Queer Pop-Ups: A Cultural Innovation in Urban Life

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Research on sexuality and space emphasizes geographic and institutional forms that are stable, established, and fixed. By narrowing their analytic gaze on such places, which include gayborhoods and bars, scholars use observations about changing public opinions, residential integration, and the closure of nighttime venues to conclude that queer urban and institutional life is in decline. We use queer pop-up events to challenge these dominant arguments about urban sexualities and to advocate instead a "temporary turn" that analyzes the relationship between ephemerality and placemaking. Drawing on interviews with party promoters and participants in Vancouver, our findings show that ephemeral events can have enduring effects. Pop-ups refresh ideas about communal expression, belonging, safety, and the ownership of space among queer-identified people who feel excluded from the gayborhood and its bars. As a case, pop-ups compel scholars to broaden their focus from a preoccupation with permanent places to those which are fleeting, transient, short-lived, and experienced for only a moment. Only when we see the city as a collection of temporary spaces can we appreciate how queer people convert creative cultural visions into spatial practices that enable them to express an oppositional ethos and to congregate with, and celebrate, their imagined communities.

Temporary spaces were popular meeting grounds of queer life in the United States and Canada prior to World War II (Chauncey 1994; Maynard 1994). Drag balls, cruising parks, theaters, and other such sites that were "scattered" (Forsyth 2001:343) across the city created opportunities for sexual expressions and connections in a climate when homosexuality was severely repressed. In the decades following the War, once episodic social opportunities solidified into permanent bars and social venues that anchored the queer imagination to urban environments (Hubbard 2012; Hubbard et al. 2015). The "great gay migration" (Weston 1995) of the 1970s and early 1980s brought thousands of queer people to major metropolises across North America (D'Emilio 1983; Stryker 2002). As more establishments opened, so too did a backlash of homophobic police raids, arrests, and public harassments (Armstrong 2002; Stewart-Winter 2016). To withstand them, bar goers, business owners, and activists clustered together in areas that developed into "gayborhoods" (Ghaziani 2014b). These districts have globalized today and are now a common feature in cities "all over the world" (Martel 2018:18).

Research on sexuality and space focuses on geographic and institutional expressions that are stable and enduring (Baldor 2018; Brown 2008; Hartless 2018; Mattson 2015; Orne 2017). Scholars assume that such places, which include gayborhoods and gay bars,

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are declining in significance due to liberalizing attitudes toward homosexuality (Twenge et al. 2015), the popularity of geo-coded mobile apps among gay men (Renninger 2018), and a global affordability crisis (Wetzstein 2017). A recurring attention to the effects of acceptance, technology, and gentrification on fixed places makes it difficult to see the creative solutions that some people have found in the use of temporary spaces to express a spirit of political resistance as they celebrate and play. In this article, we call on urban and sexuality researchers to shift their focus from permanent and fixed places to those which are temporary and transient. This is the defining feature of what we call "pop-ups" (Ghaziani and Stillwagon 2018). Resembling the scattered places from earlier years along with contemporary neo-tribes (Hardy et al. 2018) and cultural festivals (Wynn 2015), queer pop-ups are geographically diffuse and episodic events where a high proportion of participants identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or two-spirited (LGBTQ/2S[1])—or just queer, a word which emphasizes anti-normative, intersectional (Crenshaw 1991) subjectivities, fluid identities, a rejection of heteronormativity, and a plurality of social justice and sex-positive worldviews. The emergence of pop-ups in cities across the world provides an opportunity to consider the relationship between ephemerality and placemaking efforts.

The following questions motivate our thinking as we outline a vision for a "temporary turn" in sexuality and urban studies: How can we explain the emergence of moveable events like pop-ups? How are they organized? What cultural practices do they engender? What difficulties do promoters encounter? Pop-ups challenge the assumption that all LGBTQ/2S individuals are assimilating "into the fashionable mainstream" (A. Collins 2004:1802) and thus no longer require separate social spaces (Gorman-Murray and Waitt 2009). New gay (Savin-Williams 2005), post-gay (Ghaziani 2011), postmodern homosexual (Nash 2013), post-closeted (Dean 2014), post-marriage equality (NeJaime 2016), and post-lesbian (Forstie 2018) frameworks assume in common the declining centrality of sexual orientation in the lives of LGBTQ/2S people. These arguments are based on observations of fixed, stable, and relatively permanent urban, social, organizational, and institutional forms. By shifting our analytic focus away from such places toward those which are temporary, we use queer pop-ups to show that episodic events which may lack geographic anchors can still have enduring effects.

GAYBORHOODS AND GAY BARS

Once thriving as collective expressions of queer life, gayborhoods today are diminishing in size and scope (Brown 2014; Hubbard et al. 2015). U.S. census data show that between 2000 and 2010, male and female same-sex households became less segregated from all opposite-sex households in the one hundred most populous cities in the country (Morales 2018; Spring 2013). Observations of residential desegregation produce conclusions that we live in a post-gay era where LGBTQ/2S people can express themselves openly, access legal rights, and experience a greater range of life chances than did their predecessors (Lea et al. 2015; Russell et al. 2009). Post-gay does not mean post-discrimination, since acceptance is uneven (Mathers et al. 2018; Mathers et al. 2015)—even in the gayborhood (Doan 2007; Knee 2018)—where straight residents, who say they support gay rights and feel a common humanity with their LGBTQ/2S neighbors, still discriminate against them (Brodyn and Ghaziani 2018). Rather, post-gay is a conceptual

shorthand that consolidates multiple empirical indicators pointing to shifts in the meanings and material expressions of sexuality. In a series of studies, Ghaziani (2014a, 2014b, 2015a, 2015b) shows that acceptance creates an expansive residential imagination among LGBTQ/2S individuals and allows some of them to feel culturally similar to their straight neighbors. These two mechanisms of geographic expansion and cultural sameness motivated his queer respondents to pursue residence and social opportunities beyond the gayborhood.

