, like in terms of me coming out and forging, you know, a lesbian identity, a queer identity, it was really, I think it was really important to see all of these other people and to feel like I was part of something that was big and exciting and real. […] I feel like when I was coming out I really, I really needed it in the first couple of years, it just felt really important and part of identity building in a way that later on when I was dating [my girlfriend at the time], I was like ‘Oh God, do we have to go?’ It’s always the same, it’s the same lady dancing at the front, the same music. You know, like I got a bit tired of the repetitiveness of it.
Riley explains that the further she is from her coming out experience, the less concerned she is with attending the Dyke March and in this way, the meaning of the Dyke March has changed for her and its significance in her life has decreased to the point that she’s less interested in participating in the Dyke March. Similarly, Farzana explained to me that the Dyke March was much more important to her earlier in her life when she was coming out.

**Farzana:** I think in those early days of coming out, and then coming out even more, and becoming more comfortable with who I was, it was far more important to have a huge queer Toronto in those early days. Because I take being out much more for granted in the last, I don’t know, ten years or something, you know, there isn’t anywhere I’m not out anymore, yeah it was far more important in that sense back then.

She explains that she is out in all aspects of her life, and so queerness is not limited to Pride and Dyke March spaces, but emanates throughout her life. These kinds of stories in which the Dyke March decreases in its importance and validity create a kind of linearity and a sense of progress in which, as people grow and change in their lives, becoming less invested in the Dyke March illustrates a discourse of progress in queer lives. And while the simplicity of the narrative of progress is compelling, conceptualizing the Dyke March as an almost therapeutic event and moment, this narrative of progress was challenged by the stories of other participants.

A number of interview participants disrupted the simplicity of this narrative of progress (and of movement away from the need or desire to participate) by challenging how the meaning of the Dyke March can change depending on changing life circumstances. While coming out is
almost always an important and challenging experience for queer people, other life changes affected their relationship to the Dyke March as well. Some people told me about attending the Dyke March with a new friend or a new partner and how this changed their experience of the March. Others told me about how their jobs involved participating in the Dyke March and Pride activities in their work capacities. The challenge to narratives of progress was most acutely revealed in my conversation with Karen. I came to understand that the ways in which time is remembered are not always chronological, but that there are other factors, such as our relationships, our work, and the other mundane details of our everyday lives which matter just as much, or sometimes more. Karen remembered that she first attended Pride and the Dyke March in either in 1997 or 1998 when she had moved back to Toronto. She told me about how the Dyke March has played an important role for her own identity but that this relationship was not linear. While some participants had argued that the Dyke March has mattered less to them over time, Karen suggested that its importance for her has fluctuated across time. She explained to me how a recent employment change meant that she has moved out of the non-profit sector, and that move also meant that the communities of people who surround her on a day to day had changed as well. While Karen was previously employed in a place in which she was surrounded by queer people, this was no longer true in her new job. For Karen, this meant that the Dyke March played a new role in her life.

Karen: Yeah so for example when I just switched jobs and therefore communities and people I’m around with, then that year was so important for me to go to the Dyke March ‘cause now I don’t work with a lot of dykes, I don’t work with people who remember that I have a woman partner for example, who... And I encounter a lot
more overt homophobia. So these moments are really important because it gives me a sense that this is my city, that’s my relationship to the Dyke March, is that this is our city and that I think it’s a part of different things I do to heal from daily feelings of marginalization and so on. It’s that kind of a place but I don’t need it all the time.

This fluctuation in meaning and importance offers a different way of understanding the role of the Dyke March among queer women’s communities. The narrative of coming out into the Dyke March and its role in affirming identity are interrupted by narratives which illustrate the changing meaning of the March depending on people’s changing life circumstances.

Though I did not speak to participants directly about the particular political contexts in which they participated in the Dyke March, changes in the social and political climate can also play a role in whether and how they involve themselves. Arguably, expressions of social and political oppression or repression change how participation and activism in the Dyke March are manifested. This can form new kinds of moments of solidarity among participants and can compel some people to engage for the sake of a united front when, in other circumstances, they might not otherwise get involved.

The second manifestation of the narrative of progress is the way in which the Dyke March, alongside the Pride Parade, signifies a city and country marked by civility and tolerance for diversity. Like the ways in which same-sex marriage and other successfully gained legal rights for gays and lesbians come to stand as symbols of pride around diversity, the Dyke March is a mark of a progressive, urban community which welcomes or celebrates (or, at least, tolerates) diversity. This is evident in more subtle ways in the quotes above by both Farzana and Karen,
who note the importance of having a “queer Toronto” and who claim Toronto as “our city.” Thus, the relationship between the place of Toronto and the March as a marker of progress is important to note. These non-linear narratives, coming out stories, and personal experiences as markers of progress all reveal something about how the subject of the Dyke March is imagined.

5.3 Dyke Subjectivity

Kendall and Wickham (1999: 26-27) argue that one of the facets of Foucault’s archaeological analysis is to explore how it is that certain statements become repeatable, and therefore become established as true. They further argue that an archaeological analysis asks how it is that “statements produce subject positions” in order for particular characters or people to emerge in particular forms – as teacher, as genius, or, for the purposes of this research, as queer or as dyke. Foucault’s archaeology also focuses on finding emergences, thought of as “places within which objects are designated and acted upon” (26). The Dyke March might be thought of as one of these ‘surfaces of emergence’ from and in which the dyke is constituted or gains visibility as a subject. More broadly, we might think about Pride celebrations, or the setting of Yonge Street in the context of a march, in order to think of more nuanced dyke subject-positions, such as a radical dyke, an apolitical dyke, an activist dyke, or a trans or genderqueer dyke. So how does the subject of the dyke emerge at the Dyke March? Or, to begin more generally, who do people who participate in the March imagine the subject of the dyke to be?

In her influential article “Imitation and Gender Insubordination,” Judith Butler examines what it means to be a homosexual – to write or present her work “as a lesbian” (1991: 13). She resists the inclination to take on these identities so simply, instead critiquing how “identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as the normalizing categories of oppressive structures or as the rallying points for a liberatory contestation of that very
“oppression” (13-14). She calls for a continued troubling of identity categories and describes the pleasure that she finds in the very instability of categories (14). This becomes an important theme in queer theory, and as I will show below, an important component of the complicated categorical construction of ‘dyke’ among participants in my study. Questioning the coherence of the category of lesbian, Butler writes,

For it is always finally unclear what is meant by invoking the lesbian-signifier, since its signification is always to some degree out of one’s control, but also because its specificity can only be demarcated by exclusions that return to disrupt its claim to coherence. What, if anything, can lesbians be said to share? And who will decide this question, and in the name of whom? (15)

The way in which Butler questions the construction of a lesbian identity echoes her earlier work in *Gender Trouble*, in which she similarly challenges the construction of the woman. She argues that there is little that is shared amongst women, or amongst lesbians, other than, perhaps, some of their shared experiences with oppression. Complicating the category of woman, Butler writes,

If one “is” a woman, that is surely not all one is; the term fails to be exhaustive, not because a pregendered “person” transcends the specific paraphernalia of its gender, but because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts, and because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities. (1999: 6)
Drawing on Butler’s complication of gender, here I want to consider how the category or subject of ‘dyke’ is troubled. Though I examine the category of dyke in this chapter, I do not make efforts to delineate a clear definition for the term. Rather, I am interested in revealing the multiple ways in which people come to the term by both identifying and disidentifying with it from a range of different places, emotions and experiences.

5.3.1 Who Is A Dyke? Who’s Marching?

Like queer, dyke has a history of being used as a derogatory word and of being reclaimed by queer women’s communities as an affirmative identity. Its longer history was reflected by three of my interviewees, all over the age of 45, who associated the word dyke with butch women. This association with a more butch or masculine identity speaks to the word’s etymology, wherein the word dyke has historically been associated with more masculine-identified women, used synonymously with words like bulldyke or bulldagger. More recently, dyke is not limited to more masculine identified women, and has come to signify, more broadly, a self-identifying term for many women, whether they identify as femme, as butch or as something else. This changing nature of language is also explained by Natasha, who pointed out to me that while dyke may have once be used to “describe older women who fit into a very kind of specific category of being strictly lesbian,” that younger feminist and queer women now identify as dyke “with all different kinds of meanings.” These might include femme-dykes or bi-dykes, identities that point to the fluidity available to the term.

Dyke is also a contested and racialized term. Some of my interview participants

49 See Spears (1985) and Krantz (1995) for a more detailed discussion and debate about the etymology of the words dike and bulldike.

50 Susan Stryker (2008a: 23) notes that the word bulldagger originates in queer communities of colour.
identified dyke as a white term, while others identified lesbian as a white term, and this depended in large part on the communities of people in which they came out. Amy Gottlieb, a white Jewish woman, explained that, while women of colour and working-class women were involved in the early 1980s organizing work around LOOT and LAR, the politics of the organizations did not effectively address questions of race and class. Out of this and in the excitement to reclaim words like dyke and fag, Amy understood the language of dyke to be less inclusive of racial diversity than words like gay and lesbian. Similarly, Frances, a Cantonese woman from Hong Kong, associated the word dyke with a particular image of a white riot girl aesthetic from the early- to mid-1990s. Frances argued that immigrant communities tend to use the words gay and lesbian. When she first came out she was surrounded by white people at work and at her university and at that time identified as a dyke. Over the years, she met more people of colour and Chinese people who did not identify as queers or as dykes. Frances attributed reclaiming the word lesbian for herself to distinguish herself from dyke, which she understood as very connected to whiteness.

**Frances:** So for me dyke, dyke culture I think I... sort of identified it with very much with whiteness but also a lot with the shorter hair, white “wife beaters” [ribbed tank tops or undershirts], and combat boots, like the riot girl movement around that time.

Contrastingly, two other women that I interviewed who identified as Chinese and from Hong Kong explained that they associated the word lesbian with whiteness. Lee Win Hing explained to me that she came out while living in Hong Kong and learned about queer
communities through the internet. What she found was mostly based on the American mainstream gay and lesbian movement. As a result, she associated the word lesbian with whiteness, and while she initially identified as a lesbian when she came out, she had increasingly grown uncomfortable with the word.

**Lee Win Hing:** It’s very white. It’s not a word that I’m comfortable with because I think it has a racialized connotation, which is very white, and I’m not white, so that’s my relation with the word lesbian.

Similarly, Karen explained to me how her changing identity reflected, in part, an understanding of the racialized connotations of language.

**Karen:** And then there was some moment in time where I changed from thinking of myself as a lesbian, which was a very white thing in my head, into a dyke which to me was not.

Karen explained to me that dyke was not a white word for her and that this was based on the communities of Asian dykes that she surrounded herself with.

**Karen:** It was just like I met Asian dykes who are like, “I’m a dyke, I’m a dyke, she’s a dyke.” So I’m like, “Oh, I want to be a dyke.” [. . .] Now fewer and fewer of my peers who are people of colour actually identify as dykes. [. . .] I don’t choose lesbian not only because of sort of the implications of like white lesbianism but
also I feel like it is very, like, old school and it’s like, locked down, you know?

Here, Karen articulates the multiple meanings of language, explaining the association of language to racialized identities, but also to her understanding of particular identity labels as less fluid. These contested connections between the language of dyke and lesbian affect the varied possible meanings for the language use and understanding of the subject-making process of the Dyke March.

Dyke remains a contested word that continuously makes people squirmy and uncomfortable. In 2003, San Francisco’s Women’s Motorcycle Contingent, the Dykes on Bikes, filed to have their name protected under trademark to keep it from being used commercially. The application was refused on the grounds that the language of ‘dyke’ was disparaging to women, based on a dictionary definition from 1913 (Dykes on Bikes 2008). What followed was a rather drawn out legal battle, in which a number of activists, scholars and community members made a case for the use and value of the word. 51 Alison Bechdel, for example, wrote a declaration in which she defended the use of the word dyke in her comic strip Dykes to Watch Out For as a way to make visible the lives of lesbians while also reflecting the language used by them. Dykes on Bikes was eventually granted protection under trademark in 2007 (Dykes on Bikes 2008). This debate over naming is evidence that the word ‘dyke’ continues to be contentious. I would argue,

51 Todd Anten explains that applications for trademark names which use disparaging language to describe a group are treated the same, whether they come from the group itself or not. He points out the two flaws in this logic, that “(1) It overlooks the important role that the reappropriation of slurs plays in disarming historically hateful speech and fostering a healthy self-identity; and (2) it ignores the fact that a self-disparaging mark’s mere existence automatically raises evidentiary doubts about whether that mark is truly disparaging to the referenced group” (2006: 388).
however, that the contention and controversy of the word are a part of its appeal.\(^{52}\)

Controversy over language has played a significant role among Dyke March organizers as well. All three of the Dyke March coordinators that I interviewed told me of the debates they encountered over the language of the March. Lesha Van Der Bij explained that she named the march quite intentionally, but as a result, came up against some critique.

**Lesha Van Der Bij:** I specifically made it the Dyke March. I didn’t want it to be the Lesbian March. And some people said why is it Dyke March? I had actually quite a bit of backlash from that, too. Why isn’t it the Lesbian March? Actually and then some women said it should be the Women’s March. I said it’s definitely not the Women’s March. It’s a Lesbian March maybe, but definitely not Women’s March. And I specifically wanted the Dyke March partly for the history of it. It started as the Dyke March in the States, I wanted to keep that up, but partly because I wanted to just take that name and that identifier and use it in a positive way...

Though she does not quite articulate why, Lesha emphasizes that her vision for the March was “definitely not the Women’s March.” Here, she is delineating that the category of woman is too broad to convey for whom the March was intended. Though she considers the category of lesbian as the March’s identifier, she defers to a continuity with American marches already

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\(^{52}\) It is also worth noting an interesting tension here. While trademarking is generally used for licensing and claiming property within capitalism, in this instance, the group appealed to trademarking as a way to protect a name from being depoliticized and to resist its use for commercial gain.
underway. Though Lesha herself did not identify as a dyke, but rather as a lesbian, the language of “dyke” was appealing to her. She was invested in a commonality between the Toronto Dyke March and marches in the United States, but also was invested in the word dyke as meaning something more than lesbian. The direct connection between the New York and Toronto Dyke Marches raises questions about the transnational affiliations of queer organizing more generally. Over the course of the last half century at least, the political struggles around sexuality in the United States have set a tone for queer organizing around the world. The dominance of Stonewall as an important ‘foundational’ story of queer struggles is perhaps the most obvious example of this. Though there continue to be many differences between Canada and the U.S. in terms of political, legal and social struggles around sexuality (see Rayside 2008), strong political and activist alliances are also drawn across borders. The naming of the Dyke March in Toronto after the American Dyke March organizing is an example of this close connection. The manifestation of the Dyke March in Toronto thus draws on both Canadian and American histories and connections can be drawn more broadly to cross-border feminist and queer social movement organizing.

Dyke March coordinator Cris Renna explained how the naming of the March is a perpetual conversation for the organizers. For her, the tension in the name was highlighted by the fact that groups of women who did not identify as dykes but as lesbian or gay were not participating in the March because of a perception that the March was “too radical” for them.

*Cris Renna:* She had friends who didn’t come out to march because […] it was too radical for them. That it wasn’t a space for them because they’re sort of like, you know, middle-class people who are professionals and have a dog and a condo and
they don’t feel like that space is for them.

Here, a particular lesbian subjectionhood is conjured up as a group of women who do not see themselves as radical. They are positioned by Cris as upwardly mobile and outsiders to the space of the March. Contrasting this imagery, during my interviews, I asked participants both how they identified and how they understood and related to the word dyke. These conversations were quite revealing about the subjectionhood of dyke and who is imagined to be marching together as dykes. As the previous discussion reveals, no category of identification is simple – identities are always loaded with deeper and more complex meanings. Both lesbian and dyke are linked to racial identities, and not in a way that is universally understood across women’s lives or experiences. If, however, in this story told by Cris, lesbian is simply defined as a woman who is attracted to other women, then dyke is intended to indicate something more than this – something more assertive or politically engaged.

Dyke is described in many ways by interview participants: as hard or harsh; as strong; as edgy; as messy; as raunchy; as raw; as in your face; as rough; as fierce; as taking up space; as political or radical. Cris laughed when she envisioned a dyke as a woman wearing big, black, steel-toed boots. Melanie thought of ‘dyke’ as a powerful word, but also as a fun or celebratory word, as simultaneously aggressive and fun. She explained:

**Melanie:** It’s sort of like flipping the bird for me, that word, a bit like yeah, this is a Dyke March. It’s kind of unapologetic and fun at the same time.
Importantly, the category of dyke is constructed in the interviews as something other than lesbian. On the simplest level, most explained that dyke could be used as a synonym for lesbian, but then would immediately follow up this discussion with the ways in which dyke is anything but lesbian. Constance, for example, argued that dyke is not lesbian, but for her, it articulates a sense of shared or mutual experiences and worldviews that are about more than sexuality. Many offered commonalities between dyke and lesbian, but differentiated the dyke from the lesbian as more radical or more political. Dykes are overwhelmingly understood to be something other than lesbian, or, as Riley put it, more “oppositional” than lesbian.

Chip also discussed how she identifies as a dyke and not as a lesbian. She associates the word lesbian with *The L Word*\(^5^3\) and this association might be linked to stereotypes of lesbians as lipstick lesbians or of lesbian chic. Writing about the relationship between *The L Word* and its role in the representation of lesbians on mainstream television, Vanasco (2006) writes that the show “spins us into something more glamorous, more gorgeous, more intriguing, more chic, than most of us really are” (2006: 183). Reactions to these so-called glamourous representations of lesbian identity are varied, but Chip explains that her trouble with lesbian might have something to do with her own troubled relationship with femininity, which she associates with commercialism. The word lesbian has been used in the straight male pornography industry, and regularly features very feminine women who pleasure each other, but who are ultimately invested in pleasuring men. This kind of pornography does not feature masculine or androgynous-identified women. The intended audience of straight men’s lesbian porn is not imagined to be interested in dykes or attracted to a woman who is perceived to challenge traditional,

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53 *The L Word* is an American television drama which aired on Showtime and that portrayed the lives of lesbian and bisexual women living in West Hollywood, California. The show aired for six seasons between 2004-2009.
stereotypical femininity. Chip explains that, beyond this, she finds lesbian limiting because it is often a word that is used to mark or label women:

**Chip:** But it’s also that lesbian is the word that I feel like the gaze uses to mark women, you know what I mean. So like lesbian porn isn’t for lesbians. It’s for guys who think there’s some kind of thing that lesbians do and then that’s, that’s what the word lesbian represents to me. It’s like an outsider’s word and I know it’s probably not like that for everyone, but… and it just seems so not active and political and in your face which is like all the things I like about dyke and identify in that way.

*The L Word* is critiqued for representing lesbian, bisexual and queer women’s culture as too white, too heteronormative, and too high-class. As Vanasco writes, “lesbians have long been considered the dull, unfashionable, bitter, but funny younger sisters of stylish, witty charming gay men” (2006: 186) and argues that *The L Word* works to change this representation to allow for a different kind of image of lesbian identity to emerge.

Though many of my interviewees claimed an identity as dykes, these identities were contingent on who was naming them. Chip pointed out to me that even though she does not identify as a lesbian, she does use the term when she is visiting with her family in Alberta. She explained that she would never ask her uncle to call her a dyke, nor would she want him to, because then it would no longer be a word to be used inside of her community. Similarly, Lesha Van Der Bij explained that she would not use the word dyke in her current workplace, and attributed this to having mellowed over the years, but also to how the word is too political or
radical for her workplace setting. These stories imply that the word dyke is somehow deemed as inappropriate or too political for certain contexts, or that there is something ‘too much’ or ‘over the top’ about the category of the dyke in everyday use. If the language of dyke is more of an insider’s word, then this, alongside its political and edgy meanings, has implications for the meaning of who is imagined to be marching in the Dyke March.

The distinction of dyke from ‘lesbian’ was important and perhaps most clearly articulated by Abigail. At the beginning of our interview, Abigail identified herself as a lesbian, but later in the interview, as we discussed ‘dyke,’ told me that she wanted to be identified as a dyke instead. As we continued to talk about the word, she explained to me why this is her preference:

**Abigail:** It’s more, it breathes more authentic to me. It’s... it’s a word that’s offensive to my mother and... and is real to me. So I love that it’s called that. If it was the Lesbian March or something like that I wouldn’t feel, I wouldn’t ... it just wouldn’t ring true.

**Allison:** Ok. So what’s the heart of that difference? What’s it for you?

**Abigail:** It’s like, ok, I guess I think of my mom and I think of me being who I am is gross to her for the same reasons that it’s wonderful to me. The exact same reason but she hates it and I love it. And so dyke, I love everything about it that, that exactly the same things that would be offensive to someone else looking on.

The heart of the term, for Abigail, speaks to its contentious and inappropriate nature, and it is these very signifiers that make the category of dyke appealing to many and therefore makes it a useful subject upon which the Dyke March rests.
While Chip had expressed a way in which she understood ‘lesbian’ as outside of her notion of queer women’s communities, Dyke March Coordinator Margaret Robinson explored how the word ‘dyke’ has been used as a tool by straight men to control women and their behaviour, or applied to women as a sign of disapproval. She points out that dyke can be used to control all women, so for her, she understood the Dyke March as an important participatory space for anyone who has experienced the label in a negative way. She points out how when women do not participate in hegemonic heterosexuality and heteronormativity, by refusing to “respond to every overture for sexual gratification from a man” or “if they don’t behave like a doormat”, then women get called dyke. For Margaret, the Dyke March is a space for anyone who has ever been subjected to this kind of treatment to come together to celebrate a refusal to participate in patriarchal gender relations.

**Margaret Robinson:** And very much that it’s not a synonym for lesbian. As much as it often gets used that way, that’s not what it means to me. And that’s not necessarily what it means when people scream it at you across a parking lot. They’re not suggesting you’re a lesbian, they’re suggesting you’re not a good woman. You’re not a proper woman. There’s something wrong with you. And I feel like if the only people who say ‘I have control over this word’ are lesbians, well you’re leaving an enormous number of women still oppressed by the word dyke. For me, it was about saying screw you patriarchy, we’ll be whatever kind of women we want to be.
Margaret’s long description of the collective resistance and reclamation of the word dyke speaks to a history of feminist organizing and resistance, and a subjecthood which is much broader than simply articulating a subject position for a woman who has sex with other women. I think she is also here articulating a kind of re-imagining of the ways in which we perform gender. If gender, according to Butler, “is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being” (1999: 43-44), how does the notion of the dyke re-imagine not only a gender performance, but also, perhaps, a performance of sexuality? If we imagine gender, as Butler does, “as a corporeal style, an ‘act,’ as it were, which is both intentional and performative, where ‘performative’ suggests a dramatic and contingent construction of meaning” (177), perhaps we might also consider dyke as a corporeal style, as both intentional and performative. This is not to suggest dyke as another gender form or as a version of drag. Rather, how might Butler’s understanding of the performativity of gender help to understand how the subject of dyke is constructed, performed, and imagined? Like gender, perhaps we could consider how dyke is “an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts” (179). Though there might be something more deliberate about an intentional claiming of a dyke identity more so than the naturalization of gender, might we also imagine a compulsory dyke-dom or dyke-hood? Though I think the interviewees in my research would resist such a formulation, the contested versions of who a dyke is imagined to be raise questions about the very essence of the subject of the dyke.

