Geographies of Enforced Heteronormativity in Urban Public Parks: A Case Study of Project Marie

by

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Abstract

The policing of sex in public parks raises questions regarding how the access and use of public space is regulated and how normative framings of urban park space are reproduced and enforced. This thesis uses the recent police operation, Project Marie – in which dozens of individuals were ticketed for bylaw infractions and trespassing in Etobicoke’s Marie Curtis Park – as a case study. Drawing from queer geography and urban political ecology, this thesis examines how heteronormativity is reproduced through and embedded in the planning, governance and regulation of urban park space. I situate this case study within discussions of the socio-political conditions and decisions that shape urban natures that construct and confine park spaces. The paper uses interviews and a critical discourse analysis of the media and grey literature surrounding Project Marie to demonstrate social regulation and enforcement of heteronormative ideas of public park space.
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Chapter 1 – Introduction: empirical context and research questions

1.1 Project Marie

In early November 2016, the Toronto Police Service (TPS) announced in a press brief that the Community Response Unit of 22 Division had been conducting a six week long operation against sexual activity in Marie Curtis Park, a sizeable public park at the mouth of Etobicoke creek (Figure 1). Named ‘Project Marie,’ the operation involved increased enforcement in the park, including sending plain clothed officers into the wooded areas of the park that are well-known areas where men seek sex with men. Tickets were cited for bylaw infractions of inappropriate conduct in a public park (such as indecent exposure, lewd behaviour, and engaging in sexual activity) and for trespassing, a provincial offence. There was one criminal charge for “failure to comply” in relation to the project.

In the same press brief, a police spokesperson stated that the police were responding to “quite a number of community complaints about people engaging in sexual acts” (McGillivray, 2016). Yet the crackdown was quickly critiqued by lawyers, politicians, and queer activists as a disproportionate enforcement response to bylaw offences: “[it is from] the gap between the seriousness of the offences and the scale of the police response that the underlying homophobic motivations of the project can be gleaned” (Xtra Spark, 2016a). At that time, it was announced that approximately 80 individuals had been cited with approximately 90 charges (Mudhar, 2016) – the overwhelming majority of the individuals charged were men.
Since then, there have been indications that citations for trespassing have continued (see Figure 3).

On the afternoon of November 19, 2016, Etobicoke’s 22 Division of the Toronto Police Service hosted a ‘Walk the Beat’ event as a community outreach component of Project Marie. Organized in partnership with the Long Branch Neighbourhood Watch and the Community Police Liaison Committee, Walk the Beat was promoted as an opportunity “to celebrate what the project has achieved” (Draaisma, 2016) and for the community to meet with police officers to discuss the issues affecting the park. The event was also an opportunity for critics to organize. The group Queers Crash the Beat (QCtB) formed to call attention to the police’s action and to offer free legal representation to any individual charged in the park. The opposition from QCtB and their presence at the event also shifted the media’s interest and representation of the situation.

Figure 1. Map of the Greater Toronto Area, Marie Curtis Park and Arsenal Lands highlighted. (Toronto Region Conservation Authority, 2007).
1.2 Marie Curtis Park

Marie Curtis Park is a 25-hectare park located at the southwestern corner of Toronto, in the Long Branch neighbourhood, where Etobicoke Creek flows in to Lake Ontario (Figure 2). The park consists of a varied landscape including beaches, lawn spaces with older weeping willows, a winding waterfront recreational trail, and a sizeable wooded area with an extensive network of footpaths and trails. There is a playground, a wading pool and splash pad, a swimming beach, and dog off-leash zone. The forest is healthy and mature; the park is promoted as having an abundance of wildlife and native plants. There are multiple entry points (roads, trails, parking lots) to the park and well-defined areas for different uses (the playground, the beach, the waterfront trail). Etobicoke Creek bisects the park into distinct eastern and western portions. Given that the Long Branch neighbourhood is to the east of the park, most of the foot traffic and most programmed activity in the park is on the east side of the creek. Marie Curtis West’s main feature is the boat launch and the waterfront trail that runs along the southern edge of the woodlot, close to the lake before heading north again through the wooded area to Lakeshore Road. Near the northwestern corner of the park, just off Lakeshore are an off-leash dog park and an adjacent parking lot.

The park was originally created as a flood prevention measure after Hurricane Hazel destroyed the houses situated along Etobicoke creek and on a small island at the mouth of the creek (Interview with J. Pill, October 24, 2017). As a result, the village of Long Branch expropriated the properties in the floodplain and demolished the houses (Concerned Citizens for the Future of the Etobicoke Waterfront, 1997). At that time, the creek was channelized, destroying all of the existing creek habitat and the western portion of the creek bed filled in
to form the park. Long Branch used dumping fees to pay for the expropriation of the residential properties and used landfill to raise the land elevation around the channel (Interview with I. Jones, June 21, 2017). The landfill site was closed, the site was landscaped and, in 1959, Marie Curtis Park became Metropolitan Toronto’s first regional waterfront park (CCFEW, 1997). Older willows on the eastern side of the creek that once were in residential yards now sprawl across park lawn.

Figure 2. Map of Marie Curtis Park and surrounding area (Google map satellite image).

Neighbouring Marie Curtis to the west in Mississauga is the site of a former Crown Corporation Small Arms factory (used during World War II) known as the Arsenal Lands. Now owned by the Toronto Region Conservation Authority (TRCA), the site, though not yet a formal public park, is of similar size to Marie Curtis Park and a space of meadow, forest, and wetlands. An extensive network of footpaths wind through the woods and meadows; an old water tower is the defining feature in the middle of the former industrial site and birdhouses stand on posts throughout the meadows. While TRCA has done significant soil
remediation work and torn down many of the dilapidated buildings on the property, the Arsenal Lands remains in a liminal state – no longer actively used by industry and not yet designated park space – and has been like such for decades (Interview with N.Gaffney, July 14, 2017). Also on the Mississauga side of the border, extensive development is underway to convert the Lakeview Water Treatment Plant property and surrounding stretch of shoreline into a significant waterfront park and community. Together, the City of Mississauga and the City of Toronto envision a contiguous, accessible and green waterfront consisting of Marie Curtis Park, the Arsenal Lands, and the Lakeview Waterfront Connection (Toronto Region Conservation Authority, 2007).

1.3 Research questions and framing

Using Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park as a case study, this research broadly asks the conceptual questions of how parameters of socially and culturally acceptable and normative behaviour in urban public space, and particularly urban park space, are maintained. As Project Marie involved the policing of a specific park, my query encompasses how the park space, in addition to the park uses and park users, is regulated with specific norms and expectations in mind. My research broadly asks how Marie Curtis Park was policed and regulated to maintain, protect, and enforce heteronormativity. My research questions focus on formal and informal mechanisms of governance, regulation and enforcement as a means through which to observe the pervasiveness of the moral regulation of sexuality and space. Recognizing sexual behaviour – and therefore, though distinct from, sexuality – as a key aspect of this police operation, I argue that heteronormativity is reproduced through and inscribed in the governance and regulation of public park space. I argue that this is achieved,
in part, through a normative social production of space that delineates what parks are (and are not) for and where the boundaries between private and public space lie.

With this research, I seek to demonstrate how the regulation of specific norms of sexuality, morality, and public space are enforced both explicitly through ticketing and active policing and implicitly through park design and bylaws. My conceptual approach understands policing as the maintenance of order, the guaranteeing of security, and the regulation and enforcement of a certain set of norms (Valvarde and Cirak, 2003); I recognize both the distinct and entangled approaches of direct policing with other forms of regulation, such as park planning.

1.4 Thesis structure

This thesis begins with a literature review chapter where I engage with urban political ecology and queer geographies scholarship to build a foundation for understanding the complex connections between social and environmental processes and the role of sexuality in space. In this literature review I focus on how both bodies of literature have engaged with concepts of governance and subjectivity to support my framing of heteronormativity and regulation. The following chapter on methods outlines my research design of using Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park as a case study, strengthened through a discourse analysis of media and grey literature pertaining to the case and semi-structured interviews with individuals professionally and publicly connected to both the police operation and the park.

In the subsequent chapters, I analyse Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park in more detail. Outlining the events of the police action, the media surrounding it, and the activism it
spurred, in Chapter Four I focus on the notion of public safety that was created and the rhetoric of ‘reclaiming’ the park. I also examine the significant role of Queers Crash the Beat in shifting the public discourse about Project Marie and the Walk the Beat event that illustrated the tensions and tactics of the entire police operation. I conclude that chapter with a reflection on Project Marie from the perspective of a year later, in which time all of the charges that were challenged were dropped and the media’s tone has become more critical of the police. In Chapter Five I turn to the planning and design of Marie Curtis Park as a complimentary form of regulation to explicit policing. Focusing on the ‘revitalization’ project that occurred in 2010, my analysis examines how the strategic placement and removal of park infrastructure served – to varying degrees of effect – to regulate how the park was used and concomitantly how these planning decisions serve to emphasize the recreational and ecological values of park space.

To conclude, I offer commentary on considerations for different and less harmful ways to regulate park space and how to plan for sex in public parks. Lastly, I offer, perhaps only for my own piece of mind, avenues for further and expanded research.
Chapter 2 – Literature review and theoretical framing

In this research project I have chosen to draw from the literatures of urban political ecology and queer geographies as they pertain to the social (and ecological) production of public park space, heteronormativity, and governance. By putting these literatures into ‘conversation,’ I hope to create a dynamic, critical lens to examine how urban public parks are conceptualized and governed. I begin with a brief overview of the genealogy of each theoretical framework as they pertain to my research foci: the social production of park spaces; the governance and regulation of public space; and how expectations and social norms that foster heteronormativity are found throughout media and social discourses about park space.

Public park spaces reveal a range of social and environmental responses to urban nature, including ideas of social gathering, leisure activities, heritage preservation, flood protection and ecological conservation. Urban political ecology understands these social and economic transformations of space to be a critical and complex interchange. Cruising connects with other forms of site-specific social, political, and environmental practices while incorporating sexual imagination and human creativity (Gandy, 2012). In the case of Marie Curtis Park, the ‘natural’ amenities of an older forest and an unused former industrial site that has now become a meadow are connected to the sexual activity in the park by allowing for more discrete encounters. Drawing from urban political ecology, I analyze public parks as dynamic social and ecological spaces and approach the regulation of public sex as an issue of equal access to park space.
At the same time, queer geographies and, in particular, the concept of heteronormativity provide a framework for critiquing the social constructs of ‘appropriate’ behaviour in public space and the exclusion of sexual activity to the private realm. By focusing on the enforcement of heteronormativity as integral to my research question, I seek to examine how the policing of public park space is connected to “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality” seem coherent and privileged (Berlant and Warner, 1998, p. 548). Queer geographies – and queer social practices such as public sex – unsettle powerful norms, material practices and forms of regulation that support hetero privilege by perpetuating “hierarchies of property and propriety” (p. 548). A focus on the regulation of sexuality also places the case study of Project Marie within a larger socio-legal trajectory of the policing of gay intimacy and sex in Toronto.

2.1 Urban political ecology: metabolism and environmental imaginaries

In using urban political ecology to examine public park space, I seek to emphasize the political conditions, decisions, and ramifications of environmental change and the complexities of society’s interactions with ‘nature’ in the city. Political ecology seeks to synthesize political economy’s emphasis on the dynamics and distributions of power with the study of environmental processes and relationships; at its core is the enmeshed concept of socio-nature (Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw, 2006). Since the late 1990s, the field of urban political ecology has developed to combine a critical position on urban environments with a focus on how economic and social processes create (and recreate) urban landscapes (understanding ‘the urban’ as a distinct, historical expression of capitalism) (Desfor and Keil,
Work such as Heynen, Perkin and Roy’s (2006) analysis of the unequal distribution of Milwaukee’s urban forest examined the interconnections of spatial form, material metabolism, and social process that substantiate urban socio-natures.

Urban political ecology research has aimed to demonstrate how social relations of power are reproduced through uneven and inequitable access to, knowledge of, and control over (urban) environments; how patterns of environmental change and patterns of resource access are related; and to examine the social and political implications of ecological transformation (Brownlow, 2006, p. 229; see also Swyngedouw and Heynen, 2003). With a focus on power relations, the literature has studied “the violence and conflicts involved in transformations of urban landscapes, urban social movements for environmental justice, and the political economy of urban regimes” (Quastel, 2009; see also Dooling, 2009) while also recognizing how “urban ecologies shape and condition patterns of and capacities for resource access” (Brownlow, 2006, p. 229; Robbins, 2004). Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003) emphasize that the political program of urban ecology must then be “to enhance the democratic content of socio-environmental construction by identifying the strategies through which a more equitable distribution of social power and a more inclusive mode of environmental production can be achieved” (p. 898).

Heynen, Kaika, and Swyngedouw’s (2006) edited volume *In the Nature of Cities*, offered an extensive study of the socio-ecological dynamics of urbanization and “sought to unify this otherwise disparate set of interests by laying out an explicit theoretical agenda that examined the spatiality of nature produced through capitalist relations at the urban scale” (Gabriel, 2014, p. 38). This work developed the Marxist concept of metabolism to articulate “the
circulation of matter, value, and representation” (Heynen, et al. 2006, p. xiii) as the nexus of social-nature. In this way, urban areas can be understood as involving complex metabolic circuits connected to both local and distant environments, through infrastructures of transit, water, food, and waste. Yet urban metabolism encompasses more than the material flows and circuit, it can also be understood to include the networks of relationships, people and ideas, offering a reconceptualization of the city as a product of diverse socio-natural flows (Wachsmuth, 2012; see also Swyngedouw, 2006; Heynen et al., 2006 for histories of the concept). As this applies to my study of Marie Curtis Park, my inquiry is not just about ‘space’ as a neutral site but rather about an understanding of park space as urban socio-nature. In this case, the creek, the woods, and the lawns have influenced specific social dynamics and, conversely, social, economic, and political dynamics and decisions have altered the park’s formation and governance. This is made tangible through the park’s history as an expropriated residential neighbourhood turned landscaped park, as well as through the daily interactions and influences of cyclists and walkers along the waterfront recreational trail and men cruising the informal foot paths in the woods.

One of the facets of urban political ecology and the field’s study of urban metabolism that is of interest to my work is the goal of making visible the networks and infrastructure that constitute material resources. For the purposes of my research, I interpret ‘infrastructure’ broadly to encompass the trails and parking lots (infrastructure that delivers and moves resources) and fences and signage (infrastructure that delineates a resource, i.e. property). Kaika (2005) demonstrates how infrastructures of numerous types (the focus of her research is water) and the power mechanisms embedded within infrastructures have been moved out of sight, serving to obfuscate the connection between nature and the city. The study of urban
environmental space and infrastructure attempts, in part, “to rectify the tendency to relegate infrastructure to an inert and apolitical backdrop in cities and to re-theorize it as an active participant in the constitution and manipulation of urban society” (Gabriel, 2014; p. 41). A growing body of work in urban political ecology and political geography examines urban flows and the delivery and delineation of resources, as embedded in social and political struggles over access to resources and in perpetuating inequity in cities. Studies analyze these processes both as instruments of governance and as constitutive of governable urban spaces (Bakker, 2003; Kaika, 2005; Gandy, 2006; Gabriel, 2014).

More recently, scholars have critiqued urban political ecology’s reliance and emphasis on structuralist theorizations of power and capitalist metabolism as making it challenging to envision the urban sphere as separate from or outside of capitalism. By positioning the logic of capitalism as all encompassing, traditionally Marxist political ecology positions “the state, the public sphere, and even aesthetics… as either emerging entirely from capitalist relations or as a form of resistance to them” (Gabriel, 2014, p.39; see also Grove, 2009; Gandy, 2012). Recent post-structuralist critiques, in contrast, have called for an engagement with cultural politics, identities, situated knowledges, and discourse analysis. These critiques follow Escobar’s (1998) call for an ‘anti-essentialist’ political ecology, “concerned with struggles over meanings and practices of nature and the city that shape identities that make some forms of urban metabolisms possible while foreclosing others” (Grove, 2009, p. 209).