As public opinion changes, government officials and business owners are redefining the place of the gayborhood in the metropolis. No longer sites of resistance (Castells 1983; Hanhardt 2013; Stryker and Van Buskirk 1996), gayborhoods today are places of cosmopolitan consumption (Florida 2002; Rushbrook 2002), as evidenced by the decision of many local businesses to drape themselves in rainbow décor. This is a strategy of commodifying queer culture and heritage (Hewison 1987). It proceeds through speculative investments and tourism campaigns (Hyde 2014), which require city officials to rebrand the gayborhood as full of "leisure-based consumption sites" (Gorman-Murray and Nash 2017:786) like bars, nightclubs, and restaurants. This approach has a negative effect on queer sociality. In San Francisco, Mattson (2015) shows that as straights became more attracted to the queer scene since 1999, their overpopulation wiped out gay and lesbian bars; within 11 years, the number dropped from 13 to three. The propensity among young heterosexuals for public drunkenness and property destruction forced the city in 2013 to ban new bars from opening.

By rebranding gayborhoods as part of the culture industry (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002), city officials have created conditions that allow straight people, women in particular, to go "on safari" (Orne 2017:35) into gay bars. Their influx rewards a narrow range of practices, like strip shows and shower contests, while disrupting radical displays of sex and queerness (Binnie and Skeggs 2004; Leap 1999; Rechy 1977). This neoliberal and homonormative shift, as Duggan (2002) calls it, is remarkable to observe: Gay bars harassed by the police 40 years ago are now protected by them through a process of city-financed cultural authentication (Bell and Binnie 2004; Hanhardt 2013).

From an experiential point of view, greater numbers of straight people and couples "[fray] the fabric of the gayborhood" (Ghaziani 2015b:320), erode the cultural authenticity of its social spaces, and disrupt the energy that queer people try to cultivate among themselves (Baldor 2018; Orne 2017). One national study showed a 12 percent drop in the number of gay bars in the U.S. between 2005 and 2011: from 1605 to 1405.[2] As assimilation refashions "gay" to signify upper- and middle-class white cis gay maleness—the "good gays" (Warner 1999:113), who enjoy a place in the "charmed circle" (Rubin 1993:13)—the culturally-rebranded gayborhood excludes people of color (Greene 2018; Nero 2005), lesbians (Brown-Saracino 2011; Eves 2004), trans and nonbinary individuals (Doan 2007; Namaste 2000), sex workers (Ross and Sullivan 2012), two-spirit individuals (Cannon 1998; Ristock et al. 2017), and people of lower incomes (Barrett and Pollack 2005). For these groups, temporary places, which are often available away from expensive, consumption-oriented, white, and male-dominated gayborhoods, provide vehicles for safety, alternative sexual expressions, and consciousness rising. The cultural practices that these particular segments of LGBTQ/2S people engender in temporary spaces are unlike what we see in the gayborhood and in gay bars. In the next section, we detail these distinctions to set up an argument about the relationship between pop-ups and placemaking.

POP-UPS AND PLACEMAKING

Pop-ups can take many forms, ranging from sporting and food events to cultural performances, art exhibits, and dance parties. Queer pop-ups offer a mode of congregation that resemble phenomena of broad interest to urban and sexuality scholars. They are similar to the fleeting occasions of music festivals (Wynn 2015), Mardi Gras-like events (Stone 2017), circuit parties (Ghaziani and Cook 2005; Mansergh et al. 2001), and the gatherings of faeries, bears, and leathermen (Hennen 2008). Each is an example of a "neo-tribe" whose members seek a sense of belonging and communal connection with likeminded others (Hardy et al. 2018). In this section, we consider how pop-ups promote placemaking, how social capital affects their organizing, and the dynamic between seeking safety and reproducing oppressive systems.

Research on sexuality, space, and culture conceptualizes placemaking as efforts by people to imprint their "values, perceptions, memories, and traditions on a landscape" (Kaufman and Kaliner 2011; Lew 2017:449).[3] It includes the creative practices that people bring to a geographic canvas in order to claim it, overlay their community attachments onto it, and feel a sense of belonging when they occupy it. Placemaking transforms how a place looks and feels to group members, how they interact with the area, and their territorial aspirations about it. These spatial practices and collective interactions change an existing "space" into a special and powerful "place" (Gieryn 2000).

Pop-ups expand our geographic imagination (Harvey 2005) beyond the placemaking efforts that scholars have documented in fixed areas like the gayborhood (Greene 2014, 2018) and in stable institutions like gay bars (Mattson 2015). Pop-ups provide a temporary third space (Oldenburg 1989; Putnam 2000) for queer people who construct them in contrast to existing spaces, many of which they perceive as inaccessible, unaffordable, exclusive, and sometimes discriminatory. For example, pop-ups offer community-building opportunities for queer women who use interpretive repertoires (Eves 2004) to carve spaces of pleasure and consumption. Likewise, some Black and Latinx queer youth find community through ballroom culture. Starting in Harlem more than 50 years ago and derived from transatlantic musical and aesthetic hybridities (Gilroy 1993), ballroom culture now extends across the globe. It is crafted by fictive kinship structures and ritualized performances, or balls (Arnold and Bailey 2009). Bailey (2014:499) argues that ballroom culture enables self-expression among marginalized queers, transforming venues reserved for weddings or other community gatherings into black queer spaces of rich possibilities. These examples suggest that queerness often lives in temporary performance geographies, places other than the gayborhood and bars, where certain segments of LGBTQ/2S populations empower themselves with their own interaction (R. Collins 2004) and entertainment rituals (Niiah 2008; Thorpe 1996). Participating in ephemeral and spatially-mobile events like pop-ups provide opportunities to express an oppositional ethos and to congregate with, and celebrate, imagined communities for groups who historically have been the most invisible.

Conventional views of placemaking emphasize the need for "an array of physical and social elements to cohere in a given locale" (Molotch et al. 2000:792–93). Pop-ups, however, are temporary spaces that move from one venue and neighborhood to another. Their fleeting and spatially-mobile character, the individuals who are drawn to them, the social practices that people cultivate in those spaces, and the symbols and logos

that participants use to represent their queer cultural styles, tones, and aesthetics "lash up" or "make each other up" (ibid.) into something new—and not well documented in prior research. Like "any identifiable thing in the world," pop-ups unite "an ensemble of forces" (ibid.)—queerness and ephemerality in this case. The idea behind a given pop-up event, rather than the particular place where it emerges, is what acquires "character" (ibid.) and meanings. Unhinged from a specific venue or neighborhood, pop-ups can move to different parts of the city while retaining a consistent image and identity. They show that placemaking efforts do not always require institutional and geographic expressions that are stable and enduring.