Like Constance, above, Margaret appeals to the notion of a shared collective experience that is summoned by dyke. Lesha Van Der Bij explains that the harshness of the word dyke helped to make a statement and to “create a collective spirit” to bring women together. In
Lesha’s explanation, these attributes associated with the word dyke are also then associated with a notion of women’s collectivity. This collective understanding of an identity under the subjecthood of dyke is incredibly appealing, yet simultaneously challenging to how poststructural thinkers continuously challenge the construction of identity or subjectivity. For example, as Sawicki writes, “poststructuralists like Foucault do not deny that we can or should ‘constitute ourselves as subjects’ . . . for this is unavoidable” (1998: 99). Butler (1999) cautions against a politics that unifies the subject into a coalitional set of politics under the rubric of an identity – as woman, or, in this case, as dyke. She points out how, although coalition building is motivated by an impulse towards democratization, we must be cautious about the desire to achieve a unifying outcome:

The insistence in advance on coalitional ‘unity’ as a goal assumes that solidarity, whatever its price, is a prerequisite for political action. But what sort of politics demands that kind of advance purchase on unity? Perhaps a coalition needs to acknowledge its contradictions and take action with those contradictions intact. Perhaps also part of what dialogic understanding entails is the acceptance of divergence, breakage, splinter, and fragmentation as part of the often tortuous process of democratization. (20)

Though I do not think that the Dyke March makes a direct appeal to a coalition politics, and if it does, it is a rather tenuous appeal, Butler’s words are a reminder about how the March might materialize into something very different were it to be more directly focussed on one coalition. I think the tension between the desire for coalitional politics and warning against the dangers of unifying under one moniker illustrate the interesting and useful tension at work in the Dyke
March. As illustrated above, Dyke March participants revel in the sassiness of dyke and find the collective, coalitional politics to be useful. They are simultaneously aware of the limitations of the category of dyke, heeding Butler’s advice, and wary of the ways in which some people remain outsiders to the construction of a dyke subjeethood. Though the Dyke March relies on the word ‘dyke’ to articulate a sense of belonging in the March, organizers also include a long list of possible identities in the March in its definition (LGBTTIQQ2SA). A sense of the various iterations of queer women’s sexualities and identities which are included in the March is also shared among interview participants.

5.4 Practices of Inclusion and Exclusion in the Dyke March

A consideration of the collectivity of the Dyke March raises the issue of who is imagined to be marching, and simultaneously, who is imagined not to be marching. In discussions with participants about the language of dyke, many understood the term to be flexible and inclusive of a broader spectrum of queer women than other language might allow. A number of participants also spoke to how the language of dyke, like the language of queer, offers some flexibility and uncertainty. For many, the word dyke is more challenging and less easy to identify. When, in my interview with Catherine and Alexander, Catherine found herself struggling to articulate what a dyke was, Alexander jumped in to explain that the uncertainty in the definition of the term is what makes the term useful.

One of the things that the Dyke March enables for interview participants is a flexibility in the categorization of identity and participation within it. While many participants spoke to me about how the language of dyke allowed for flexibility, a number of the participants that I spoke
with were women who were in relationships with cisgender\textsuperscript{54} or transgender men, and some were raising children within those relationships. Many of these women articulated the inclusive possibilities allowed by ‘dyke,’ thus articulating a more inclusive conceptualization of the imagined subject position of dyke. Catherine, for example, explained to me that she is in a long-term romantic relationship with Alexander and that they share economic and reproductive capacities together (they have a two year old daughter and Catherine was eight months pregnant with their second child). Catherine understood dyke as more inclusive than lesbian because she can identify as a queer woman and as a dyke, terms which she finds to be more “well-suited” to her identity and experiences, whereas lesbian is less so. Similarly, Melanie explained to me that she identifies as a bi woman, and is currently married to a man and together they are raising a one year old son. She describes herself as visibly heterosexual, and though she has never used the word dyke to identify herself, the Dyke March has played an important role for the preservation of her bi or queer identities. In other words, the March has helped her to keep that part of her identity alive, particularly in contexts in which she is not visibly identifiable as queer.

While for many, the imagined subject position conjured up by the Dyke March offered them a broader sense of inclusion as bisexual women or as women in relationships with men, the Dyke March is simultaneously experienced as a space of exclusion by others. While forms of exclusion are often troubling, conceptualizing the Dyke March as an exclusive space is not always problematic. Most participants were not troubled by the notion that the Dyke March specifically delineates a space for a particular group of people, or a space of singularity. As Alex

\textsuperscript{54}While “trans”means “on the opposite side as,” “cis” means “on the same side as.” Cisgender and cissexual are terms used by some, rather than nontransgendered or nontranssexual, to articulate a person who identifies their sex and gender as on the same side. The word is also used to identify an unstated assumption of normative sex and gender identities (Stryker 2008a: 22). See also Julia Serano (2007).
explained, “I don’t think it has to be inclusive of everybody.” Creating separate spaces around particular marginalized identities is often a feature of women’s and/or of queer peoples’ spaces. In his article, Kurt Iveson explores the legal dispute over the exclusion of men from access to the McIvers ladies’ baths in Sydney, Australia. He argues that “some forms of exclusion might actually work to deepen democracy” (2003: 216). He positions McIvers as a kind of counterpublic public space in which women and children have access to a swimming area away from men. He argues that this space can be thought of among other forms of exclusion which are “justified on the grounds that they facilitate the exploration of forms of co-presence and public sociability which are not possible in other public spaces” (224). The Dyke March is certainly a space that asks cisgender men to stay out in order to create a space for a group who might not otherwise be together. The Dyke March thus delineates a set of ideological boundaries around its counterpublic space (the concept of the counterpublic is examined in more detail in the following chapter). This creates a more obvious exclusionary boundary similar to other women’s marches, such as Take Back the Night, which have a history of asking men to not participate.

The Dyke March, however, is also a site of tension for some trans people. Though only a small number of people I spoke with during my interviews identified as trans, genderqueer, or indicated having been raised in a sex or gender other than the one by which they currently identified, the question of exclusion around trans identities was more fraught. Many of my conversations about the language of dyke were also about how dyke and the Dyke March serve to create forms of exclusion in sometimes problematic ways.

A large number of the cisgender women that I interviewed admitted that they did not know about the history of trans policies or exclusions from the space of the March. Some pointed to the fact that organizers make it clear that the March is trans inclusive, or deferred to
trans people they knew in order to understand whether or not they felt welcomed in the space. Some people told me how they marched with a trans friend who, as far as they could tell, felt welcomed in the space, though admitted to not knowing if this had always been the case. This uncertainty revealed how access to the space of the Dyke March can be assumed and unquestioned for those bodies which are more normatively gendered and therefore more easily conceptualized as the imagined subject of the Dyke March.

Some interview participants spoke about the tension of seeing a man in the Dyke March, and being unsure of whether the person was a cisgender man taking up space in a women’s march, or whether this was a trans man who was perceived to be “rightfully” in the space. This tension follows from a history of the earlier days of the Dyke March, when many women would ask men to leave.

Lesha Van Der Bij: I remember in the beginning, I did ask some men to leave. Like I said this is a women’s march. You can cheer, we’re happy to have you cheer us from the sides. But I don’t even know if I’d do that any more. I don’t know if I could be bothered.

First, it is important to note that, in this passage, Lesha identifies the Dyke March as a women’s march, in contrast to the previous discussion in this chapter on the naming of the Dyke March, in which she contradicts this statement by arguing that conceptualizing the Dyke March as a women’s march is an insufficient characterization. In the earlier statement, she rejected the notion of a women’s march to clarify that the Dyke March was intended to exclude straight women, whereas in this statement, she relies on the notion of a women’s march in order to
indicate the exclusion of men. While in the context of articulating an identity associated with the March, “women’s march” was insufficient, yet in the context in which the Dyke March is conceptualized as a counterpublic to men’s space, here Lesha relies on the category of women rather than dyke or lesbian to articulate who does not belong. Second, what also emerges in this passage is a tired ambivalence around the policing of identities and bodies in the March. Lesha says “I don’t know if I could be bothered,” suggesting that the issue is a lost cause or not worth the struggle. It also suggests that subjectivity is not coherent and that divisions and fractures in subject positions are possible, and even expected. It is unclear if this change in her attitude is because of a difference in Lesha’s politics, if it is reflective of a changing practice over the years in which the Dyke March is less rigidly policed around gender identity, or if it is reflective of a more general increased awareness and acceptance of trans bodies in the Dyke March. The practice of policing bodies in the Dyke March is fraught with tensions as participants try to carve out a space for themselves in a male-dominated context. Yet, any attempt at regulating which bodies can be excluded in the space challenges the notion that there is a shared subject position that those included bodies occupy.

Though it was once a more common practice for women to ask men to leave the space of the March, many of my interview participants struggled with this as they considered the implications of policing the space of the March, particularly in the context of misreading or offending a trans person. Rebecca described how one year a man marched with her contingent, and she described the fear of policing someone who might identify as trans.

**Rebecca:** Yeah I do remember last year there was someone who was trying to march with our group who was definitely male but no one wanted to kick him out
because they were afraid that he might be trans. In the end he turned out not to be but people were saying what if, you know, this is a trans woman who just isn’t really passing well. And people were kind of afraid to approach this guy. I mean it turned out he was just a gay guy who didn’t know that men weren’t supposed to march.

Rebecca here articulates something rather complex. Among a group of women who are otherwise attuned to questions of marginalization and exclusion based on their genders and sexualities, there is a repeated moment of questioning another marcher’s presence and involvement in the March. Many participants told me similar stories of seeing men who were participating in the March and feeling unsure about how to deal with them. There is a sense of anger and frustration towards cisgender men’s participation in the Dyke March, since the March is about carving out a counterpublic space distinct from men. The desire to ask the unwanted male to leave the space is about demanding a brief but important boundary of a women’s only space. However, at the same time, there is a fear of disrespecting trans people, or mis-reading or misunderstanding a trans person’s body and identity in the negotiation of belonging in the space. Here, power and positioning are at play in the regulation of gender identities, and the matter is complicated by queer theory’s disruption of binaries. The negotiation of matters of (non-)belonging in the routinized performance of the Dyke March is a negotiation of power and control over the reading and policing of particular bodies in particular ways. It is also about power and control about who gets to determine the boundaries of belonging. There is an ambivalence in the desire to police male normative gender power and the fear of marginalizing trans bodies and identities. Rebecca’s passage above also reveals a relief of recognition when
she confirms her reading of the cisgender male body. When she explains that “it turned out he was just a gay guy who didn’t know,” she here confirms a form of cisgender power and privilege. This is manifestation of an anxiety around trans bodies – that trans bodies are identifiable on sight, and that when they are not, this is a cause of panic around a binary gender regime (Wilchins 1997).

The question of trans inclusion in the March must be contextualized within the broader social and political moment. As trans politics have come to be more vocally present in queer politics, a number of controversies over the years help to reveal the tensions within the microcosm of the Dyke March. Certainly important is understanding the context of the sex wars debates from the 1970s and 1980s. A generalized sentiment of many feminists from the moment of the second wave was that they were quite critical of transgender identities and practices. Stryker (2008a: 2) points out how FTM trans people were critiqued for trying to escape women’s lived oppression and MTF trans people were critiqued for not being proudly effeminate males. In my conversation with Sarah Martin, she explained to me how, during the 1980s, the lesbian community was very uncomfortable with trans people and was concerned that their lesbian spaces would be invaded. The debates from this moment have continued to rage on, and though they certainly do not dominate feminist or queer politics in the same way in the current moment, debates over who constitutes a “real” woman continue to occur. In my interview with George, he explained how, at every step of his medical and civil transition, he was met with incredible resistance to his transition. He argued that, in his experience, it is more generally acceptable for trans men to mess with the gender binary but not to undergo surgical intervention. Throughout the process of his transition, he encountered resistance about how he was reinforcing the gender binary – a kind of thinking which he attributed, in part, to second wave feminism. Despite the
influence of queer theory’s problematizing of gender both in academic and everyday lives and identities, people continue to be troubled with how to read trans bodies. In part, this ambivalence is rooted in the various ways of reading trans bodies in the social, political and legal contexts. Despite the complex contributions of queer and gender theorists, “it still remains a standard practice to invoke biomedical and essentialist categories, such as reproductive anatomy, to distinguish and define sexual difference” (Denike 2006: 137). As Denike summarizes, “many women may feel ambivalent about whether simply stating that one is a man or a woman is sufficient to affirm such identity for the purpose of participating on a sports team, volunteering at a woman’s centre or being housed in a woman’s prison” (137). She argues that the ambivalence is reduced when the trans person has undergone a surgical sex-change, ultimately reducing how trans bodies are read and understood based on assumptions about anatomy. This is also further complicated by the way in which trans people are overly burdened with the responsibility of embodying the breakdown of gender binaries.

The consequences of the debates over who constitutes a “real” woman relate directly to questions of inclusion in and exclusion from women’s spaces. Perhaps most notorious is the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival’s womyn born womyn policy, which excludes trans people from the space. Debates over this festival’s policy raged through the 1990s and early 2000 and Camp Trans (and Son of Camp Trans) was established in the mid-1990s as a space for trans people and allies to meet and protest the festival’s exclusion policies. Though trans women can now buy tickets and attend the festival (contrary to earlier experiences of being escorted off the premises in the middle of the night), this is perceived by festival organizers as disrespectful of the womyn only space. Defenders of the Festival as a women’s only space argue that women should have the right to create a week away from patriarchal culture (Denike 2006: 141). Denike
raises the tension in the question of exclusion. She argues that “while it is important for women to carve out spaces to collectively organize and freely associate as a group, it is worth considering the context and purpose of such organization and the relevance of exclusion to this purpose” (141).

Other important debates around trans exclusion have garnered significant media attention as well. In 1995, Kimberly Nixon, a post-operative transsexual woman who had been living as a woman since 1989, was asked to leave a volunteer training session at the Vancouver Rape Relief Society, a “non-profit women’s organization that provides counseling and other support services to female survivors of sexual violence” (Denike 2006: 139). Nixon was asked to leave on the grounds that she was not born a woman and therefore did not share the same life experiences of born females. There was also concern that some clients might not feel safe or comfortable with a counselor that they did not read as female (140). Nixon filed a human rights complaint in which she argued that she was discriminated against on the basis of sex. Part of her argument to the BC Human Rights Tribunal was that she had experienced physical and emotional abuse from a man and therefore wanted to be able to provide counseling to other women. In 2002, the BC Human Rights Tribunal ruled in favour of Nixon and she was awarded $7500 in damages. In 2004, the decision was overturned by the Supreme Court of British Columbia, which ruled that Nixon does not qualify as female. Justice E.R.A. Edwards ruled that MTF trans women could be banned from the Rape Relief Society because women who had been subjected to male violence might see a trans woman as threatening (Gulliver 2004). In 2006, the BC Court of appeal upheld the same ruling, confirming the Society’s right to exclude trans women from volunteering (NUPGE 2006).

55 At the time, $7500 was the highest amount given for special compensation in the history of the BC Human Rights Tribunal (findlay 2006: 146; Harris 2006: 174).
Nixon’s lawyer applied for leave to take the decision to the Supreme Court of Canada for a final decision (Findlay 2006: 145). In part, Nixon’s legal battle has been the source of broader debates around the question of trans inclusion in women’s spaces. As Denike writes,

> It has led to personal, legal, political and philosophical interrogations of what it means to *be* a woman; in what circumstances and contexts sexual difference might matter; of what it takes to change one’s gender identity and civil status; and of what similarities and/or differences exist between the forms of sex-based discrimination, oppression and violence experienced by ‘women-born-women,’ transsexual women and transgendered persons. (2006: 140)

But as Barbara Findlay argues, the consequences of the BC Supreme Court and Court of Appeal is that “if you are a member of a women’s group you can’t be held accountable for discrimination. That means you can decide which women are women enough for you” (149). In part, what these controversies ask is “on whom does the burden of accommodation fall?” (Sreedhar and Hand 2006:167). These controversies are also about “the otherwise unjustifiable exclusion of some in order to maintain the comfort of others, or the otherwise morally obligated accommodation of some at the expense of others’ comfort” (167).

The Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival and the Kimberley Nixon case offer important context for discussions happening around trans inclusion and decisions made at the Toronto Dyke March. Margaret Robinson explained how decisions around trans inclusion and exclusion in other organizations helped to inform discussions around trans policies at the Dyke March Committee level. When Margaret first got involved with the Dyke March Committee in 1999, a
number of the members of the Committee had also been involved in organizing Take Back the Night and the organizing committee got into arguments about the inclusion of men at the Dyke March. She explained that what had initially seemed to be an argument about men’s presence in the March turned out to be an argument about keeping transsexuals and bisexuals out of the March. In the discussions, the logic of exclusion argued that if bisexual women were allowed to march that they would bring their male partners with them. She described very heated Dyke March committee arguments in which, as a bi woman, she had to listen to whether she was even welcomed to participate in the March. Further, two of the committee members had come out as trans in circumstances that Margaret describes as “not easy or safe.” Margaret felt conflicted by, on the one hand, the biphobia and transphobia that she was witnessing in the discussions, but on the other hand, a concern that the Dyke March requires a strong volunteer base, and many of the women participating in the discussion were experienced volunteers and leaders in the community. As she explained,

**Margaret Robinson:** Yeah, if you let transsexuals, they said men will just... you won’t be able to tell men to leave. How will you know? And that any random man will wander in and say, “It’s ok, I’m trans.” And they said it’ll be swamped with straight men and you’ll never get rid of them and the March won’t exist anymore. And at the time I thought well maybe they’re right, I don’t know. It’s their city, it’s not mine I don’t really know how it works here.

She felt that this group of women held a certain amount of feminist credibility, and she was intimidated at the time by a lack of access to Women’s Studies education and by feeling like an
outsider, new to the Toronto area. Debates over trans and bi inclusion in the March ended up dividing the committee and half of the group quit. Margaret ended up making the argument that trans people had a historic right to continue to participate in the March, as people who had been participating in and organizing the March for a number of years. She remembered how the tension of the moment was also heightened by similar debates in other cases across the country, such as the Kimberly Nixon case, which was ongoing at the time. Creating a trans-positive policy for the March was helped by the fact that the Toronto Women’s Bathhouse Committee had come out as trans positive. As she explained, “it seemed like every news coverage of any of these transsexual inclusion issues, we’re all biting our nails to find out is this going to support our decision or not.”

The hostile transphobia and biphobia that Margaret encountered at the time centred on the logic defining women as “real women.”

**Margaret Robinson:** I remember getting a phone message at Pride Toronto office from a woman who said, “I think it’s about time you started focusing on the real lesbians and not these other so-called bisexual, transsexual what have you.” I just thought wow, how do I even begin to respond to this? Does she even have a clue that the people organizing this event identify as a trans man and a bi woman? Does she know this?

This was reiterated in a more contemporary discussion with Farzana over transphobic debates which undermined the possibility of a trans woman being awarded the position of Honoured Dyke in the 2007 March, questioning whether or not she was a “real” dyke. All of these debates
over the inclusion of trans and bi women in the Dyke March indicate a way in which particular groups of people fought to keep the boundaries of a dyke subjecthood more tightly refined. As Bronwyn Davies writes, “Each person must make their way inside the experience of belonging to the category of person as that is understood within their time and culture if they are to recognize themselves when addressed as such” (2005: 30). Struggles to define the subject of dyke, and to determine whether or not trans and bisexual bodies “belong” are questions, for each person involved in the struggle, of articulating who they understand themselves to be. If, as Davies writes, “feminist discussions often fall apart on the terms woman and man, because it is assumed that the speaker is saying ‘all women’ or ‘all men’ and anyone can instantly think of exceptions to the apparently universalistic statement that is being made” (69-70), so too does the category of dyke fall apart every time it begins to appear stable. The so-called threat of bi and trans people to the subject of dyke illustrates the fragility and instability of the category. Thus, the subject of the Dyke March is always already fraught from within the politics of gender, sexuality and identity.

Certainly, there are many painful stories of exclusion from the March. Unsurprisingly, some of the trans people I spoke with articulated some particularly difficult stories of exclusion from the Dyke March alongside their ejection from other similar kinds of queer women’s spaces. George described to me how, through the process of his transition, he has been gradually removed from most of his communities. Once a very active volunteer in queer women’s communities and Dyke March organizing, as he transitioned, his desire to march was perceived as an invasion of women’s space. George articulated a difficulty with understanding why trans men had to be excluded from the space. He found this to be particularly difficult given that his life, at the time, revolved around the dyke community and that, as he explained,
George:... to three quarters of the world I was just, you know, like a bull dyke, stone butch [. . .] It was really weird for me to get so much of the straight world telling me to go away and be a dyke, and the dykes saying get lost or die. So there’s no space for me.

What is apparent from George’s account of his removal from dyke communities, alongside Margaret’s story of defending the rights of trans men’s participation in the Dyke March, is how a complicated layering of marginalization is always at work. It also reveals how, while on a policy level, the Dyke March can be articulated as a trans-positive space, this can be very removed from the quotidian living experience of the March and from the personal politics of people in queer women’s/dyke communities. George’s removal from the space of the Dyke March occurred alongside his being denied access to a variety of spaces and services. At the height of one argument about accessing so-called women’s spaces, he angrily articulated how his body and life experiences were about so much more than the politics of an identity label. At the time, he explained that though he identified as male, he certainly was not always passing as male and still needed to deal with a medical institution that did not know how to deal with someone like him, a trans guy who was going through menopause in his 20s. Though George’s logic relied, in part, on the fact that he was raised and lived as a woman, he also problematized this argument as insufficient reasoning for belonging in women’s spaces. However, he pointed out that at the time, though he identified as male, he did not always pass as male, and was identified by other people as female, thus confusing the possibilities for access to spaces and services. George generally felt that his access to communities, services, spaces and support systems was cut off quite quickly and abruptly because of his trans identity, and that the spaces of the Dyke March
were quite central to this. The complexity of not belonging was particularly difficult since neither the cissex/cisgender queer community nor the straight community were places in which he was welcomed.