These scholars reposition nature as created by social relations, rather than being an apolitical economic input. This shift in interpretation creates theoretical space to examine geographically and socially unequal characteristics of urban natures. Brownlow (2006), by way of example, positions questions of access and control over resources as “contingent upon
the reproduction of discourses, institutions, and social relations residing at a variety of spatial scales and social spheres” (p. 229). Feminist political ecology scholars have led this shift in focus to center subjectivity and different forms of power within political ecology by carrying out studies that incorporate embodied experiences and everyday practices (Grove, 2009; Doshi, 2016; Truelove, 2011). Drawing from the global south, these studies also call for an examination of power as diffuse and relational (Gandy, 2006; Gabriel, 2014) and a more intersectional approach to political ecology that expands an understanding of power to multiple forms of identity such as gender, race, class, and— I would add—sexuality (see Rocheleau, Thomas-Slayter, and Wangari, 1996; Truelove, 2011).

Taking from Gabriel’s (2014) commentary about shifts in urban political ecology’s engagements with post-structuralism, I have explored how urban environmental imaginaries are tied to concepts of governance and subjectivity. Broadly defined, urban environmental imaginaries can be understood as “conceptual framings and systems of meaning related to urban environments, including assumptions about nature of the city and the nature of nature” (Gabriel, 2014, p. 39) – urban environments including public parks. Watts and Peel (1996) used the notion of ‘environmental imaginary’ to describe how context-specific material and social practices form the basis of complex beliefs of what the environment is. The concept is meant to capture how social and political practices shape, and are shaped by, relations with distinct environmental settings. Cowell and Thomas (2002) use this notion to conceptualize how ‘nature’ was imagined within the politics of a waterfront development project, which portrayed the waterfront as both environmentally and socially marginal and therefore requiring redevelopment. How environments are imagined, often through discourse, has
implications in the “material conditions of urban spaces through the construction of particular types of landscapes, subjects, and practices” (Gabriel, 2014, p.40).

In this way, urban political ecology offers analytical tools to make connections between the control of the environment/nature and the control of people. Yet governance itself is often theorized as a dominating force without considering the complex ways it is enforced, perceived, and challenged (Gabriel, 2014; Monstradt, 2009). While urban planning and development – controlled by powerful institutions, both public and private – dominates the governance of material resources and spaces, urban political ecology (mostly feminist and embodied approaches to political ecology) has also looked at how formal governance structures are often subverted or challenged by the daily practices of individuals and communities (Gandy, 2006).

Quite recently, Heynen’s (2017) Progress in Human Geography report on urban political ecology in “the feminist and queer century” gives credit to feminist and queer scholarship for shifting the field of urban political ecology. Heynen argues that this work is leading the push for “politically creative ways for articulating how the uneven production of nature creates interdependent and interconnected problems for people living in cities but also possibilities for creating a better, more egalitarian world” (p. 2). Important to my research, Heynen’s report specifically acknowledged the influence of queer ecology to disrupting “prevailing heterosexist discursive and institutional articulations of sexuality and nature, and also [reimagining] evolutionary processes, ecological interactions, and environmental politics in light of queer theory” (Sandilands qtd. in Heynen, 2017, p.3). While queer and urban ecology are more rooted in landscape ecology, this scholarship demands that urban political ecology
“widen the scope, methods, and analytical sensitivity of academic research into cultural, historical, and geographical aspects of human sexuality” (Gandy, 2012, p. 734).

Gandy’s (2012) research on cruising in a cemetery park in London explores these intersections between the ecological, political, and sexual significance of urban park spaces to develop this emergent concept of ‘queer ecology’ (p. 730). I also place my research in this interstitial space. Patrick’s (2014b) work on queering the urban forest furthers this line of inquiry by focusing on the marginal spaces of urban nature – urban wastelands, brownfields, etc. – and paying attention to “the interplay of metaphor, interpretation, and material reality in both urban and ecological modes” (p. 193; see also Ingram, 2010). Both Patrick (2014a, 2014b) and Gandy (2012, 2013) speak to an interest in ‘unruly spaces’ that may offer “possibilities for political constellations that might come into being as an alternative to the contemporary presence of utilitarian or historicist approaches to urban nature” (Gandy, 2012, p. 740). My analysis of the anomalous urban nature of the Arsenal Lands bordering Marie Curtis Park, and the implications for re-conceptualizing cruising, is inspired by this scholarship.

2.2 Queer geographies (and geographies of sexualities)

An interest in the literature on sexuality and space of the 1980s focused on articulating and ‘revealing’ the spatialities (spatial manifestations) of gay and lesbian communities (Bell, 1995; Bell and Valentine, 1995; the genealogy of which is discussed in Browne, 2007; Podmore, 2013). This work sought to describe and give meaning to the spaces of identity and community formation (discussed in Sember, 2003). Gieseking (2013) describes how writing about these common stories and spaces – of “counting lesbian and gay people in order to
prove their existence and make them visible in the heterosexual eye” – was “both revolutionary and foundational” (p. 16). By the mid-90s a breadth of work emerged that explored the “performance of sexual identities and the way that they are inscribed on the body and the landscape” (Bell and Valentine, 1995, p. 10). This research included a focus on spaces where gays and lesbians met, spent time and could meet for sex, such as gay bars, bathhouses, and villages (e.g. Bell, 1995; Bell and Valentine, 1995; Leap, 1999; Bell and Binnie, 2000), and built on earlier studies of gay urban histories that articulated erotic geographies of public places and the role of cruising in the development of urban gay male culture (Chauncey, 1994; Delaney, 1999; Houlbrook, 2005; Turner, 2003).

In Mapping Desire (Bell and Valentine, 1995), a key early anthology on sexuality and space, a facet of critique was how heterosexuality is performed, naturalized, and repetitively inscribed in space so as to appear natural, and therefore how it serves to marginalize, criminalize, and make non-heterosexuals invisible. Sexuality and space literature also critiqued the production of geographical knowledge and geography’s (relative) lack of engagement with sex and sexuality. This literature suggested that by not engaging with the topic of sexuality there is a presumed heterosexuality to the discipline of geography and the spaces that are studied by geographers (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Brown and Knopp, 2003; Browne 2007).

A different approach to sexuality and the politics of space is found in Brown’s (2000) use of the metaphor of the closet. Describing how ‘the closet’ operates at different spatial scales – from the body to the globe – Brown offers a material analysis of how gay men, lesbians, and queers map where and how to be ‘out’ and the constant negotiations required in the repeated acts of ‘coming out.’ This is applicable to my understanding of cruising sites and the social
production of park space in that many of the men seeking sex with men in Marie Curtis Park likely do not identify as gay in other aspects/spaces of their lives and must negotiate when and how to fulfill their sexual and erotic desires. Understanding urban park space as part of a queer geography of the city gives historical and ongoing importance of park spaces as being “both known and not known as sites of homoerotic potential” (Jeyasingham, 2010, p.308; Sember, 2003).

Much of the earlier literature focused on building a concept of ‘sexual citizenship’ and connecting sexual politics and rights-based arguments to politics of space. Bell and Binnie (2004), in “Authenticating Queer Space,” claim that the main argument of those works was about claims to space, “to establish forms of queer territoriality as the base for political work” (p. 1810). Yet they and others critique how gay villages have become commodified, thus reducing the ‘gay public sphere’ to consumption spaces and gentrified neighbourhoods and, in the process, desexualizing such locations to the extent that unwanted queers are pushed out (Knopp in Bell and Valentine, 1995; Dangerous Bedfellows, 1996; Warner, 1999). For the most part, these changes have left cruising grounds as less assimilated and less consumer-oriented spaces (Dangerous Bedfellow, 1996). Whether at the scale of the neighbourhood or more generally, the boundary between sexualities that are considered normal, acceptable, and healthy and those that are not defines the social and spatial boundaries of ‘appropriate’ sexual activity (e.g. where commercial sex or cruising can or cannot be accommodated) (Bell, 1995; Leap, 1999; Hubbard, 2001). Such social and spatial divisions set the stage on which unsanctioned or unacceptable sexuality sparks moral panic and is used to justify forms of socio-spatial control that reassert the boundaries of normative

In an article on the ‘moral contours of heterosexuality,’ Hubbard (2000) makes the argument that by leaving heterosexuality unexamined, scholarship on sexuality and space further perpetuates heterosexism. Hubbard called for research that “addressed how heterosexual identities are spatially constructed and negotiated;” noting that conceptualizing space as either gay or straight overlooks how spaces deemed to be heterosexual are “variously sexualized or desexualized by different people at different times” (p. 192). This literature predominantly focused on the regulation and spatialities of sex work (Hubbard, 2008) and the sale of pornographic materials and sex shops (Papayanis, 2000) in order to generate a more nuanced understanding of how (hetero)sexual practices and identities are (or are not) categorized as ‘moral’ or ‘normal’ and deepened an understanding of the role that zoning and other regulatory practices play in delineating these categories. Recognizing that the geography of sexuality is shaped by a complex topography of desire and disgust – by which certain sites (and sights) of sexuality are rendered visible or repressed (Hubbard, 2000) – is helpful in building a framework for examining sex in a public park.

Queer geographies research has played an important role of applying queer theory to material studies of space; at the same time, geographies of sexualities have benefitted from attention to discourse, subjectivities, identities, and relations of power addressed by queer theory. In this literature, tensions exist between the project of queering the discipline of geography and that of producing geographies of sexualities – projects that are never completely discrete from one another (Brown and Knopp, 2003; Browne, 2006; Wright, 2010; Podmore, 2013). Brown and Knopp (2003) argue that this inherent contradiction between building consensus
around concepts of sexual identity, power, and space and the deconstruction and destabilizing of these same narratives are beneficial to the field of sexuality and space studies. In particular, they state, “[i]f queer geographies are not merely the contemporary versions of geographies of sexualities, but in fact occupy a marginal and potentially critical position in relation to geographies of sexualities, then both of these geographies have a productive part to play” (Browne, 2006, p. 891). This is an important tension for my work as I seek to both build on past studies of sexualities and space that have studied cruising as well as draw on queer geographies’ analysis of normative assumptions about the use of park space and behaviours in parks.

A weakness in the literature of queer geographies (and geographies of sexuality) is that much of the research has focused on downtown and gentrified/commercial neighbourhoods of cities in the global north. Marie Curtis Park is located in the inner-suburbs, in a residential neighbourhood at the edge of two municipalities but not in the downtown of either. A gay cruising park such as this problematizes what Halberstam (2005) has termed ‘metronormativity.’ By metronormativity, Halberstam refers to the “conflation of ‘urban’ and ‘visible’ in many normalizing narratives of gay/lesbian subjectivities” (Tongson, 2011, p. 5). A common queer narrative includes the queer subject’s migration to, and a subsequent ‘coming out’ in the city (Tongson, 2011; Halberstam, 2005). Brown (2008) argues that these reductive narratives have not been adequately addressed or challenged in queer geography. In the case of Marie Curtis Park, the public’s awareness that sex happens in the park is a reminder that varied sexualities and sexual practices take place in the suburbs and that many gay and queer individuals choose, for a variety of reasons, to seek sexual encounters outside of the consumerism of ‘the village’ and, furthermore, that the suburbs can become a site for
challenging heteronormativity. In *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, Berlant (1997) argues for the importance of queer challenges to space by looking at radical urban queer activist groups, such as Queer Nation, who chose suburban shopping malls to stage performative “invasions.” That said, discrimination is still abundant, as noted in a recent anthology on Toronto’s queer history, *Any Other Way*, in which Verma (2017) describes the challenges of organizing, being visible in, and creating networks of support for QTBIPOC communities in Mississauga. As a case study of a public park in a residential area of the inner suburbs, my work seeks to respond to Tongson (2011) and Brown’s (2008) call for research that studies “sexualities as they are lived across the whole city, not just the inner-city leisure zones and gentrified neighbourhoods” (p.1216).

Adjacent to this critique of where queer geographies is studied, Oswin (2008) critiques how sexuality has been approached within geography and advocates for scholarship that attends to how sexual categories and norms are put to use in spatial contexts. (This goes beyond the concerns of mapping queer spaces or considering how spaces come to be appropriated by the ‘radical’ queer subject.) Jeyasingham (2010) follows this prompt with a study of how public washrooms have been socially and materially reconstructed and policed in order to reduce opportunities for sex between men. Andersson (2012) takes a similar approach in examining how heritage discourse was used to selectively ‘restore’ public squares in London, serving to increase surveillance and displace the men who used those spaces to cruise.

### 2.3 Heteronormativity

As a concept, heteronormativity encompasses the ways heterosexuality is normalized as the only, or more, legitimate form of sexuality. Key to my research framing and to my analysis is
the understanding that the social concepts and practices that make up ‘heterosexuality’ are deeply engrained. Berlant and Warner (1998), in their influential article “Sex in Public,” lay bare the deeply engrained notions and narratives of proper political subjects through a discussion of sex, sexuality and the pervasiveness of normalizing heterosexuality. Succinctly, they describe heteronormativity as “the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent – that is, organized as a sexuality – but also privileged” (p. 548). The entire infrastructure of social welfare, for example, is premised on the centrality of the oppositely-sexed couple, and their reproductive sex, as the legitimate form of an adult relationship (Bell and Binnie, 2000). These powerful norms support “hierarchies of property and propriety” (Berlant and Warner, 1998, p. 548) and place monogamous and heterosexual sex, that takes place in private, as the emblem of good citizenship.

As mentioned earlier, heteronormativity, as a concept, is associated with queer theory’s attempts to question and denaturalize heterosexuality and to “open up spaces for queer desire, acts, and identities” (Bell and Binnie, 2000). While Bell (1995) and Bell and Valentine’s (1995) works were instrumental in bringing these discussions to geography, Rich (1980) offered an earlier analysis of how heterosexuality is enforced and perpetuated through social institutions and behaviours; she coined the term ‘compulsory heterosexuality’ to illustrate the ways heterosexual roles and behaviours are written into everyday practices. Butler’s (1993) *Bodies that Matter* is also an influential work that provided language to describe how space is performatively (re)constituted; Butler further positioned the need to critically examine how power is practiced (and made sense of) as key to the experience of and meaning-making of space (Browne, 2007). In “Fear of a Queer Planet,” Warner (1993) built upon these concepts
by introducing the succinct term ‘heteronormativity’ to speak to the persistent and permeating enforcement of hetero behaviours and sexuality as normal.

Yet to analyse heteronormativity also requires recognizing how norms and what is considered ‘normal’ takes on power and becomes normative. As Jakobsen (1998) describes, normativity is “a field of power, a set of relations that can be thought of as a network of norms, that forms the possibilities for and the limits of action” (p. 158). ‘Heteronormativity’ normalizes heterosexuality, “making heterosex the normal term, the commonsensical position, unremarkable and everyday in relation to which nonheterosex is queer, odd, to be commented on and policed” (Jakobsen, 1998, p. 518). This ‘averageness’ of heterosexuality is normative in Foucault’s use of the term ‘normalization’: “not the imposition of an alien will, but a distribution around a statistically imagined norm” (Berlant and Warner, 1998, p. 557). Through various social institutions and discourses, heteronormativity assumes that sexual identities conform to a social norm of heterosexual love, sex, and reproduction.

Building on this, we can recognize how homosexuality is defined both by sex and in juxtaposition to heterosexuality. As culturally hegemonic, the reproduction of a heterosexual/homosexual binary takes on structural significance by simultaneously subordinating ‘homosexual’ and institutionalizing the heteronormal (Jakobsen, 1998).

A key aspect to examining heteronormativity is to understand how it is imposed spatially, a task queer theory and queer geographies literature have taken up (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Bell and Binnie, 2004; among others). Importantly, heteronormativity delineates the boundaries of where ‘appropriate’ sex can happen (and where sex can happen appropriately) and consequently attempts to delineate boundaries of public and private space (Hubbard, 2008). Tied to this is, as Berlant and Warner (1998) emphasize, that “heterosexual culture
achieves much of its metacultural intelligibility through the ideologies and institutions of intimacy” (p. 553). This is done in part by presupposing distinct spheres of public and private life (that “intimate life is the endlessly cited elsewhere of political public discourse”); by connecting intimacy to the institutions of personal life; and, importantly, by making “sex seem irrelevant or merely personal, …[and thus] block the building of non-normative or explicit public sexual cultures” (p. 553). Though these boundaries of public and private (with analyses of heteronormativity and queer geographies) have been approached and explained differently, I seek to engage with how this shifting and illusory – yet powerful and normative – boundary appears in discourses and policing of public sex in Marie Curtis Park.