Because pop-ups are performative geographies that are fleeting, organizing them requires arrangements with venues that can provide momentary anchors. Organizers must possess a high degree of social capital within their networks to make this happen (Coleman 1998; Portes 1998). These relational resources can produce positive and negative effects (Bourdieu 1986; Fukuyama 2000; Putnam 1993). Positive benefits include access to economic resources, perceptions of expertise, bonding people within communities and bridging them with sympathetic networks, creating a spatial consciousness, and establishing institutional credentials that secure contracts and funds for social gatherings. Social capital can also produce negative outcomes by reproducing exclusive organizational strategies, placing excessive demands on members, breaking down trust, and restricting social opportunities for those who are outside the network. Because the accumulated efforts of individuals operating in embedded networks are necessary to produce pop-ups, we must remain sensitive to the uneven consequences of social capital in these spaces.

Consider the relationship between pop-ups and safety as an example. The Roestone Collective (2014) remind us that the idea of safety undergirding popular notions of "safe spaces" is relational, context dependent, heterogeneous, and socially constructed through the collective interpretations of its members. The pursuit of safety and the strategic exchange of social capital among queer people can become unexpectedly oppressive. Saying the "right thing" or presenting yourself in the "right way" to signal your membership in a group can become an ideological mechanism to regulate boundaries (Gamson 1997; Ghaziani 2008). Orne (2017:220) calls this "queernormativity," or the standardization of queerness in narrow ways that destabilizes its radical potential. The major consequence of queernormativity is the "downward leveling norms" (Portes 1998:17) that it produces. These pressures to perform in particular ways isolate queers from each other, rather than building intimacies among them. Queernormativity can place demands on members to police one another, thereby excluding outsiders and restricting individual freedoms. Such practices fragment queer spaces. Therefore, when they imagine pop-ups as safe spaces, organizers must be "reflexive about what and who they seek safety *from* and safety *for*" (Roestone Collective 2014:1361).

There are many theoretical directions that urban, culture, and sexualities scholars can pursue by studying pop-ups more closely. We focus on how placemaking occurs in ephemeral and spatially-mobile environments while resisting dominant, neoliberal narratives of assimilation and cultural loss. Pop-ups reinvigorate the centrality of sexuality, especially queerness, in social life, and they allow participants to forge enduring communal sensibilities in temporary spaces. Scholars who only focus on stable urban and institutional forms will miss the innovative cultural practices and worldmaking efforts that transpire in pop-ups (Brim and Ghaziani 2016; Muñoz 1996).

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METHODS

We analyze pop-up events in Vancouver. This city is often overlooked by urban sociologists, yet it is an ideal place to study questions related to sexuality and space. Located on the west coast of Canada, Vancouver is the third largest city in the country. It is widely recognized as a "tolerant, multicultural, and liberal" place with large numbers of same-sex households (Lauster and Easterbrook 2011:394) and men who have sex with other men (Rich et al. 2018). Vancouver was the site of the first large-scale Canadian homophile organization in 1964, the Association for Social Knowledge (ASK), which established a network of local and regional activist and service groups for queer rights across the Pacific Northwest (Harris 2004). Five years later in 1969, Canada decriminalized same-sex sexual conduct, and the country legalized marriage in 2005. In recent years, Vancouver has established itself as a tourist destination and "avant-garde paradise" for LGBTQ/S2 people (Canadian Broadcasting Company 2006; Murray 2016:71). Queer organizations today are thriving. Vancouver is home to the Q Hall of Fame, a national museum housing Canadian LGBTQ/2S activism; Qmunity, a social service organization catering to urban and regional queer populations; and cultural festivals such as Gay Pride Week, the Queer Film Festival, and the Queer Arts Festival, one of the top five artist-run events in the world.

Vancouver displays a pattern of "cultural archipelagos" and "spatial plurality" (Ghaziani 2019) with its two queer urban centers: Davie Village, located in the West End, and Commercial Drive in East Vancouver (Bouthillette 1997; Lo and Healy 2000; Murray 2016; Ross and Sullivan 2012). Adjacent to the downtown financial center, Davie Village caters primarily to middle- and upper-class white, gay, cis men, while The Drive, an economically modest "counter-cultural, lesbian and leftist" hub flanked by an industrial waterfront, is inhabited by a higher proportion of female lesbians, trans- and genderqueer folks (Ley and Dobson 2008:2487).

We used a combination of key informant and snowball sampling strategies to interview 21 LGBTQ/2S people who produce and frequent queer pop-ups in the city. Table 1 shows the demographic distribution of our respondents.

Our sample consists of individuals who are active in planning and promoting pop-up events. These include a two-spirit activist who speaks at events across North America and the executive director of Out on Screen, a nonprofit organization that celebrates queer lives through film. Out on Screen hosts an annual queer film festival, the second largest cultural event in Western Canada. Out on Screen is also connected with another group called Out in Schools, which uses queer films and conversations about them to reach 28,000 students and educators in British Columbia in 2016 alone. Our sample also includes a core organizer for Black Lives Matter Vancouver, a leader of Qmunity (the queer community center that is located in the Davie Village gayborhood), a consultant for local trans issues, multiple party organizers and DJs, a Queer as Funk performer whose band performs across the city, and a health care provider for a queer wellness organization. Finally, we also include the perspectives of several attendees as well.[4]

Our data emphasize the perspectives of organizers, people who possess high levels of social capital, education, and community embeddedness. Organizers will promote the innovations and inventiveness of their own product in light of their cultural, economic, and political interests. While this will affect generalizability, we do not advance claims of central tendencies. Rather, our goal is to introduce the concept of pop-ups into scholarly conversations about city life. While our modest sample size constrains our ability to