While exclusion functions in very real and painful ways for many trans folks, exclusion can also function in a productive way for others as a way to confirm a trans or masculine identity. For example, Karen told me how the masculinity of a trans guy that she dated was affirmed in part by the Dyke March. As she explained, “his exclusion confirmed for him his masculine identity.” Though she pointed out that the Dyke March is open to trans people, not belonging in the space was important to who he understood himself to be.

Much of this discussion has centered on questions of identity politics, particularly debates in feminism about challenges around the limitations of language. It is from within the debates around identity politics and the narrative of a Dyke March history that a dyke subject emerges. The identity politics that are at work shape what constitutes the dyke subject, or the subject of the Dyke March. The discourses of identity politics which circulate, like the narrative of the history of the Dyke March, is a place from which the subject of the dyke emerges.

5.5 Conclusion

I began this chapter by challenging the linear narrative of the history of the Dyke March. I did so by considering how the subject of the dyke emerges. What this reveals is how there are multiple and conflicting understandings of who the subject of the Dyke March is imagined to be. This is, in part, about the imagery conjured up by the language of ‘dyke,’ but it is also about how Dyke March participants understand questions of inclusion and exclusion. What these contested understandings reveal is how narratives of Dyke March histories, experiences, and subject positions are multiple, contextual, and fractured. As Wendy Brown explains, each of Foucault’s
genealogical projects “asks not only whether these stories are ‘really true’ but what function of power each purported Truth serves, what each particular fiction conceals and, even more importantly, produces” (1998: 38). The multiple ‘truths’ of the Dyke March and the subject of the marching dyke reveal how the Dyke March is fraught with tension and that complicated layers of marginalization, inclusion and exclusion are always at work. In the following chapter, I consider this theme more explicitly and ask what it means for dykes to take up space in public. I examine the role of spectatorship and how the question of looking is both desired and contested.
CHAPTER 6: CONTESTED TERMS OF PUBLIC VISIBILITY AND SPECTATORSHIP

6.1 Introduction

This chapter considers the relationship between the Dyke March and how particular bodies are looked at when they appear in public. By contextualizing the chapter within the literature which challenges the binary of public and private space, I begin by establishing the production of the Dyke March as public. I consider how March participants understand what it means to be visible and to take up space in public. In the second section of this chapter, I examine the notion of spectatorship and consider the politics of looking, in order to reflect on the complex relationship between marchers and spectators and on the tension between the desire to be noticed and the contested ways of seeing or looking. Here I ask, what are the consequences and meanings of dykes taking up space in public? What kinds of politics are at work when dykes are on display in public? In each section, I examine how particular bodies are included or excluded from the space of visibility that the Dyke March provides, and more broadly, from conceptualizations of the city.

6.2 The Dyke March as a Public Event and the Importance of Visibility

In Chapter Three, I examined geography literature which contemplates how the division between public and private spaces operates in the name of truth. Recall that while theoretically, public spaces are open to everyone, in practice and with some regularity, particular gendered, racialized, classed and sexualized bodies are excluded from public spaces and understood not to belong in the public realm. For example, Michael Warner (2002) reminds us that public space is traditionally ascribed to the male and masculine. He writes that “in the case of gender, public and private are not just formal rules about how men and women should behave. They are bound
up with meanings of masculinity and femininity. Masculinity, at least in Western cultures, is felt partly in a way of occupying public space; femininity, in a language of private feeling” (24-25).

Public spaces are constructed as the space of male and masculine, of heterosexuality, of the middle and ruling classes, and of whiteness. Puwar argues that “just as discourses constituted the female body as an unsuitable occupant of the body politic, certain racialised bodies were also deemed unsuitable participants of the politic” (2004: 21). What does it mean, then, when a group of dykes of various gender identities, ages, sexualities, abilities, races and classes demand to take up space in public?

It is in the spaces of political protest, and the spaces of Pride Parades and Dyke Marches, that the tension between understandings of public and private can be ruptured and private identities can be affirmed through public politics (M. Warner 2002). Warner writes that,

In the ideals of ethnic identity, or sisterhood, or gay pride, to take the most common examples, an assertive and affirmative concept of identity seems to achieve a correspondence between public existence and private self. Identity politics in this sense seems to many people a way of overcoming both the denial of public existence that is so often the form of domination and the incoherence of the experience that domination creates, an experience that often feels more like invisibility than like the kind of privacy you value. (26)

In this passage, M. Warner sees the right to a private existence, on the one hand, and the sense of an invisible existence, on the other, as manifestations of domination. The phenomenon of Dyke Marches is a way for collective groups of women to attempt to disrupt this sense of invisibility
that is formed through dominant ways of knowing and dominant forms of being. Importantly, the Dyke March challenges the ideals of the public, by disrupting gender normative and heteronormative assumptions about access to public space, as well as by troubling how variously racialized and classed people access and navigate the public. Public space is space which belongs to the collective – be it the collective of the City of Toronto or of the national collective of Canada. The Dyke March interrupts normative claims to public space by insisting on the rights of othered bodies to access those spaces, interrupting municipal and national constructions of who belongs in public space.

Interview participants made succinct arguments about the Dyke March as a public event, about the importance of being visible and of being out. This sense of affirmation in public space is critical to how participants understand the March and their participation within it. Indeed, they argued that a part of the very essence of the Dyke March is about creating visibility for a group of people who are otherwise understood to be invisible and a part of the private realm on the basis of both their gender and sexuality. Understanding the need for visibility hinges on the notion that dykes are not otherwise visible both in the broader public eye as well as within Pride celebrations where men tend to dominate, or in which Pride is understood to be more about gay men than about dykes or trans folks. The fact of women gathering as a large group in a public space challenges conceptions of who belongs in the public realm, and interview participants understood the Dyke March as an important tool for queer women’s or dyke visibility. Catherine, for example, explained that part of the appeal of the Dyke March is the opportunities it affords for visibility and for challenging peoples’ assumptions about queerness.
Catherine: . . . it’s very public. Like, marches are about being seen and about getting attention [. . .] one of the things you really notice participating in the Dyke March is that people are watching you, so it has that good edge of promoting awareness too. And you never know what people are taking away from it as spectators. But at the same time you know you’re out there and you’re contributing to visibility and that it’s a diverse crowd and it challenges some of people’s assumptions around what queer or gay identity is.

In this passage, Catherine draws a direct link between the publicness of the March and the importance of attracting attention in order to create visibility for an otherwise invisible group of people. This sentiment was echoed by many of my interview participants. Similarly, Amy Gottlieb articulated the importance of challenging the invisibility of queer women’s sexualities in both their work and personal lives. Participating in the visibility of the Dyke March is an important part of this project for her. She further articulated a connection between the March and a broader politic wherein legal victories have not yet been exhausted. Her participation is a continued commitment to furthering the struggles to achieve equity rights.

Amy Gottlieb: And so despite the legal victories we’ve won and the right to marry, etcetera, etcetera, I don’t feel like it’s over and that we’ve won. So I still feel the need to be out on the streets.

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56 Also note here Catherine’s emphasis on watching – the politics of watching, of looking, and of seeing and the tensions that emerge from these interactions will be addressed in more detail in the following section.
In addition to claims to public space, my research participants also highlighted the importance of creating spaces that are specifically oriented to women and dykes. They argued that because the Dyke March is dedicated to women, it challenges the stereotypes that Pride is only about gay, white, middle-class masculinities. Participating in the Dyke March, as Amy outlines, is also about continuing with broader legal, political and social struggles, perhaps in the spirit of the old feminist slogan: “Still ain’t satisfied!”

Within the project of creating visibility, interview participants spoke to me about a variety of strategies that they used in order to take up space at the Dyke March. For some, simply being in the space, or the very presence of their bodies in the space was sufficient. Participants also spoke to me about taking up space in ways that signaled revelry, joy and celebration. They described using rainbow flags, carrying signs or wearing t-shirts with meaningful messages on them. They took opportunities to dance, jump around, make a lot of noise, shout into megaphones, and get splashed in water gun fights. Others emphasized the importance of clothing and costumes to express their sexuality. Melanie described how she plays with feminine and masculine ideas, by dressing in a ‘femmy’ way but with a queer twist. As she explained, she dresses in a way that is “a little bit fucked up, it’s got to be a little bit punky, you know what I mean, a little bit masculine” and offered the example of pinstripe trousers with a lace blouse as an illustration of the kind of dissonance that she likes to express. She is interested in embodying a look which is “feminine but kind of grotesque.” Similarly, Cris Renna described the conscious decision that she makes during the Dyke March to dress in a more revealing way which is different from her usual day-to-day attire. She emphasized that the March is her opportunity to “go and take up space in that way and sexualize the space in a particular way.” Here, Cris articulates how the Dyke March functions as a space for many women to play and experiment
with their dress as a way to challenge both themselves and spectators about the expectations of what dykes look like or how they can appear in public.

Some interview participants considered the possibility for public visibility as a moment of transgression, or a moment for a deeper and more engaged set of politics. This was particularly evident in my conversation with Chip who explained how she uses the Dyke March to help create visibility for communities that she perceives to be even less visible than dykes. Contrasting her experience in the Dyke March with other political marches, such as those put on by No One Is Illegal\textsuperscript{57} or Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP),\textsuperscript{58} she explains how much these groups actually want people to come and watch and witness the events in order to witness interactions with the police. She emphasizes how it is at these events that the act of witnessing can be really important and a form of political action. Chip described feeling quite bitter about the lack of witnessing at these political marches in contrast to the large numbers of people who are watching the Dyke March, but where people are not necessarily interested in taking advantage of the opportunity to be seen in a political way.

\footnote{As stated on the No One Is Illegal website: “No One Is Illegal (Toronto) is a group of immigrants, refugees and allies who fight for the rights of all migrants to live with dignity and respect. We believe that granting citizenship to a privileged few is part of a racist immigration and border policies designed to exploit and marginalize migrants. We work to oppose these policies, as well as the international economic policies that create the conditions of poverty and war that force migration. At the same time, it is part of our ongoing work to support and build alliances with Indigenous peoples in their fight against colonialism, displacement and the ongoing occupation of their land” (No One Is Illegal n.d.).}

\footnote{As stated on the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty website: “OCAP is a direct-action anti-poverty organization based in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. We mount campaigns against regressive government policies as they affect poor and working people. In addition, we provide direct-action advocacy for individuals against welfare and ODSP, public housing and others who deny poor people what they are entitled to. We believe in the power of people to organize themselves. We believe in the power of resistance” (Ontario Coalition Against Poverty n.d.).}
Chip: So here is all this visibility going on but then I’m like, we’re not doing anything that’s worth watching. Like let’s use this moment, this is the one moment a year when I’m in a part of a community where a lot of people are looking, right, and a lot of people are noticing and what am I doing? I’m just walking with my shirt on, it’s like what the fuck am I doing?

For Chip, this moment was filled with possibilities for political protest and she worried about the potential for lost opportunities. Yet, she also articulated a tension where on the one hand, she was angry with herself for not making better use of visibility, and on the other hand, she wondered why she could not simply enjoy the moment of Dyke March as an opportunity for celebration and fun. Here, Chip articulated a struggle between the personal and the political, or, perhaps more specifically, between the pleasurable and the political. This tension echoes the ongoing feminist struggle to resolve the divide between the personal from the political, even when they are usually already interconnected. This tension is similarly captured in Kath Browne’s (2007) work in which she examines how Pride spaces in Dublin and Brighton are simultaneously political and party spaces. This struggle is again articulated and repeated in mainstream discourses of Pride in which politics are declared to be irrelevant to and separate from political events. Chip’s navigation of the space of the Dyke March speaks to this broader tension and struggle.
Chip’s response to her own sense of internal conflict was to more actively make use of her visibility during the Dyke March. Chip works as a sex worker and with Maggie’s Toronto, an organization run for and by sex workers to improve their work safety conditions. Because she felt that Maggie’s needed more visibility, she used the moment of marching in the Dyke March to increase the organization’s visibility in terms of both sex positivity and body positivity.

**Chip:** I was like, okay, here’s a group that needs a lot of visibility right now and I feel like want to have some more visibility around doing this work, I mean not necessarily to just like be marching, being like, “Hey everybody I’m a prostitute,” but being like... which I could have done because my friend was going to lend me her sign that says “This is what a feminist hooker looks like,” but I couldn’t find it. And so all of a sudden I was like ok everyone’s going to look at me and think something about me or not and I’m going to try and mobilize this opportunity for something different.

Because she felt that her role within the Maggie’s contingent in the Dyke March made her quite visible, she opted to dress in a conservative style, which was distinct from her half naked dress in previous years. The year she marched with Maggie’s, she wore a boy’s shirt and a vest and describes herself as looking very boyish and held a sign that said “Outlaw Poverty Not Prostitutes” on the one side. She was told by friends that they saw her on CBC and CP24 news.

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59 According to the Maggie’s Toronto website: “Maggie's is an organization run for and by sex workers. Our mission is to assist sex workers in our efforts to live and work with safety and dignity. We are founded on the belief that in order to improve our circumstances, sex workers must control our own lives and destinies” (Maggie’s 2011b).
and could quote her sign. (Though it was not captured on the news, the other side of the sign said “Sex Work Without Apology.”) As a result, Chip described a sense of achievement at having made use of the potential for visibility and transgressive politics at the March. She explained that “All of a sudden I felt like I had achieved something around being visible in a way that I was really lacking.” Chip’s actions reaffirmed for her the political purpose of the Dyke March, in addition to actively contributing to the infrequent support and rare affirmation of sex workers. Here, Chip’s challenge to the use of public space of the Dyke March is a disruption to the notion that the March might only be about gender and sexuality but instead, is also interconnected to matters of class, commerce and forms of labour. While Chip’s story is evidence of an effective use of the visibility of the Dyke March, she is also inserting a challenge to use the space in other ways which highlight the politics of sex work.

Sex work has a peculiar relationship to the public/private divide. As I outlined in Chapter Three, a ‘public woman’ is understood to be a sex worker, and is constructed as a threat to social and moral order by challenging notions of respectability. This order is threatened by the presence of sex workers in public spaces and on city streets. There is a long history of regulating sex workers in public and of the police’s role in “defend[ing] the respectability” of particular neighbourhoods (Kinsman 1996: 387). Sex work is regularly affiliated with lower-class populations and neighbourhoods, and with degeneracy, lacking recognition and respectability as a form of employment. Recent legislative changes in Ontario offer the promise for the possibilities of new working conditions for sex workers; however these changes have yet to take effect.\footnote{On September 27, 2010, the Ontario Superior Court ruled that the Charter rights of sex workers are violated by prostitution laws in Ontario. As of the publication of this dissertation, no changes have taken effect pending an appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada. Though Toronto police claimed they would stop} I interpret Chip’s sex worker activism in the Dyke March as being about disrupting
normative conceptions of access to public spaces and offering an intersectional form of politics into the space of the March. Chip’s actions challenge dominant understandings of who sex workers are, what spaces sex workers take up in the city, and the relationship between sex work and feminism. Her activism also gestures to a confrontation of class politics into a space designated for women’s and queer politics and visibility.\textsuperscript{61}

The gendered and sexualized intervention of visibility into public space needs to be nuanced by the role of racial politics and identities as well. If public spaces are presumed to be the realm of white, middle-class, heterosexual masculinities, this is disrupted by the insertion of large groups of racialized queer women onto the space of Yonge Street. A number of interview participants spoke to me about the way that race and nationalism are at play in the negotiation of their bodies in the space of the Dyke March. In particular, many racialized people are constructed as outsiders to the space of the Dyke March. Indeed, the presence of racialized queers troubles notions of inclusion which function at the Dyke March.

Two of my interview participants, Karen and Frances, identified themselves to me as Cantonese and Chinese respectively, and both immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong. Frances explained to me how during the Dyke March, she is constantly negotiating herself and her body, and sometimes her toplessness, in her interaction with East and South-East Asian spectators. In the years that she was a member of an Asian community organization, she marched with the group and used the March as a way to target Asian populations with flyers about the conducting sex worker sweeps, Maggie’s has reported a number of ongoing arrests and sweeps in the Markham and Ottawa areas (Maggie’s 2011a).

\textsuperscript{61}It is worth noting that though sex work is generally conceptualized as the work of the poor and working-class, it of course also transcends class boundaries. I am thinking here of a wide range of work, from street hustlers to professional escort services.
organization. During these moments, she describes feeling hyper-conscious of the stereotypes of East Asians and explained:

**Frances:** Well there’s a stereotype of East Asians as being immigrants, foreigners, tourists, and so on, and then you know generally straight, and so I’m just often very conscious of that, hyper-conscious of that.

Despite her own Canadian citizenship, Frances articulates here a sense of always being perceived as an outsider. Frances is referring to what Rinaldo Walcott (2003) characterizes as the case of racialized minorities in Canada who are framed with “not-quite-citizenship” (2003: 141). She is deeply conscious of understanding her Asian identity as one of non-belonging in Canada, as she acknowledges the stereotypes of East Asian people as not from here, or as outsiders to the nation-state – as “immigrants, foreigners, tourists.” As Sara Ahmed writes,

> The alignment of race and space is crucial to how they materialize as givens . . . while ‘the other side of the world’ is associated with ‘racial otherness,’ racial others become associated with the ‘other side of the world’. They come to *embody distance*. . . Whiteness becomes what is ‘here,’ a line from which the world unfolds, which also makes what is ‘there’ on ‘the other side.’ (2006: 121)

Acknowledging the way in which Canada is a white country challenges the discourses of Canadian multiculturalism. Attending the Dyke March, Frances is repeatedly reminded of her not-quite-citizenship in Canada.
The process of non-belonging in Canada is further problematized by how racialized people are assumed to be straight. Karen also articulated a particularly important moment of recognition from her experiences in the Dyke March. Like Frances, she has experienced being read as an outsider. She explained to me that when her hair is long, she sometimes gets read as a spectator, or as an outsider to the Dyke March. That outsider status is also an articulation of being understood as outside of queer communities and subjectivities, where the stereotypes of racialized people hinge on assumed heterosexuality. Gayatri Gopinath uses “the notion of ‘impossibility’ as a way of signaling the unthinkable of a queer female subject position within various mappings of nation and diaspora” (2005: 15). Karen’s long haired aesthetic made it particularly easy for her body to be mis-read as a straight outsider to the space of the Dyke March. The notion of “impossibility” functions similarly here as a way of articulating how queer women of colour get read simultaneously as outsiders to both the Dyke March and as outsiders to the nation. When queer women of colour are read as straight and as tourists, their sense of belonging to the public space of the Dyke March and to Canadian territory becomes suspect.

This point was further emphasized in the course of my ethnographic data collection. As I participated in the Dyke March in both 2008 and 2009, my partner walked with me. She identifies as a Brown South Asian woman and annually wears a homemade t-shirt that reads “Dykes Come In Brown.” The reception that she receives from this shirt is overwhelming as a moment of recognition from other racialized women, particularly from Brown and Black women who are either in or watching the Dyke March. She explained to me how she is regularly met with smiles, cheers, and shout-outs acknowledging and appreciating how she is drawing attention to the interconnection between race and sexuality. Here, “Dykes Come In Brown” inserts
queerness into racialization, disrupting the broad assumptions which link racialized people with heterosexuality and which disregard racialized queerness.

Both Frances and Karen told me about the importance of taking up space in the Dyke March as queer Asian women and as members of Asian organizations. This was further evidence of how the assumed whiteness of queer sexualities and of public spaces is interrupted by queer racialized women’s bodies. However, in the process, Frances questioned the desire for Asian organizations to participate in the Dyke March and interrogated the desire to march as a collective contingent.

Frances: Exactly who are we representing ourselves to? Like, who’s actually watching and caring whether or not there is a strong contingent? And what does it mean that we’re all ‘stuck together’ or spread out or multicultural or whatever?

This question became especially pressing for Frances when she explained that the majority of people in the organization that she was marching with were straight. She remembered the sense of responsibility that people felt to ensure that their contingent was large enough, and the concern that Asian people be well represented in the March. The irony in this example, however, is that in order to create an image of queer Asian visibility in the Dyke March and to use this visibility to reach out to a queer Asian community more broadly, this organization relied on a predominantly straight membership. Frances’ quotes also reveals an anxiety to represent Asian queerness as a unified contingent rather than dispersed, and, perhaps, rendered invisible within the broader population of marching dykes.
What I have established in this first half of the chapter is how interview participants understand the Dyke March as a public event and about the March’s role in creating visibility around queer women’s bodies, identities and politics, in an interconnected way which also creates visibility around race and class dynamics. In this section, I have examined what it means when marching dykes go public, suggesting that dyke visibility is not simple, but complicated by how bodies are read according to gender, race and assumed nationality. In the moment of ‘going public’ and creating visibility, some bodies are read as outsiders to the space of the March. In the following section, I consider the consequences of making claims to visibility. What happens in public space when dykes march in public? What becomes apparent is that March participants’ expectations around the practices of looking and of being on display are troubled and contested. The interactions between marchers and spectators complicate what at first appears to be a simple notion of creating public visibility.

### 6.3 Troubling the Consequences of Public Visibility and Spectatorship

Throughout my interviews, participants insisted on the publicness of the Dyke March and emphasized the March’s role in disrupting everyday normative practices of heterosexuality as well as disrupting the male domination of Pride. However, this visibility and assertion of claiming space in public comes with a set of internal tensions, particularly between marchers and spectators. Though many participants excitedly described how they took up space, Riley depicted an ambivalence about the pressure to look good and the consequences of what this means for the politics of the Dyke March.

**Riley:** I don’t know, that kind of gets under my skin a bit. Like in the sense that I feel like I’m not ready somehow because I don’t have an outfit, I don’t have a haircut,
I don’t have a... you know, I don’t know. And then when I get there, it’s like a lot of staring. [. . . ] It feels like such a highly charged event in a way that should be really fun. But I end up feeling like... oh, like it’s just a bit too heavy on the me as spectacle.

Riley’s articulation about her ambivalence about her appearance is rooted in a tension between the increasing sense of the March as de-politicized and the March as a kind of show. While, on the one hand, there is an appreciation for the opportunity to take up space and to see other dykes in the space of the March, on the other hand, Riley is frustrated with how the Dyke March becomes a space in which women are simply looked at or gawked at. This discussion raises questions about the consequences of creating a form of visibility which focuses on the bodies of thousands of queer women in the streets.