2.4 Sexuality and public parks as concerns of governance

Drawing from urban political ecology and queer geographies, and more broadly from human geography and urban studies, my research engages with issues of governance, morality, and difference in public spaces and particularly in urban public parks. Urban public parks are ideological and political spaces that are created for specific ecological, social, political, and economic reasons, reflecting “diverse ideologies of nature-making” (Byrne and Wolch, 2009, p. 743). These factors, in turn, shape how public parks are perceived and used, as well as how they are governed.

Historically, parks have been conceptualized and used for a range of purposes: as sites of romantic naturalism, as economic stimulus, and as means to improve public health or preserve class-based moral values. Many studies on parks emphasize the landscape design or social and economic goals of civic-minded reformers, of how urban public parks have been made into iconic sites of nationalism and colonialism (Mawani, 2005; Catungal and McCann,
2010) and can represent both heritage and modernity (Valen, 2015). Literature on urban parks addresses how moral values, meanings, and uses are inscribed into these public spaces, “in which the creation of proper, moral citizens is shown to be a key purpose behind their design and governance” (Catungal and McCann, 2010, p.77). Understanding parks as moral spaces gives context to understanding why and how transgressions, or the crossing of moral boundaries (Cresswell, 1996), are regulated. In Catungal and McCann’s (2010) study on sexuality in Vancouver’s Stanley Park as a problem of governance, they note, “visible transgression, such as the occurrence or representation of Other sexual practices and identities, destabilizes hegemonic norms while state reactions to those disruptions ... reveal order as social, power-laden and uneven” (p. 77).

In a study of environmental change and the fear of violence for racialized people in public parks, Brownlow (2006) emphasizes that it is the “relationship between power, control, and access that most clearly and convincingly links political ecology with urban social geography” (p. 229). Other studies such as Byrne and Wolch (2009) use an analysis of power and urban environments to discuss how “the racial politics of park development reflects ideologies of land use, histories of property development, planning philosophy and the spatial expression of racial discrimination” (p. 753). Their urban socio-spatial analysis of why and how people use parks is central to “building a critical appreciation of the processes that operate through, and in turn shape park spaces” (p. 743). Byrne and Wolch (2009) also examined how the components of park space – “variables such as lighting, vegetation, topography, drainage, fencing, signage, and maintenance, and the character of nearby neighbourhoods” – become determinants in the perception of urban park space (p. 751). Connected to a critical study of why and how people use parks is the recognition that there is
often a discrepancy between the intentions of park planners and the actions of park users (Valen, 2015) yet few such studies of parks take into consideration the role of sexuality in accessing park space or engage with cruising as a subversion of park design (notable exceptions include Ingram, 2010; Andersson, 2012). While certain analyses can be applied to urban public parks broadly, Catungal and McCann (2010) speak to the importance of studying a specific park space to understand the social and ecological politics in their own terms rather than as monoliths.

Looking beyond the scope of public parks, Hubbard (in Doan, 2011) develops an argument to view planning as a technique of governance. He describes planning as a “distinct set of practices that work alongside policing” to construct “appropriate sexual orders,” delineating “boundaries between legitimate and illegitimate sex consumption” and sexual behavior (p.183). Though working under the guise of moral neutrality of amenity and right to property, planning and policy play an effective role in social-spatial regulation, maintaining a “state-sanctioned narrowing of what activities are deemed appropriate in public space” (Catungal and McCann, 2010, p.85; see also Mitchell, 2003). A key aspect to Catungal and McCann’s (2010) analysis of governance is that “while regulations are relatively cut and dried, their implementation, by planners, judges, et al., involve[s] significant discretion and leads to contingent, contestable outcomes” (p. 75).

Literature in urban studies and queer geographies has demonstrated how the interpretation, enactment and enforcement of planning and municipal laws – whether though bylaw enforcement officers, businesses, police, or government – designate conduct as appropriate or transgressive depending on where it occurs (Hubbard in Doan, 2011; see also Frisch, 2002; Prior, 2008; Hubbard, Collins, and Gorman-Murray, 2017). A particular behavior may vary
in acceptability and be enforced variably in different jurisdictions, neighbourhoods, parks and areas of a single park, resulting in what Hubbard refers to as “a ‘patchwork’ of local norms” (Doan, 2011, p.169), emphasizing the inconsistencies and selectiveness with which all regulation and policing occurs. In regards to sex in public spaces, Andersson (2012) studied how heritage discourse was used to de-sexualize a park in London, offering an example where the responsibility of enforcement shifted from police to council; his work suggests that public sex becomes a “question of managing public space” through park design (p. 1087). Catungal and McCann (2010) look at the governance of sexuality and park space through the public debate of the placement of an AIDS memorial in Stanley Park and the reaction to the killing of a gay man who was cruising in the park. Their study examines the social tensions raised regarding what and who park spaces are for; their analysis of “how the state and the media govern homosexuality through regulatory and representational practices” (p. 76) is incredibly relevant to my work in thinking through how heteronormativity in embedded in multiple avenues of discourse and institutional practice.

2.5 Conclusion

I use this literature to build an analytical framework that illustrates how conceptions of park spaces are social products, in which “material forces, the power of ideas, and the human desire to ascribe meaning are inseparable” (Knopp in Bell and Valentine, 1995, p. 158). Literature from urban political ecology provides a critical understanding for approaching urban public park spaces as dynamic socio-natures while queer geographies provides a foundation for approaching discussions of sexuality and heteronormativity within spatial contexts.
Chapter 3 – Methods

3.1 Conceptual framework and research strategy

I used a qualitative mixed-methods approach for my research that included the analytical focus on a specific case study, semi-structured interviews, and critical discourse analysis of media and grey literature. This triangulation of methods enabled me to refine, broaden, and strengthen conceptual linkages across and within empirical and theoretical data and to analyze varied perspectives and multiple lines of action (Berg, 2009). I chose these methods to align with a conceptual framework informed by feminist geography: understanding all knowledge to be subjective and situational, using a variety of qualitative methods, and incorporating a reflexive approach of my personal positionality as a student researcher. In this chapter I describe each method, how they build upon one another and how they fit into the literature with which I am engaging. I also address my efforts to ensure rigour in my methods alongside an acknowledgement and discussion of the limitations of my research design, scope, and methods.

3.2 Case study, as method

When seeking to examine the boundaries between concepts of public and private space and governance issues regarding parks in Toronto for my thesis, I considered numerous parks of various scales and with varied community-driven projects. During the winter of my first year in the program the news of Project Marie became public, yet it was not until a few months later that I revisited the case and the media surrounding the police sting. Because I was
intrigued by the explicit and implicit discussions of morality and sexuality pertaining to park space I chose to use Marie Curtis Park as a case study and incorporated geographies of sexualities into my research approach.

Honing in on a single case study or site allowed me to investigate a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context. The analysis of the case study included gathering information on the actions, reporting, and activism that surrounded the events of Project Marie to provide contextual basis – social, political, temporal, spatial, and ecological – for assessing how the regulation of public parks contributes to the enforcement of heteronormativity. As I delved into Marie Curtis Park as a site, I was intrigued by the park space itself and how it had been reconfigured over the past decade. Through multiple visits to the park and by pouring over historical aerial images and park planning maps, I gained an understanding of the park’s spatial layout. The interviews helped me further understand the role that the reconfiguration of the park had on how Project Marie unfolded, contributing to my analysis of how heteronormativity is also embedded in planning.

Based on this experience, I agree with the assertion that the context specific focus of case study research is important because it acknowledges “a nuanced view of reality” (Flyvbjerg, 2004, p. 7) and permits experiential learning. Yin asserts that using a case study – as a form of empirical inquiry – is particularly relevant in contexts “when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (2003, p. 13). Berg argues that case study method also offers the ability to incorporate “various nuances, patterns, and latent elements that other research approaches might overlook” (2009, p. 317), including the complexity of the relationships between individuals who use the space and individuals’ and groups’ relationships to the park space.
Consequently, case studies are often regarded as the preferred strategy for when ‘how’ and ‘why’ research questions are being posed (in other words, when there is a desire to understand complex social phenomena); for when the investigator has little control over events; and for when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context (Yin, 2003). A case study as part of a research strategy informs the logic of research design, data collection and analysis techniques (Yin, 2003, p. 85). In this case, to examine Project Marie a critical discourse analysis of the media surrounding the events and the park as well as semi-structured interviews were appropriate methods to acquire and analyse information about the case.

Engaging with more than one body of theory through a specific case study offered me an opportunity to use the literature as it pertains to and helps to make sense of the empirical case material while allowing my argument to develop from both theory and case study. Tacking between deductive and inductive approaches, my case study approach encouraged a high caliber of interaction between theory and data allowing me to revise concepts in light of ongoing research and to redirect research as concepts evolved (Herbert, 2010). This specific case study also allowed me to take up an issue that matters to my personal and Toronto-focused context, creating context-specific and, I hope, practical knowledge as an example of broader phenomena (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Although the policing and criminalization of men who seek sex with men in public is by no means a new phenomenon, a police sting of this nature and scale against public sex and ‘lewd behaviour’ had not occurred in Toronto since the Pussy Palace raids of 2000. Project Marie then raised questions as to how concepts of morality, sexuality, policing, safety and surveillance in public spaces have changed (or not) in the past decade. Project Marie and
men cruising is not an outlier case per se, Project Marie is demonstrative of how heterosexist concepts manifest in practices and management of space. Additionally, Marie Curtis Park’s size and location outside the city core challenges the ‘metronormativity’ of much of the queer geographies literature (Halberstam, 2005) as well as much of the urban political ecologies literature on park distribution, equity, and environmental politics (Heynen, Perkins and Roy, 2006; Byrne and Wolch, 2009). As a case study then, Project Marie “represents an opportunity to enlarge extant theory” (Herbert, 2010, p. 75) in bringing together queer geographies and urban political ecology literatures – two bodies of literature that have not often spoken to one another (see Heynen, 2017) – regarding regulation of space and spatialities of heteronormativity. As Mitchell (2002, p. 8) wrote “theory lies in the complexity of the cases” – encouraging us to think harder, more critically, and politically about power, theory, and, in this case, about neighbourhood parks.

3.3 Critical discourse analysis of media and grey literature

According to Hajer (1995), a discourse is “a specific ensemble of ideas, concepts, and categorizations that are produced, reproduced, and transformed in a particular set of practices through which meaning is given to physical and social realities” (p. 44). Discourse is both dependent on and composed of a complex combination of cultural norms, disciplines, and rituals – the social practices that construct and govern discursive formation (Hajer, 1995; Hewitt, 2009). Discourse analysis is concerned with how discourses and social practices are mutually productive and constitutive (Hall, 1997; Fairclough 2012). In this case, I aim to demonstrate how discourses can be influential in the ordering of public park space.
More specifically, critical discourse analysis, as articulated by van Dijk (2015), is inherently focused on the “way social-power abuse and inequality are enacted, reproduced, legitimated and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (p. 466). Acknowledging the role of power in discourse, critical analysis of discourse “acknowledges that problems come into discourse and therefore into existence as reinforcements of ideologies” and create ideas of the relative importance of actions/events and actors (Kerkin, 2004, p. 185; see Foucault, 1991).

A distinction that I found helpful in dissecting and deepening the relationship between power and discourse was to be cognizant of the relationship as both power over discourse and power through discourse. Power over discourse can be understood as the “ability to determine, constrain or encourage the possible range of language in use” (Scoville-Simond, 2009, p. 15; see also Hajer, 1997; van Dijk, 2015); this includes the ability to delineate the ideas, concepts, and categories that are acceptable in specific contexts. It is through such delineation that “what can be said, by whom, in what contexts” are prescribed (Scobille-Simon, 2009, p. 15). Power through discourse, conversely, analyses the effects of power, asking what objectives are served when an issue is defined by specific framings and parameters. This includes considering who is quoted, who is granted legitimacy or authority to frame a story and who is considered a marginalized source (Rose, 2001). Beyond an analysis of the role of mass media, an examination of discourse can “examine what other epistemic organizations or institutions…are involved in the (re)production, regulation and legitimation of socially shared knowledge” (van Dijk 2014, p. 4). In the case of Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park, accordingly, I examine the role of the Toronto Police Service, community groups such as Take Back the Park Long Branch and Long Branch
Neighbourhood Watch, and activists such as legal advocates and the group Queers Crash the Beat. To understand the discourses surrounding the park space more broadly, I examined documentation from the Toronto Region Conservation Authority and City of Toronto Parks, Forestry, and Recreation.

Hajer and Versteeg (2005) use the concepts of discursive frames and discourse coalitions to describe how discourses shape what can and cannot be conceptualized, who sets the discourses that then delimit norms and acceptable behaviours and can act as precursors to policing (see Fischer and Hajer, 1999 on the impact of discourse frames on environmental policy). What happens when certain concepts are constrained or excluded? It is through social processes “that various discourses are exposed, expressed, constructed, and reformulated, and that power is exercised, contested, and negotiated” (Scoville-Simond, 2009, p. 17). Examining discursive framings is one approach to making explicit how power is integrated into law, norms, habits, and even what is considered “common sense,” thus becoming hegemonic (van Dijk, 2015). Critically analyzing power through discourse, also reveals how power is exercised in numerous everyday actions that are often taken for granted (Foucault, 1980), such as the many forms of everyday racism, sexism, and heterosexism (van Dijk, 2015).

As applied to this case study of Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park, I used critical discourse analysis as a tool to examine how dominant discourses of parks and public spaces are (re-)enforced through media narratives and how those discourses are normative and reproductive of certain hegemonies of property and propriety. In this case, my specific aim is to understanding of why and how public park spaces are regulated to maintain heteronormativity.
To do this, I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the grey literature – primarily media and open letters pertaining to Project Marie and government documents related to the regulation of the park space such as municipal bylaws and parks planning documents including community consultation summaries and environmental assessments of the Marie Curtis Park and the Arsenal Lands. Keyword searches for ‘Project Marie’ in Canadian Newsstand databases produced the news and editorial pieces that I analysed. While most of these pieces were published in the days and weeks following the police announcement of Project Marie and the Walk the Beat community event, a sputtering of articles was also published in autumn 2017 following the announcement that a number of the tickets had been dismissed; these, too, are included in the discourse analysis (see Appendix 2 for media). The media scan also searched for ‘Marie Curtis Park’ to find additional news items pertaining to park and neighbourhood issues as well as to examine the park’s ‘revitalization’ project that took place in 2010 and became a focus of my research (see Chapter Five).

Through less direct means, often following prompts in news pieces, I also sought out grey literature related to Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park. This search found a series of open letters (some of which were printed in newspapers, the rest were found on politicians’ or organization’s websites), event flyers from the police and city councillors, and Parks and Recreation presentation materials. Other documents such as municipal bylaws, park environmental assessments, and neighbourhood urban design guidelines were also reviewed as contextual material yet not with the same level of scrutiny required in the discourse analysis process. An initial review and analysis of the media discussing Project Marie and available documents assisted my preparation and outreach for interviews by giving me an
understanding of the main actors and how various concepts and conflicts were being articulated, defended, and critiqued.

As for my method in analyzing these texts, I took guidance and structure from both Fairclough and Hajer. Fairclough (2012) offers an approach at three scales that extends from the detail of textual analysis, through the discursive practice, to the contextual social practice of discourse. I used NVivo to conduct the initial textual analysis – to scrutinize the vocabulary and grammar and the semantics of rhetoric in the texts to “discover particular narrative structures, issue framings and how storylines close off certain lines of thought and action at the expense of others” (Lees, 2004, p. 102). Hajer (2005) offers the tools of metaphor, story line, and discourse coalitions to differentiate the layers at which discourses are created and enacted. Identifying metaphors or key phrases was pivotal to defining the essence of the discourse and the story lines that encapsulate it (Hajer, 2005, p. 301). The analysis of the discursive practice included a consideration of the context in which statements and arguments were made, with what intended audience and reception, as well as the connections to other debates and literatures. This was especially pertinent in distinguishing how discourses were used differently by mainstream and ‘alternative’ or LGBT media (predominantly Xtra) as the narratives, positions, and identity of both the institution and the intended readers differed (Hajer, 1995).