TABLE 1. Sample Demographics

	N
Age	
20–29	7
30–39	10
40 and older	4
Sexual orientation	
Queer	11
Gay	6
Pansexual	3
Bisexual	1
Multiple identities	5*
Gender	
Female	11
Male	5
Genderqueer	4
Nonbinary	1
Multiple identities	2*
2Spirit/Indigenous	
Yes	1
No	20
Race-Ethnicity	
White	13
Taiwanese	2
Chinese (multiracial)	2
Black	1
Filipino	1
South Asian	1
Refuse to identify	1
Born in Canada	
Yes	15
No	6
*Education***	
Some college	1
Bachelor's degree	5
Master's degree	6
Relationship status	
Single	7
With women	6
With men	4
With transmen	1
With trans nonbinary human	2
With two genderqueer humans	1

*Respondents who selected more than one option.
**Respondents not specified ($n = 9$) are currently in the process of completing a post-secondary degree program.

make systematic comparisons between promoters and attendees, we identify such themes where it is generative. Future researchers will be better positioned to ask more nuanced questions about the consumption and reception of ephemeral spaces. In addition, the subjectivities of the first author, who conducted the interviews, as a white, middle-class, fluidly gay-to-queer, cis-male limited our ability to travel to all spaces in the city. We did not have access to exclusively racialized queer pop-ups, nor trans-specific events. That said, many of our interviewees shared with us their experiences about such gatherings,

TABLE 2. Global Themes and Reliability Tests

Global Theme	Description	Stability
LGBTQ/2S Current spaces	This theme captures names and locations of existing queer events and spaces, their respective tones, the types of people who attend them, and comparisons between them. Within this code also are conversations on the social determinants of space, including race, economics, age, and life course perspectives.	80.56
LGBTQ/2S Aspirational spaces	This theme designates discussions about ideal spaces, including the spaces and times they respondents felt most welcomed within gay and queer spaces. This theme answers the question: "What do pop-ups provide that other spaces elide?"	88.94
Change mechanisms	This theme houses discussions about technologies, perspectives, or conflicts that can produce cultural and spatial change. Major subthemes include callout culture, the politics of space, and carving out cultural spaces of distinction and safety (such as Black Lives Matter and QTPOColypse).	88.805
City and gayborhood influences	This theme animates conversations on the influences of the gayborhood and Vancouver on LGBTQ/2S communities. Captured here are conversations about how respondents think the city affects LGBTQ/2S communities and what it could do to better support its members.	84.81

and we incorporate their views into the results. Despite these limitations, our sample remains rich with a type of queer spatial and cultural diversity seldom seen in published studies on gayborhoods and gay bars.

We organized our interviews around the following themes: motivations for attendance; comparisons between pop-ups, gayborhoods, and gay bars (e.g., cultures, tones, vibes, demographics, and other "scene" characteristics [Silver and Clark 2016]); memorable moments; organizing challenges; and attitudes about available queer spaces in the city. The conversations averaged an hour each, and they ranged from 30 minutes to 2 hours. We recorded and transcribed all our interviews. In total, our data include 392 transcribed pages of single-spaced text. We coded this dataset using the logic of theme analysis (Ryan and Bernard 2003) to generate an initial first-level round of codes. To discover larger themes, we employed a strategy that Saldaña (2013:8) calls "essence-capturing." A heuristic discovery of the text is at the heart of this approach, an outcome that we achieved by repacking particular sentences and passages that were evocative of our research questions into a set of focused codes. We clustered these codes into broader organizing frameworks. Finally, we arranged those frameworks into four "global themes" (Attride-Stirling 2001:389): (1) existing spaces for queer people, (2) aspirational spaces for queer people, (3) mechanisms for spatial change, and (4) city and gayborhood influences on pop-ups. Our analytic procedure included reflexivity at each level, which allowed us to ensure that our codes were unique and validly measured (Miles and Huberman 1994).

Some scholars lament that qualitative analyses are unreliable (Biernacki 2014). To demonstrate that this is not always or inevitably the case—and certainly was not for us—we conducted interrater reliability tests. The purpose of the test was to determine whether our global themes were inter-subjectively stable (Campbell et al. 2013). The procedure entails four steps. First, we selected at random 10 percent of our transcribed pages. Next, we trained an independent coder on our analytic procedures, including all levels of our

themes. Once the training was complete, we asked the coder to analyze the randomly-selected subset of our data, focusing in particular on the stability of measuring the four global themes. The first pass resulted in 80 percent agreement across all but one of our codes. To address the discrepancy, we adopted a "negotiated agreement approach" in which we discussed our disagreements in an effort to "reconcile them and arrive at a final version in which as many discrepancies as possible have been resolved" (ibid.:305). This final portion of our procedure yielded above an 80 percent level of reliability across all global themes and thus confirmed intersubjective stability (Table 2).

We now turn to our results, which we organize into three sections: the emergence of queer pop-ups, their organizational structure, and the cultural practices that they engender.

RESULTS

EMERGENCE

Pop-ups emerge to provide space, visibility, and representation for queer people who feel excluded from mainstream gay and lesbian life in the city. One popular event in Vancouver is called "Denim Vest." Two femme lesbians in their early thirties organize the party. One woman, Melanie, describes Denim Vest as "centered around community-determined access [that] collaboratively tries to figure out what safer spaces can look like." For her, dance parties promise to counteract misogyny, colonialism, and nonconsensual contact. "There was always the feeling of unease because of how things have been organized to not address [colonial] appropriation—or even base-line consent. That's why we made Denim Vest." Melanie remembers having "pointed conversations" with queer folks of color, femme-identifying individuals, and suburban queers to figure out what safety looks like from their point of view. She wanted to create a space that could accommodate historically excluded groups.

Pop-ups like the one that Melanie organizes are political insofar as they attempt to forge a feeling of community among marginalized queers. She explains, "Denim Vest is seen as a political space because it's . . . an arena for belonging and desirability." For queer people from different backgrounds to experience this sense of belonging and desirability, Melanie says that planning for pop-ups must be "trauma-informed" and sensitive to the intersectional oppressions of racism, ableism, sexism, homophobia, classism, and indigenous erasure that queers experience on a daily basis. She remarks, "In East Van, [events are] very, very politicized, and there's like tons and tons of conversations about mental health and pain and trauma. And when we do events, they are centered on that, and you can't really get away from it." A trauma-informed perspective acknowledges mental health and structural oppressions through the planning process and during the event itself. It starts with advertising, which sets a tone of safety—consensual contact and the acknowledgment of indigenous oppressions—and it carries through in how the event staff are trained to interact with patrons. Further enforcing safety at Denim Vest is what they call their "buddy-system." In this approach, designated staff wear neon vests and casually patrol the venue to adjudicate situations where nonconsensual contact or drug overdose occur. "Everyone's trained up. Our buddies are trained up. We're always walking around with NARCAN kits [to resuscitate someone who overdoes on drugs]," says Melanie.