In part, I think that the frustration articulated by interview participants about the role of spectatorship stems from a historically established pattern about the deeply gendered implications in the act of looking. John Berger argues that:

...*men act* and *women appear.* Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (1972: 41)
While the presence of women in the streets in the Dyke March is understood as an important reclamation of space and community, this is challenged by the way in which women are regularly gazed upon as objects rather than subjects. Thus, to be viewed in ways that feel objectifying is problematized by women who desire to reclaim the heteronormative and gendered power relations of looking.

The politics of Dyke March spectatorship and the relationship between marchers and spectators plays out in four important and interconnected ways. First, a shared understanding emerged amongst interview participants about a contrast between two oppositional types of spectators – people who are a part of a supportive queer community, and straight men who ogle or gawk at Dyke March participants. Second, an understanding of these two types of spectators is complicated by the undetermined intentions of a person holding a camera. Third, the politics of looking become more complex through the introduction of the media and the media’s role in the visual capture and representation of the Dyke March, including the more recent role of social media. Fourth, the possibilities for partial nudity and toplessness are contemplated by considering the purpose of nudity and the question of who might be looking. The relationship between these four interconnected factors is explored in this section.

In my conversation with Catherine, she articulated a tension between the function of the March and how people see or hear it.

**Catherine:** There’s that tension between ‘we’re here to make a statement’ and are you here to hear that statement? Or are you here to just gawk or whatever.
The gawking that Catherine describes is captured in similar ways by many of my interview participants. The experiences with a more uncomfortable form of spectatorship came from the many stories of aggressive spectators. Interview participants told me about how men would walk out into the middle of the March with cameras or video cameras and would intrusively approach them or the women they were with to photograph them or to photograph their breasts. Similar to Catherine, Karen questioned how people who are watching the Dyke March interpret what they see. Though she has not experienced ogling herself, Karen has been around other people who are topless and who have experienced the ogling spectator. She described the way friends are approached and photographed, or else they might receive a request to have a photograph standing next to the spectator. These interactions between topless marchers and spectators point to the complicated way in which the Dyke March is manifest as a form of spectacle.

Karen: And that really annoys me but at the same time I often think, like, am I entering into like an unspoken agreement to be a spectacle? And if so, why do you get angry when you’re treated as one?

Allison: Yeah, it’s a funny relationship.

Karen: Yeah, like I don’t march for you but then I march to be seen so I need you to see me, but not in that way.

The discomfort with the ogling spectator is caught in the tension between marching dykes who are creating visibility for an otherwise invisible or under-representation group of people, and the notion that marching dykes are on display. In part, this tension emerges from different understandings of the politics of marching topless in the Dyke March. If the Dyke March is
understood, in the simplest of terms, as a political march, as a political intervention to protest against homophobia, male domination, and to make claims to queer women’s identities and spaces, then toplessness in this context can be understood as an embodiment of these politics and the rights of women’s access to public spaces. However, as the Toronto Dyke March is repeated annually and has become a part of broader Toronto Pride celebrations, there is a gradual sense that the Dyke March is decreasingly political in aim and increasingly similar to the Pride Parade spectacle. (Though this characterization of the Pride Parade as merely a spectacle is contentious, as it certainly has its own internal tensions and im/possibilities, it is frequently constructed in these terms by interview participants.) While each of these conceptualizations of the Dyke March are oversimplified, what Karen captures in the quote above is the ongoing negotiation about what it means to march and to put bodies on display, yet also a desire to regulate how particular spectators look at those bodies.

A further tension exists between two kinds of imagined spectators – the person who attends the Dyke March in a supportive capacity, often imagined to be a member of the queer community or to be queer-positive, and the person who attends the Dyke March to ogle or gawk, often imagined as a lecherous straight man. Some interview participants articulated how the presence of gawking men creates a sense of vulnerability. Melanie told me that though she is not usually troubled by the thought of people watching the Pride Parade, she observed that a combination of vulnerability and objectification are at work at the Dyke March in a way that is both complicated and uncomfortable. While she argued that the March could be an important teaching moment for groups of people who might not otherwise be exposed to queer sexualities, she concluded that she is not interested in the way that this could simply be a form of carnival-like or freak show-like spectatorship. Pearl made a similar analogy, by arguing that she does not
like the feeling of straight people attending the Dyke March in order to act like spectators at the zoo. These reflections parallel Johnston’s (2005) work in which she draws on Kristeva’s concept of abjection to understand the combined fascination and revulsion that tourists experience of queer bodies during Auckland’s HERO and Sydney’s Mardi Gras parades.

The marcher-spectator relationship is further complicated by the presence of cameras. Alyssa, for example, expressed a uncertainty about the role of the camera at the March.

**Alyssa:** I think even as a marcher, like all the people with their cameras and I’m never sure is it media? Is it someone’s home camera? Is it someone who’s taking pictures because they’re excited and they’re supporting it or are they taking pictures because this is like easy titillation? [. . .] I’m not so much worried about the media but something about horny guys makes it not so fun.

The notion of the March being recorded in time and place, as it relates to the Dyke March, is something that is only contingently desired. There is a negative response to the idea that marching dykes might become another form of lesbian pornographic titillation for an undesirable straight male audience. An ‘insider’ taking pictures of the March or a media representative, however, is perceived as more desirable. Titillation of straight male viewers is overwhelmingly conceptualized as problematic, and it is separated from the use and purpose of photography or the role of titillation for either queer insiders or for the media.

This relationship to the camera has affected how many people participate in the March. Many told me about how at one time they were more inclined to march topless or partly nude, but that over the years, they have come to feel increasingly uncomfortable to do so. This is related in
many ways to both the increased numbers of spectators at the Dyke March, and to the increased numbers of cameras in the hands of the spectators. Cameras fix what is for many a rather spontaneous moment in time and place. Participants are particularly concerned about where their photographs might end up. In John Berger’s analysis of women’s nudity in art, he argues that “in lived sexual experience nakedness is a process rather than a state” (1972: 54). However, when it is captured by the painting, “the painting ‘contains’ time and its experience” (55). Similarly, what happens in the moment of photography is that the meaning of the public nudity expressed by a person walking down the street changes to become about the meaning of the photographer and its viewing audience. Berger’s analysis of the representation of women in Renaissance art depicting the story of Adam and Eve points to how there continued to be “the implication that the subject (a woman) is aware of being seen by a spectator” (43). Similarly, Dyke March participants are aware of being seen by a spectator and his camera.

The increased numbers of cameras among spectators in recent years has changed the way some interview participants decide to dress and participate in the March. Frances remembered the significance of the Gwen Jacobs trials on being topless, and told me about her cherished sets of Dyke March photographs which include a number of topless marching women including photographs of herself topless. She felt that it was safe for her to photograph topless women at the time in part because she was topless herself, and this was before the advent of digital cameras. Frances described marching topless, and how wearing a corduroy bag with the strap across her chest, between her breasts, felt very significant and empowering. However, she

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62 In the summer of 1991, Gwen Jacobs walked bare-breasted through the streets of Guelph, Ontario, to protest the inequality of the law, which prevented women from being bare-breasted in public while simultaneously allowing men to be in public without a shirt. She was charged and found guilty of indecency, though by December of 1996, the Ontario Appeal Court reversed the conviction. The implication of this reversal was the legalization of women to go top-free in public. (See Deschênes n.d.).
concluded that she will no longer march topless as she feels it to be unsafe. This sentiment was echoed in a 2000 *Siren* article, in which the author lamented the fact that fewer women had gone topless at that year’s March (Gervais 2000: 2). Frances contrasted her experiences at the Dyke March with her experience at the Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival,63 where there is an effort made to talk about safety around photography and respecting people’s privacy. In comparison, she described the Dyke March as an unsafe free-for-all.

The relationship between nudity and the camera is not limited to the experiences of queer women. George, who identifies as a trans guy, also struggled with the interaction between spectators and marchers. Though he no longer participates in the March, when he did, he described the Dyke March as a difficult space because the question of his nudity is complicated by a knowledge that his body and chest scars could be seen by an undesired group of people. The presence of so many cameras made him somewhat regretful of taking off his shirt. He admitted to a contradiction in which he acknowledged that he does not have a problem with queer community members who are either in or watching the March and who are taking pictures. Here, queer community members are described as and presumed to be a safe group of people among whom George might disclose his trans identity. Significantly, this contrasts how he has gradually been shut out of queer women’s community spaces throughout his transition, as examined in the previous chapter. However, as he described the role of the camera in the Dyke March, he said,

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63 The Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival is an annual summer women-only music festival in Michigan. The Festival is perhaps most famous for its strict policing of sexual and gender identities, and its enforcement of a “womyn-born-womyn” policy, effectively barring entrance to trans people, as explored in the previous chapter. In response, Camp Trans was set up as an annual gathering of trans people and their allies in protest to the exclusion of trans people from women-only events and spaces (see Camp Trans 2011).
George: There’s something about the straight guy who either stumbled there or came there explicitly to see the naked Dykes on Bikes and I’m like, “Ooh I don’t want you to have a camera. I don’t want you to look at my scars and...” like you know, point and go “Ha ha ha, that person used to have breasts.”

Here, George identifies a particular subject, the menacing straight man, who is understood to be the threat and antithesis to what the Dyke March represents. There is a collective response that constructs this particular figure of the gawking or luring straight man as the object of critique of the Dyke March. He is understood, very clearly, to belong outside of the space of the March, constructed as not belonging, as not a part of the queer community, and as the source of the problems experienced by March participants. This subject is positioned as one who ogles participants, who is titillated by marchers, and who is insensitive to the realities of their everyday lives. He is also imagined to embody all of the problems of spectatorship experienced at the Dyke March. During my interviews, people did not seem to be concerned with a leering or gawking queer woman who might be titillated by the Dyke March. Instead, her titillation is welcomed and celebrated.

There have been active responses by some women to the lecherous forms of voyeurism experienced at the March. As I discussed earlier, in 2006, in an attempt to respond to the male gaze and the intruding camera, artist Gaye Chan undertook a project titled “Turn The Gays (Gaze) Around!!” to challenge the voyeuristic gaze during the Dyke March. She invited women to participate and to “Shoot the Dyke March Paparazzi” as they marched in the Dyke March (Chan n.d.). The photographs are posted on Chan’s website. In an interview with Xtra!, Chan explained that her interest in this project “is not simply to turn the table and collect trophies of
paparazzi, but to demonstrate how photography can turn everything into a trophy to collect and display” (Xtra staff 2006). She was responding to a general unhappiness among the Dyke March participants that photographers at the March are a lecherous, ogling group who “turn them into the spectacle” (Xtra staff 2006).

The gaze and the politics of women’s bodies in public is of course much more complicated by the interconnection between gender and sexuality with race and nationality. Karen complicated this by describing the relationship between herself as a marcher and the East Asian spectators in the crowds. As a member of an East Asian community organization, she described the visceral excitement that both she and the crowds experience when her group passed Asian spectators in the crowd:

Karen: But when I am either in the Parade or the March there are a lot of spectators...

and it’s funny [. . .] but I have had so many experiences where there’s an East Asian person or a family or like an old lady or something in the crowd and we meet, our eyes meet, and I point to them and I have a whistle or something or I’m screaming, they will get extra excited. They will like scream and... that’s happened so often and so when I’ve marched with [a community-based organization], for example, with an almost completely East Asian contingent that, you can tell all the other East Asian people scattered in the crowd will like rise up at that moment and say ‘that’s us’...

Karen describes this moment of recognition, of seeing one’s national or cultural self represented in the crowds or in the March, as a moment of celebration and excitement. There is a shared
sense of familiarity between marchers and spectators, a sentiment experienced by other kinds of similarity. This is particularly tangible in a space, like the city of Toronto, which despite its multiculturalism, is otherwise predominantly (culturally) white. When groups or communities understand themselves as a smaller group within the larger masses, the moment of shared recognition is even more important. In the same way that Pride events have played an important role for queer identity formation (Markwell 2002: 84), so too do they play an important role for smaller communities within broader notions of queer community that help to reaffirm the importance of public visibility, recognition and identity.

Karen also here troubles how nationalism and nationalist fervor gets very quickly wrapped up in the moment of celebration. For immigrants to Canada, they might experience a desire to connect to two or more nations – to Canada, and to a country of ‘origin’. In the space of otherness, in which racialized people are understood as outside of the construction of the Canadian nation, or as diasporic, in which a sense of national belonging is questioned with regularity, there can also a desire to connect to a ‘home’ country.

Karen: I remember there was one year where other people in the same contingent were actually wrapping themselves in, like, Korean flags or Japanese flags, I mean that’s very complicated too, right. And I’m not nationalistic nor do I wish to be, but at that moment I wanted, I wished I was like wrapping myself in a Hong Kong flag, and then, like, letting other Hong Kong people see we’re here. They are here. So that’s a very complicated moment and it’s really emotional for me, but it happens a lot.
Though conscious of the limitations of nationalism, Karen is caught in between countries and identities, and dreams of wrapping herself in a Hong Kong flag, while walking down Toronto city streets, making connections with others based on the discursive strength of the myth of national unity.

Karen’s description of her interaction with the spectators during the Dyke March is not only with other East Asian people, but also with dominant white communities. Here, rather than a moment of recognition, Karen described a kind of paternalistic congratulatory spirit that she experiences during the March:

**Karen:** But, of course, there’s also that other piece, this is completely different, where I sense this weird congratulations that is sent out to groups that are seen as more marginalized or like... have traveled further in order to come to this place of embrace. So, if like a group of East Asian people walked down the street, non-East Asian people would also be congratulating them. Like, “oh, you go! That’s so good. I know where you come from and how it is in Thailand, or whatever.”

Karen previously described a moment of recognition between and amongst particular racialized communities, a sense of recognition and a sense of inclusion in the March by virtue of race and national origin. In that moment of what might be called racial recognition, she has a complicated desire to claim her cultural heritage, despite her own personal politics which are not nationalistic. Complicating questions of belonging/not belonging, or insider/outsider status, in this last quote Karen is describing a sense of white tolerance and acceptance, in which the assumption is that she has now entered into the liberated Canadian context and is welcomed in a way that speaks to
the nationalist celebrations of an imagined form of tolerant multiculturalism. If she was united with other East Asians by virtue of her racial identity, then the non-Asian crowds attempt to draw on a unification based on sexuality. Neither, it seems, offers a more complex or nuanced kind of recognition of the lived reality of queer genders and sexualities. As Eva Mackey asks, “Canadians like to congratulate themselves on their tolerance, but under what limits does tolerance exist?” (2002: xix). While white crowds might celebrate racialized queer sexualities, the paternalistic sentiment felt by Karen illuminates the disconnect between celebratory forms of Canadian multiculturalism and more critical engagements with anti-racism. In her analysis of same-sex marriage discourse, Jocelyn Thorpe (2005) argues that Canada gets constructed as “an international leader in human rights,” as a “progressive nation” and “as leader and saviour with an imagined family of nations” (2005: 15; also see Lenon 2008). This results in a compelling discursive line of thinking in which Canadians imagine themselves to be world leaders in the celebration of diversity. As Jasbir Kaur Puar writes, “resituating discourses of the nation in ways that complicate a repressive-versus-productive binary can show how ‘sexual political subjects’ use, appropriate, reject, rely on, and are even produced through, rather than simply oppose, discourses of the nation” (2001: 170). That queer, racialized women in my research experience complicated forms of inclusion and exclusion that waver based on their bodies and on perceived national, cultural, racial and/or sexual identities, is evidence that this constructed discourses of Canadian nationalism, tolerance, cultural diversity and multiculturalism are incredibly complex and problematic. Indeed, as Sara Ahmed writes, “The moments when the body appears ‘out of place’ are moments of political and personal trouble” (2006: 135). These moments of (mis)recognition for particular bodies in the Dyke March illustrate the complicated series of negotiations that interview participants undergo via their participation in the March.
It is worth noting that while many of my conversations with people pointed to how spectatorship made them uncomfortable, many also pointed to the pleasure of the viewership and the pleasure of looking and of being visible. Most highlighted supportive members of the crowd, or pointed to the ways allies and other members of the community cheered or applauded for them as they marched past. Jean told me how meaningful it is for her that the men from the Toronto Bisexual Network (TBN) come to pre-selected spots along the March route so they can be there to support the bi women from the TBN in the March. Interviewees pointed out how many of the spectators are themselves dykes, so it often feels like the same groups of people are both marching and watching. This suggests some interesting possibilities allowed for in looking and being seen during the March. When I asked Sarah Martin how she participated in the Dyke March, she joked about how she enjoys standing on the sidelines to see “the titties.” She elaborated further:

**Sarah Martin:** I’ve always been big, always had body issues, and seeing women of different sizes looking sexy, ah, it was so good. Just... the enjoyment of that whole weekend...

Here, Sarah articulates how the act of looking at nudity and at bodies in the Dyke March can also be pleasurable and does not always need to be conceptualized primarily as problematic. It might also be interesting to consider how there might also be space for pleasure *within* the problematic.

While marching women are the subject/objects of the gaze, they are also participating in the act of looking – at the crowds, and at each other. This can also be very pleasurable and can function as an important moment of recognition, solidarity and visibility amongst queer women’s
communities. Chip expressed a desire for the Dyke March to be experienced as a more pleasurable experience.

**Chip:** Sometimes I kind of wish it was more like... a pleasure march too, you know. I feel like there’s something really transgressive in women having pleasure and experiencing pleasure, but then there’s also that whole gaze right, women having pleasure is like, can be read in a lot of ambivalent ways.

That women experience pleasure in spectatorship, whether out of recognition of other women’s presence, their bodies, their participation in community groups, or their simple presence in large numbers, is an important component of the Dyke March. Spectatorship is often overshadowed by stories of frustration and difficulty with the tension of challenging or dealing with the ogling male subject in public spaces. Women also take up the gaze, and how women look at other women is constructed as different from the way that men look at women. Though beyond the scope of this project, this might be further nuanced by a consideration of the role of the straight woman as the spectator and how she is constructed within the politics of the gaze.

**6.3.1 Spectatorship and the Media**

A reflection on cameras also requires a consideration of the role of the media at Dyke Marches. Recall that in reports of the 1994 Dyke March in New York City, news sources provided minimal reporting on the March in contrast to the larger Pride Parade on the following day. The lack of reporting on the Dyke March is regularly read as a continued and forced invisibility of queer women’s communities. This pattern of invisibility is repeated in the representations of the Toronto Dyke March. In my archival research, newspaper coverage of the
March was either absent or minimal and always overshadowed by coverage of Pride Parade celebrations. This was also reflected in my interviews. Deirdre Pike expressed a frustration about the fact that the Dyke March is rarely recognized in the media, especially in contrast to the representation of the Pride Parade. For Deirdre, the lack of recognition in the media underscores how women’s spaces continue to be overshadowed by men’s spaces. She believes that ongoing efforts to create women’s communities and spaces, such as the Dyke March, could result in more balanced recognition and visibility. She is frustrated by news that reports on the costumes, outfits and colours at the Pride Parade while ignoring these same details at the Dyke March. She is also puzzled by how this gets presented as something that is new or as something that is read as absent from the Dyke March.

**Deirdre Pike:** I remember women in angel wings on roller blades and topless and you know whatever, there was always some really great thing to [the Dyke March]. You know, [the media] never take pictures. And even if they did, like I don’t even necessarily want them to, but like they make Sunday seem like it’s the best thing, the costumes, oh isn’t it great. Like, we’re doing stuff too! You just don’t pay attention. It really pissed me off.

Here, Deirdre is expressing something rather complex. She is frustrated that the Pride Parade is represented in the media as the only important event of the weekend, which she understands to de-legitimize the role and importance of the Dyke March. She resents that the Dyke March is never credited with being as exciting or as flamboyant as the Pride Parade. However, she is also critical of the potential ways in which the media might represent the Dyke March. When she
says “I don’t even necessarily want them to” she is acknowledging how, despite wanting to be recognized and noticed, she is wary of how that recognition might manifest in mainstream press, assuming that the representation would not be reflective of how the Dyke March really looks and feels like to her.

Pearl echoed these hesitant sentiments when she told me that it is in the media “where things get fucked up” because the media are always aiming for the most exciting photograph and headline.

**Pearl:** They’re certainly not going to put a picture of all the parents standing outside of the bouncy castle you know up, for their headline at six [. . .] and they won’t put up a picture of people at an outdoor author reading or anything else [. . .] Yeah it’s got to be the guy in the assless chaps.

Pearl’s frustration with the media is that her experiences of Pride and of the Dyke March are not well-captured or summarized by the “sexier” photographs of leather communities, or, by extension, the extra-flamboyant or naked imagery that is most common in media representations of Pride. Pearl’s desire to have other articulations of queer communities represented might be read as connected to an ideology of integration in which queers want to be seen as the same as heterosexuals. Here, there is a desire to step away from representations of queer communities that are perceived as too “outrageous” or “flamboyant.” This process is articulated by Judith
Butler, who points out how the move towards gay marriage in the US is contextualized within a liberal, normative, rights-seeking discourse. Butler argues that

To demand and receive recognition according to norms that legitimate marriage and delegitimate forms of sexual alliance outside of marriage, or to norms that are articulated in a critical relation to marriage, is to displace the site of delegitimation from one part of the queer community to another or, rather, to transform a collective delegitimation into a selective one. (2004: 115)

I do not want to oversimplify or misunderstand Pearl’s broader set of politics here. However, her frustration around more outrageous representations of queer sexualities certainly gestures towards this broader set of normative sexual politics which delegitimizes or distinguishes itself from more radical performances of politics and identities. That said, Pearl’s reaction might also point to a lack of representation of what appears to be a more mundane, less flashy performance of sexual politics when in fact these more mundane-looking moments might be more queerly progressive than the annually repeated performance of nudity in public. Indeed, many interview participants consider the annual Dyke March to be tired and predictable. I argue that queer progressive politics could, for example, involve the radical ways in which queer families re-imagine kinship structures and parenting models (even if they are standing outside of the bouncy castle), or an author reading which transgresses traditional bounds of literature or performance.

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64This point linking same-sex marriage with struggles for respectability is also examined in the Canadian context (see Lenon 2008; Thorpe 2005).
The complexity of both resenting the minimal representation of the Dyke March in the media as well as the ambivalent desire to avoid being badly represented is articulated in Stuart Hall’s analysis of the relations of representation of black identities in popular culture. He writes that there are two major concerns:

first the question of *access* to the rights to representation by black artists and black cultural workers themselves. Second, the *contestation* of the marginality, the stereotypes quality and the fetishized nature of images of blacks, by the counter-position of ‘positive’ black imagery. (1996: 443)

Similarly, in the case of the Dyke March, interview participants are first concerned by the question of creating visibility and access to the rights of representation of queer women’s lives in media and in popular culture more broadly. Secondly, they are concerned with how they will be represented. In other words, they are concerned that when they are represented, especially within mainstream media, the imagery of marching dykes will be negative, fetishized or otherwise problematic. This is the kind of tension that is at work in the representation of marginalized communities and is an example of the function of cultural imperialism, which “involves the paradox of experiencing oneself as invisible at the same time that one is marked out as different” (Young 1990:60). Thus the possibilities for Dyke March representation seem bleak at best.