As for the tangible method of critical discourse analysis, I took guidance from Rose (2001, p. 158) in incorporating strategies of: examining the sources with fresh eyes, immersing myself in the sources, identifying key themes and examining their effects (of truth), paying attention to their complexity and contradictions; being attentive to the invisible as well as the visible (in discussions of sex and sexuality this was key); and paying attention to details.
Most broadly, my analysis of the media discourses considered the social practices in which discourses of park space and park use are conceptualized in order to investigate how these events and the texts are (in)formed by relations of, and struggles over, power (Rydin, 2003; Fairclough, 2012). In the case of municipal parks, social practices (and consequently discursive framings) have been established that define park spaces as ‘natural’ yet highly structured. A plethora of social (and sexual) behaviours are deemed inappropriate. Discourse analysis is a tool to make these social practices, and the standards of morality and heteronormativity within which they fit, explicit and examine how they are culturally specific and potentially problematic.

While much of the literature regarding discourse analysis in geography is focused on planning and policy documents (Lees, 2004 on discourse analysis in urban geography; Rydin, 2003 in environmental planning; Hewitt, 2009 in public policy; Scoville-Simonds, 2009 in political ecology), my research, as mentioned, instead centered an analysis of the discourses in the media and other grey literature. Consequently, it is worth reiterating the considerable role that news media plays in the reproduction and circulation of language, metaphor, narratives and connotations that shape discourse and shared meanings (Hall, 1997) as well as the importance of access to media and therefore to discourse (van Dijk, 2015). My approach to discourse analysis included evaluating the social practice of media production and the acknowledgement that the audience, in addition to being media consumers, are social subjects located within their own social environments.

One of the reasons I was drawn to using discourse analysis was the inherent reflexivity built into the approach. Identifying and critiquing how the language of concepts and arguments is constructed demands an acknowledgement and understanding of patterns of power. And in
order to interpret the research material “an appreciation of the embedded norms of social practices gained through being ‘inside’ the discursive field, is also required” (Hewitt, 2009, p. 3). Pertaining to the media and parks planning surrounding Marie Curtis Park this meant I focused my analysis on how power relations produce certain discourses and marginalize others. As Richardson (2001) has noted, “[d]iscourse theory puts the spotlight on the boundaries of thought and action. Using these tools reflexively is an attempt to first notice how these boundaries are established and maintained, and then to notice the effects of this closing down process” (p. 354). My observation is that the attentive reader is also required to question these processes. This is discussed further in the subsection on ethics and reflexivity.

3.4 Interviews

A key method in my approach to understanding the case study was a series of semi-structured, open-ended interviews. I chose to conduct interviews as a useful method “for investigating complex behaviours, opinions, and emotions and for collecting a diversity of experiences” (Longhurst, 2010, p. 112). The semi-structured interviews were designed to give sufficient structure; by including an initial set of questions while intentionally allowing for flexibility and conversational flow. This flexibility allowed interviewees to expand on their expertise, viewpoints, and experiences while the guide facilitated comparison between the sixteen interviews I conducted (see Appendix 2 for list of interviews).

My approach to interviewing initially sought to understand the motivations and actions of various “stakeholder” groups involved in Project Marie and their respective ideas of public parks and appropriate park uses and forms of regulation and enforcement. My intended interviews were with members of Division 22 of the Toronto Police Service; the City
Councillors for Ward 6 Toronto and Ward 1 Mississauga; the Long Branch Neighbourhood Watch: Take Back the Park Long Branch; management staff from Parks, Forestry and Recreation; the activist group Queers Crash the Beat; and the lawyers involved in offering free legal counsel and representation to the individuals ticketed. When representatives from key groups declined to participate, I sought out additional interviews to deepen my contextual understanding of the Long Branch neighbourhood, Marie Curtis Park and the history of Toronto’s queer community relationship to the police. I inquired about an empirical understanding of Marie Curtis Park (e.g. the amenities, the park’s role in the neighbourhood) as well as conceptual understanding of the regulation of public space, the role of policing, and the relationships between different agencies and stakeholder groups regarding the park. Through these qualitative interviews I gained a depth of understanding of the case study and contest while including a purposeful and analytic approach to answering theoretically motivated questions (Baxter and Eylse, 1997).

My outreach to interviewees was done through publicly accessible avenues and all participants were interviewed in their professional capacities. I contacted individuals who had been quoted in the media surrounding Project Marie or whose job titles or volunteer positions were pertinent to Marie Curtis Park and the Long Branch neighbourhood. Yin makes the helpful distinction between ‘respondents’ and ‘informants,’ where the former respond to question and informants help make connections, provide insights, and “suggest sources of corroboratory or contrary evidence” (2003, p. 90). A handful of the interviewees became informants, were incredibly generous and thorough, and allowed for the gathering of “qualitative and descriptive data that are difficult or time-consuming to unearth” (Tremblay, 2009, p. 688) such as the nuanced understandings of roles and relationships between different
municipal and local actors involved in the management and regulation of park space. I also used a ‘snowball’ method, requesting interview respondents pass along the research information and my contact information for their colleagues’ participation. Additionally, as many of the interviews as possible were in person, allowing for face-to-face interaction and the opportunity to analyse and interpret intonation, facial expressions, and body language.

In the interview process I was aware of the power relations involved in research interview interactions (Rose, 1997; Kobayashi, 2009; Ackerly and True, 2010). At the same time, I would argue, the power relationship is shifted when the situation involves a student researcher and a professional interviewee. I also attended to the need for reflexive considerations of how knowledge is produced through the social relations of the interview. Recognizing the inter-subjective nature of interpretative knowledge and the moral question of what right I have to speak about, to, and on behalf of ‘others’ (Kobayashi, 2009), I sought to ensure that the interviewee’s voice and perspective were heard alongside my own (Baxter and Eylse, p. 510; see also Pile, 1991). This meant that I was conscious and intentional about the terminology I used in the interviews (often referring to ‘sexual activity in the park’ and only using ‘cruising’ or ‘public sex’ if these were terms the interviewee used) and allowed interviewees to use their own terminology in discussing Project Marie. Additionally, throughout this thesis, I have tried to use verbatim quotations when appropriate so as to be as transparent as possible as to how interview data was transformed into concepts (and to show whose meanings are represented (Baxter and Elyse, 1997; Ackerly and True, 2010).

3.4.1 Interview limitations

Initially, a key component of my research was to interview local police officers in 22 Division who carried out Project Marie as well as other pertinent members of the Toronto
Police Service, such as the LGBT community liaison officer. This line of inquiry was halted when Corporate Communications informed me that no member of the Toronto Police Service would be available for interviews while the charges from Project Marie were being discussed in court. I debated circumventing this barrier by means of a Freedom of Information request yet, after consulting with a journalist who had submitted a FOI request in November 2016 and had yet to receive anything back as of June 2017, I decided the process would not be relevant or possible for my timeline.

Additionally, members of a Facebook community group called “Take Back the Park Long Branch” whose page had been quite active in autumn 2016 and supportive of the 22 Division’s work, were unresponsive to requests for interview despite multiple requests. Similarly, the contact information for Long Branch Neighbourhood Watch, a community group tasked to inform Division 22 of neighbourhood issues and concerns (and closely related to the Community Police Liaison Committee), was unavailable via email or Facebook. Though individual administrative members of both groups were contacted through Facebook, I chose to respect that a social media platform is not a professional platform and therefore was not as persistent as I may have been if professional contact information was available. Instead, I interviewed other community members of Long Branch who offered insight and context about the neighbourhood and the park. I was unable to speak to anyone directly involved in organizing the “Walk the Beat” event or in filing complaints to the councillor or police division.

The city councillor for Ward 6, Mark Grimes, was also consistently unresponsive or “unavailable” for interview and I was told that constituency assistants would also not be able to speak to the issue for fear of “misrepresenting” the situation. After a phone conversation
with a constituent assistant I was informed I could submit a written set of questions for the councillor. Unfortunately, after persistent phone and e-mail follow-up I have yet to receive any response to the written questions I submitted.

3.5 Reflexive practice & positionality

Incorporating a reflexive practice into my research process entailed (and continues to entail) a consideration of my position in the production of knowledge and a critical engagement with the assumptions and ethics that guide me in the research process (Reed and Mitchell, 2003). Drawing on and building upon the traditions of embedded, reflective research in qualitative social science research – and feminist and human geography more specifically (Haraway, 1998; Rose, 1997; Kobayashi, 2009) – enabled me to acknowledge, articulate, and address how my knowledge is situated in the context of my own life and politics, my own position within the research process, and my discomfort with claiming a position and voice as an academic student researcher.

The methods I chose – case study, critical discourse analysis, and semi-structured interviews – allowed for an iterative process of situating my own knowledge and demanding a questioning of how concepts are framed, defined, and made normative. Part of this process was to chose a research focus that took up problems of social significance, that were context-specific and practical while also speaking to broader issues at the local, national, and even global scale (Mansvelt and Berg, 2005). I grew up in and live in Toronto and a significant draw to attend graduate school (particularly in geography and planning) was an interest in studying and deepening my understanding of this city. Although I am not from the Long Branch neighbourhood or from Etobicoke and recognize the limitations to that – particularly
in an amalgamated city that at times has divisive regional politics – as a Toronto resident and engaged citizen, I am equipped to act on my research findings at a personal and civil level (e.g. by critically assessing police actions and voicing my support or dissent).

As a young queer woman living in Toronto, my perceptions of Project Marie as a homophobic (or at least heterosexist) policing action were a starting point of this research; the thesis project also took on personal significance in a variety of ways. I also remain, as a researcher, cognizant of my positions of social privilege as an educated, middle-class, white person who lives and works downtown. I am therefore conscious of situating my own knowledge and perspective as partial, embodied, and localized (Haraway, 1998) and to actively question how my situation affects the production of knowledge about Project Marie, both epistemologically and ethically. According to Patrick (2014b), “the power and provocation of queering in theory cannot be separated from ongoing risks and struggles of queer in practice” (p. 192). Due to this research, I followed the city’s queer politics with an attuned focus, such as Pride Toronto’s decision to endorse the demands of Black Lives Matter – Toronto by removing uniformed police officers from participation in the parade. More broadly, I was thankful for the opportunity to immerse myself in Toronto’s queer history and a re-mapping of the city based on known cruising parks. These reflections on my research and positionality respond to Patrick’s (2014b) call to “acknowledge the roots of our theory and practice in critical thought and action emerging from lived experiences of sexism, racism, ableism, classism, and colonization” (p. 192).

Yet, first and foremost this is my MA thesis research; I am constrained in this text by the conventions of an academic thesis and my role as a student. What I have written is a record of my research experience yet I am self-conscious of the words I have chosen to articulate
this research and analysis. To address this, I have strived to address – to the best of my abilities – the nuances and complexities of the terms and concepts I engage with as well as being attentive to the details of this specific park space. As well, I have opted to include first person, ‘I’ voice where helpful to situate myself within the research.

Lastly, it is worth mentioning that I made the ethical decision to not include interviews with individuals who were ticketed, primarily because none of them chose to make their experience public or to publicly challenge their ticket charges. To me, this was an indication of their preference for anonymity. Accordingly, my decision to only interview professionals and individuals publicly involved in Project Marie was made out of respect to the individuals who use the park seeking sex. I am careful to not make assumptions about who frequents the park for sex and why; instead I refer to how the media and grey literate form these types of descriptions and analyses.
Chapter 4 – Project Marie, public safety, and ‘reclaiming’ the park

You’ve seen over the past decade or so some attempts on the part of the Toronto Police Service to build better relationships. I think it is a fraught relationship because of this long history…For many, when you see things like Project Marie and the targeting of LGBT folks, you think well maybe this relationship of trust you’re trying to build has disappeared through a single act.
– Kirkup (qtd. in Robinson, 2016)

According to Toronto Police Service, Project Marie was a community police operation that consisted of education, enforcement, and community outreach components. In practice, it was a time and labour intensive operation that consisted of weeks of enforcement through ticketing in the park’s parking lots and through an undercover operation to entrap men for seeking consensual sex with other men in a public park. Important to note is that this level of attention was given to an operation that charged individuals with bylaw infractions and trespass. Gray, a spokesperson from TPS, stated, the “charges are provincial or municipal offences, involving such infractions as trespass to property, accessing restricted areas and engaging in a prohibited activity” (Draaisma, 2016). According to the section under ‘conduct’ of Toronto Municipal Code 608 – Parks it reads, “While in a park, no person shall: 5) Engage in form of sexual behaviour; or 6) Be nude” (City of Toronto, 2016), such bylaw infractions that come with $520 fine (Kinsman, 2016). Ontario’s Trespass to Property Act stipulates under ‘Trespass an offence,’

Every person who is not acting under a right or authority conferred by law and who, a) without the express permission of the occupier, the proof of which rests on the defendant, i) enters on premises when entry is prohibited under this Act, or ii) engages in an activity on premises when the activity is prohibited under this Act …is guilty of an offence. (Province of Ontario, 1990)
In this chapter, I argue that this overt policing of sexuality in the park is an example of how parks are regulated as heteronormative space and that accordingly, police made conscious and explicit decisions in how they framed issues of morality, sexuality, ‘appropriate’ park behaviour and the ‘appropriate’ boundaries of public and private space and interaction. I then describe how the organizing efforts of an activist group formed to challenge the police’s actions – Queers Crash the Beat – effectively shifted the framing of Project Marie and used the operation as a way to engage Toronto’s queer community in anti-police advocacy. I end the chapter by examining ‘Walk the Beat,’ a community event hosted by 22 Division as illustrative of the police’s tactics and of the tensions over park space.

4.1 Project Marie and the policing of public space

On November 10, 2016 the first news article covering Project Marie was published. The Etobicoke Guardian story titled “Toronto Police Crack Down on Public Sex in Marie Curtis Park” opens with the following statements:

A registered sex offender apprehended after exposing himself within the vicinity of children.

Two men charged for engaging in sexual activity in a car at a busy parking lot over the lunch hour.

A male patron observed naked near a popular splash pad in broad daylight.

Numerous men caught with their pants down in the bushes off a well-used cycling trail. (Reason, 2016a)

These opening lines set an alarmist tone: they are written to grab attention and to dramatize the situation. Initial news pieces about Project Marie followed a similar script: that police
were responding to community complaints, that the police had been told “this behaviour is out of control, it’s unacceptable and we don’t want it in our neighbourhood” (Draaisma, CBC, Nov 11 2016). The initial reporting was based off a police press conference, allowing the police to set the tone and frame the issues (without critical assessment). Additionally, the police and media’s use of adjectives such as ‘lewd’ and ‘indecent’ – and the unclear use of conditional tense – led to a lack of clarity as to the type of charges being laid and were potentially misleading as to the severity of the offences. The Etobicoke Guardian article, reposted by The Toronto Star three days later, stated “Charges against such offenders...could include...criminal code charges of indecent exposure and/or indecent acts, which could potentially carry jail time” (Reason, 2016a). Although the number and type of charges varied in the reporting, the focus on a single known sex offender and that individual’s single criminal charge, served the alarmist tone and the severity of ‘lewd’ behaviour.

In the initial press conference the police made deliberate efforts to reiterate that the sexual activity they were responding to was ‘indecent, ‘lewd’ and ‘inappropriate.’ As part of the initial Etobicoke Guardian story, the police gave the reporter a tour of the park’s trails making sure to show the extent of condoms littered through the park and a dug-out pit that they suspected was used for sex (Reason, 2016a). Multiple subsequent news stories published accompanying photos of condom wrappers in their articles. While the citations themselves were bylaw offences for nudity or engaging in sexual behaviour, Kinsman points out that, given that the crackdown was “directed at men who have sex with other men in a long-time cruising area” it is reasonable to conclude that the operation “is based on legal and social constructions of homosexual sex as more ‘indecent’ than heterosexual sex” (Kinsman, 2016). It has been suggested that this type of police focus “criminalizes activity not because it may
cause offence but because it is deemed *in principle* offensive” (Johnson, 2007, p. 531; as qtd. in Andersson, 2012, p. 1086).