Melanie produces three parties—Open Relationship, Queers & Beers, and Denim Vest—and the goal at each is the same: treat participants as community members, not consumers. Having revelers see each other as "human" rather than "consumers" requires organizers to train staff members on matters of etiquette. Melanie describes how she accomplishes this: "I'll have a meeting with the door staff and the bar staff to be like, 'Ok, here's how we do things, and we're working together. Just remember our party is organized around access. Please don't call anyone ladies or gentlemen.'" Organizers like Melanie discourage gendered nouns since many attendees identify as gender fluid, trans, or nonbinary. Organizers also consider issues of economic access and affordability when people enter into the space. "Instead of people handing the money to you, they put it into a jar," Melanie clarifies, "because it's always pay-what-you-can with a suggested sliding scale fee." Participants decide how much they can give, based on what they can afford.

Lakshay is a former member of the collective QTPOColypse, a group that empowers queer and trans-identified people of color. A trans South Asian party organizer of events in Montreal and Vancouver, they (their pronoun of choice) describe the type of spaces that best suit pop-ups: "My favorite type of space is like a long rectangular room," Lakshay begins. "I like it when it's dingy. I like it when the ceilings are low. I like it when it's sweaty and when it feels crowded." Spaces that are too clean or too large damage the communal effervescence of queer gatherings, Lakshay argues, because "queer possibilities need to be a little dirty." Unpolished, gritty spaces that attract a diverse menagerie of bodies, aesthetics, and ages to dance together open up possibilities for spontaneous relationships to form among people who would otherwise be stratified and separated by the roles and responsibilities they perform in their home and work lives. Grungy spaces lessen the focus on social status and create possibilities for people to meet each other where they are—"the ideal party," says Lakshay. When different bodies are in the room dancing together, the party becomes electric—the gay boys, trans and nonbinary folk, queers, dykes and femme lesbians, and bi-folk of all ages and racial compositions are in close contact, making out, sweating together, holding each other. "I want to be able to talk to everyone in one space, because otherwise I always leave a part of myself behind at the door when I walk in," Lakshay emotes, alluding to a poem by Pat Parker. "When I think of LGBTQ or queerness or like all of that—I just want it all in one place. I want to know that we're all being attended to in the same amount and that we care for each other." Lakshay describes their ideal space as a sacred, spiritual gathering, a "queer Mecca" or "queer heaven."

Pop-ups represent and provide spaces for a tremendous range of gender and sexual subcultures. Lesbian and trans folk seeking spaces on the forefront of political progressivism head to "Denim Vest," or they make their way with other queers to the gender-bender, drag-king-and-'thing' dance party called "Man Up." Alternately, they can head over to a fire-spinning event or to amateur strip shows like "Rent Cheque." People of color (POC) might flock to parties like "Silk Scarf" or "KILL JOY," whereas two-spirit individuals might prefer to center their indigeneity at sweat lodges through powwow dancing or the occasional two-spirit drag show, like "2SpiritRebellion," sponsored by the annual Queer Arts Festival. Each pop-up points to diverse possibilities for placemaking in the city. Man Up, a drag king pop-up that celebrated its tenth year and 100th show in November 2017, has evolved into a performative art exhibit that invites the audience to interact with its drag characters, thereby continually queering gender norms within a performative

space. On the other hand, Rent Cheque queers its space through the sex-positivity of gay and straight amateur performers who uncoordinatedly strip for a couple hundred dollars while organizers try their hand at getting the audience to dance topless between sets. KILL JOY and Silk Scarf represent initiatives by people of color who feel gayborhood culture is too white. They create their own spaces of community to express themselves and experience a high density of belonging with other people of color, a "corporeal effervescence," to allude playfully to classical writings by Durkheim (1912).

ORGANIZATION

Pop-up events arise through collaborative efforts of queer organizers who leverage their community social capital and event-planning experiences to host gatherings that promote self-expression, safety, and inclusion. Organizing pop-ups happens through successive waves of young, energetic queer organizers who cycle through investments and burnouts, reflects Jess, a white trans DJ in their 30s who is part of a DJ duo called "Body Party" that plays at many events in Vancouver. "What happens is that people organize, organize, organize, burn out. And then somebody else will organize, organize, organize, burn out." Being an organizer seems "nightmarish," yet Jess also observes that energy around staging pop-ups is a constant and steady force in the city. Several respondents noted the crucial role that networks play in transmitting resources that are necessary to ensure this continuity, despite the short lifespan of any given event. For example, one of the original queer parties in Vancouver, "Prance," donated all their organizing materials and financial resources to OTPOCoylpse. When QTPOCoylpse closed up shop, organizers transferred their accumulated materials next to Denim Vest.

Melanie attributes the cycles of organizing to the lack of resources, time, and influence in municipal politics that queer people have in the city, along with the lack of affordable spaces for them to congregate. "It's interesting 'cause when pop up parties first started, they weren't necessarily supposed to be pop-ups; they were supposed to be continuous. Not only do people burn out, but parties also become pop-up kinds of things . . . because there aren't really any [stable] places in Vancouver." The iterative nature of pop-ups points to the frustrations that organizers experience with securing and maintaining temporary events amid rapacious gentrification. Melanie describes how real estate moguls buy large swaths of property and then set month-to-month leases on them. Queer organizers have no way of anticipating how much they will gain in returns from their parties or whether their rent will remain the same month after month. This creates a precarious feeling around pop-up events, and in fact, some parties closed or relocated during the period of our data collection and analysis.