Participants were also critical of how the presence of media personnel disrupt the experience and flow of the March. Cris Renna, for example, talked about how the media will interrupt the March in order to capture a desired photograph, and how March participants’ requests not to be photographed will be disregarded. As she told me this story, she said:
Cris Renna: ...you’re not there for their consumption, do you know what I mean?

While participants did not accuse the media of the same kind of leering eye that they experienced from more aggressive or ogling spectators, neither were participants overwhelmed by a desire for an increase in media voyeurism. What is particularly fascinating about Cris’ formulation here is that she understands the claims that women make to space in the Dyke March as somehow not for the media. Despite the fact that the Dyke March began, in part, to raise awareness and visibility around queer women’s communities, when the media attempt to record the event, it is perceived as an interruption, as problematic and as out of place.

6.4 Conclusion

At play in the critiques of spectatorship at the Dyke March are a number of issues, both complementary and contradictory, and which form a paradox of visibility. Dyke March participants want to make a public statement by taking to the streets and creating visibility for a dyke or queer women’s community. The basis of this political action involves a desire to be seen. To be seen in the public, and to be noticed as a political force in public, requires that there be a viewership or spectatorship. It can also be risky to take up space in this way, and this risk can create a sense of vulnerability among marchers. Dyke March participants also want to be viewed in particular ways, or, perhaps, they do not want to be seen in particular ways. They want to reject the ways in which they are traditionally hyper-sexualized and objectified by the ogling male subject. Instead, they want to be understood as making claims to gender and as interrupting heteronormative assumptions about desire, access to space, and legitimacy.

Interview participants are concerned about the risk of becoming a spectacle. Many of the interview participants contrasted the Dyke March to the Pride Parade, which they were quick to
define as a corporate spectacle. Rosemary Hennessy warns that “visibility in commodity culture is . . . a limited victory for gays who are welcome to be visible as consumer subjects but not as social subjects” (1994-1995: 32). The visibility of the Toronto Pride Parade is understood by interview participants as a spectacle that is deeply corporate and invested in consumer culture. While they desire an increased visibility for queer women’s communities, they are cautious about how it might manifest, and resistant to the move towards corporate culture. Perhaps in the same way that Canadian national identity is often understood as not American, similarly, the Dyke March is constructed by participants as not the spectacle that is the Pride Parade. Here, identity and meaning are each conceptualized as something that they are not, rather than articulated clearly as something that they are.

Public visibility hinges on the notion of belonging – taking up space at the Dyke March is a way of inserting one’s body into spaces of non-belonging and challenging dominant notions of who belongs where. The practice of questioning people’s presence in the Dyke March is about questioning their belonging not only in queer or dyke communities, but it is also about the questioning of their belonging to the nation, for at the root of nationalism is also the notion of belonging. Despite the claims to multiculturalism that dominate discourses of Canadian identity, racialized women’s presence in the Dyke March can be brought very quickly into question. Sara Ahmed writes that “bodies stand out when they are out of place. Such standing reconfirms the whiteness of the space” (2006: 135-136). As Karen’s comments illustrate, when the presence of particular bodies is not questioned, then they are celebrated in a peculiar way that hinges on notions of dominant whiteness which lies at the heart of Canadian nationalism, Canadian multiculturalism, and Canadian identity. Here, the politics of non-belonging are linked to the nation, which is again and again being repeated and reinvented. Negotiating belonging in public
is a negotiation in space, and an ongoing negotiation of gender, of sexuality, of race, and of nationalism. The Dyke March is a project of taking up space in public and about creating visibility. It is simultaneously about the negotiation of that visibility in the context of a spectatorship which is only conditionally desirable.

In the following chapter, I consider in more detail the spatiality of the Dyke March by examining how the March organizers have refused to use metallic barricades to separate the marchers from the spectators. I do this in order to analyze the possibilities and limitations made possible for both space and subjectivities. More broadly, this chapter asks (how) does the Dyke March affect space? This question allows me to consider the relationship between space, feeling and memory.
CHAPTER 7: THE DYKE MARCH AND ITS RESIDUE: SPATIAL, TEMPORAL, AND AFFECTIVE TRANSGRESSIONS

7.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I examined what it means for the Dyke March to ‘go public’ and disrupt invisibility. In this chapter, I ask: How does the Dyke March make spatial and temporal interventions, and what are the effects? I analyze how the intervention of the Dyke March marks the space of Yonge Street and the space of the city. I begin by examining the implications of conducting the March without barricades to separate marchers from spectators. I ask what this allows in terms of fluid movement in space. This leads me to consider the extent to which the Dyke March is able to mark the space. From here, I move to reflect on the relationship between space, memory and emotions to think about how the Dyke March marks the space and its marchers in ways that are not visible, but in ways that are felt and with spatially associated memories.

7.2 Negotiating Barrier-Free Dyke March Spaces

In Toronto, events that draw large crowds of people, especially large groups of spectators, also tend to involve significant policing and crowd control. Much to the chagrin of many Caribana participants, over the years Caribana has seen an increase in the number and size of barriers and fences erected to keep the two groups separate. Marches and demonstrations that do not draw a large spectatorship, such as the International Women’s Day March, the Take Back the Night March, student demonstrations against rising tuition fees, or rallies held by organizations such as No One Is Illegal, do not typically require barriers. In these events, the large crowds are inside of the march or demonstration space and few people are there to watch. The exception to
this rule is the Toronto Santa Claus Parade, which is a barrier-free parade, based on a so-called proper decorum in which spectators do not make attempts to join in, but are ‘well-behaved’ on the sidelines. What can be inferred is that concerns around safety tend to be raised when the barrier between the spectators and paraders are blurred.

One of the political manifestations of the Pride Parade and Dyke March, like other large Toronto events, is the ongoing annual debates about crowd control. Since the early 1990s, the Pride Parade organizers have used metallic barricades to maintain a barrier between paraders/marchers and spectators. The barricades mark off the two inside road lanes of Bloor and Yonge Streets, creating a route in the two central road lanes for the safe travel of all of the participants, vehicles and floats in the Parade. This also creates a wide space, from the outside road lane to the sidewalks and up to the storefronts, for the large crowds of spectators to watch the Parade. An estimated one million people watch the Pride Parade, and crowds can be ten to fifteen people deep along the length of the parade, especially in pedestrian-heavy areas such as the intersection of Yonge and Wellesley Streets. The collected group of spectators can be so thick that it can become difficult for pedestrian traffic to move among the crowd. If they do not have a coveted roof-top or window view from a nearby building, people will sometimes climb on top of mailboxes, garbage bins, and each others’ shoulders to get a good look at the Parade and its participants.

Though the Dyke March does draw a sizable crowd, it does not reach the density or scope of the Pride Parade. Early comers line the sidewalks, sitting on the edge of the curb or in camping chairs. It is only in the few minutes before the March begins that the length of the route becomes lined with spectators two or three people deep. One of the major concerns for Dyke March organizers and participants is the ongoing threat of the imposition of barricades. For
Dyke March organizers and participants, the barricades pose a threat to the form and meaning of the March. For police and some Toronto Pride organizers, barricades are desired for crowd control and safety. Organizers have continued to insist that the March does not need barricades, despite increases in the size of the spectator population. Instead they rely on a set of volunteer marshals to manage the space. As I will argue, organizers and participants are concerned about how the imposition of barricades might change the March in problematic ways. During her tenure as Dyke March co-chair, Cris Renna was warned that with the increasing growth in both the March and spectator sizes, that barriers might become a necessity in the near future. She argued, however, that despite the pressure to implement the barricades, that maintaining a barrier-free space was an important theme that emerged out of the 2006-2007 community consultations. Emerging from these consultations was the composition of the Guiding Principles of the Dyke March document, which argues: “To the greatest extent possible, the Dyke March Committee is committed to providing participants with a safe physical space while avoiding a significant police presence or physical barricades.”

While Pride Parade spectators are perceived to be predominantly composed of heterosexual individuals (with some exceptions), the spectatorship at the Dyke March is perceived to be more mixed. Indeed, the Pride Toronto (2007) Guiding Principles document states that “the march is largely for the participants” in order to justify a decreased emphasis on “elaborate decorations and displays.” The March does not function as a major tourist attraction and the spectator crowds are smaller. Queer men are asked to support the Dyke March by

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65 In 2006-2007, Dyke March organizers hosted two community consultations with community organizations, groups and members of the public to address the following questions: “What does the Dyke March mean to you? What does the Dyke March represent? What do you want from the Dyke March?” (Pride Toronto 2007).
cheering from the sidewalks, and many queer women watch rather than march. The barrier-free space allows for women to join in when they desire, and the Guiding Principles document encourages them to do so. During the 2008 March, as I recorded the day’s events, I took note of who was in the space around me. A woman sitting on the curb nearby jumped up halfway through the March and joined a contingent wearing shirts that matched her own. This kind of experience is echoed by Jean, who described to me how one year her group grew from 25 to 30 people from the beginning to the end of the March and that this was only possible because of the fluidity allowed by the barrier-free space.

My conversations with interview participants revealed a clear and shared appreciation for and commitment to a barrier-free Dyke March. Many spoke of how they would jump in and out at any point along the route to say hello or give a hug to friends who were watching along the sides. People used words like “fluid,” “free flowing” and “welcoming” to describe the space of the March. The barrier-free space facilitates meetings with old friends and enhances the familiarity of the space. For example, Deirdre Pike described to me that one year she attended the Dyke March with a gay guy friend. Because he was male he could not walk with her and her friends in the March, and so instead he walked alongside them on the sidewalk. When there were stops in the March, they would run over to give him a hug. This helped them to acknowledge their identity differences, while also allowing them to stay together to support each other. These kinds of moments allow for a transgression of invisible boundaries between the marching street space and the spectator sidewalk space.

In her writing on the HERO and Mardi Gras parades, Lynda Johnston (2005) argues that the barricades have the effect of maintaining a spatial segregation which confirms a sexual division. She argues that “When spatial segregation is maintained, there can be no confusion
between heterosexual and homosexual bodies” (58). The barriers at these parades, along with the police surveillance, serve to separate the tourist crowds from the parade participants. As such, she argues that there is a controlled separation between people on either side, and that the bodies of the tourists “become disciplined, controlled and carefully separated from the homosexual bodies on the parade” (60). Indeed, Johnston argues that the border created by the barriers maintains a separation “between the self and the Other” (66), where the Other is the sexual degenerate. Without a barrier between the queer marcher and the straight tourist voyeur, in which the gay body is clearly distinguishable, “a border anxiety is present” (63), threatening the stability of straight identities. Johnston argues that “only when gay bodies are easily marked as different, as in gay pride parades, does this border become visible and therefore less threatening to the dominant culture” (63). Thus, Johnston argues that the use of actual barriers which separate bodies maintains a metaphorical boundary between identities.

Interview participants were adamant about maintaining a barrier-free space as a way to challenge notions of insider/outsider and marcher/spectator dynamics. Many interview participants quite consciously made connections to gender and queer theories, suggesting that an absence of barriers could be read as a metaphor for fluid gender and sexual boundaries. Further, Cris Renna emphasized how the barrier-free space creates a sense of fluidity which is important for fostering a sense of community.

**Cris Renna:** ... but people do, they go out, they come in, they see people, they say hello and that helps create community, right, like if you can feel like the space is yours to kind of move within and you’re not confined to this sort of like tunnel where you have to march.
The possibilities offered by the open space offered a fluidity of movement. This also allowed for a literal physical embodiment of identity exploration. If, in the simplest sense, a marcher is perceived as queer, and a spectator is perceived to be straight, as in Johnston’s model above, then the possibility of movement between these two spaces can function as an attempt to challenge the fixity of this identity binary. It also challenges not only the structure of binary identity categories, but the permanence and fixity suggested by them as well. The fluidity of the space also allows participants to negotiate how ‘out’ they want to be. As Rachela explained to me:

**Rachela:** And I think that [the barricades] send the wrong message to people who are ... dipping one toe in our identity waters, who are going ‘Well, maybe I’m queer’. You know, like if you’re on the sidewalk watching, which is often what people do, you know, sort of in the process of coming out, it’s way easier to step into the street and join up than it is if there’s a barricade. If you’re inside the barricade, it means for example that if you see friends that you’re not out to yet, you can’t just escape onto the sidewalk and blend in with the spectators.

Here, Rachela articulates the possibilities for motion and movement between comfort levels and trajectories of coming out. Rachela also here articulates a discourse of progression in the process of coming out, and this discourse is symbolized by the movement of closeted queers on the sidewalks into the space of the street space as out, marching dykes. Like the narrative of progress which was examined in Chapter Five, here, Rachela mobilizes this same narrative in relation to the way that people use the Dyke March to navigate their coming out progress. The expectation of this narrative is that as people become increasingly comfortable with being out,
that they will be more inclined to march. What is absent from this discourse, however, are the
ways in which people might actively chose not to march or not to participate in the Dyke March
in this readily scripted way. This discourse does not leave room for what the other possibilities
of being out might look like.

Margaret Robinson similarly highlighted the transgressive possibilities allowed by a
barrier-free space.

**Margaret Robinson:** But the assumption is sort of straight people over there, queer
people over here. And if you don’t have a barricade the way the Dyke March
doesn’t, it makes things more fluid at the same time it’s sort of making a different
statement about the interaction between people on the sidelines and people
marching. And maybe it’s suggesting, maybe that’s more queering because its
suggesting any of you could be joining us at any minute and it’s... it maybe makes
people question their position more than it does if they’re leaning against a
barricade.

While Johnston (2005) conceptualized this kind of imagined moment as threatening to the tourist
or spectator, Margaret narrates this moment with more excitement for the possibilities that it
allows. When Margaret says that “any of you could be joining us at any minute,” she is
emphasizing how sexuality is fluid and changing. She here also highlights and playfully reverses
homophobic discourses which use scare tactics to suggest that homosexuality is contagious.
Thus, she attempts to disrupt the comfortable heteronormative outsider position that is manifest
with the presence of barriers and tries to imagine what is allowed for in a barrier-free March in which people negotiate their identities in public space.

One of the major effects of maintaining the Dyke March as a barrier-free space, however, is how it contributes to the perception that, unlike Pride, the Dyke March is *not* a parade. Rather, it is a public demonstration and not the spectacle of the Pride Parade. As I examined in the previous chapter, interview participants are invested in understanding the Dyke March as distinct from the Pride Parade, and this is important to how they understand their role as marchers or March participants. The threat of barriers also implied a threat of increased corporatization of the March, including increased corporate sponsorship and advertising space. Interview participants suggested that if the Dyke March implemented barriers, that this would significantly change the meaning of the March – that it would become a spectacle, motivated by corporate interests rather than about creating visibility for queer women’s communities. Many were critical of this marked change in the Pride Parade’s history, pointing out that the implementation of barriers was quickly followed by increased corporatization and elitism which function to keep people out of the Parade, rather than inviting them into a community space. This was widely perceived as undesirable by participants in my study. They share a desire to disrupt invisibility, to participate in a grassroots collectivity, to be committed to a political moment and to be resistant to corporatization.

The Dyke March organizers, members of the community consultation, and interview participants are committed to maintaining a barrier-free space to facilitate easy movement, to foster community, and to resist corporatization and elitism. Indeed, the barrier-free space is also conceptualized as a space without economic barriers. Unlike the Pride Parade, organizers have resisted implementing a fee structure for group participation in the March.
One of the consequences of creating a barrier-free space is that once the Dyke March passes through a space, it leaves few traces as a reminder that it was once there. During my observation of the 2008 Dyke March, I noted that from my spot at the corner of Yonge and Charles Streets, the March had concluded by 2:26pm. By 2:33, the traffic was already flowing along Yonge Street again. In my ethnographic notes, and during my discussions with interview participants, it seemed that people found the 2008 Dyke March to go by extra quickly. Even at its longest, the Dyke March does not last much longer than an hour. What became significant to me about this was how easily any traces of the March are quickly cleared away. My photographs from the 2008 Dyke March reveal a small space between the last set of straggling marchers and street cleaners that follow closely behind. Two large yellow trucks accompanied by two smaller vacuum litter collector vehicles came along and cleaned up the street and sidewalk areas. These were followed closely by a group of City of Toronto vans marked with “Clean City, Beautiful City” slogans on their sides. The March seemingly concluded, not with a last sound truck or an enthusiastic contingent of marching dykes, but instead by a convoy of street cleaners and police escorts. In one of my photographs, I captured the first set of street cleaners, but between them is a group of four women skipping down Yonge Street, one is waving, and another is clapping. Were these women who fell behind in the Dyke March? Are they late, trying to catch up?

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66 I also wondered if the 2008 March was smaller than in recent years. The morning of the 2008 Dyke March had been quite rainy, and though the weather cleared, it was grey, overcast and hot by early afternoon, I wondered whether this had resulted in smaller numbers of marchers. The experience of observing the March and noting its shortness left me feeling quite underwhelmed. It is worth noting that the 2008 Pride weekend fell over the Canada Day long weekend, which might have resulted in a number of potential local participants leaving the city for holiday or vacation. In 2009, as a part of my ethnographic observations, I participated in the Dyke March as a marcher, and I paid attention to the speed and progress of the March along Yonge Street to compare it to the previous year’s March. I noted that it was past 2:40pm when I passed the same intersection from which I had observed the previous year, and there remained a large number of marchers behind me. This indicated that we had either marched at a much slower pace or that there was an increase in the number of marchers who participated.
In the seven minutes that it took for the last marchers to pass my spot and for the streets to be cleaned, it felt to me as though the Dyke March had been erased from the space. Remnants of sparkles, flyers, and other leftover markings of the March were cleaned up, and the traffic eagerly followed the cleaners, ready to resume business as usual. Though the absence of barricades offer Dyke March participants transgressive and fluid possibilities for engaging with the space and playing with identities, the barrier-free March also makes it easier to restore to its heteronormative state, to unmark its queering, to unmark its dyking. Yonge Street quickly returned to business as usual – vehicular and pedestrian traffic picked up its ordinary pace, shopping and consumerism resumed, and dyke visibility and auditory disruptions of daily traffic, consumption, and heteronormative practices were removed as the March participants dissolved into the designated Pride spaces along Church Street.

If the March’s transgression in space can so easily be unmarked, so easily made invisible, what kinds of transgressive possibilities remain for spatial interventions and visibility? Though the Dyke March might be imagined to have a kind of permanence as an annually reiterated event, to what extent is it really able to mark space or offer transgressive change? The March does have its pattern, or its annual rhythm, but it is relatively brief. Does its brevity and easy erasure undermine its spatial and temporal challenge to heteronormativity and dyke invisibility?

7.3 The Dyke March and Its Residue

Perhaps the longevity or the way in which the March takes up space goes beyond its physical manifestation? Indeed, there is a visceral, emotional component to the Dyke March. Many interview participants spoke about their feelings in relation to this annual event. For example, Riley said that the lack of barriers at the Dyke March meant that “It feels like a real march.” This quote infers two things. First, Riley captures something important about the
emotions involved in marching, that the Dyke March conjures up emotional connections to a particular set of feelings and sensations of marching. Marching in the Dyke March might feel, in some ways, like the marching that is done in other protest or demonstration spaces. This is supported by the March’s circulating definitional discourse. It might also feel like participating in a collective identity or political moment. Secondly, however, when Riley says that it feels like a real march, this suggests the possibility that perhaps the Dyke March is not really a march, that it could be conceptualized otherwise. Though there is ongoing resistance expressed at the possibility that the March could become a Parade, that the March feels like a march suggests that perhaps it is not. This suggestion threatens the core notion of what the Dyke March is imagined to be by many of its organizers and marchers. When the Dyke March is repeatedly defined as a grassroots event, I argue that this is an attempt to naturalize the definition of the March, to establish its performance as a reiteration of histories of meaning and feeling, to reiterate the meaning of the marching experience. If the Dyke March has taken place in the space previously, and it is expected that it will happen again, then this offers a kind of layering effect.

These reflections led me to consider the ways in which many of the affective moments of the Dyke March are already scripted. The emotion of Lesha Vanderbij’s (1996) article in *Siren*, inviting women to participate in Toronto’s first Dyke March, is more than palpable. She begins by describing her experience of attending the Dyke March in New York City in 1995. She describes the event and the day as “transformative”, that “the energy was high”, and that “the feeling was one of intoxication” (21). She articulates how she left behind “feelings of discomfort and unease about [her] sexuality” in a transition towards “feelings of solidarity, pride and belonging inspired by the march” (21). Vanderbij’s article serves as a model for how women attending the Dyke March should or could feel, about the kinds of transformative moments that
become scripted as the expected emotional experience. Though many interview participants’ experiences examined throughout this thesis offer contrary affective stories about the Dyke March, they are understood as contrary to a dominant, collective, shared knowledge of what it is, or could be, to experience the Dyke March. This also speaks to the kinds of subject positions which are made possible by the March, as I examined in Chapter Five. The scripted emotionality of the Dyke March reveals who marching dykes are imagined to be and what kinds of shared and collective experiences they are meant to have.

One of my questions to participants was: “How does the Dyke March affect the space of downtown city streets?” Reflecting back on the time when I wrote my interview questions, I do not remember if I consciously intended to use the word affect; rather, I suspect that I may have intended to ask: How does the Dyke March effect the space of downtown city streets? I was initially interested in whether or not interviewees saw the Dyke March as producing any discernable change to the space. Depending on the dictionary definition on which you rely, sometimes the boundaries between affect and effect are quite blurry, however the meaning of each question is different. The question “How does the Dyke March affect the space?” might have made more sense as: How does the Dyke March affect your relationship to/with the space? These questions would be asking interviewees about the feelings they have in or about the space or about whether the Dyke March produced a kind of effect or change for them in their experience of the space. The question “How does the Dyke March effect the space?” is asking about changes to the production and physicality of the space.