The subtle use of language about someone masturbating “within the vicinity of children” in the news coverage (Reason, 2016a) is at once vague enough to not be entirely false yet also leading enough to raise concerns as to the safety of children. The individual who was apprehended for masturbating on the beach was found to be a known sex offender with conditions not to be around children (McCormack, Toronto Police Association President qtd. in Warmington, 2016). This “failure to comply” was the single criminal charge in Project Marie (Gray, spokesperson for TPS, qtd. in Draaisma, 2016). While the categorization of “sex offender” and the specific allegations are not discussed here, the use of this single case to insinuate pedophilia and dangerous sex crimes within a broader operation against cruising (men consensually seeking sex with other men) leads to a dangerous conflation between pedophilia and homosexuality. To conflate two very different sexual predilections deepens the ‘othering’ of men seeking sex with men and contributes to the idea that cruising is both dangerous and infringes on the safety of park goers (Robertson, 2016; see Kinsman, 1987 on the creation of sexually deviant categories and the deliberate conflation of child molestation and homosexuality).

As part of the rationale for Project Marie, the police named that “the community wants the park to be a family friendly place where adults and children can enjoy the outdoors without fear of witnessing sexual acts” (Gray qtd. in Draaisma, 2016). In descriptions of sexual activity occurring in the park, a key aspect of the behaviour being ‘out of place’ was, in fact, that it was at the wrong time, that it was occurring in the daytime or even ‘over the lunch hour.’ The aghast tone of sex occurring in the park in ‘broad daylight’ is, in part, due to a fear
of encountering, witnessing, or simply being in the vicinity of sexual activity, a tone/theme that appeared throughout the media coverage on Project Marie. To add to this, police attested to the issues of alcohol and drug use as further rationale for their increased enforcement (Mudhar, 2016). In a study of cruising in a cemetery in London, Gandy (2012) similarly notes, “public discourse in relation to cruising activity frequently segues into a fear of crime or social disorder more generally” (p.732). To reframe this: fear is also about safety, where a fear of ‘the other’ accompanies the desire to ensure the safety of the public. This notion of ‘public safety’ has, more broadly, formed a basis for the exclusion – from parks or public space – of those who are considered threatening to the norm, to ‘the community,’ or notions of ‘the public’ (England, 2008). In Marie Curtis Park, the “production of safety” has become an element of regulation through the practices of ticketing and an increased police presence in the park space.

Inherent to the idea of ensuring public safety are numerous assumptions and meanings about who is considered part of the public and therefore whose safety is important. The Toronto Police, by responding to ‘community complaints’ and putting significant effort into policing individuals engaging in sexual activity in the park frame ‘the public’ as the ‘victim’ in the context of public sex. Bell and Binnie (1995) articulate that this is problematic because the police then “admit that the public does not reside in any of the people who are participating in the activity” (p.311). In this case, 22 Division police officers stated that they chose bylaw infractions and trespass tickets because these charges are “less serious than potential criminal charges that could have been laid” (Mudhar, 2016). Project Marie allegedly consisted of three phases including a preliminary ‘education phase’ consisting of uniformed officers in the park announcing to everyone they encountered in the park that there was an increased police
presence due to community complaints (Keogh, 2016). Due to the fact that police declined to be interviewed, it is challenging to understand the rationale of each phase or give credit to the police for safeguarding the individuals using the park for sex. Moreover, the ticketing of men cruising jeopardizes their safety as there may be very real personal or professional consequences of them being ‘outed,’ raising issues of social inequality and cultural repression to considerations of access to public space (Gandy, 2012). Though the ethnographic component of who uses Marie Curtis Park to cruise is out of the scope of this research, various interviewees and media pieces reflected on this. My findings (from media and interviews) suggest that many of the men cruising in Marie Curtis Park may, for various social, cultural, or religious reasons, not identify as being gay or that these men may feel excluded (whether financially, geographically, or demographically) from participating in the commercial gay sphere of downtown. Of course, there are myriad reasons why individuals may cruise in parks (and prefer to cruise in parks) and I do not want to insinuate that the men ticketed in Project Marie are marginalized and/or closeted, yet this was a narrative that was extensively used by QCtB and media coverage.

Arguably, policing public sex in the name of public safety can disproportionately affect more marginalized individuals. In a position paper about public sex and “Queer Rights to Erotic Spaces,” the advocacy group Queer Ontario articulated this by arguing “there is evidence that the poor, the marginalized, including new Canadians, transfolks, and people of colour are at greater risk for intensified policing of park and washroom sex and consequently exposure and stigma” (2016). Building on this in an open letter published in Xtra, a group of queer women made the point that the safety of queer, transgendered and sex working women, homeless and under-housed LGBTQ people is also jeopardized in the policing of public sex.
They argued that these groups already experience high levels of gender and sexuality-based violence in public spaces and increased police presence compromises their safety and livelihood (Xtra Spark, 2016b). The concerns expressed by these letters broaden the interpretations of public safety and serve as a reminder to be cognizant of how various forms of discrimination can intersect and compound.

These considerations for the safety of men cruising are also substantiated by the history of violence towards men seeking sex with men in public spaces (discussed in much of the literature I encountered on cruising). Such incidences of antigay violence occur in urban public parks where cruising is known to occur, including the well-known murder of Aaron Webster, a gay man killed while cruising in Vancouver’s Stanley Park in 2001 and the lesser-known case of Kenneth Zeller murdered in Toronto’s High Park (Interview with K. Rae, October 21, 2017). These murders, and many other equally hateful acts of violence, “serve to remind all park users that even if you don’t agree with public sex, being queer in public space is often the real danger: not queer people in public space” (Robertson, 2016).

In the police’s initial press conference at which they framed their initiative, they emphasized that Project Marie was established in response to ‘inappropriate behaviour’ defined neutrally without reference to any particular group. They stated that the ‘sexual orientation’ of those engaging in public sex was of no importance, and that the operation in no way discriminated against any particular group. To understand the Toronto Police officers’ decision to reiterate that Project Marie was not about sexual orientation or was not targeting any specific group of people it is important to situate their framing within a ‘post-homophobic’ context. In a study on the policing of public washrooms in London, Jeyasingham (2010) articulates how most public institutions – including those that manage and police public spaces – have anti-
discrimination policies and procedures, including clauses to not discriminate based on sexual orientation. These developments in state policy and institutional practice are presented therefore as ‘post-homophobic.’ That said, as is the case with any anti-discrimination policies, impact matters more than intention and critics were quick to point out that the actions of the police officers in Project Marie had the affect of targeting primarily gay men and men who have sex with men. In fact, in an open letter written by a group of queer women and published in Xtra, it was the denial of this targeting that was distressing: “We are…dismayed by Toronto Police Service’s handling of Project Marie in the media, namely by denying that the action targeted gay men or men who have sex with men” (Xtra Spark, 2016b).

In a similar vein, an interesting aspect of Project Marie is the police’s choice to utilize municipal trespass bylaw. By focusing on bylaw infractions and late night presence in the parking lot, the police may have anticipated more likelihood of appearing non-discriminatory. Yet, the lawyers who worked on a pro bono basis on behalf of the men charged made the case that municipal bylaw had been used in lieu of criminal law; they claimed that the trespass bylaws were used only against a specific sub-set of park users and were thus applied in a discriminatory way (Robinson, 2016). By charging individuals with bylaw infractions, the police emphasized how the park was used rather than what the charged individuals had done. As Valverde (2005) notes in relation to municipal zoning and land use, “at the local level, use is an absolutely crucial legal technology, whose effects are best understood is we contrast governing through use to governing through persons” (p.38). If the police had used criminal law to charge the men, the charged men would have had access to legal rights; because
they were charged regarding their use of the park, no such rights applied (Robinson, 2016).

In an editorial in Xtra asking, “Is the queer community ready to defend public sex? Identity, community, and privacy argument may not be sufficient for Project Marie,” Maynard (2016) makes the argument that the police’s decision to assert a focus on the acts of sex occurring in public were exactly that, to focus on the sex and the public nature of it. He notes that the queer community’s response to both the Toronto bathhouse raids of 1981 and the more recent raids on the Pussy Palace in 2000 – of which many comparisons were made to Project Marie – “made strategic use of the way bathhouses exist on the uncertain threshold between public and private space. The arguments rested not upon a right to public sex, but on the men’s right to sexual privacy” even if the notion of privacy that the organizers used went beyond liberal and legal formulations. Similarly, key to queer women’s opposition to the Pussy Palace raid was that the presence of male cops violated the women’s privacy (Bain and Nash, 2007).

Maynard suggests public sex in a park, on the other hand, differs. While there is privacy and discretion to be found in the bushes and off the beaten path, parks are a public space – “not exclusively queer spaces” – where notions of queer identity, community, and privacy do not have as much sway; and the police understand this (Maynard, 2016). In this editorial, Maynard also pointed to the lack of consensus within the queer community around public sex and police as another obstacle to the queer community’s ability to organize around Project Marie.

As stated by the editorial board of Xtra endorsing Queers Crash the Beat’s work, the discrepancy between the significant time and labour invested in Project Marie and the lack of severity of the bylaw infractions attest to the moral assumptions underlying the operation:
“[It is from] the gap between the seriousness of the offences and the scale of the police response that the underlying homophobic motivations of the project can be gleaned” (Xtra Spark, 2016a). In particular, the portion of the operation involving plain clothed officers walking through the wooded areas of the park was highly critiqued as fitting the definition of entrapment (e.g. Public Statement by City Councillor Wong-Tam). Member of Provincial Parliament, Cheri DiNovo, in her open letter to the Attorney General Naqvi acknowledge, “We have learned that Toronto Police had been performing undercover sting operations in Marie Curtis Park trying to lure gay men and trans people to proposition them for sex” (DiNovo, 2016). This tactic of plain clothed officers entrapping gay men has a lengthy history, including two cases in Marie Curtis Park in the early 1980s (Loos, 1983). The use of public statements and open letters from public officials not directly involved in Project Marie or park management attests to the perception that police were involved in biased or discriminatory behaviour. Within a week of the public being aware that Project Marie was taking place, LGBT critics from all three levels of government had written statements denouncing the actions of the police and calling for the charges to be dropped (see Appendix 3 for full list).

In regards to the plainclothes portion of the operation, Constable Ward, who became the de facto spokesperson for the project, was quoted as saying that during the enforcement part of the operation, “male patrons have been approaching our officers and soliciting them for sex” (in Reason, 2016a). This is another incidence where the boundaries between public and private space and interaction are complicated. On one hand, expressing and discussing sexual interest with another adult is not illegal; in fact, it is a key aspect of consent. On the other hand, and depending on context, such solicitation could be considered sexual harassment.
Specifically exposing one’s genitals to a police officer without instigation is defined as an indecent act and could result in a criminal charge. Yet if the police officer is working undercover, purporting to be cruising and expresses sexual interest, case law makes clear that this context cannot result in a criminal offence (Fisher, 2016).

Police entrapment and policing of cruising grounds intensifies the uncertainty of a public-private boundary. As explained by Moran and McGhee (1998), through “the corporeal practice of policing in ‘plain clothes’ the police are implicated in the production of the private in this public space. In the moment of their revelation they reinstall the public of private encounters” (p. 220). The narrative created by the police and media around Project Marie emphasized the public quality of the park – and the public role of the police officers as enforcers of the law – yet “in order to prove that a crime has been committed, the court needs also to hear evidence of private aspects of the activities in which the officer takes part” (Jeyasingham, 2010, p. 313). Consequently, to avoid this, police only cited bylaw infractions to the individuals in Marie Curtis Park who may have solicited the officers (for a more thorough legal explanation see Fisher, 2016).

Robertson, in an editorial in Spacing Magazine (2016) pushed further, arguing that “Officers dressing in plainclothes and using specific social cues in order to attempt to obtain ‘evidence’ of a person’s willingness to perform a sexual act – despite this being sanctioned under law – is fundamentally coercive, manipulative, and violent.” She asserts that, while the media and Toronto Police Service framed undercover officers’ roles as “passive, stating that officers must wait to be propositioned, impersonation inherently requires active participation …solicitation of a sexual act using impersonation (i.e. for an on-duty cop, not wearing one’s uniform) is a form of sexual violence” (Robertson, 2016).
And while police officers entrapping men cruising was not discussed by most of the initial news stories, the issue of consent was raised from a different angle: the police’s lack of consent in being propositioned. There is no law forbidding propositioning yet this narrative, and a focus on the consent of the police officers (who knowingly put themselves in such situations to explicitly be propositioned), serves to prioritize and center the police officers (all men and presumed to be heterosexual men) and is indicative of both the sexuality and gendered manifestations of heteronormativity (Sly, 2016). Additionally, in an editorial in Xtra critiquing Project Marie as a ‘witch hunt’ against gay men pointed out that while the officers insisted they were not trying to target any particular group of people, they only used male officers in the undercover portion of the project (Miksche, 2016).

Like many police actions and policing decisions, there is a lack of transparency and accountability about Project Marie and critiques have been raised in this regard. First, the amount of police resources that went into the project was critiqued as poor judgment and a misallocation of time and staffing resources given the city’s policing priorities\(^1\) and that “undercover operations should be used to target real crime activity and violence” (Wong-Tam, 2016; Interview with Kristyn Wong-Tam, August 21, 2017). Secondly, it is clear that officers from 22 Division did not consult with other units of TPS, such as downtown divisions that have significantly more experience and history of addressing public sex in parks and with working with the LGBT community. Councillor Wong-Tam shared that in

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\(^1\) In Councillor Wong-Tam’s Statement on Project Marie she stated, “In a city coping with increased opiate drug trafficking, a rise in shootings, and a spate of deadly pedestrian collisions, what crime was so significant as to get this level of attention? The answer is largely men having consensual sex with men.”
order to feel confident in her condemnation of Project Marie she consulted numerous police
officers in her downtown ward. From those conversations she concluded,

Would they have created the same kind of undercover operation in any of
our downtown parks? We have plenty of cruising and public behaviour that
may or may not be accepted by all but it happens, including sex, public sex,
between consenting adults, and they emphatically said there was no way
they would have set up such an operation. … [the officers] were also quite
distressed, even as members of TPS, because they could not speak out
against other officers but, at the same time, they recognized that the
organization they represent, TPS, would bear the brunt of what would be
bad media, perhaps, and [critique] in the LGBT community. So they were
not necessarily satisfied with the outcome as far as I can tell. (Interview with
K. Wong-Tam, August 21, 2017)

Additionally, due to the fact that 22 Division positioned Project Marie as being unrelated to
gay men and the queer community, Division officers did not consult the Toronto Police
Service’s LGBTQ Liaison Officer whose role is to provide sensitivity training to police
officers and support for LGBTQ members of the police force. Wong-Tam (2016) called for
the mayor to reconvene the Community Advisory Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and
Transgender Issues, citing the importance of having informed advisors to inform the City’s
(and police) actions.

Numerous open letters and editorials called for transparency around the operation: Who gave
the go-ahead? Who decided that community complaints warranted this level of police action?

In Councillor Wong-Tam’s statement on Project Marie (2016) she asked,

Who actually ordered the operation? What real and effective notice was
afforded to those targeted that the police would act this way [in reference to
the education component that allegedly preceded increased enforcement]? Did the police ever consider the effects their operation would have on this
targeted population? What is the real operation cost in dollars and missed
opportunities elsewhere? These are the same questions asked after the 1981
and 2001 bathhouse raids. We did not get answers to these questions then
and I suspect we will not get them now.
The selectivity of police accountability was also apparent when the Take Back the Park group posted – in June of 2017 – an update from Constable Ward stating, “We are still actively patrolling the park. I have been down there almost every night [and] evening shift and charge everyone I encounter that is there after midnight. I constantly check for persons that have previously trespassed. The activity seems significantly decreased…” (see Figure 3). While there was a lack of response to wide-spread criticism at the city level, policing of the park continued, demonstrating how selectively the police (and neighbourhood divisions, in particular) determine who their constituents are.