Queer pop-ups can take several forms. There are pop-ups where the event is a kind of canvas—most people have not heard of it and organizers release details about it at the last minute. These "canvas-style parties," as Lakshay calls them, are staged regularly by a close-knit group of friends, and they reoccur in intervals that range from biweekly to quarterly in semi-predictable places across the city. There are also "community-need parties" which cater to a specific subset of queers and nonbinary folks in response to the lack of diversity and perceived whiteness of the gayborhood. Disbanded groups like OTPOColypse and currently existing groups like Black Lives Matter Vancouver organize POC-only parties and healing spaces for outer-limit queers to attend and find community

among themselves. Community-need parties construct queerness as a critique of stable gay and lesbian areas in Vancouver, which many organizers experience as culturally white, expensive, and masculine spaces. Such critiques allow for the exercise of what Greene (2014) calls "vicarious citizenship," or nonresidential forms of claims- and placemaking among the most marginalized subsets of queer communities.

Last are "guerilla-style" events where participants infiltrate an existing bar and inject into it a uniquely queer tone, vibe, and density of bodies and styles of interactions. Representing this last form is the band "Queer as Funk," a Motown, soul-cover band who sold out their show at the predominantly straight Commodore Ballroom with 1,000 tickets during pride celebrations in 2018. Co-singer Jocelyn, a white cis-female lesbian in her late thirties, explains that Queer as Funk has become popular among lesbians, trans, and straight people who are in their thirties through their sixties and who flock to venues across the city for a night of soulful dancing. "We've expanded more quickly in the straight community than among gay men," Jocelyn notes with some surprise. This implies a crossover appeal for some queer pop-up parties. Similar cultural transferences have occurred for gayborhoods and gay bars, of course, although it is too early in the life course of pop-ups (and we lack the necessary longitudinal data) to conclude whether pop-ups are on a similar trajectory. With guerilla-styled events, queer people bring with them a distinct set of cultural practices, a repertoire of gestures, aesthetics, and interactions that transform an existing venue into a queer space. These repertoires, which we consider in detail in the next section, can be welcoming to both heterosexuals and queers alike, thereby blurring the lines that designate a space, and the bodies that occupy it, as either one or the other.

CULTURAL PRACTICES

Queer pop-ups promote distinct cultural practices related to a historical consciousness, styles of interaction, gender explorations, activism, and anticolonial reclamations of two-spirit representations. As gayborhoods vacate their radical, activist, and sex-positive potential (Rushbrook 2002), pop-ups are preserving and even expanding on the visionary possibilities of queerness by leveraging the power of temporary spaces. As we show in this section, the cultural practices that pop-ups engender accentuate "the conditions that make life livable" (Brim and Ghaziani 2016:19) by centering queerness.

Pop-ups push cultural boundaries more so than do gayborhoods. Riley, a white queer cis-man in his late twenties, sees the queer events that he attends (as a reveler, not an organizer) as "more politically aware" than the bars that are available to him in the gayborhood. Queer pop-ups embody a "consciousness of historical injustices against indigenous people in Canada [and] against queer people of color." He cites community agreements and buddy systems as practices that organizers use to promote safety and inclusion while celebrating queer diversities and anticolonial legacies. Queer spaces matter to Riley because they "continue the tradition of queer activism since Stonewall," and they remind him that "our identities are political identities, and that we need to not forget that and become complacent." For Richard, a 37-year-old bisexual transman who also attends a number of events, pop-ups "bring something new—either a talent or music." Pop-ups attract people looking for something artistically or culturally enchanting, something beyond the predictable, commercialized palate of gayborhood bars.

Pop-ups offer a place of socialization and respite for queer people of color and trans folk in particular. Xinyi, a 20-year-old student who self-describes as QTPOC (queer and trans person of color), started frequenting pop-ups with friends after online attempts at partner selection left them feeling discouraged. Their experiences echo what we heard earlier from organizers: "I think one of the most memorable moments at one of these events, when I first went, was just seeing queer women together," remembers Xinyi. "Just seeing the different kinds of queer couples that were there, cute queer POC together . . . it was just so nice." Xinyi eventually developed their own drag king persona after attending a few events at Man Up. Joy, a 21-year-old black pansexual and core BLM Vancouver organizer, agreed: "I feel more comfortable at pop-up events because, usually when I'm there, I'm there only with queer people. And more often queer people of color." Not having to be aware of yourself or your differences from those who are supposed to be "your people" enables Joy to have more fun and let loose with her friends. Kyle, a 31-year-old queer trans male, thinks that there is "definitely a sense of more comfort and ease when I'm in spaces where I can tell it's a community of people who are familiar with queer issues [and] trans issues." Jess echoes the comfort that Kyle feels in these spaces in her response as well: "I find East Van pop-up parties most welcoming," she tells us. "I find that there are more transwomen there. As a transwoman, that makes me feel safer." Vinny, a white gay cisman in his thirties who lives in the gayborhood and has a well-paying job, feels that pop-ups are more inclusive to those people who are not like him, especially younger people whose gender and sexuality are nonbinary and who cannot go unnoticed in straight spaces.

Organizers and attendees both target gender as a particularly powerful and playful arena of expression. Jocelyn from Queer as Funk observes that drag performers are edgier in pop-up spaces: "It's less about impersonating Cher or Dolly Parton or whatever, and more about creating your own characters." Stephanie, a queer ciswoman in her forties and the executive director of Out on Screens, remembers when Man Up, which was once notorious for drag king performances, introduced the notion of "drag things." By doing so, the organizers morphed the party into a "piece of performance art that is drag but [a type of] drag that plays with gender across the spectrum in all different ways." The visual effect was a poignant reflection of the "diversity of genders within our community." For Richard, having a safe space to explore gender enabled him to transition from female to male in his early thirties. Pop-ups allowed Richard to "dance with people of a variety of gender identities and play with my energy around bodies, and contact, and arousal—all of these things—and to place myself [within it]." Richard recalls the fluid promise of pop-ups: "In some spaces, there is a requirement for having 'figured it out,' in air-quotes, but in queer spaces? Not so much." Venturing into safe queer spaces is how Richard grappled with the complexities he experienced with his assigned gender and preferred gender presentation.