Unsurprisingly, the question raised some confusion with interview participants, who often asked me for clarifications or further elaboration. Each time, I think I elaborated on the question a bit differently, as I continued to work through what I thought I meant by the question, and was
cued by earlier conversations with previous participants. I found myself surprised by some of the conversations that followed. During the interviews, I offered a brief explanation of my interest in the geography literature on sexuality and space and then asked if the participants thought the Dyke March queered the space. Multiple interpretations and understandings of the relationship between the Dyke March and the space are important here, as well as multiple understandings of and attachments to the term queer. The multiplicity of voices and interpretations offer complexity and important nuance to understandings of the space.

Many participants thought that the Dyke March did not *effect* the space, that it was too short, too small or too insignificant for it to have any kind of lasting impact on the space. Often it was considered to already be in a queer space because of the March’s proximity to the gay village. For example, Constance argued that the March is an articulation of a “brand of queer” that has already been sanctioned. This suggests that the queer visibility of the Dyke March is not changing or offering any new interpretations of queer, but is instead ascribing to a complacent set of politics. Constance and others pointed out how the March might be quite different if it were held in a different neighbourhood. Instead, its repeated performance on Yonge Street perhaps only reinscribes a familiar discourse of meaning, expectation and experience of the March.

In contrast, many interview participants argued that the Dyke March “absolutely” or “unquestionably” queers the space. Some pointed to the proliferation of rainbows and rainbow-coloured products in the storefronts on Yonge Street and in the neighbourhood as noticeable changes. While participants were glad to see stores making an effort to make their spaces more queer-friendly, they were also suspicious. They were concerned that the appearance of queer-friendly stores was motivated by a desire to access the pink dollar rather than a broader commitment to social change.
Others pointed to the presence of so many queer women in the space as an important change to the space. Leslie Ramsay-Taylor, for example, said:

**Leslie Ramsay-Taylor:** Sure it does. Absolutely, absolutely. You know, thousands of women running down the street and ranting and hooting and hollering? Absolutely, absolutely.

In this passage, Leslie enthusiastically conjures up familiar Dyke March imagery to suggest that the marchers’ presence and behaviour disrupts dominant heteronormative spatial discourses. Leslie’s remarks are connected to a more general observation that the Dyke March was one of the only ways in which the male-dominated Church and Wellesley neighbourhood and surrounding area was changed in a gendered way, if only temporarily. Indeed, many noted the March’s brevity with frustration, paralleling this with broader sentiments about the lack of queer women’s community spaces in the city more generally. Though the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood is widely recognized as a queer space and is regularly described as Toronto’s gay village, it is largely understood as a gay male space with little room for women. Participants highlighted how a number of queer women-oriented businesses and commercial spaces have come and gone over the years and have not managed to survive in any long-lasting way. This discussion links to broader questions, beyond the scope of this thesis, about why dyke bars, business, and community spaces have historically had difficulty surviving as queer women’s spaces in Toronto seem to be especially transient, unfixed, and changing, even within the city’s ‘gay village.’ Some participants characterized the relationship between the Dyke March and the space as rented or borrowed (thus perhaps not as ‘respectable’ as owned spaces), made available temporarily by
either the gay male-dominated neighbourhood of Church and Wellesley, or permitted as a momentary visit within heteronormative space, such as the intersection of Bloor and Yonge.

Though some suggested that the Dyke March’s changes or claims to the space were temporary, fleeting, or momentary, they nonetheless acknowledged a perceptible difference. If my questions to participants suggested a more fixed conceptualization of space, interviewees’ responses were a good reminder that spaces are never static, but are changeable, and, perhaps, queer-able depending on the relationship between a space and its occupants. Beyond this, the relationship between a space and its occupants is also affective and related to emotion. Lucy emphasized to me that the physical change to the space was only temporary, but something else lasted a bit longer:

Lucy: At least temporarily, yeah. I don’t know if it’s still there, but for Saturday for sure. […] Saturday, for a couple of hours after the Dyke March was over it still felt like there’s a really female energy that was on the streets…

Lucy’s comments are particularly interesting for a number of reasons. First, as I have already emphasized, she highlights an ongoing changing relationship between people and space – that space is not static. Secondly, she notes a relationship between emotion and space, a connection that is examined in the burgeoning field of emotional geography. Emotional geographers argue that “emotions are vital (living) aspects of who we are and of our situational engagement within the world; they compose, decompose, and recompose the geographies of our lives” (Smith et al. 2009: 10). In the passage above, when Lucy explains that though the March only affected the
space for a few hours, she still felt a kind of ‘female energy’ on the streets, she is relying on an emotional relationship to the space.

In Sara Ahmed’s work *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, she considers the multiple meanings of ‘impression.’ She writes that “to form an impression” is about perception, cognition, and emotion, but also about “how objects impress upon us” (2004: 6). She argues that

To form an impression [...] can be a mark on the surface (‘to leave an impression’). *We need to remember the ‘press’ in an impression.* It allows us to associate the experience of having an emotion with the very affect of one surface upon another, an affect that leaves its mark or trace. So not only do I have an impression of others, but they also leave me with an impression; they impress me, and impress upon me. (6)

The visual imagery that Ahmed describes in this passage is a useful way to think about how the Dyke March forms an impression on people, their feelings and memories, and the intervention of the March in space and time. When Lucy describes feeling a female energy in the hours after the March, she is articulating how the Dyke March has formed an impression on her and on the space. This feeling is the mark or trace left behind by the March. Third, it is also worth noting Lucy’s characterization of “female energy.” Such a characterization calls into questions whose femaleness is referenced. Does it suggest that anyone who makes a claim to womanhood or femininity can make a claim to contributing to a female energy? Is this based on essentialism or biological determinism, or does it draw on various moments in women’s, feminist, or lesbian femininst organizing histories in particular ways? While I do not claim to know how Lucy would navigate these questions, I argue that it is important to note that the construction of “female
energy” can never be imagined to be simple or apolitical, but instead is loaded with notions of gender, subjectivity, and emotion. Claims to womanhood and femininity can be simultaneously politically useful and problematically exclusive.

What became increasingly interesting to me was the way that, for some participants, their stories started to change as they continued to talk. They would begin by explaining to me that the Dyke March did not affect/effect the space in any way. But then they would follow up by describing their own memories associated with the space, and how this changed the meaning of the space for them. In my conversation with Catherine, for example, she began by thinking about whether the Dyke March has any kind of lasting effects.

Catherine: I think it obviously transforms and queers space during the time that it happens, and it’s a very different experience of Yonge Street than you would have on a normal any other day of the year. And the political purpose of the Dyke March to take up space and increase visibility and do all that stuff, I think that does happen during the March. I don’t feel like it has, it’s not like it permanently transforms the space, like it sort of goes away after.

As Catherine continued to think through the question of the relationship between Dyke March and Yonge Street, she began to think about the memories that she associates with the space, and ended up arguing that she continues to carry the memories of the Dyke March with her when she walks down Yonge Street at other times of year. She concluded that, in fact, the March then did transform the space for her, but hesitated to make that kind of claim for anyone else.
Catherine: But I think, in terms of having an impact on the space of Yonge Street or on the space of downtown Toronto, that impact might seem kind of temporary [. . .] but maybe the lasting effects of it are not primarily spatial. They’re more political or identity-related. The space may not be transformed for a lot of folks. I mean, you still, I would carry the memories of walking down the street in that sense, so it would, for me, transform the space. Like, this is the space where I participated in the Dyke March and it has that significance for me, but I don’t know if it would carry over for everybody.

Catherine’s articulation cued an important nuance that I had missed in my Interview Guide. Though perhaps there was no permanent, physical kind of marking to change the space, Catherine convinced me that perhaps the response to “How does the Dyke March affect the space?” was more related to the emotional residue of the Dyke March. Perhaps, to borrow Ahmed’s (2004) phrasing, the Dyke March has made an impression on Yonge Street and on the marching participant’s memories and experiences of Yonge Street.

To think of it another way, Avery F. Gordon considers the role of haunting in relation to sociological thought. She uses haunting as a way to think about “that which appears to be not there [but which] is often a seething presence” (1997: 9). She draws on the image of “furniture without memories” (4) to think about how a couch may be left with an impression from the last person who was seated. She uses this imagery to encourage her reader to think about what is notably absent from the furniture, to think about what is present in its absence. Gordon argues that what is invisible, what is absent, or what is hard to see is important because “that which appears absent can indeed be a seething presence” (17).
Gordon’s conceptualization of “furniture without memories” is a useful way to think about the relationship between the Dyke March and the space of Yonge Street, but in the time after the Dyke March has passed through, after the streets have been cleaned, and traffic and commerce have resumed as usual. Interview participants had visceral memories and emotional ties that kept them connected to the space and which changed their later relationships to the space because of those associated memories. As Owain Jones writes, “clearly remembering being-in-place, and perhaps remembering through place, through emotions of (remembered) place are powerful elements of emotional geographies of the self” (2005: 213). For interview participants, the Dyke March serves as a way to remember space through place and emotion.

Participants would only lay claim to this changing experience for themselves and resisted the suggestion that this experience was happening for other people. That more than one person made such claims, however, was evidence of a broader phenomenon at work, linking space to emotion and memory. In part, this hesitation reflects how the relationship between emotion, memory and space is always difficult to pin down. Indeed, according to Bondi, Davidson and Smith, “emotions are never simply surface phenomena, they are never easy to define or demarcate, and they [are] not easily observed or mapped although they inform every aspect of our lives” (2005: 1). Thinking about the interconnectedness of emotion, place and memory, Jones argues that “this call to heed emotion [. . .] recognises the role of emotions in the construction of the world, and in interpretations of the world” (2005: 207). Jones’ work is useful for understanding the consequences of the Dyke March in the space of Yonge Street and for understanding what is being articulated by Catherine in the passage above. When she explains that she carries her memories of previous Dyke Marches with her as she walks along Yonge Street at other times of the year, she is illustrating that “memory is spatial [and] clearly
bound up with processes of place and emotional attachments to place” (213). Rather poetically, Catherine said to me: “I think Pride events leave their residue.” This statement summarized the relationship between emotion, memory and place in the space of the Dyke March.

This was similarly illustrated by Margaret Robinson, who told me about her changing relationship to Yonge Street and the space of the Dyke March at other times of the year.

**Margaret Robinson:** I think it affects your subsequent experience of it. Like I know walking through places that the Dyke March has been feels different for me because I’ve been there in the March. So Yonge Street feels more safe because I have been in the space feeling a particular way for numerous times.

Margaret thus echoes the way emotion and memory infuse understandings of people’s relationships to space, the way that the Dyke March leaves its remnants or its residue in the memories on participants. And this was again echoed by Cris Renna.

**Cris Renna:** I think there’s a memory attached to a place, yeah, and to the space that’s created within the place. So like when I walk down Yonge Street, I remember where that car blew up [. . .], they had some sort of engine problem and there was a bit of a fire when I was the co-ordinator, and they had to push the car off the street and I remember the street and I remember where that happened. I remember, I remember running into an older friend from Kingston who I really love and I remember where she was on the March when I ran into her. Like I wasn’t expecting to see her and that was really lovely. And I remember this
year... I remember dancing down the street with my sister and my friends and like, I remember where we were in those moments.

Similarly, whenever I am walking on the east side of Yonge Street, less than a block north of Wellesley, I remember that this is where I stood the first time I attended Pride in Toronto. We stood to watch the Pride Parade, and my memories of my experiences from that day are securely attached to that place, to the backdrop of the store fronts on the adjacent side of the street. Whenever I wander down Church Street, south of Bloor, heading into the gay neighbourhood, I remember the overwhelming feelings of nervousness and excitement of walking into Pride crowds, of walking towards the booths and people that gather during Pride weekend. Whenever I stand, or remember standing, on the usually quiet corner of Church and Hayden Streets, in my memory, I can see the motorcycles of the Dykes on Bikes glistening in the sunshine, lined up and ready to lead the Dyke March. I can hear their engines revving, and my heart skipping a beat at the anticipation and excitement for what is to come. What all of this tells me is that, though it is hard to pin down, there is an important relationship between feeling, memory and space. As Bondi, Davidson and Smith write, “Clearly, our emotions matter. They affect the way we sense the substance of our past, present and future” (2005: 1). Indeed, for many people, the spaces of the Dyke March are “saturated with affect” (Ahmed 2004:11).

7.4 Conclusion

The Toronto Dyke March serves, in many ways, as a transgression into the space and time of Toronto Pride weekend. Marchers, determined to disrupt notions of queer women’s invisibility, take to the streets in large numbers and revel in the fluidity allowed for by the barrier-free March. This confirms for them who they imagine themselves to be, as marching
dykes, and how they distinguish themselves and the March from the Pride Parade and its participants. While the changes to the space may only be temporary or brief, the Dyke March lasts beyond its physical manifestation, and forms an impression in the memories of its participants, affecting how they engage with and remember Dyke March spaces throughout the year. The manifestation of the Dyke March’s haunting allows for its sustained symbolic role.
CONCLUSION

In this thesis, I have addressed the following questions: (1) How do dykes take up space in public? (2) How does the ‘marching dyke’ emerge as a subject and what kind of subject is she? (3) How, in turn, do marching dykes affect/effect space? To answer these questions, I turned to the Toronto Dyke March as the site of my analysis in order to ask how the March has emerged in this particular time and place. Each of these questions produces answers which are paradoxical. Thus, the Dyke March is a complex, complicated and contradictory site of politics, protest and identity.

The Dyke March is a particularly interesting site of analysis because, while it shares many similarities with other marches, protests, or forms of activism, it manifests in a rather unique way. It is a march which is organized around very specific (though contested) sets of politics, identities and historical struggles which are in many ways uniquely local and, in other ways, common across North America. Toronto’s Dyke March is definitely of Toronto, but it shares history and activism with Dyke Marches in San Francisco, New York City, Philadelphia and Vancouver, among others, and is linked to broader politics of women’s activism and struggles for visibility and recognition.

I both draw from and contribute to a variety of bodies of literature and scholarship in order to offer an interdisciplinary analysis which incorporates queer and poststructural theories, cultural geographies, and the histories of sexuality in Canada. By bringing these bodies of literature together in combination with ethnographic, archival and interview data, my work asks how they speak to each other in new ways at the site of the Dyke March. In relation to queer theory, I insist on the importance of considering the category of ‘dyke’ – to imagine the
possibilities enabled by the category, and to challenge the confines that it might create. To
cultural geography, I inquire about the kinds of relationships in public space which are created by
a March that demands visibility. I also consider how an event which makes claims to space
might, in the end, function at the level of emotions and feelings – that people’s experiences of
space might be transformed not only by a physical change to a space, but also by the memories
and feelings that people associate with a space. Finally, in this analysis, I raise historical, spatial
and theoretical questions about the importance of making claims to identity in the public space of
a march.

I am also writing alongside studies by Becki Ross (1990a, 1990b, 1995), Gary Kinsman
(1995, 1996, 2000) and others of the social histories of the lives of queer people in Canada. My
work on the Dyke March is a contribution to the written record on queer women’s histories, and
more broadly, on the history of dyke activism in Toronto. However, my thesis is not a social
history. A social history of the Toronto Dyke March might make inquiries about the micropolitics
of Dyke March organizing, or the interpersonal relationships among Dyke March coordinators,
participants, and Toronto Pride organizers, or it might examine more specifically the roles of
particular individuals or community leaders who have contributed to Dyke March organizing
over the years. All of these are important projects and possible new directions that future
research on Dyke Marches might examine. In contrast, what I set out to do in this project is to
examine the kinds of discourses which are at work and which are revealed through this annual
event. Rather than focusing on the personal details of participants’ lives, I was interested in
examining discourses which were revealed by the participants’ stories and in media accounts. I
argue that these discourses tell us not only about the meaning and importance of the Dyke March,
but also reveal the workings of queer politics in the contemporary city.
Though the Dyke March is a relatively brief and infrequent event, I show that it is neither a simple nor uncontested site of analysis. Instead, it offers a way of asking questions about queer women’s political struggles more generally. What kinds of subject positions are conjured up by a massing of women in the streets? What kinds of oppositional politics are at play in queer organizing when subsets of its population insist on distinguishing themselves? Further, what kinds of coalitions are made possible by this kind of activism?

As the thesis comes to a conclusion, I am struck by the way in which the Dyke March functions as a paradox. This paradox is manifest in many ways. It is revealed most obviously by the title of my project: “It’s not a parade, it’s a march!” This is a declaration that is repeatedly expressed by Dyke March participants and organizers. People are invested in the notion that the Dyke March continues to hold strongly to a history of political activism. The definition of the Dyke March as a political event is heartily defended in contrast to what the Toronto Pride Parade has become: a large, corporate, flashy party. The Dyke March comes to stand in for a history of queer activism, and is almost zealously credited with maintaining what is left of the political integrity of Toronto Pride. This is a paradox, however, given how the Dyke March is deeply implicated in the Toronto Pride structure: it is funded (meagerly) by Toronto Pride, holds office space with Toronto Pride, and since 1996, its organizers have worked closely with Toronto Pride.

The paradox of the Dyke March extends into each analysis chapter in this thesis. The March delineates a particular identity category – the dyke – yet thousands of women gather together to march in ways which both support and contest the limitations of that very category. The Dyke March demands the creation of visibility for queer women’s lives, yet when spectators gather to watch the March, marchers only want be seen in particular ways. Dyke March participants insist on its definition as a march, yet their descriptions of the March are slippery,
often describing it as a parade or in parade-like ways. For example, not all marchers who spoke with me are necessarily invested in overt forms of political action or activism. Many are unaware of who has been named the annual Honoured Dyke or Honoured Group. Indeed, many people are invested in the Dyke March as a place to have fun, to meet friends, to enjoy the sunshine, or to pick up a hot date. This is not to say that these actions are not political in and of themselves – arguably, the moment in which thousands of queer women take to the streets to make claims to space is really about the demanding the right to have fun, to meet up with friends, or enjoy cold beers in the shade of a tent. The fact that annually, thousands of women participate in the Dyke March in a wide variety of ways reveals how the March is fun, sexy and political all at once. That said, activist energies still play a vital role in Pride and Dyke March organizing and participatory efforts. This was perhaps revealed most clearly by events which followed the conclusion of my data collection.

8.1: Take Back the Dyke in 2010

I conducted ethnographic research for this thesis during the 2008 and 2009 Dyke Marches. In the lead up to the 2010 Pride season, major disputes arose over the inclusion of a group called Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QuAIA) in Toronto Pride events. QuAIA is a Toronto-based group which critiques the occupation of Palestine and the apartheid state in Israel and works in solidarity with queer Palestinians. They critique the way that Israel cultivates “an image of itself as an oasis of gay tolerance in the Middle East” (QuAIA n.d.). This is problematic because Palestinians living in Israel are denied rights and are subjected to state violence and control. QuAIA further supports the call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) against Israel, a movement initiated by Palestinian civil society (BDS Movement n.d.).
Though the group had previously participated in the 2008 and 2009 Pride Parades and Dyke Marches, their participation came into question during the lead up to the 2010 Pride season because of the politically provocative use of the term ‘Israeli Apartheid’ in the group’s name. In late May 2010, Pride Toronto was pressured by City officials to ban QuAIA from participating in Pride Toronto. Toronto City Council, a major funder of Pride, banned the expression “Israeli Apartheid” from the events. Pride co-chairs argued that the controversy over this issue had put the whole festival in jeopardy, not only because of threats to cut funding from the City of Toronto, but also the potential loss of hundreds of thousands of dollars in corporate sponsorship (Dale 2010). Councillor Giorgio Mammoliti presented a motion to withdraw city funding and support, which would have involved the loss of permission to close streets, the loss of City permits, the loss of in-kind services including police and garbage, as well as the potential loss from other major funding bodies, including provincial and federal funding.

There was a tremendous community response in opposition to the ban of QuAIA. Organizers from Toronto’s 1981 Pride wrote an open letter to Toronto Pride organizers, urging them to reconsider banning the use of “Israeli Apartheid” at Toronto Pride events. They argued that this was a banning of political speech and group participation at Pride, something that had not ever been done before in the history of Toronto Pride. Making links to the history of the 1969 Stonewall rebellion and the 1981 Toronto bathhouse raids, they argued that Toronto Pride events have always been rooted in political resistance to oppression and repression (“Banning QuAIA” 2010). Further, a number of the past Grand Marshals and Honoured Dykes renounced their honours in opposition to the ban, and some of those nominated for the awards in 2010 rejected their invitations as well.
The ensuing debate both within queer communities and more broadly on public radio and in the mainstream press was, in part, about whether or not Pride Parades are political events. Defenders of the group’s ban argued that Pride should be a single issue event, that it should only be about LGBTQ issues, and that world politics are unrelated to queer issues and should be left out of the events. For example, out City Councillor Kyle Rae argued that the Toronto Pride Parade is a protest against state-sponsored homophobia and should not concern itself with Israeli government policy (in Dagostino 2010a). In contrast, QuAIA continued to argue that Israel uses the illusion of a gay-friendly state while continuing the oppression of Palestinian people living in the state of Israel. Though Pride Toronto organizers claimed that people were welcome to participate in Pride in support of queers in Palestine, they continued to argue that it was the expression “Israeli Apartheid” that needed to be banned. Some argued that QuAIA ought to comply with Pride Toronto’s decision because it is necessary to abide by the desires of sponsors and stakeholders (Dagostino 2010b), revealing how Toronto Pride is now deeply dependent on monies from outside of its own organizational structure. However, QuAIA organizers and supporters, such as Tim McCaskell, pointed out that human rights violations affect queer people directly, and so it is necessary to draw links to them in Toronto Pride events (in Dagostino 2010b). They argued that the rights of queer Palestinians are threatened by Israeli state policy and drew parallels to other forms of apartheid throughout history. Further, as evidenced by the wide array of social and political groups who participate in Pride, despite Rae’s assertion above that Pride is a one-issue event, issues of all kind related to LGBTQ communities are included in Pride. Debates about QuAIA’s inclusion in Pride also raged through mainstream media, and people continued to debate both Israeli-Palestinian relations as well as the question of whether or not Pride is political.
By June 23, 2010, after weeks of pressure from community organizers, Pride Toronto changed its position on language use. Rather than restricting the phrase “Israeli Apartheid,” they required that all groups participating in the Parade “read, sign and agree to abide by the City of Toronto’s Declaration of a Non-Discrimination Policy” (“Pride Toronto to no longer restrict language in the Parade” 2010). This compromise came out of a proposal from community leaders who offered the solution as a way to appease City policy-makers, Toronto Pride organizers, and Pride participants. In the end, QuAIA was allowed to participate in the 2010 Pride events.