Figure 3. Screenshot from Take Back the Park Long Branch Facebook group relaying an update on patrolling in Marie Curtis Park, June 2017.

4.2 Queers Crash the Beat and reframing a ‘debate over public space’

The notion of community is internally defined by the resistance of gays ourselves to
oppression, and externally defined by the police, the mass media, and State policies. Community is, then, a social relationship between gay resistance and heterosexual hegemony – not something that can be abstracted from the relation. It cannot be seen as a ‘thing’ existing on its own outside this social and historical context.


Upon reading of Project Marie in the initial sputtering of news stories, and particularly the fact that more than 70 people had been ‘arrested’ for cruising Marcus McCann, a lawyer at Symes, Street & Millard LLP, was concerned. He immediately reached out to members of the Law Union of Ontario (some of whom had more specific and relevant legal experience) to gather a team to offer pro bono legal counsel to anyone cited in Project Marie; a group of ten volunteers was assembled. McCann then spent the next week giving upwards of twenty interviews to radio and print media. His main goal was to get the word out that they were offering free legal counsel; by doing so, he also spread word of the examination of the police operation to the reporters (Interview with M. McCann, July 18, 2017). Within days a handful more news pieces on Project Marie had been published, now with the inclusion of the lawyers’ offer.

Due to the fact that by the time Project Marie was announced publicly it had already been going on for anywhere between a month and two months, many of the tickets would have already been paid without challenge or without knowledge on the part of the individuals charged as to how to challenge the fines. For these reasons, amongst others, the offer of free legal counsel and representation was taken up by only a dozen or so individuals (Interview with M. McCann, July 18, 2017). Additionally, McCann stated that many of the individuals charged would have likely pleaded guilty to avoid the potential of being ‘outed’ in court, especially men who may be closeted and/or be heterosexually partnered, being outed could have significant effects on their personal and professional lives. In one news piece McCann
argued, “Something that is a relatively minor offence is going to have major ramifications for some of these guys and it didn’t have to be that way…An undercover sex sting just reeks of the old school morality police that I think as a city we have outgrown” (Strapagiel, 2016).

Stemming from an editorial McCann published in Xtra (2016) and from outreach amongst a network of friends in the queer community, a group of activists came together “in response to historical and ongoing failures in policing,” and specifically to challenge the police’s actions/tactics and language/framing of Project Marie (see Appendix 4 for QCtB’s statement). The initial ‘action’ of this group, Queers Crash the Beat, was to attend the Walk the Beat event hosted by 22 Division as the community outreach component of Project Marie. The organizing and media outreach of both the legal team and Queers Crash the Beat served to shift the tone of the public perception of Project Marie. This can be seen in media headlines: “Lawyers offering free services to those caught up in Toronto police sex sting” (Kim, 2016) and “Marie Curtis Park becomes centre point of debate over public space” (Mudhar, 2016). One organizer with Queers Crash the Beat stated that they were (relatively) impressed with the richness of debate in the media and the response from public officials; that the media successfully represented a broader understanding of intersection of issues and police interference with queer life (Interview A, July 31, 2017), though others were not as optimistic. The activism and advocacy of Queers Crash the Beat called critical attention to Project Marie and served to bring citywide attention to the issue. Their public critiques of the police actions demonstrated that the story had public relevance; as a news story, Project Marie was consequently given more coverage than it may have otherwise been.

The ripple effect of this is that Project Marie has become a key reference point in discussions of policing in the queer community, mentioned in numerous articles discussing police
critique and tensions between police and the LGBT community. Exemplary of this, Project Marie was noted as one of the top contentious issues – for both the perception of police and the LGBT community’s lack of consensus on public sex – in “A year in review 2016: How the police divided Toronto’s LGBT community” (Mann, 2016c).

4.3 Walk the Beat and ‘taking back the park’

As the police’s ‘community engagement’ component of Project Marie, the Walk the Beat event is illustrative of the social politics and moral policing of the Project as a whole. On November 19, 2016, police from 22 Division, with the support of the Community Policing Liaison Committee, Etobicoke city councillor Mark Grimes and Mississauga city councillor Jim Tovey, hosted a Walk the Beat event in Marie Curtis Park. The event consisted of hot chocolate and refreshments and “fun activities for kids to enjoy.” It was promoted as an opportunity for the community “to discuss the issues plaguing Marie Curtis Park” and to “foster community support and involvement” for Project Marie (see Figure 4). The event was attended by approximately 100 park goers throughout the day who stopped by to speak with both officers and the activists attending; according to McCann there were about 30 police officers and dozen or so activists (Interview with M. McCann, July 18, 2017; Interview A, July 31, 2017). The Walk the Beat event was also well attended by media (see Appendix 3 for full list).
In some ways, the event could be viewed as an effective example of community policing and outreach. At the same time, the planned litter clean up and candle lit march, accompanied by the goal to “TAKE BACK THE PARK!” resounded as an overt form of enforcing who and what the park is for. How the event was framed also demonstrates the discursive territoriality (“your police officers,” “we take back the park,” “knowledge from actual residents”) and the family-oriented disposition of the park space (“bring the whole family,” “fun activities for the kids to enjoy”). The language of taking back and reclaiming asserts the park as a territory belonging to specific ‘community’ members. As Constable Ward was quoted as saying, “We’re empowering them to mobilize the community to get actively involved in the solution from here on” (Amin, 2016). The goal to ‘reclaim’ the park exemplifies how “the ideology of
the neighbourhood” can be a powerfully exclusionary form of local politics (Berlant and Warner, 1999, p.563). In an interview with an organizer with Queers Crash the Beat, their interactions with Constable Ward also made clear the specifics of how personal Project Marie was in that the officer emphasized growing up in Long Branch, raising his daughter there, and that it was for these reasons that ‘taking back the park’ was so important (Interview A, July 31, 2017). As part of Walk the Beat, Ward appealed to attendees to “walk the trails, spend time with your families, deter this behavior – because the more legitimate users we have in the park, the less room there is for the illegitimate ones” (Keogh, 2016). By hosting an event for ‘the community’ to walk to the western side of the park, with the protection of police officers and the sanctity of candle light using the language of reclamation also enforces a certain form of governance through use.

The language and symbolism of the event also speaks loudly. Both a litter clean up and a candle lit walk connote ideas of cleansing and purity. While litter may be an annoyance and detract from the image of a clean natural park space, when ‘litter’ is made synonymous with condoms the associations of dirty extend beyond the object itself and apply to the actions associated with the litter (i.e. sex) and the people participating in such behaviours. I found this symbolism particularly pertinent as much of the western portion of Marie Curtis Park was created through the dumping of landfill (CCFEW, 1997). While some of this was development fill (predominantly soil and other aggregates) some of the dumping was also household waste (Interview with I. Jones, June 21, 2017). This fill has settled unevenly and, during the revitalization work, staff came across piles of exposed garbage that they covered with fresh fill (L. Coates, personal communication, October 31, 2017). While the circumstances between dumping in the 1950s and litter from sexual activity are very
different, the comparison is helpful in considering how moral connotations attached to
garbage differ depending on the social context.

The language on the flier naming the event’s goal as addressing issues ‘plaguing’ the
community evokes disease, infestation and contagion. These types of evocations have been
identified in scholarship as ways by which to justify acts of purification and cleansing of the
space as practices of social exclusion (England, 2008; Mitchell, 1997; Blomley, 2004). In an
Xtra editorial (2016a) the editorial board pointed out that, “public sex between consenting
adults is not a plague. The presence of gay men in public parks is not a plague.” Embedded in
this critique is the deep seeded discriminatory associations between homosexuality and
disease, including discussions of AIDS ‘plaguing’ the gay community (Kinsman, 1987;
Interview with M., August 24, 2017).

The event also served as an impetus for queer activists critiquing Project Marie to show up
and confront the police, appropriately naming their group Queers Crash the Beat. Members
of Queers Crash the Beat felt it was important appear at the Walk the Beat event in order to
demonstrate opposition and to assert that homophobic policing tactics would not go
unnoticed. Their goal was to be visible, to engage with residents, to ask questions and
demand answers of the police, and to garner as much media attention about Project Marie as
possible (Interview A, July 31, 2017). As one QCtB member stated in describing how
insulting and contradictory the Walk the Beat appeared, “The bathhouse raid apology
happens and then here they are throwing themselves a party for kicking out the gays from the
park” (Interview with M. August 24, 2017).
The QCtB activists I interviewed described amicable discussions with residents where many residents wanted to point out that the priority park issues were actually about water quality and parking infractions (Interview with M. McCann, July 18, 2017). Yet, one of the activists did point out that the antagonistic dynamics of downtown queers against suburban residents was palpable: QCtB showing up “invites the analysis of “Oh, there’s those downtown sickos coming out to Etobicoke – in our neighbourhood, where I live, in my park – with their lefty downtown agenda. The fact that [this became] the optics doesn’t seem to be an accident” (Interview A, July 31, 2017).

4.4 A year out

This autumn (2017), there was a sputtering of media articles revisiting Project Marie when it was announced that all of the individuals who had used free legal representation to challenge their citations had their charges dropped. This made public what the lawyers had presumed: that there was a discrepancy between the police’s eagerness to charge and the court’s willingness to prosecute, a discrepancy that speaks to the likelihood of discrimination. What was interesting to note was that the media’s tone had shifted further, recognizing the morality and homophobia of the situation (with headlines such as “Tickets Withdrawn After ‘Morality Raid’,” Gallant, 2017). In part, this is likely because McCann and other lawyers were able to better frame the story and place the police in a position of having to publically respond. A spokesperson for TPS acknowledged that,

If we had taken the opportunity to reach out to those groups in advance and to work with some of our LGBT community partners, then I think we could have perhaps done a more robust and sensitive outreach strategy (Gray quoted in Mann, 2017)
Unfortunately, that is likely as close to an apology as will be offered. While it is evident that cruising has a long-standing history in Marie Curtis Park, the impetus for Project Marie remains unclear: why then? Why again? I came to realize that the question would not be satisfactorily answered. Instead, through the course of my interviews, two hypotheses were proposed. Somewhat nonchalantly, Gaffney speculated that Project Marie may have been conceived as a legacy project by Councillor Grimes (Interview July 14, 2017). Equally as possible, Councillor Tovey suggested that there was nothing unusual or spectacular about Project Marie, that public sex in the park has been a long-standing issue that both Peel Region and Toronto Police deal with now and again (Interview with C. Tovey, August 23, 2017).

4.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I sought to examine the choices made by Toronto Police 22 Division in designing and executing Project Marie and assessed the extent and variation of media coverage over the course of a year, including the role of public critique. My analysis positions policing of sexual activity in Marie Curtis Park as a concrete example of how parks are regulated as heteronormative space.
Chapter 5 – Park planning and public parks as private property

Public sex is not new and it won’t go away. It is directly related to how we choose to envision the environments we live in, how we organize our erotic lives, and what value we assign the random, the unpredictable and the adventure of unplanned pleasures as legitimate parts of democratic association and as a vision of the good life – all certainly part of what makes life worth living.

– from Queer Ontario’s “Queer Rights to Erotic Spaces: Position on Public Sex, Park and Washroom Sexual Activities” (Teixeira, 2017)

While policing is an overt way to deter cruising and assert park space as heterosexual, how park spaces are designed, planned, and managed is a subtler, though equally as effective, way to affix specific values to and expectations of behaviour in park space. Unsurprisingly, the reinforcement of social norms through planning is subtle enough to rarely be written into planning documents – and it is often not sensational enough for media to cover, or even notice. Yet multiple examples of the influence of park planning exist in Marie Curtis Park and it is the pattern of these planning decisions – drawn from the media and documentation from the 2010 project, interviews with City of Toronto Parks, Forestry & Recreation (PFR) and Toronto Region Conservation Association (TRCA) staff – that forms my empirical evidence.

I point to how decisions regarding park design, such as the placement of infrastructure, sought to ‘deal with’ cruising by prioritizing other recreational uses and the health of environmentally significant areas, re-enforcing expectations and priorities of park uses. I then discuss how planning is tied to the same legal framework – of bylaws and trespass – that delineate the park space in particular, and restrictive, ways. I argue that these examples demonstrate how park planning and design serve to prioritize certain aspects of parks as
heteronormative spaces (parks as recreational and ecological) and to exemplify how urban public parks are highly regulated spaces of socio-nature.

5.1 The ‘revitalization’ of Marie Curtis Park

In 2010, the City of Toronto Division of Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) chose to invest in a revitalization project of Marie Curtis Park. The project was originally intended as part of larger-scale plans to develop the Arsenal Lands on the Mississauga side of the park to form a larger, contiguous park space. Given that this multi-jurisdictional project had been on the drawing board for over a decade without the involved governments simultaneously having the dedicated budget for the project, the City of Toronto and TRCA chose to independently go ahead with redesign of the Toronto portion of the project – the revitalization of Marie Curtis Park – with a more modest budget and shorter planning timeframe. The project involved assessing priorities through a community consultation process and creating a phased project for the park. One of the key park planners responsible for the redesign, Leslie Coates, described that this project was above and beyond “state of good repair” work often allocated for neighbourhood park maintenance. Coates enthusiastically described how key design features (such as the detail to park benches, bike racks, and a stone overlook) were “special,” being above what most neighbourhood park upgrades often entail (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017).

During public consultations, key issues focused on environmental concerns: including the geese (which had overrun the park and made much of the lawn space unusable), water quality and litter issues at the beach, and amenities: the poor state of the washroom and concession stand buildings and the need to better sign and designate trails to separate cyclists and
walkers (see Figure 5 for issues raised during public consultation process). The most noteworthy aspects of the revitalization work included building an off-leash dog area, redesigning the parking lot along the eastern side of the creek to lessen run-off, and a new playground and splashpad (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017). Additionally, a beach boardwalk along the eastern side of the creek was constructed as well as various seating areas and “family gathering areas” (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017).

Figure 5. Slide from public presentation on Marie Curtis Park revitalization, 2012 (Care of Leslie Coates).

In an interview with Nancy Gaffney (July 14, 2017), Watershed Manager at TRCA, she described Marie Curtis Park as being “an over-loved park” and the revitalization project was an acknowledgement that while the park was both sizeable and well loved, it was worn down. In interviews, the well-worn quality of the park was attributed in part to the increased
intensification in Longview and southeastern Mississauga and, to a certain extent, also in
Long Branch, which had contributed to the increased use of the park (Interview with L.
Coates, October 31, 2017; with N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017). While the individuals I
interviewed were hesitant to demean the park, a handful of testimonials about park safety and
cruising posted on the Facebook page of ‘Take Back the Park Long Branch’ affirmed the
park’s previous reputation as being “sleazy” and the history of sex workers who worked the
Lakeshore strip of motels also “working the parking lots” of Marie Curtis Park. Although the
City of Toronto’s Department of Parks, Forestry and Recreation documentation from
community consultations did not state cruising as a key concern, an article in The Etobicoke
Guardian (Reason, 2010) regarding the park revitalization stated, “Residents identify geese
and gay ‘cruising’ as issues.” In the same article, Councillor Grimes was quoted as stating
that eliminating “undesirable activity…was our number one priority going into this.” During
Project Marie, the police also alluded to the park’s cruising history by noting, “we’ve really
got our work cut out for us. This has been something that has been so ingrained in the area
for decades” (Ward qtd. in Reason, 2016a).

5.2 Parking lots and pushing cruising “further into the woodlot”
Part of the park planning and redesign sought to deter cruising in the park through the
strategic placement (and removal) of infrastructure, landscaping features, and park amenities
on the western side of the park where cruising was known to occur. In an interview with
Gaffney, she made clear that there was public and institutional perception that cruising and
the presence of those using the western parking lot for sex deterred others from using the
parking lot, the woods, and the beach on the western side of the creek (Interview with N.
Gaffney, July 14, 2017). Initially plans included the creation of a large sloped hill north of
the beach, installation of beach volleyball courts, the removal of an existing parking lot and driveway. In addition to taking out the driveway and parking, which would make more lawn space available for recreational use, a vehicle turning circle would be put at the southern end of the park to improve traffic flow. Of these, only the parking lot removal was executed.