Pop-ups can also be sites of activism that make visible issues such as elder-care and two-spirit representation. Wei, a 30-year-old queer Asian female, reminisces about a project she participated in called "Troublemakers." The program was convened by Out on Screen to document change-making practices among LGBTQ/2S seniors aged 55 and above. "The youngest in our group was 13 and the oldest in our group was 75 to 80 years old," Wei recalls. The group cut through the age divisions of its members and brought them together to accomplish advocacy work for queer elders. "I think when people get to a certain age, they start to lose their voice in society," Wei argues. Troublemakers provides

a visual medium where elder queers can express concerns that give them anxiety in public, such as gender-neutral washrooms or the lack of two-spirit acknowledgement. "Film has the power to transform people's lives," Stephanie argues. "It allows people to see themselves reflected on screen in complex ways." In this capacity the Queer Film Festival does powerful cultural work. "You have people, for the first time—queer and trans and two-spirit people—for the first time in their lives, seeing themselves and their stories portrayed up on screen in a way that affirms who they are." Organizers and attendees bring back onto the dance floor the affirmations of diverse queer identities that they see on the silver screen.

Indigenous representation is able to thrive in pop-up spaces in ways that gayborhoods have facilitated with less success. Harlen, a 50-year-old two-spirit community organizer who organized a drag show called 2Spirit Rebellion for the annual Queer Arts Festival and who speaks across North America on behalf of two-spirit concerns, thinks the cultural work of two-spirit visibility starts with vocalizing against the tides of erasure. "For us, within the two-spirit community, we're not asking for anything new. Where we begin the conversation is 'remember when?' Remember when we were honored and respected and had full equality of citizenship within our respective nations?" The forced relocation of indigenous children to residential schools and forced foster care in Canada in the 1960s disrupted countless indigenous lives across the country. One of the insidious byproducts of residential schools was introducing homophobia into indigenous communities, thus marginalizing two-spirit members in their respective nations (Ristock et al. 2017). Combating two-spirit erasure within indigenous and LGBTQ/2S community events is a daily struggle. Harlan explains that this effort requires two-spirit people to "center our indigeneity, to start from a place that says we're whole," rather than as a "marginalized identity" in a culture that was created through colonialization. Pop-ups enable this type of queer two-spirit activism, awareness, and consciousness.

Pop-up cultural practices remind queer attendees that their identities are political, as Melanie and Riley mentioned. They provide queers spaces to gather beyond what gayborhoods and their bars offer. Pop-ups interrogate the gender binaries and proffer ways to modify and personalize it. Certain pop-ups also prioritize the representation of queer elder-care and two-spirit representation, often erased in established queer spaces. Amid these conferred benefits to patrons also exist collective sanctions, however. Portes (1998:18) notes that "sociability cuts both ways." To prevent an overreach of positive claims, in the final section of our results we examine some of the negative concerns that confront pop-up organizers.

CRITIQUES

Because pop-ups are built on a foundation of dense social networks, their organization often depends on delicate interpersonal dynamics. Lilliam, a trans, genderqueer person in their thirties in a polyamorous relationship with two other genderqueer individuals, finds the connectivity of queer pop-ups intensely communal yet also deeply troubling. "The events that I have attended have had a really nice family feel to them. Lots of people knew each other," Lilliam acknowledges. But they quickly added a word of caution about the negative effects of highly embedded social networks: "It's probably their strength and their curse, because if there's ever a falling out between people or any kind of bad blood,

those people lose that space." A pop-up can sometimes feel exclusive or place onerous demands for conformity and ideological purity on its members. Becky, a married lesbian ciswoman in her early thirties who frequented pop-ups biweekly in her twenties, now prefers gay bars because pop-ups feel "cliquey" and "kind of intimidating." Melissa, a 23-year-old lesbian ciswoman, finds herself welcomed in the artistic queer community but thinks that it can harbor "a kind of aesthetic or vibe, like a queer-chic" that alienates others. Thus, queers seeking community spaces may find some pop-ups familiar and friendly, but others may feel hostile if you undermine its established norms.

The most scathing critique of queer pop-ups comes from the former organizer Lakshay. They railed against the "queer aesthetic"—triangle jewelry, rings, piercings, black sleeveless shirts, short-shorts, bike hats with dark-rimmed glasses—acerbically stating, "I think we want so desperately to be desired. And then we see what's desirable, and then we try to work towards it. Like, we become it in order to be fucked by it . . . queers love fucking themselves." From the look to what people perceive as sexually desirable, the normalizing gaze of queerness disrupts the transgressive potential of queer spaces. Lakshay cites frustrations with the queer community and QTPOColypse in particular as the reasons why they stopped organizing pop-up events. "I just get tired so easily, and [just] like that, I peaced. I couldn't handle it anymore. And I was angry." Lakshay explains how excessive demands for safety and inclusion became impossible to achieve. Planning an event as simple as a picnic became something that some people called out as unsafe. Lakshay cites Melanie (Denim Vest organizer) and Paige (Man Up organizer) as people who possess great endurance and optimism to engage with this form of "call out culture."

One such call-out occurred against "Babes on Babes," a queer party held at a dance club located in Chinatown on the Downtown East Side (DTES). Babes on Babes originally started as a queer party protesting a culture that some interviewees referred to as high-class, young, white, femme-exclusionary lesbianism that was transpiring at "Lick," the name of a former lesbian bar that has since transformed into a monthly pop-up event. The particular call-out against Babes on Babes started with an open letter penned and published by Yulanna Yui in September 2016. Yui accused the club of being complicit in the "terrible and very real threat of fast-moving gentrification" that was pushing Chinese elders out of their community with nowhere to go (Liu 2016).

Yui's call-out gained greater traction when the organizer for Black Lives Matter in Vancouver, Cicely-Belle Blain, wrote an op-ed in the local LGBTQ newspaper in 2017 with an argument about why black queer people feel unsafe at queer parties in Vancouver (Blain 2017). Joy agreed with Blain's assessment of Babes on Babes, recalling that a majority of people she saw at their events were white. When gentrification surrounds a venue, racial diversity lessens. Joy argues, "If Chinese queers don't want to go there because it's in a gentrified area, that's making that space inaccessible to a population that would [otherwise] diversify your event."