What is particularly relevant about this story for my research is that, by mid-June, at the height of debates over QuAIA’s inclusion in Pride, a new Dyke March organization emerged: the Take Back the Dyke (TBTD). TBTD was held on July 3, 201067 at 2:00pm, at the same time as the annual Pride Toronto Dyke March. TBTD met for a rally in front of Toronto City Hall at Nathan Phillips Square and then spilled onto Queen Street, marching west and then north along University Avenue, concluding on the lawn of Queen’s Park. Though I could find no news reports on the number of participants who attended the march (and notably, very little reporting), my own estimation is that somewhere between 500-1000 people participated. TBTD was organized quite quickly and relied on word of mouth, email and Facebook, as well as some

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67 In 2010, Toronto Pride events were organized on the first weekend of July, rather than the last weekend of June, which traditionally marked the anniversary of Stonewall. The move was partly about accommodating the G20 Toronto Summit meeting, which met June 26-27, the last weekend of June. In 2011, Toronto Pride was again held over the first weekend in July, rather than the last weekend in June. It remains unclear to me why this change has been maintained, though, perhaps this is a move towards a decreasingly political Pride celebration. This move might be considered an attempt to capitalize on the tourism made possible by the Canada Day long weekend. This change is also notable in the lead-up to 2014, when Toronto is set to host World Pride.
postering around the city. TBTD’s Facebook page explained itself as ascribing to the Dyke March’s definition, as a “parade – it is a political demonstration of critical mass; a moment seized to revel in the strength, diversity and passion of LGBTTIQ2SA women and trans folk.” TBTD organizers articulated a critique against the annual Dyke March for having lost track of its political purpose under the control of Pride Toronto. The debates around QuAIA’s inclusion in Pride raised a number of broader issues for TBTD organizers about the rights of access to queer spaces and about the rights to gather without corporate or City money dictating the terms of inclusion. They invited people to march in TBTD on their Facebook page by stating: “Come march with us if you are fed up with having your life, your choices, your body and your politics diluted and silenced by the meek and the monied.” Organizers drew links to Dyke Marches in other cities which function without permits. This became an indication of a level of radical political engagement – a refusal to ask for permission to take to the streets and create visibility for queer women. Asking for permission to march represents a move towards falling within the control of City policies, corporate interests, and the potential for censorship. The TBTD Facebook stated: “We don’t need money to be proud. We are dykes. All we need is a can of lentils and some sunscreen . . . It is time to reclaim our march.”

Take Back the Dyke thus set itself up to be understood in a number of important ways. First, the organizers distinguished themselves from the annual Dyke March, by arguing they were to be more committed to the original principles which defined the Dyke March. They also claimed they were more grassroots than the Dyke March by refusing to request a permit from the City of Toronto and by refusing to function within the structure of Pride Toronto. Though the

68 Though these events in 2010 tempted me to join, it is worth noting that I am not a member of Facebook. I am grateful to my friends and family who are on Facebook who were able to forward me notices and information posted on Facebook, where most of the information about TBTD was posted.
Take Back the Dyke made claims for inclusivity, its organizers also delineated a more specific image of the dyke subject, relying on “lentils and sunscreen” to conjure up an idealized dyke subject. Though the Facebook statement’s tone is sarcastic and slightly in jest, it also conjures up a particular historically contextualized image of dyke subjecthood which is of a political, vegetarian (or vegan), sun-smart, health-conscious woman who takes to the streets in radically activist ways. These signifiers also invoke a nostalgia for earlier counter-cultural moments. Further, the Facebook page encouraged women to get involved by plastering the city with Take Back the Dyke posters. As they suggest:

Be a part of the effort to plaster the city and get the word out for Take Back the Dyke!
Just do your neighbourhood, or plan a hot wheatpasting\(^69\) date, or staple gun them up as you walk your dog, whatever.

Again, here, a particular image of a political dyke subject is humourously imagined as organizers suggest that a do-it-yourself style form of activism is appealing to dykes and the women they might like to date.

Take Back the Dyke was an interesting emergence in the history of Toronto Dyke Marches for many reasons. It was an expression of frustration with the annual Dyke March tradition. It was also a refusal to accept the terms of censorship that were almost applied to Pride events. Take Back the Dyke took over University Avenue, rather than Yonge Street, where the Dyke March has arguably begun to be naturalized in the space. University Avenue was a curious

\(^{69}\) Wheatpaste is a simple adhesive made from starch and water which creates a glue. It is used for many kinds of projects, including attaching paper posters to walls, telephone poles and other surfaces.
location choice for the TBTD as it is a street that is used as a stage for many other political
demonstrations, marches, parades, and races in Toronto. This route choice does suggest that
perhaps many members of Toronto’s queer women’s communities are seeking to disrupt what
some view as routinized Dyke March tradition.

It is also notable, however, that Take Back the Dyke has not become an annual event.
While Take Back the Dyke was a third Dyke March emergence in Toronto, like the 1981 Dykes
In the Street March, TBTD did not get repeated in 2011. That year, TBTD organizers
collaborated alongside other community organizers on a Stonewall Toronto March on June 26.
This march marked the 41st Stonewall anniversary and insisted on being a political, non-
corporate March that did not request street permits.

8.2 Update: 2011

In 2011, another controversy surrounded Toronto Pride and the City of Toronto’s local
politics. In the fall of 2010, Mayor Rob Ford was elected to Toronto City Council and there was
a major conservative change to the spectrum of city politics and the number of elected
conservative City Councillors. In the lead-up to the 2011 Pride season, despite the resolution that
was reached in 2010, controversy again rose over the appropriateness of the phrase “Israeli
Apartheid” and whether or not QuAIA could or should be included in Pride events. Rather than
jeopardize Toronto Pride funding, QuAIA decided not to participate in 2011 Toronto Pride
events. Instead the group focused on hosting and collaborating on its own set of Pride week
events to highlight the struggle against Israeli Apartheid.

However, controversy resurfaced when Mayor Rob Ford did not attend any part of Pride,
generating heavy critique that he was not supportive of the queer community in Toronto. His
absence was in marked contrast to all recent Toronto mayors, who have been active participants
in Pride events. On the other hand, Georgio Mammoliti, known to have a close working relationship with Ford, attended the Dyke March with a camcorder. He later asserted that he did so in order to capture anti-Israeli groups participating in the March, arguing that City of Toronto funding to Pride was dependent on QuAIA’s non-participation in the Pride events. No such agreement had been reached, however. Mammoliti had previously demanded that Pride guarantee to ban QuAIA’s participation in Pride, but the issue was left unresolved when QuAIA decided not to participate. Another group, Dykes and Trans People for Palestine, announced that they would march under a banner with the term “Israeli Apartheid.” Councillor Mammoliti attended to film the event and protest the group’s use of the term (Fedio 2011). Another City Councillor Shelley Carroll tweeted a photograph of Mammoliti filming the Dyke March and others posted videos on Youtube.com of Mammoliti walking with his camcorder in hand.

Responses to his actions were incredibly critical, as he continued to change the target of his attack on Pride. In his interviews with media, he began by arguing against the use of the expression “Israeli Apartheid” in Pride events, despite the City of Toronto’s Solicitor’s April 2, 2011 Report stating that “the phrase ‘Israeli Apartheid’ in and of itself does not violate the City’s Anti-discrimination policy” and that “the City also cannot therefore conclude that the use of term on signs and banners to identify QuAIA constitutes the promotion of hatred or seeks to incite discrimination contrary to the Code” (Pennachetti 2011: 1). Mammoliti’s critique was then mounted against any groups who expressed a critique against Israel or expressing solidarity with Palestinians. He argued that QuAIA’s promise to stay away from Pride was broken by the attendance of the group Dykes and Trans People For Palestine, and by their chants and banners (Fedio 2011). In the week following Pride, Mammoliti made news by threatening to pull City funding from Toronto Pride. On July 12, 2011, his motion to defund Pride Toronto was defeated.
by Council (Houston 2011). However, his target again shifted, as he argued that: “I have to congratulate the Pride Parade and the organizers because what they’ve done is they’ve opened up the eyes of City Hall to the larger picture. City taxpayers’ dollars should not be going towards any venue, including marches and parades, that have a political message slant to them” (in Rodan 2011).

Mammoliti’s actions and participation at the 2011 Dyke March were fascinating to me for a number of reasons. He was heavily critiqued by many others across various social media sites, as well as by other City Councillors, as voyeuristic and “creepy” (Councillor Adam Vaughan in CBC News 2011). His actions were viewed by those in opposition to him as leering and suspect, and it was clear that he was quickly constructed as an unwanted voyeur to the Dyke March, though perhaps (or, perhaps not) for different reasons that the leering voyeur imagined in Chapter Six of this thesis.

Mammoliti has not acknowledged whether he attended the Pride Parade or attempted to record similar political moments at the Parade, but I find his decision to attend and record the Dyke March especially noteworthy. I would argue that this moment reveals how the Dyke March remains a contested and contestable space – a space in which questions of identity, of marching, of looking, and of making claims to the political are continuously in question. How Mammoliti will continue to pursue his pet project of defunding queer political events (or any political events, for that matter) and defending Israeli state policies remains as yet unclear. What is clear, however, is that the Dyke March and the subject of the political marching dyke continues to challenge conservative notions of decency and respectability by refusing to abide by apolitical or homophobic demands.
8.3 The Toronto Trans March

This thesis includes an examination of trans identities in relation to questions of inclusion and exclusion at the Dyke March. I did not, however, include an analysis of the 2009 emergence of Toronto’s Trans March, which has become an annual component of Toronto Pride. In its first and second year, Trans March participants gathered at Bloor and Church Streets on the Friday evening of Pride weekend and at 8:00pm, they marched south on Church to Wellesley Street. This was an important moment of recognition for trans people, who have continued to struggle, in varying ways, with questions of inclusion in either the Pride Parade or the Dyke March. In 2011, over 1000 people gathered to march in the Trans March, but rather than all marching together, there was a split. A smaller group of about 200 people marched along an alternative route, marching southbound on Yonge Street, from Charles to Wood Street (Xtra staff 2011). This more closely replicated a shorter version of the Dyke March’s route. For the Yonge Street participants, this was a moment of insisting on the creation of trans visibility in contrast to the March on Church Street, a street which by Friday night is closed off to traffic and already playing host to a number of commercial booths. Through they did not obtain permission from Toronto Pride and had not requested City permits, they insisted on the importance of Yonge Street as a space in which they could make claims to out and proud trans identities.

An examination of Trans Marches both in Toronto and other cities is an important new direction for future research. What this study of the Toronto Dyke March offers is a way to consider questions of subjectivity, the limits of inclusion/exclusion, the politics of spectatorship and the meaning of taking up space. While my thesis examines these issues in regards to the specifics of Toronto’s Dyke March, the broader issues raised are ones that might be contemplated for Trans Marches or other activist claims to identity and which are made in public space. Future
research on Dyke Marches might consider if and how the politics of identity which are manifest at the Dyke March are impacted in any way by the emergence of an annual Trans March. As I revealed in my analysis chapters, trans people have historically ambivalent and varied relationships to the Dyke March. Does the presence of a Trans March take pressure off of the Dyke March and its necessity to address trans issues directly? Or does a Trans March help to insist on broadening notions of identity and inclusion? This is certainly suggested by the fact that the 2011 Dyke March Honoured Group was Trans Health Lobby, a group which advocates for access to health care for trans people in Ontario. At issue, on a broader level, are questions of visibility and recognition for communities of people who are otherwise invisible and the costs of making these claims to broader politics.

8.4 Concluding Thoughts

As the Toronto Pride Parade has become increasingly corporate, and critiques continue to mount about the monetary control exercised by a wide variety of funding bodies and corporate entities, it remains important to consider the consequences of continued claims to visibility. When claims to visibility are taken over by corporate motivations and liberal human rights discourses, it is critical to interrogate the practice of making claims to visibility and the costs and consequences of these claims. It also becomes imperative to continue to imagine other possibilities for visibility and to challenge dominant notions of citizenship and claims to respectability for queer subjects.

This thesis examines the Toronto Dyke March and its significance in the history of queer women’s activism in Toronto. It also considers how the Dyke March is an event which is intentionally significant – it intentionally makes claims to meanings and a contested set of politics about who dykes are and the meaning that is attributed to them when they take to the
streets and march. What remains clear to me is that, as debates continue to rage in Toronto City politics over the meaning of Pride events and their claims to Toronto spaces, is that the Dyke March remains an incredibly important site of analysis. The annual gathering of thousands of women in the streets, and the emotional defence of the politics and meaning of the Dyke March reveal to me that the Dyke March is something that continues to matter.

The paradoxes of the Dyke March, in part, reveal the paradoxes of contemporary queer life. Claims to radical politics or to particular forms of identity are persistently undermined or complicated by a contested experience. In the contemporary moment, manifestations of queer radicality remain incredibly tempered and are couched in liberal human rights discourses which emphasize respectability and “we’re just like heterosexual” sameness. This is a very different kind of claim to queer subjecthood than has been made in other historical moments.

This research is important because it offers a number of broader questions beyond the specifics of the Dyke March. First, it raises questions about the importance of interrogating claims to identity and visibility and asks at what or whose expense these claims are made. Second, it addresses the importance of examining Marches, demonstrations and other political gatherings as contested sites of analysis. Third, it raises the importance of understanding history in order to consider how the future might manifest. Responding to Todd May’s (2005) question of the relevance of Foucault today, Ladelle McWhorter summarizes May’s point by explaining that:

Most importantly . . . it is only by really understanding how we got here – which is what genealogy enables us to do – that we can see what possibilities remain for us for changing
things. The only way to imagine and bring forth a future different from the present is to see how the present evolved from the contingencies of the past. (2005: 85)

As queers continue to struggle with questions of identity and visibility within the heteronormative mainstream, we will continue to wrestle with whether or not recognition and respectability are important, and at what cost. In this contemporary moment of increasing corporatization of queer identities and sweeping generalizations about good, respectable gay citizens, we must continue to ask who gets left out of these images, and under what conditions. The changing specter of the Dyke March is but one of the sites of this analysis.
WORKS CITED


Stand Together. 2002. Produced and directed by Nancy Nicol. 124 min. Toronto: V Tape. DVD.


APPENDIX A: CALL FOR PARTICIPANTS

- Have you participated in the Toronto Dyke March?
  (In other words, have you marched, watched, embraced, been ambivalent about, 
  contested, protested, critiqued or experienced or participated in the Dyke March and 
  related Dyke Day activities in any other way?)

- Or, do you not attend the Dyke March but only attend events on the day of the Pride 
  Parade?

My name is Allison Burgess and I am a PhD student in Sociology and Equity Studies in 
Education and the Graduate Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies at the Ontario 
Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). My thesis research 
examines the Toronto Dyke March with a particular focus on people’s experiences and 
interactions with the March. If you are interested in participating in an interview, either one-on- 
one or with a partner/lover/friend/etc., please contact me at <xxx>.
Have you ever participated in the

Toronto Dyke March?

(In other words, have you marched, watched, embraced, been ambivalent about, contested, protested, critiqued, experienced or participated in the Dyke March and related Dyke Day activities in any other way?)

I am looking to hear from voices of colour who would be interested in discussing their experience of the Toronto Dyke March with me.

My name is Allison Burgess and I am a PhD student at OISE/UT. My thesis research examines the Toronto Dyke March with a particular focus on the history of the March as well as people’s experiences, engagements, and interactions with the March.

If you are interested in participating in an interview, either one-on-one or with a partner/lover/friend/etc., please contact me at xxx.
Dear Participant,

Thank you for expressing interest to participate in this research project which focuses on the Toronto Dyke March. My name is Allison Burgess and I am a PhD student in Sociology and Equity Studies in Education and the Graduate Collaborative Program in Women and Gender Studies at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto (OISE/UT). I am working under the supervision of Dr. Kari Dehli from the same department. My PhD research asks questions about identity, space, citizenship, tourism and history as they relate to the Toronto Dyke March. Major questions informing this research include: Why does the Toronto Dyke March emerge in this particular time and place? What role does the Dyke March play in queer women’s understandings of community and identity? This research will involve interviews with 30-40 people as well as an ethnography of the March.

I am asking people to participate in this study if they have participated in some way in the Toronto Dyke March. The semi-structured interview should last approximately one hour. Interviews will be tape recorded and transcribed for research purposes. You will be provided with a list of interview questions before the interview begins and these questions will be the basis for the interview. All interview participants will remain confidential in my research unless otherwise requested. During the interview, I will ask you questions about your identity (e.g. gender, sexual, racial identity), but you will remain anonymous and unidentifiable in the analysis and write up of my research and will only be identified by a pseudonym. If you would like to see a copy of the interview transcript before I begin my analysis, please be sure to indicate so on this form. Once I send you the transcript, I will request that you return it to me with any comments or edits within one month’s time. The findings from this research will be the basis of my PhD dissertation, and will also be the basis of publications, conference presentations and/or workshops. Once my research is complete, if you indicate on this form, I will provide you with a summary of my research results.

The only people who will have access to the material from this interview are me and my supervisor. All original audiotapes and interview transcripts will be destroyed within 5 years of the completion of the study. There are no foreseeable risks to your involvement in this research beyond those feelings encountered in your everyday life. There is no direct benefit or compensation for your participation in this project, although you may be happy to know that you are contributing to a study which will contribute the scholarly community and the theorizing related to women’s communities, sexuality and space, and identities.
Participation in this study is voluntary and refusal to participate or withdraw from the study at any time will involve no penalty or negative consequence to you. You have the right to refuse to answer any interview questions asked. Please note, however, that withdrawal from the study must be done before the analysis of the interviews begins, at which point information from your interview may already be de-linked from your identity.

This study has been reviewed and received ethics approval through the University of Toronto Research Ethics Board. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Ethics Review Office at <ethics.review@utoronto.ca> or 416-946-3273. Should you have any questions or concerns about the interview or the study in general, please feel free to contact Allison Burgess, the researcher, at <xxx>. You may keep a copy of this letter for your own reference.

To be filled in by participant:

I have read and understood the above. This study has been explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study and am now ready to begin the interview.

☐ Yes, I would like to see a copy of the transcript from this interview. If I have any changes that I would like to make, I will do them and return the transcript within one month’s time.

☐ Yes, I would like a copy of the summary of research results. Please email them to: ______________________________

☐ Yes, I would like to remain anonymous in this research.

Or

☐ I would prefer to be identified by my real name in the research.

Name: ______________________________  Date: __________________

Signature: ___________________________

Researcher’s Signature: ______________________________
APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introductions
• Can you identify yourself (gender, race, class, sexual orientation, ability, age, education, profession)?
• What’s your history with the Dyke March?

Participation
• Do you attend Pride in Toronto? Why/why not?
• Do you attend the Dyke March? (Participate, observe, march, etc.). Why/why not?
• What other kinds of events do you participate in? (Parties, concerts, booths, volunteer, etc.)
• Do you participate in other marches (e.g. International Women’s Day, Take Back the Night) or other Pride Parades or Dyke Marches? Do you see similarities or differences between these?
• How does the Dyke March affect your overall experience of the events/weekend?
• How do you experience spectatorship? Thoughts on Dyke March as a barrier-free space?

Identity & Meaning-making
• How do you understand the Dyke March – what is it for you? Does this contrast the role of the Pride Parade?
• Does it play an important role for you? Does this contrast the role of the Pride Parade?
• How do you understand your own identity in relation to the March?
• Has the meaning of the Dyke March changed for you? Why? How?
• What identifies the shape of the march for you?
• What does ‘dyke’ mean for you?

Politics
• Do you see the Dyke March as connected to a feminist project? To a queer rights project?
• Do you know anything about the history of trans inclusion/exclusion at the Dyke March? What are your experiences with this?
• How do you feel about corporate sponsorship of Pride? What about of the Dyke March?
• What’s your relationship to other people or groups at the March? Do you relate to other individuals or groups and who they are?
• How does the Dyke March affect the space of downtown city streets?
• Does the Dyke March ‘queer’ the space?
• How do you ‘take up space’ at Pride events?
• How does it feel to participate in this part of the city in this way, as a part of a particular identity?
• Any other questions? Issues I have not addressed?
APPENDIX E: INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT SKETCHES

Participants were given the option to identify using a pseudonym or with their real name. Participants chose their own pseudonyms, and these people are identified with a first name only. Those participants who identify with their real name have a first and last name. Unless indicated otherwise, participants were interviewed in person, at a location of their choosing.

**ABIGAIL** is a 32 year old woman. At the beginning of our interview, she identifies herself as lesbian, but later prefers to be identified as dyke. She is Polish and describes her class as at the poverty line and as “struggling.” She has a BA, is able-bodied and works as a secretary at a university. Abigail began attending the Dyke March a few years before she met her wife and has attended the Dyke March for approximately ten years as an observer. She explained how more recently, she is less excited about and less invested in the Dyke March, and had stopped attending by the time of our interview.

**ALEX** identifies as queer. In our interview, she troubles fixed gender identity categories of male and female, and so identifies her gender as androgynous and fluid. She is white. She also identifies her ability as fluid, arguing that sometimes she feels able bodied, but sometimes she feels disabled by society. She is a Masters student and is 28 years old. Alex first went to Pride ten years prior to our interview, but did not begin attending the Dyke March until two years later. Alex attends the Pride Parade and the Dyke March every year if she is in town. Though both events are important to her, it is more important for her to attend the Dyke March. Alex explains that she cannot just stand and watch the Dyke March, but that she needs to participate in it.

**ALEXANDER.** See entry on Catherine.

**ALYSSA** identifies as a 29 year old non-trans female, as a feminist, as queer, bi, white, Jewish, and as a woman with no real disabilities. She has a Masters degree and works for the City of Toronto. She attended the first Dyke March without knowing that it was going to be happening. She describes how she was sitting outside of the 519 at Lesbian Gay Bisexual Youth of Toronto (LGBYT) and she describes seeing a bunch of women walking by. She thought it looked cool, and left her group at the 519 to join in with the March. Since then, she says she participates in the March when she can, and she usually marches, depending on who she is with.