This work on the western side of the park was most directly linked to deterring cruising. As Councillor Mark Grimes suggested, improved traffic flow would “help drive out some of the cruising activities” (Grimes in Reason, 2010). Grimes expands on this by stating that,

I think it's a great park, but I do think it needs some work. I hear about it all the time - the “social problem” happening on the west side of the park that I want to address,” he said.

“We want you to go to the west side of the park, and with that roundabout, and with the beach volleyball, and the walking paths through woodlots – the more traffic and activities we have going on, the more we'll eliminate undesirable activities over there. That was our number one issue going into this.” (Reason, 2010).

Yet given the design and programming of the entire park, the western portion of the park is comparatively underused. From personal observation, the eastern half of the park is in closer vicinity from the Long Branch neighbourhood and the active park amenities are concentrated there (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017). For example, from visits to the park I observed that although there are beaches on both sides of the creek, only the beach on the eastern side of the creek is supervised and designated as a public beach. Since the planned volleyball courts and artificial hill were never put in, the western portion of Marie Curtis Park remains under-programmed. Consequently, from my understanding, removing the former western side parking lot meant dispossessing the individuals visiting the park to cruise from a potentially more discreet place to park and meet up. It may also be helpful to state the significance of parking lots to accessing park space in the quasi-inner suburbs.
While Marie Curtis Park is accessible by walking from the residential blocks of Long Branch, it is designated by TRCA as a regional park and is one of the largest park spaces in southwestern Etobicoke. Consequently, parking lots are required for access by residents in this wider catchment area.

Another aspect of the redesign was to install an off-leash dog area and an accompanying parking lot near the northwestern entrance to the park (off Lakeshore Drive). The construction of the off-leash dog area included clearing shrub and grassland (there was community concern over the loss of deer habitat), lying fresh fill over the area (as this part of the park is both former landfill and a brownfield, former industrial area), and constructing a new parking lot (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017). While it is unclear if this is the area of the park referenced by community complaints (which allegedly prompted Project Marie) yet the parking lot is the primary area of the park where police charged individuals with trespass (Interview with M. McCann, July 18, 2017). According to visits to the park and by a Toronto Sun (Davidson, 2016) article that described the patterns of vehicles moving across the parking lot, it can be presumed that this newer lot became the primary parking lot for individuals who come to cruise. As mentioned previously, seeking a potential sexual partner happens in both the parking lot (car to car) and in the network of trails in the woods. Each type of cruising involves different sets of negotiations and reading of social cues, yet both approaches to cruising involve parking in a parking lot.

According to the manager of the redesign project, residents and park users did not express cruising as a major concern during the community consultations (Interview with L. Coates, October 31, 2017). At the same time, the 2010 redesign of the park illustrates the micro-level nature of interactions inherent in park planning. Another dispute over parking lots,
concerning the park’s main lot on the edge of the eastern side of the creek, raised the most public discussion. Due to campaigning from the non-profit organization, Citizens Concerned for Etobicoke’s Waterfront (CCFEW), Parks staff proposed the parking lot be moved to reduce environmental risk to the creek from vehicular runoff. Residents living adjacent to the proposed location, however, successfully petitioned against relocation and garnered media opposition by raising concerns about traffic and potential GO station parking overflow and diminished views. This resulted in the parking lot staying in the same location.

Another key piece of infrastructure in Marie Curtis Park that had an effect on how cruising happens in Marie Curtis Park was the designation of a regional waterfront trail. Though the regional trail was initiated years prior to the revitalization project, it came up in interviewees’ conversation about the park’s amenities and use of the western portion of the park. The waterfront regional trail is a project of the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, a provincial initiative to increase access to and recreation along Lake Ontario’s waterfront. According to the TRCA, they had been asked many times by the Trust to divert recreational cyclists and walkers off Lakeshore Drive and into the natural areas along the waterfront, hugging the shoreline as much as possible. Though an existing trail wound south of the Marie Curtis woodlot, this recreational priority to upgrade the trail and designate it as part of the regional trail system brought substantially more recreational users through the park, resulting in more instances of user conflict.

Gaffney described that TRCA was aware and deliberate about the trail placement and the potential issues it might cause. She summarizes the issues of Marie Curtis Park West as such:

We knew there would be a lot of issues with [the trail] that because it was going just south of the woodlots that we knew had a lot of social issues. It wasn’t just [pause]…it was a lot of teenagers hanging out there, vandalism all
the time, and there was this social deviant behaviour (that had been there historically). There was a parking lot right near the woodlot as well and that parking lot was infamous. In Marie Curtis Park West – it’s not there now – but just south of the woodlot and the waterfront trail went between that parking lot and the woodlot. As soon as we built the waterfront trail – built for the Waterfront Regeneration Trust – there were so many user conflicts because families and their kids would be exposed to the kinds of activities happening there. And it was all day long. It wasn’t in the evenings and things, it was all day long. We thought putting more people through the area it would clear them out a little bit more. So that was one of the reasons why the trail went through there and because there was a big push to have the trail continue as close to the water’s edge. (Interview with N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017)

Gaffney explained that while TRCA (as the owners of the property) initially received a number of complaints, along with complaints received by city councillors on both the Toronto and Mississauga side, the level of complaints have diminished over time. The popularity of the trail has likely worked as TRCA planned: “it has pushed people further into the woodlot” (Interview with N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017).

5.3 Woodlot, trails, and degrees of ambiguity

The woodlot on the western side of Marie Curtis Park was one of the few areas of the park that was never used for landfill and consequently is one of the more mature wooded areas in southern Etobicoke. This ecologically significant forest contains numerous species of environmental interest including the endangered butternut tree and provides habitat to birds of interest (Toronto Region Conservation Authority, 2007; Interview with J. Harvey, November 23, 2017). As part of the park revitalization work, the Urban Forestry division of PFR formalized the trail system to preserve more of the woods from active human use. They did this by reducing the number of total trails in the forest and making selected trails easier to identify and follow. Of primary concern were areas where tree roots were being compacted and where there was poor drainage.
In conversation, it was made clear that the goal of Urban Forestry’s work in the woodlot was to “manage use in a sustainable way, regardless of who it is and what they’re using the space for” (Interview with J. Harvey, November 23, 2017). In other words, Urban Forestry’s jurisdiction is environmental management while “recreational management” is up to bylaw enforcement officers or the police (J. Harvey, November 23, 2017). While the purpose of the trail design work was to ensure the health of the forest and keep recreational or human uses of the space within specific areas, it nonetheless speaks to a tension of values and uses of park spaces. For comparison, around the similar time, the dunes behind Hanlan’s Point Beach, a well-known queer hangout and clothing-optional beach were designated as an environmentally sensitive area. This meant that a large portion of the sandy meadow and forested area – where cruising happened – was fenced off and designated boardwalk trails were built connecting the road to beach access points (Burrell, 2010). In both cases, there was not explicit enforcement to stay out of the ‘environmentally significant areas’ yet the infrastructure of trails, fences, and signage have a noteworthy effect of asserting the primacy of the ecological value of these areas of the parks and, consequently, in deterring cruising.

Due to jurisdictional limitations, the trail maintenance work that Urban Forestry carried out was, understandably, only on the Marie Curtis Park side of the fence. Important to visualize is that a chain link fence, approximately ten feet high (see Figure 6), severs the forest to delineate the border of Toronto’s Marie Curtis Park and Mississauga’s Arsenal Lands. Yet, scattered along the length of the fence are curtained openings, the fence has been cut and pulled back to allow for the informal infrastructure of footpaths on both sides to connect. Nancy Gaffney described that when TRCA purchased the Arsenal Lands property from Canada Post, the public was already using the space informally. Gaffney states, “Because
there were so many holes in the fence, it was easy to get in. We spent years trying to maintain those fences but you could walk away [from putting up a new fence] and by the next day there were big, gaping holes in it again” (N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017). She noted that the effort was not worthwhile and they decided to stop actively trying to keep people out through fence repair. Due to a lack of coordinated funding for the Arsenal Lands to function as a park, there is no coordinated trail work; the trails designed and maintained by Toronto’s urban forestry staff abut informal though well-worn footpaths, also known as desire lines, extending into the Arsenal Lands.

Figure 6. Curtains cut in the fence between Marie Curtis Park and the Arsenal Lands. Photo courtesy of the author.

In contrast to Marie Curtis Park where regulations stipulate appropriate behaviour and uses of the park space, the Arsenal Lands are a ‘wild’ and ‘unruly space.’ It is an area that does
not play a clearly defined role within a stretch of the waterfront that still has numerous post-
industrial sites. The ownership and management of these lands are not necessarily apparent to
the public. It is a space that has, consequently, become appropriated for cruising (Gandy,
2012, p.734). In Toronto, these anomalous spaces of urban nature such as ravines, the sides
of railway lines, shrub land and beaches, take on new significance when considering the
spatiality of cruising. Seclusion and a semblance of privacy in these spaces allow for a degree
of discretion, what Iveson (2007) refers to as “the delicate balance of visibility and
invisibility which defines the sexual vernacular of cruising” (p. 107).

While there have been plans to develop the Arsenal Lands for decades (a master plan was
most recently developed in 2007; Toronto Region Conservation Authority, 2007), the lack of
coordinated funding from pertinent governments has meant that the site has remained an in-
between space for decades, fenced off to the public. TRCA has recognized the ecological
value of the forest, wetlands, and meadow environments in the Arsenal Lands (similar to the
recognition of the forest in Marie Curtis Park) and, importantly, has attributed the ecological
health of the site to the lack of ‘active’ or designated human use of the space (Interview with
N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017). Redevelopment of the Arsenal Lands is slated to be revisited
when the Lakeview Waterfront Connection project in Mississauga is further developed
(Interview with N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017); my research leads me to speculate that the
ecological value of the area will likely become, in part, a rationale to ‘design out’ public sex
at that time. This points to the use of ecological features as a exclusionary tool. This practice
is noted in Patrick’s (2014a) queer ecological analysis of New York’s High Line trail and the
erasure of the rail line’s history as a cruising ground, when he states that the “redevelopment
relied both implicitly and explicitly on a logic of ecological improvement in order to
depoliticize critical aspects of the project’s impacts” on both the existing landscape and the way in which the space was used (p. 198). Ecological improvements to Marie Curtis park (such as the trail work) fall into this apolitical rubric yet have social and spatial repercussions – by design and by default – that could be potentially exclusionary to those who are cruising in the park.

5.4 Trespass, bylaws and public parks as private property

As mentioned in the previous chapter, 22 Division police officers gave bylaw infractions and trespass citations to the men who were in the park seeking sex. My analysis pertaining to bylaw and trespass ticketing in that chapter focused on the police officers’ decisions and the discursive critique of how bylaw infractions and trespass were enforced. Here, I seek to analyse how planning and bylaws and trespass charges are part and parcel to the same legal framework, demonstrating how saturated in regulation park space is. While park planning and design delineate park space in specific ways, municipal bylaws and provincial trespass make tangible these restrictions while still operating under an apolitical rubric.

As part of the regulation of urban public parks, the municipal code contains an extensive list of things that cannot occur in parks and an equally extensive list of things that can only occur with explicit permission (granted through a permitting process). At the top of the ‘Parks Use’ section of the Toronto Municipal Code is a clause regarding access which stipulates: “Unless authorized by permit, no person shall use, enter or gather in a park between the hours of 12:01 a.m. and 5:30 a.m.” (2016). Closing hours in parks also implicates time with morality by stating that anyone in the park after midnight is deviating from a social and legal norm of daytime leisure use. This bylaw clause thus affects many people who may want to use parks
at night such as people “who may have housing issues, drug users, maybe sex workers” or shift workers who may choose to use or feel safer using parks at different times of day (Interview A, July 31, 2017). The bylaw sets up an interesting bind: if people are seeking sex during the day it is considered indecent, if they use discretion by seeking sex at night when the park is less active they are considered trespassers.

Due to obvious constraints in capacity, this stipulation of the municipal code is highly selectively enforced and often only on a complaint-driven basis, complaints being viewed as sufficient to attest to the activity being problematic (Interview B, September 22, 2016). From an interview with Megan Price, a Policy and Project Advisor at Parks, Forestry and Recreation, bylaw enforcement officers are often sent to respond to complaints and in the case of individuals being in a park after-hours, they are usually sent to “move people along.” The use of trespass citations is considered heavy-handed or viewed as a last resort (Interview with M. Price, October 11, 2017). In the case of Project Marie, cruising was a well-known occurrence and, according to the police and city councillors, community complaints drove the police’s response.

The use of trespass citations – which are charges inherently linked to private property law – is an explicit recognition and enforcement that public parks are owned by the City of Toronto as a municipal corporation and that ‘the public,’ in fact, has limited access. While not surprising to a legal audience, this definition of public space is nonetheless in direct contrast to a widespread understanding of public space as being held as collective property and made available for common use.
In areas where the City does not want people venturing, ‘No Trespassing’ signage is used to protect park users from the perceived safety concern and to protect the City’s liability (Interview with M. Price, October 11, 2017). In the interview with Price, it was made clear that the City, under the Occupier Liability Act, is in fact held to a higher standard of property care (and liability) than standard private property owners and consequently strives to maintain a high standard for “ensuring the safety of the public while they are on City property” (October 11, 2017). While there may be signage posted in certain areas (usually where a dispute has already occurred or when a particular issue has garnered attention), my understanding from an interview with a Bylaw Enforcement Manager is that the primary function of bylaw signage is to assert bylaw enforcement staff’s jurisdiction to enforce the bylaws: without the signage to justify ticketing, the authority of bylaw enforcement officers is often dismissed (Interview B, September 22, 2017). Similarly, the use of infrastructure, such as gates and clearly defined closed roads are used as justification for enforcement: if someone has deliberately ignored such indicators of closure, their presence would be considered trespassing (Interview B, September 22, 2017).

From that same interview, the manager acknowledged that it is well-known and well understood that most park bylaws are outdated and poorly represent the ways in which people use park spaces (Interview B, September 22, 2017). Recognizing the increased population and increased densification of the city, this Bylaw Enforcement manager noted how parks and public spaces are becoming de facto backyards as well as acknowledging how cultural practices and understandings of how urban public parks should be used are shifting. Though some shifts have occurred to redefine park bylaws to accommodate a wider breadth of park uses – for example allowing bake ovens and campfire sites in numerous public parks
across the city and better transparency and streamlining of park permitting processes – this interviewee stated that substantial updates or revisions to park bylaws have not occurred to reflect these shifts, let alone to consider how bylaws can become more meaningful and productive (Interview B, September 22, 2017; Councilor Tovey expressed similar sentiments in an interview, August 23, 2017).

As a jurisdictional consideration, it is significant to note that the Parks, Forestry and Recreation annually grants authority to the Toronto Police to trespass people based on the municipal code and the provincial *Trespass to Property Act* on Parks’ behalf (M. Price, October 11, 2017). Municipal Licensing and Standards (MLS), which operates bylaw enforcement, has the authority under the municipal code to enforce city bylaws; additionally, the police are given this same authority to ticket or trespass anyone contravening park bylaws. The bylaw enforcement manager, as well as management and policy staff at PFR, though aware of occasional complaints about sexual activity in Marie Curtis Park, were unaware of Project Marie and asserted that their staff played no part in the operation (M. Price, October 11, 2017; Interview B, September 22, 2017).

In an interview, Marcus McCann, one of the lawyers offering legal representation to those ticketed in Project Marie, noted that as the media and criticism of Project Marie unfolded, it appears that the police officers shifted their tactics from using trespass citations to applying ‘notice of trespass’ (July 18, 2017). While trespass citations are accompanied with a fine (that can then be challenged in court), trespass notices revoke the “implied license to be in the park” and stipulate that the individual given notice cannot return to the park for a given amount of time (ranging from two to five years) (M. McCann, July 18, 2017). McCann pointed out that, frustratingly, due to the fact that a notice of trespass has no accompanying
fine or court date there is no well-defined avenue for contesting the notice. Additionally, from what he heard from his clients, police had continued to serve notices of trespass through the winter and spring of 2017 well after Project Marie had officially ended (July 18, 2017; additionally see Figure 3). McCann pointed out that this lack of judicial oversight epitomizes an administrative state while relying on social stigma to ensure that those given notice adhere to the notice.