Call-outs are beneficial and detrimental for pop-ups. They are necessary to keep queer spaces safe, accessible, and accountable in a community where members face intersecting oppressions. But the "tactics of call-outs" can also be "disheartening [when they're] centered around shaming, disposability, and excommunication," notes Melanie from Denim Vest. Stephanie shares with us that a small group of queers publicly boycotted the Queer Film Festival when its organizers mistakenly published advertising that showed the Israeli flag next to a pride flag (thus inadvertently taking a stance on the Israeli-Palestine conflict). Despite the outspoken work that Out on Screen has done since then to combat this

image, Stephanie has seen members of her staff shunned by their friends, while festival performers have canceled at the last minute due to pressures from their networks.

In response to community call-outs, organizers like Melanie have teamed up with other events to establish guidelines for safety. These guidelines are called "community agreements," and they set a tone of sensitivity through strategies like indigenous land acknowledgements, addressing the parameters of sexual and physical consent, acknowledging the consumption of music that is associated with Black culture, providing an accessibility summary for a given space, and highlighting the buddy system and safe drug use policies. Community agreements like these promote an ethic of care and safety, and they counter the harmful effects of call-out culture.

CONCLUSIONS

What we conclude about urban sexualities will depend on the cases we select and our area of focus (Brown 2008; Ghaziani 2018; Ghaziani 2019; Stone 2018). The cultural significance of the gayborhood and gay bars is changing in Vancouver, as it is in other cities around the world (Martel 2018), but queer communal and social life is still thriving. To see it, we need to shift our analytic gaze away from geographic and institutional expressions that are stable toward those which are fleeting and transient. We call these temporary spaces "pop-ups" (Ghaziani and Stillwagon 2018), and our findings show that such ephemeral events can have enduring effects.

Queer pop-ups provide modes of congregation and vehicles for the articulation of distinct sex cultures (Ghaziani 2017). They challenge unqualified claims that queer people are integrating "into the fashionable mainstream" (A. Collins 2004:1802), their nightlife is waning (Mattson 2015), and they no longer feel an urgent need to carve out distinct places (Brown 2007). Our findings show that acceptance is uneven, and safety is a luxury afforded to those people who have the financial and social means to conform to a narrow image of sexual, social, and racial respectability. For the rest, queerness is still "open for attack" and finds refuge in "fleeting moments" like pop-ups (Muñoz 1996:6). Unlike other critiques of post-gay arguments that assert the importance of sex (Orne 2017) or the illusions of tolerance (Walters 2014), our contribution focuses on the agency of the most historically overlooked segments of LGBTQ/2S people and their innovative use of spaces that lack geographic permanence to create robust communal expressions and to experience collective effervescence within them.

By introducing pop-ups into urban, culture, and sexuality research programs, we call scholars to embrace a "temporary turn" in our research in which we develop an agenda that better theorizes the relationship between ephemerality and placemaking. Similar to the cultural archipelagos (Ghaziani 2019) that are emerging in many cities, pop-ups are spatial expressions of queer life that thrive beyond the gayborhood. They suggest that placemaking efforts are not limited to gay districts or gay bars. Greene (2014) details nonresidential forms of citizenship whereby gays and lesbians who live outside the gayborhood still make claims to its current cultural composition and its place in the future of the city. Vicarious citizens exercise "socio-territorial practices to mobilize against perceived normative and political threats to their visions of authentic community" (p. 99). With the pop-up, spaces rather than people become vicarious. Pop-ups are thus vicarious spaces that provide a platform for creating communal gatherings in a historical moment when

there is an onslaught of conversations about assimilation, sameness, and integration. While the events move from venue to venue, the effects on queer consciousness endure through cultural expressions like dance, gendered and genderless drag performances, relational support systems, elder care, and two-spirit empowerment. In this way, pop-ups suggest that placemaking is a performative outcome. Ephemeral spaces, like those that endure, are populated by people who are embedded in particular social networks, and these networks confer positive and negative benefits to its members. The pernicious effects of call-out culture that we documented, frustration and burnout and wave-like patterns of organizing, are some of the challenges that inhere in temporary gatherings.

The diversity of urban sexualities in Vancouver resembles what we see in large American cities, yet there is considerable variation in the cultural, political, and spatial expressions of sexuality beyond those places, including peripheral cities, the South and Midwestern regions of the United States, the Global South, nonurban areas, and international cities (Martel 2018; Stone 2018). We mention this not as a limitation of our study but rather as a call to action for more research on pop-ups, especially comparative work about the context-dependent, national, geographic, institutional, and temporal variations in queer placemaking practices.

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Notes

[1] The slash is deliberate. It signals a distinction between how First Peoples conceptualized their genders and sexualities in contrast to western frameworks. According to Harlan Pruden, a Nehiyaw/First Nation Cree scholar, activist, and one of our respondents, "'Two-Spirit' is a community organizing strategy or tool. Although it is often positioned as an identity (when it is listed alongside other identities; hence the slash), it is neither an end-point nor an identity. . . . [I]t is used as a way to identify those individuals who embody diverse (or non-normative) sexualities, genders, gender roles, and/or gender expressions . . . while evoking the time before the harshness of colonization where many, not all, First Peoples had traditions and ways that were non-binary, where some Nations had 3, 4, 5, 6, or even 7 different genders, and these genders were not only accepted and honored but also had distinct roles within their respective Nations. Today, we would generally refer to these individuals as Two-Spirit."

[2] June Thomas, writing for *Slate*, reported on the study: http://www.slate.com/articles/life/the_gay_bar/2011/06/the_gay_bar_3.html

[3] Some scholars differentiate "place-making" from "placemaking." The former specifies an "organic, bottom-up" process through which people claim and shape space—give it meaning, in other words. The latter is a "planned and often top-down professional design effort" that attempts to shape how people perceive and interact with a given space (Lew 2017:449). We use the compound word "placemaking" for its stylistic elegance and to signal our theoretical view that many social and urban processes include both organic and planned elements.

[4] The Behavioral Research Ethics Board (BrEB), the Canadian equivalent of an IRB, granted permission to use real individual and organizational names, provided those respective individuals signed an "attribution of consent" form expressing their permission in writing. We use pseudonyms for respondents who wished for us to conceal identifying information. In our discussion of results, we do not differentiate which names are real or pseudonyms in an effort to add additional layers of privacy and protection for our respondents (UBC BREB ID # H17-01778).

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