**AMY GOTTLIEB** is a 55 year old Jewish lesbian-identified woman. She is white, able-bodied and middle-class and grew up in New York in a communist family and identifies as left, as socialist, as feminist and anti-racist. She has been out since 1973 and moved to Toronto in 1975. She has a B.A. and a B.Ed. and for the last ten years has been working full-time as a high school teacher. Before that, she worked for a number of non-profits, mostly within the magazine industry. Amy was involved with Lesbians Against the Right (LAR) and the Lesbian Organization of Toronto (LOOT) and participated in the 1981 Dykes in the Street March in Toronto. She has participated in every Dyke March since 1996 and marches in the Pride Parade every year as well. Amy argues that it is important to be visible and that she has always thought it was important to be out for herself and to encourage others as well. It has also been important for her to bring her thirteen year old son to Pride events as well.
Catherine identifies as a queer Métis woman who is 28 years old. She has a Masters degree and a Bachelors in Education and teaches professionally at the secondary level. She explains that her education and work affect her thinking around her identity in such a way that she raises issues around Aboriginal identities or anti-homophobia or equity work in the classroom and the school. Catherine is in a long term relationship with Alexander. Alexander is a 29 year old white male. He has a PhD and is a striving academic. He identifies his sexuality as non-aligned. He explains that he is with Catherine in a male-female relationship, and while he is not practising anything aside from a straight lifestyle, he does not think of the straight label as something he is ever really identified with or felt happy with. Catherine and Alexander are in a long term romantic relationship with each other, and they share economic and reproductive capacities. Catherine and Alexander have a one and a half year old daughter together and at the time of our interview, Catherine is eight months pregnant with their second child. Because they are in a relationship together as a man and woman, questions of sexuality get erased in their day to day, so the public performance of the Dyke March has been important especially for Catherine. Catherine and Alexander first attended the Dyke March after they had moved to the city in 2003. They attended because Catherine was coming out at the time and was trying to generate a sense of her identity as a queer woman. She explains that she and Alexander have been in a relationship together for a very long time, and so as a result, her coming out process happened a bit later, and that she realized that she was also attracted to women and identified as queer during their relationship. So when they moved to Toronto, she worked to create a “very public sense of queer identity” by getting involved in advocacy and equity work including doing anti-homophobia workshops in schools, as well as “sticking rainbow stuff all over myself and having a billion buttons.” And she says that the Dyke March fit well into this public identity for her. Catherine and Alexander were interviewed together.

Chip is a 30 year old woman who sometimes identifies as genderqueer. She clarifies that she sometimes likes to pass as a guy, but does not identify as trans. She identifies as a dyke, but also as queer. She is white and identifies as low income. She grew up in small-town Alberta. She is able bodied, though sees herself as an ally to people with disabilities. She is currently in a relationship with a man and has been for two years, though she still identifies strongly as a dyke and feels pretty centred in the dyke community. Chip is a Masters student and identifies as sex positive and has begun, in the year before our interview, done some work as a sex worker. She is a part of Maggie’s Toronto. She has been participating in the Dyke March since 2001. She says she always goes to the Dyke March, but that she never goes to the Pride Parade. Though she may have once attended the Pride Parade, that she generally does not like it at all. She describes how she is often invited to march in the Dyke March as a part of a group but that, as she says, “I can never get my shit together and get there at the right time and the right place etcetera.” So most often, she just jumps into the March wherever she can with a group that has cool music or with a group that gives her the impulse to jump in and march.

Cole is 40 years old and identifies as transgender and at the time of our interview, has just started taking testosterone. Cole identifies as liminal and in his words: “so neither, so between genders.” Cole has identified as lesbian for the last twenty years, and still does sometimes, but in Cole’s words, “I still kind of do even though I’ve got this trans thing going on.” Cole is mixed race, half Indian, half British, and is enrolled in a Master’s degree. Cole grew up in Scotland and
now lives in Hamilton and has lived in Canada for almost twenty years. Cole used to work at the Women’s Bookstore in Hamilton, but now works in social services. Cole has been to every Dyke March since it began in 1996.

**CONSTANCE** is a 35 year old. She was raised as a boy and now identifies as a woman. She says she dates girls and has always dated girls. She explains that she is read as white and has white skin, but says she actually does not know her history because she is not sure whether the man who raised her is actually her father. She is an undergraduate student and works as a bike messenger. She has previously run her own consultancy and worked as a graphic artist. She describes herself in Richard Florida’s terms, as not quite creative class, and is doing service class related stuff. She explains that she does not like to put words on the various aspects of her life. She says “I date girls and I’ve always dated girls so... I guess you know maybe you could just say that well wouldn’t that make you dyke? And I’m like well, not necessarily. I don’t believe, I don’t have time for the semantics really because it’s a lot of political baggage.” Constance has only participated in one Toronto Dyke March in 1996. At the time she did not know it was the first one. She was not living in Toronto at the time but was dating someone who lived in the city and came into town for the weekend partly for Pride, partly to see her girlfriend, and partly to see some other friends in town. 1996 was the only year that Constance attended Pride. She explains that she only likes to do something over and over again if there is a reason to do it. Beyond this, she says she was trying to figure out the March’s purpose and was not sure if she was welcome. She tells me about an experience in which she was made to feel incredibly unwelcome in the space of the March. In addition to a context of other life experiences of marginalization and discrimination, and of questioning the purpose of Pride events more generally, Constance has not participated in the Dyke March or Pride in Toronto since, though has occasionally attended a few other Pride events in other cities.

**CRIS RENNA** is 25 years old. She identifies her gender as genderqueer and her sexuality as queer. She is white, able-bodied, was raised lower-middle-class, and is a Master’s student. Cris was a Dyke March coordinator for the 2006-2007 year. She got involved with the Dyke March because she had moved to Toronto and was living with a group of women, one of whom had been a Dyke March coordinator, and knew they were still looking to fill the position, and so encouraged Cris to apply. At that point, she had never participated in the Toronto Dyke March. She explains that she thought it sounded like interesting activism with a really good group of people and so she applied for the position and was hired by the beginning of November. Though it could take 30-40 hours/week worth of work, the position is unpaid and so she was also working full-time at a job.

**DEIRDRE PIKE** is 45 year old woman who identifies as a lesbian, but more often as a dyke. She is white, middle-class and has a degree in theology. She explains how her identity has changed and expanded over the years. At 18, she identified as gay, then at 27 as a lesbian, and in the last two years, she identifies more and more as a dyke. She has a history of service to the Catholic Church, attending high school and university at women’s schools, and then for fourteen years as a pastoral associate. Through these years, she lived with long-term partners but in a closeted way as “roommates” and so was disconnected from any queer community. In 2001, she left working for the Catholic church and now works as a social planner in Hamilton on
Deirdre’s experience with Pride began in 2001. She had just moved back to Hamilton after working for three years in Ottawa. As she describes it: “So now I was out.” She describes being out quite publicly in the newspapers. So that year she attended Pride with her partner and some friends. She has attended Pride and the Dyke March almost every year since 2001.

**FARZANA** is 38 years old and identifies as a cissexual woman. She identifies as queer, as South Asian, and as Muslim. She is a social worker and a writer. Farzana has been attending the Dyke March almost every year since the very first one, though she does not remember how long ago that was. Farzana describes how she looks forward to the March every year and says that it is the event at Pride that insists on attending. Farzana was interviewed over the phone.

**FRANCES** is a 31 year old woman. She is Chinese and immigrated to Canada when she was five years old. She is originally from Hong Kong. She grew up middle-class and is downwardly mobile. She identifies as queer, as lesbian, and rarely though sometimes as bisexual, and sometimes as pansexual. She is physically able bodied, but has invisible disabilities. Frances thinks that she first attended the Dyke March in either 1997 or 1998. Frances has since attended the Dyke March regularly and generally tries to attend every year but sometimes has missed it on occasion because of other events or obligations occurring at the same time.

**GEORGE** is a 24 year old man. He grew up middle-class, but was disowned when he transitioned and lost class status as a result. He describes himself as a trans guy and identifies as queer or heteroflexible, depending on where he is. George is white, French and is a Masters student. When I ask George what his history with the Dyke March is, he makes a direct connection to trying to figure out his own history of transitioning alongside his memory of the Dyke March. He explains that it feels like a long time ago that he first went to the Dyke March, but realizes that it was not all that long ago. George moved to Toronto when he was 17 or 18, and he explains that after, he moved to Toronto, someone sat him down and explained to him that he was trans. He says he was going by the name George, was binding and basically living full time as a guy without realizing his identity. The person who talked to him about his identity was volunteering as a marshal for the Dyke March and said they needed more people and asked him to help out so he did and had lots of fun. George has a history of being very involved in queer community activities and organizing efforts. He first marshaled the Dyke March in 2002. By 2004 he had begun taking testosterone, and his participation in the Dyke March was met with more resistance after a number of really difficult experiences of marginalization from the Dyke March and other queer women’s community events, organizations and spaces. George has since stopped attending the Dyke March. Though he continued to be involved in Pride organizing, as of 2008, the year of our interview, he no longer had any connections or ties with any forms of Pride organizing.

**JACKIE** is a 64 year old woman who identifies as a lesbian. She was previously married to a man and has two children. She met her partner and came out in 1997 when she was 53 years old. Her partner died three years ago of breast cancer and Jackie is now single. She has a Master’s
and works as a freelance editor. Jackie has attended the Dyke March as a spectator and only has done so since coming out. She and her partner had gay and lesbian friends in their church and her partner had some work colleagues who were lesbians so they would all go to the Dyke March together. They would also attend with some friends in a lesbian and breast cancer project. Beyond these friends, Jackie says that she is not active in community lesbian events. Her favourite part of the Dyke March is the Dykes on Bikes. Jackie is also out at her church and has been involved in the Pride Parade. She marched in the Pride Parade with her church group. Jackie explains that in the years where she wants to mark Pride weekend in a quieter way that she will watch the Dyke March rather than marching or watching the Pride Parade.

JASMINE describes herself as a thirty-something, able-bodied woman of colour. Jasmine is Asian-Canadian of Chinese descent. She explains that she comes from a middle-class family, though would currently describe herself as working-class. She has a university degree and a college diploma and is currently working in the social services field. Jasmine is straight. Jasmine has once been a spectator at the Dyke March in 2005. Jasmine learned about the Dyke March through her involvement with the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre and as a student through the Assaulted Women’s and Children’s Counsellor/Advocate program at George Brown College. Jasmine was interviewed via email.

JEAN is a 35 year old bisexual woman. She describes herself as white and middle-class-ish. She has a Masters degree and works in health promotion for a national volunteer-based organization. Jean describes coming out twice, first as a lesbian, and then later as bi. As she says: “Bi is the kind of queer I am.” Jean has participated in every Dyke March in Toronto. Most years she has marched, though some years she has watched. She also attended Pride for two years prior to the beginning of the Dyke March. For the last six or seven years she has marched with a bisexual women’s organization and has been an organizer with the group. Before that, she did not march with any group, but with friends.

JORDYN SAMUELS is 18 years old. She identifies as lesbian, as a Black female, and as stable middle-class. She is a high school student and is also enrolled in community education at Ryerson University and is beginning university in the fall. Jordyn Samuels is very involved in the community and does a lot of community work around sexual health. She runs sexual health programs with Planned Parenthood and she also works at the Griffin Centre where she is a facilitator for LGBT youth of colour. Jordyn has attended the Dyke March twice. The first year she attended because she was approached in Black Queer Youth (BQY) by someone looking for people to walk with Amnesty International. The second year that she attended, she went as a part of Pelau, a group that she describes as a Caribana section of the Dyke March where lots of Caribbean people dance behind a truck playing soca music. Jordyn Samuels has been to Pride three times. She explains that she goes to Pride and the Dyke March to celebrate her community.

KAREN is a 32 year old woman. She says she is queer and a dyke and a person of colour. Karen is Cantonese, originally from Hong Kong. She is multiply-abled and currently working on her Masters. She teaches sexual health with the City of Toronto and does her own consultations and other various projects for no money. As she is answering questions about identification, she says, “... it’s so limited, I know what the answers are but it’s all so limited so I’ll just go with the
limited answers as well.” Karen explains how at a young age she wanted to be a boy. After she had read all of the books on sex changes in her local library, she found the books on feminism on the shelf nearby, and then came across the books on lesbians. This was how she discovered that lesbians existed, and this opened up the possibility to her that she could be a woman. It was when she was 19 and living in Vancouver that she was particularly in search of community. Though she found a group of white women who met in Irish pub, she did not feel connected to them and explains “So I longed for this idea of going to a Dyke March thinking that it would be like, my community would be there.” For the first few years when she wanted Pride activities the most, she did not attend the Dyke March in Vancouver or Toronto because she was travelling back and forth between the two cities and would miss the Pride events in each city. Karen’s first Pride, including her first Dyke March, was when she was 21, either in ‘97 or ‘98. Once she had returned to Toronto, she got involved with one of the community organizations in Toronto that work with East Asian communities, That year, the organization was putting on a conference so she got involved with that, and that was her way into Pride. Ever since her first Pride, Karen explains that each year she always really considers whether or not to attend and that it is always a conscious choice. She explains that “ever since then, I would either, it would be a very conscious choice to either go or not go. And it never passed by without that sort of decision. And I think I’ve been at the Dyke March maybe half of the time since then and then consciously away from it the other half.”

LEE WING HIN is 27 years old. She is a PhD student and identifies as Chinese. She grew up in Hong Kong and moved to Canada when she was 18 years old to go to university. She comes from a solidly middle-class family and she has no disabilities. At the time of our interview she had been living in Toronto for three and half years, and had previously lived in Kingston. Lee identifies as a woman and as bisexual. Lee began to realize that she was interested in women when she was 15 or 16 years old and after a few years, she came out as bi even though she did not have any feelings for men. After coming to Canada, she came out as lesbian, but a few years later realized that she is interested in some men. She explains that she got hooked on the queer theory bug and after spending a lot of time reading and working around the issues, she identified as queer, and later became more committed to the category of bisexuality, which she sees as “political and necessary and urgent in this time in the queer movement.” She likes the category both theoretically and in an activist sense. The first time Lee attended Pride in Toronto was in 2003 when she was an undergraduate student. Along with another queer Chinese friend, she joined the ACAS contingent in the Pride Parade. That same year was her first Dyke March. Once she moved to Toronto, she regularly attended the Dyke March after participating in the Pride and Remembrance Run on the Saturday morning. She generally doesn’t participate in Pride on Sunday.

LESHA VAN DER BIJ identifies as a lesbian and as white. She is 38 years old and has a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology, a Bachelor of Laws and is a practising lawyer. Lesha organized the first Dyke March in 1996 and organized it for three years with co-organizer Liza Hayes. Lesha’s first Pride experience was in New York City, where she attended her first Dyke March in 1995. She then began regularly attending both Saturday and Sunday events in Toronto for many years. She says the exception was in 1999, the first year that she stopped organizing the Dyke March, which was the year that it almost fell apart. She explains that she stopped co-organizing
because she was exhausted with the event. There was also a desire by some for it to be a more political event. Lesha has not attended the Dyke March every year and does not remember the last time that she marched in it. She has taken her two young children, but does not like to take them to very crowded places, so will go to the Family Pride area rather than the March.

**Leslie Ramsay-Taylor** is a 46 year old queer woman. She is Black, identifies as African-Canadian and as working-class. She is completing an undergraduate degree and is a social worker. She is also a musician. Leslie Ramsay-Taylor did not get to participate in the first five Dyke Marches because, as a musician, she was performing on one of the Pride stages around the same time as the March. As a result, she has only twice marched in the Dyke March, though her daughters and ex-partner participate annually.

**Lucy** is a 31 year old white, bisexual woman. She is a graduate student of theology and training to be a pastor. She is works as a Street Outreach Worker for a Street Organization near the gay village in Toronto. She describes the difficult struggles reconciling becoming a pastor with her sexual identity. Lucy has decided that, until she gets ordained, that she will not be publically out within the wider church. Once she gets ordained she will reconsider, though hopes that, with continued changes within her denomination, this struggle will not be as difficult or as long-term as it might have once been. Lucy first attended the Dyke March in 2008. She had previously attended Pride events in both Edmonton and Halifax, but 2008 was the first chance she had had to attend Pride events in Toronto. Lucy has close gay married friends who said that they usually attend the Dyke March as a way to celebrate Pride, so she felt that it was something she would like to do as well. However, when her friends were unavailable, she nervously attended the Bisexual Women of Toronto’s Dyke March Brunch. Though she was anxious to march, after she heard that it was more political than the Pride Parade and that there would a lot of people in attendance, she felt that she could participate without being singled out. In the matter of two weeks, she attended her first Dyke March, a queer conference in the U.S. for her church’s denomination, and her church’s biannual meeting where they voted on motions to allow congregations to marry same-sex couples to open up a call towards allowing for queer pastors to practice openly. She describes feeling excited and empowered by all of these events, though also expressed nervousness and fear around being outed or discovered and about the possibility of jeopardizing her career as a pastor.

**Margaret Robinson** is a 34 year old woman and has been out since she was 19. She is bisexual, biracial (Micmac and Scottish), and able-bodied. She is working-class and describes her family as from what Marx called the Lumpenproletariat. She explains that it has been helpful to come from a family tradition of questioning authority. She is a PhD student and works full-time in a video store. Margaret was very involved in the Dyke March for many years. She served as a Dyke March co-chair for the 1999 and 2000 Marches and continued to volunteer until 2003, at which point she left the Dyke March to focus on bi-activism exclusively. She was initially recruited to help out with the March by a friend who needed help and was overwhelmed with all of the responsibilities. At the time, the first co-chairs had decided to step down after serving in the position for three years. It was possible that the Dyke March might get cancelled, but Margaret, her co-chair, and a number of volunteers managed to keep it going. As Margaret explains, a number of people were galvanized to get organized out of fear that the March would
get cancelled, though she admits that only about twelve people showed up to the organizing meeting to help. After a lot of infighting about politics of inclusion around trans and bisexual people in the March, half of the committee quit. Margaret continues to attend the Dyke March every year and she says it feels really great because she feels like she helped make it. She describes how it feels great to know she contributed to it, though also says she is anonymous in it because few people actually knows she was on the committee, unless they know her or she has told them.

**MELANIE** is a 34 year old woman. She is bi, white, Euro-Canadian and able-bodied. She explains that there was a time in her life in which she identified as a lesbian, but that she now identifies as bi, is married to a man and has a one year old son. She has BA and works as a reporter, though has previously worked as a literacy worker and educator. Melanie’s first experience with Pride was in 1997 when she attended the Pride Parade in London, England. She was there visiting and spent a lot of time exploring queer culture. She describes how she came out to herself during this time, and after attending the Pride Parade in London, she really began to identify in more visible ways. Her first Dyke March in Toronto was in either 1998 or 1999 after she had moved back to the city. Much of Melanie’s queer community is found through her involvement with a left-leaning Christian anarchist queer-positive community. This is where she has met most of her GBLT friends. She has two women friends who would host a brunch before the Dyke March through this group, and it was through attending this brunch that she was first introduced to the Dyke March.

**NATASHA** is a poverty-class, white, able-bodied, queer, single mother who working on her PhD and is 31 years old. She lives in the Niagara region, but used to live in Toronto. As a single mother, Natasha expressed some of the difficulty she has had finding spaces that are both queer positive and family positive, and so appreciated being able to attend Family Pride, which hosted events that were more low key and better suited for her daughter. Natasha has not attended the Dyke March, but has attended and/or participated in the Pride Parade for the last eight years or so. The one year she tried to go to the Dyke March she arrived too late.

**PEARL** is a 36 year old Black woman who sometimes identifies as lesbian and sometimes as queer. She is recently divorced, and has come out within the last two years before our interview. She has two children, aged 5 and 7. She comes from a working-class background and currently works three jobs to keep afloat, explained that she still has a working-class identity. She has a graduate degree, which is remarkable change in her family where her mother had an elementary school education. Pearl lives in the greater Hamilton area and grew up in Hamilton and says that trying to find a queer community in Hamilton is hard. She explains that in order to try and find community that you have to work hard at it, which she thinks feels weird because, for her, finding community should be more organic. Instead she finds herself trying to push to find it. Pearl goes to Toronto to try and find community there and has had mixed experiences with that. Pearl has attended the Dyke March twice since coming out. She explains that she is not at all interested in the Sunday Pride Parade, so the Dyke March is her focus at Pride.

**RACHELA** is a 34 years old woman who identifies as a femme lesbian. She poor, white and Jewish and was born and raised in Poland. She is disabled and chronically ill. Rachela quit her
university degree part way through because she got sick and says that the longer she stays out of the university, the more unnecessary a university education seems to her. She is a writer by profession, both a creative writer and an editor and proofreader, though because of her illness and disability, her income is mostly from a disability pension. She is a child torture and sexual abuse survivor. Rachela went to the first Dyke March and has attended most of them over the years. She enjoys participating with the “Gays Can Be Geeks Too” contingent.

**REBECCA** is a 20 year old white Jewish lesbian. She is middle-class and says she is pretty able, though she has a vision impairment. She has identified as a lesbian since she was 12 years old. She is an undergraduate student. She first attended the Dyke March when she was 17 years old after having come out to her family. She went with a friend and ended up marching. She has also bicycled in the March. In the years before Rebecca came out to her family, she wanted to go to the Dyke March, but they always wanted to go with her and she did not want to go with them, so she did not go. Her first experience of Pride was with her family at the age of eleven or twelve. She knew growing up that coming out to her family would not be a problem. She knew that her problem would not be that when she wanted to go to the Dyke March, that her mom would want to come with her. In the years that Rebecca has attended the Dyke March, she has also attended the Pride Parade. She makes a marathon weekend out of Pride. She goes to the Fruit Loopz stage and walks around at the community fair. She has also attended the Pride Prom.

**RILEY** is a 36 year old who identifies her sex as female, her gender as “genderqueer of some variety, learning towards the masculine and the androgynous,” and her sexual orientation as queer, though qualifies that she is presently in a heterosexual relationship and has been for about five years. She is white, “solidly middle-class” though clarifies that she has not always been middle-class. She is able-bodied, holds a PhD and works as a professor. She has attended the Dyke March three or four times, and the first time she went was about ten years ago after she had just moved to the city. She attended because she was dating a woman who was really into Pride so she went with her. The last time she went was about five years ago with a friend, but previously had only gone with that girlfriend. When Riley has attended the March, she marches and has never been a spectator.

**SARAH MARTIN** is a 48 year old transsexual woman who identifies as pansexual. She is white, able-bodied, and on the lower end of the middle-class. She has technical training and education and works in tech support. She is also the webmaster of Transsexual Menace Toronto. Sarah has been attending Pride for 25 years and remembers attending Pride when it was held at Cawthra Park. She describes Pride as her favourite holiday. When the Dyke March began, she explains that there were a lot of politics at the time around issues of inclusion and exclusion. She describes herself as not a very political person, and so she watched the March from the sides and enjoyed being in the crowds. Sarah describes how in the early 1980s, the lesbian community was very uncomfortable with trans people and were concerned with the idea that their space would be invaded. During the first years of the Dyke March, Sarah Martin would watch the March from the sidelines. She remembers that one year, the Dyke March banner had a list of identities on it, and these included transsexual and transgender, so she decided it was inclusive and joined in. She cannot remember which year it was, but knows it was before 2000. In the years that she owned a motorcycle, she rode with the Dykes on Bikes contingent and loved doing that.