5.5 Conclusion

In this chapter I utilize the recent planning and implementation of a revitalization project in Marie Curtis Park to explore how decisions regarding infrastructure (e.g. parking lots, trails) and access to ecologically important areas (e.g. woodlots) impact and curtail informal uses of the park, including the use of the park for sex. I demonstrate how urban public parks are highly regulated spaces of socio-nature by drawing connections between the use of planning and municipal law. This results in the enforcement of a limited understanding of the recreational and ecological value of parks that seeks to curtail, to varying effects, the cruising in Marie Curtis Park.
Chapter 6 – Conclusion

The men having sex in the park, they’re also Torontonians, they’re also part of the community.
– Jen Robertson on CBC ‘The 180’

Project Marie might be over. The Toronto police may even have a few regrets. But there’s hundreds of Project Maries taking place in this city all of the time. And I don’t see how that’s ever going to stop.
– Mann (editorial in Xtra, Nov 3rd, 2017)

In this thesis, I analysed active policing and park design in order to critically examine how an urban public park space and the public sex that occurs there is regulated by specific and policed norms and expectations. My empirical findings from Project Marie and Marie Curtis Park illustrate how heteronormativity is reproduced through and embedded in the governance and regulation of public park space. My research builds on emergent scholarship at the intersection of queer geographies (and queer theory) and urban political ecology (Gandy, 2012; Heynen, 2017). This interstitial space between literatures and the work to bridge them made this research both challenging and exciting.

6.1 Harm reduction and planning for sex in parks

In conducting this research a question that kept arising was how should the police have responded to the knowledge of sexual activity occurring in Marie Curtis Park. At the most immediate level, it was made clear that an education focus rather than an enforcement focus (similar to how bylaw enforcement and police officers often treat public drinking in other urban public parks) to 22 Division’s community policing efforts would have been less harmful (Xtra Spark, 2016a). At a broader scale, others have called for an equality of needs
in the planning of public parks. As stated by Robertson and McLeod in an editorial in *Spacing Magazine* (2016),

An effective way forward involves planning that balances the needs of park users who do not wish to see explicit sexual acts, with the equally essential needs of queer people to have spaces to express their sexuality, in which they will not be traumatized and violated.

To acknowledge the needs of those who go to parks to cruise is a radical act in and of itself, to plan these needs into park design is a step further. In the same editorial Robertson and McLeod (2016) pointed to examples where parks have been planned to accommodate the reality of cruising. In Amsterdam’s Vondelpark, public sex has been officially allowed since 2008, as long as “patrons do not litter, do not engage in sexual activities near the playground, and limit public sex to evenings and nighttime.” These changes to regulation were made by the municipal government to “protect all members of the local community, including gay men who were being targeted by ‘queer-bashers’” (Robertson and McLeod, 2016). While the social and political contexts may vary between Amsterdam and Toronto, these gestures are material responses and strategies for resisting the displacement, exclusion and expulsion of men who seek sex with men in public parks and speak to broader commitments to producing spaces of justice, nature, and difference (Dooling, 2009).

At an equally practical level, the nascent Park Ambassador program run by Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PFR) is an example of a harm reduction approach to dealing with ‘user conflict’ in urban public parks (Interview with M. Price, October 11, 2017). The program is focused on supporting homeless individuals who are living in parks and have built encampments (primarily in ravines); the program consists of PFR staff trained to liaise between homeless individuals and various social and shelter services. Working in a front-line role, the Park Ambassador positions interface with bylaw and police officers yet do not
approach encampment issues punitively. The program is currently limited to serving downtown wards and has a limited staff (Interview with M. Price, October 11, 2017). At a recent Parks and Environment Committee meeting at City Hall (October 16, 2017), Councillor Wong-Tam requested an assessment of staffing and resource needs for the Park Ambassador program in order to better assess the potential for expanding the program. I see a direct connection between the intentions of Park Ambassador program and the need to approach sex in parks in a less harmful way than Project Marie was conducted. Additionally, as Kinsman (2016) critiqued, policing efforts against sexual activity should focus on activity that is violent, coercive and non-consensual, rather than sex that is simply happening in the ‘wrong place.’

6.2 Future directions for building upon research

This research has served as an initial examination into the social and ecological politics of a specific urban park space along Etobicoke’s waterfront yet there are numerous directions that could be expanded upon. Foremost, I was drawn to the literature on queer urban ecology and specifically the urban ecology of wastelands or ‘unruly spaces’ (Gandy, 2012, 2013; Patrick, 2014a, 2014b) as a way to conceptualize how cruising takes advantage of these in-between spaces and anomalous sites of urban nature. Gandy (2012, p. 734) defines unruly spaces as “those that do not play a clearly defined role, or which are characterized by ill-defined use or ownership, or that have been appropriated for uses other than those for which they were originally intended” such as the sides of railway lines, ravines (in the case of Toronto), or a forested area of an unmarked public space, such as the Arsenal Lands. While this line of inquiry felt too speculative for the empirical focus of this thesis, a more thorough study of the
queer claiming of this in-between space of urban nature would support this nascent scholarship of queer urban political ecology.

From a broader scale of urban political ecology and urbanization, the changes being made to Mississauga’s western waterfront – the Lakeview Waterfront Connection development – are substantial. This waterfront development, which includes significant acreage of new park space, beaches, wetlands, and a residential and business community on former industrial grounds, will irrevocably alter how the waterfront space, encompassing Marie Curtis Park and the Arsenal Lands is conceptualized and how it is used. Many of my interviews speculated to this effect (I. Jones, June 21, 2017; N. Gaffney, July 14, 2017; J. Tovey, August 23, 2017). The implications that this changing waterfront will have for cruising and specifically for the use of Marie Curtis Park’s forested trails and the anomalous space of the Arsenal Lands leads to a reflection on temporality, both of the space and of the cruising that can happen there.
References


Truelove, Y. (2011). (Re)-conceptualizing water inequality in Delhi, India through a feminist political ecology framework. GeoForum, 143-152.


## Appendix 1 – Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position, Organization</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Organizer, Queers Crash the Beat</td>
<td>August 8, 2017</td>
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<td>Coates, Leslie</td>
<td>Manager, Special Projects (Retired), City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation</td>
<td>October 31, 2017</td>
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<td>Gaffney, Nancy</td>
<td>Watershed Management, Toronto Region Conservation Authority</td>
<td>July 14, 2017</td>
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<td>Harvey, Janette</td>
<td>Natural Environment Specialist, City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation</td>
<td>November 23, 2017</td>
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<td>Interview A</td>
<td>Organizer, Queers Crash the Beat</td>
<td>July 31, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview B</td>
<td>Manager, Bylaw Enforcement, City of Toronto Municipal Licensing and Standards</td>
<td>September 22, 2017</td>
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<td>Jones, Irene</td>
<td>Organizer and member, Concerned Citizens for the Future of Etobicoke’s Waterfront</td>
<td>June 21, 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(and former City Councillor, Etobicoke)</td>
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<td>McCann, Marcus</td>
<td>Lawyer, Symes, Street &amp; Millard LLP and organizer, Queers Crash the Beat</td>
<td>July 18, 2017</td>
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<td>Mikiki</td>
<td>Organizer, Queers Crash the Beat</td>
<td>August 24, 2017</td>
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<td>Pill, Jaan</td>
<td>Resident, blogger, and local historian, Long Branch neighbourhood</td>
<td>October 24, 2017</td>
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<td>Price, Megan</td>
<td>Policy and Project Advisor, City of Toronto Parks, Forestry and Recreation</td>
<td>October 11, 2017</td>
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<td>Rae, Kyle</td>
<td>Lecturer in the Department of Politics and Public Administration at Ryerson, former</td>
<td>October 21, 2017</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Stea, Angela</td>
<td>Manager, Community Planning, Etobicoke York District, City of Toronto</td>
<td>November 7, 2017</td>
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<td>Tovey, Jim</td>
<td>City Councillor, Mississauga (Ward 1)</td>
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<td>Ursel, Susan</td>
<td>Lawyer and Senior Partner, Ursel Phillips Fellows Hopkinson LLP</td>
<td>September 26, 2017</td>
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<td>Wong-Tam, Kristyn</td>
<td>City Councillor, Toronto (Ward 27)</td>
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### Appendix 2 – Project Marie media

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<tr>
<td>Toronto police crack down on public sex in Marie Curtis Park</td>
<td>10-Nov-16</td>
<td>Reason, C.</td>
<td>Etobicoke Guardian</td>
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<td>Toronto police charge dozens of men with sexual offences in Etobicoke park</td>
<td>11-Nov-16</td>
<td>Mann, A.</td>
<td>Xtra</td>
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<td>Police crack down on lewd acts in Etobicoke park</td>
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<td>Global News Toronto</td>
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<td>Over 70 people charged after residents complain of public sex acts in Etobicoke park</td>
<td>11-Nov-16</td>
<td>Amin, F.</td>
<td>City News</td>
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<td>Toronto police lay charges after Etobicoke residents complain of public sex acts in park</td>
<td>11-Nov-16</td>
<td>Draaisma, M.</td>
<td>CBC News</td>
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<td>Toronto police cracking down on public sex in Etobicoke park: Project Marie aimed at discouraging sex, indecent exposure and more at Marie Curtis Park</td>
<td>13-Nov-16</td>
<td>Reason, C.</td>
<td>Toronto Star</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lawyer vows to help men charged in Etobicoke park sting</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>Mann, A.</td>
<td>Xtra</td>
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<td>Project Marie is shocking, but at least as gay men we know how to respond</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>McCann, M.</td>
<td>Xtra</td>
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<td>Police target sex in Etobicoke park</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>Davidson, T.; Doucette, C.</td>
<td>Toronto Sun</td>
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<td>Arrests won't deter outdoor park sex</td>
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<td>Proulx, S.</td>
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<td>Stop the crackdown on consensual queer sex: Toronto police at it again with Project Marie</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>Kinsman, G.</td>
<td>Radical Noise</td>
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<td>Over 70 People Charged For Committing Sex Acts in Park Just Outside Mississauga</td>
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<td>Group of lawyers step up to defend men charged in Etobicoke park sting</td>
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<td>McGillivray, K.</td>
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<td>LGBT activists are concerned after dozens of men were charged by police at a cruising park in Toronto</td>
<td>14-Nov-16</td>
<td>Strapagiel, L.</td>
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<td>Park sex appears to continue despite arrests</td>
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<td>Toronto Sun</td>
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<td>Lawyers offering free services to suspects charged in undercover Toronto police sex sting</td>
<td>15-Nov-16</td>
<td>n/a</td>
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<td>Lawyers offering free services to those caught up in Toronto police sex sting</td>
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<td>Global News</td>
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<td>Homophobia motivated &quot;Project Marie&quot; park sting, NDP critic says</td>
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<td>McGillivray, K.</td>
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<td>Federal NDP denounces Etobicoke park crackdown</td>
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<td>Q&amp;A: Marcus McCann, the lawyer who's defending the men accused of &quot;lewd behaviour&quot; in an Etobicoke park</td>
<td>18-Nov-16</td>
<td>Shea, C.</td>
<td>Toronto Life</td>
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<td>Toronto police should drop Project Marie charges, city and provincial politicians say</td>
<td>18-Nov-16</td>
<td>Rieti, J.</td>
<td>CBC News</td>
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<td>Protesters, residents and police discuss park sex crackdown at protest</td>
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<td>Mann, A.</td>
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<td>Marie Curtis Park becomes centre point of debate about public space</td>
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<td>Mudhar, R.</td>
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<td>Kim, P.</td>
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<td>Walk the Beat sees community, police come together to 'take back' Marie Curtis Park</td>
<td>19-Nov-16</td>
<td>Reason, C.</td>
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<td>Give cops medals for efforts to stop park sex</td>
<td>23-Nov-16</td>
<td>Warmington, J.</td>
<td>Toronto Sun</td>
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<td>Panic in Marie Curtis Park</td>
<td>23-Nov-16</td>
<td>Keogh, D.</td>
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<td>Police sting operation dismaying</td>
<td>24-Nov-16</td>
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<td>Why Project Marie was a witch hunt on gay men</td>
<td>25-Nov-16</td>
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<td>Project Marie is the latest chapter in Toronto police's long history of targeting queer sex</td>
<td>28-Nov-16</td>
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<td>Is public sex in parks a public safety concern?</td>
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<td>Robertson, J., McLeod, M.</td>
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<td>Is the queer community ready to defend public sex?</td>
<td>30-Nov-16</td>
<td>Maynard, S.</td>
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<td>Cities need to plan for sex in public parks</td>
<td>4-Dec-16</td>
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<td>Why these queer women stand in solidarity with gay men opposing Project Marie</td>
<td>5-Dec-16</td>
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<td>Constitutionality of police bylaw use questioned</td>
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<td>Why closeted men go to parks for sex</td>
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<td>Tickets withdrawn after morality raids in Etobicoke's Marie Curtis Park</td>
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<td>No nudity at the kiddie pool, please</td>
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<td>Protip: Don't have sex in public parks</td>
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<td>Toronto police regret lack of LGBT outreach before undercover park sting</td>
<td>1-Nov-17</td>
<td>Mann, A.</td>
<td>Xtra</td>
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<td>Project Marie was about morality and respectability – that's why it could happen again tomorrow</td>
<td>3-Nov-17</td>
<td>Mann, A.</td>
<td>Xtra</td>
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<td>Embarrassment led to withdrawal of charges from police sting, says lawyer</td>
<td>7-Nov-17</td>
<td>Davidson, T.</td>
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Appendix 4 – Queers Crash the Beat ‘About Us’

Retrieved from: queerscrashthebeat.com

Queers Crash the Beat is a project and collective formed by a rag-tag group of Toronto-based queers in response to historical and ongoing failures in policing.

We believe in the values of queer pleasure, of liberation, and of harm reduction. This necessarily places us in opposition to racist and homophobic practices of police in the Greater Toronto Area, at the institutional, individual, and cultural level.

Also central to our project is a commitment to queer identity and activism as the driving political and creative force for our work. As queers working against the long history of violence, oppression, and coercion by the police, we share an understanding that:

We oppose the policing of consensual sexuality and pleasure, which has long been the chosen target against which police have enacted homophobic violence and abuse. Queer sexuality in private and in public threatens the straight, patriarchal society which attempts to contain and subdue us. An intersectional approach to queer and sexual liberation is a necessary challenge to this order.

Organizing against police is a shared and historical struggle, and the groups and individuals most affected by discriminatory policing are also the people who have historically led the resistance against state violence: black people, Indigenous people, people of colour, transwomen and other femmes, people living with HIV, poor folks, drug users and psychiatric survivors.

Our goals begin at holding police accountable for their actions, and continue through and beyond aspirations for a world without police or any militarized state, and where queers, people of colour and other marginalized groups are not subject to the targeted abuses inherent to the criminal justice system.

We believe in a diversity of tactics to respond to police misconduct and institutional racism and homophobia in the criminal justice system, including: public confrontations of power through direct action, outreach and education, advocating and lobbying to politicians and powerbrokers, and developing ongoing solidarity with and accountability to allied groups.

As a collective of individuals, our lived experiences and identities are unique but overlapping, intersecting and always shifting. There are inherent power imbalances and differences in the group related to race, gender, age, ability, class and income, and history — and it is our ongoing project to acknowledge and respond to these dynamics with care and consideration.

We are a changing and non-hierarchical organizing crew working in collaboration and in solidarity with other groups to realize true justice for queer folks. Because we are a diffuse and changing group of individuals, with different skills and approaches to these issues, the shape of our activism is perpetually changing. However, our shared commitment a queer, intersectional resistance to police violence stays at the core of our reason to be.