We Are Connected: Collaborative Audio Archiving In Toronto's Queer Activist Community

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ABSTRACT

This project challenges the marginalization and misrepresentation of the 2SLGBTQ+ community in traditional archives and research endeavours by empowering queer Toronto arts-based activists to archive their own stories and experiences. This was achieved through co-creation workshops with queer artist/activists with the goal of creating an audio archive inspired by themes and topics collectively chosen by the participants. These counter-archiving practices are particularly powerful in the queer community because they build a sense of shared identity and history, fostering pride and strength in participants and community members.

Keywords

Activism/ Collaboration/ Audio/ Archives/ Community Support/ 2SLGBTQ+/ Art Practice/ Community Engagement/ Connection/ Website Development/ Accessibility/ Queer Community/ Grassroots/ Counter-Archiving

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Land Acknowledgement

This research project was conducted in what is now known as the city of Toronto, Canada. The current name of this land originates from the Mohawk word, Tkaronto, meaning "over there is the place of the submerged tree", a reference to a system of Wendat fishing weirs at the place where Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching meet (Bolduc et al., 2021). This land has been inhabited by humans for at least 13,000 years and has been the location of countless people groups and nations, who often used the complex system of rivers such as the Humber and the Don to travel and trade with one another (Bolduc et al., 2021).

The land encompassing Tkaronto is subject to two treaty agreements. Treaty 13, covering much of what is now Old Toronto, was signed in 1805 between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the New Credit after the Crown revealed that the original 1787 'Toronto Purchase' of the land they had already begun developing was not a valid treaty (Sault, 2021). The three Williams Treaties cover an enormous tract of land from Lake Ontario to Lake Huron, including East Toronto. These three treaties were signed in 1923 between the Crown and the Mississaugas of Rice Lake, Mud Lake, Scugog Lake and Alderville, the Anishinaabe of Beausoliel First Nation, and the Chippewa of Georgina Island and Rama (Nanibush, 2021). According to Wanda Nanibush, the Crown intentionally misrepresented the treaty, and elders were shocked to find that they had signed away their rights to fish, trap, and hunt on the treaty land, drastically affecting the communities' health and ways of being (Nanibush, 2021).

These elements of the land acknowledgement are important to include not only because they are a piece of living history that continues to impact the lives of Indigenous

people today, but because as a settler doing research on the land, I must acknowledge the privileges and benefits I receive because of the colonization of the land. Being a treaty person means understanding and facing the devastating effects of colonialism, especially within academia and research, and using the power I have to resist those effects in everything I do. As a researcher, there are several concrete ways I can bring decolonization into my work, something I have attempted to do throughout this project. The first is to decentre my focus as a researcher in favour of the needs and wishes of the participants[1]. Rather than begin the project with a specific set of research questions, I began with a goal of creating a more accessible and justice-based archive, collaborating with participants to design the research questions and foci they wished to include. While it is impossible to fully escape the power dynamics of researchers and participants, I attempted to empower participants to make key decisions in the project and become involved earlier in the research process than is typical. As a researcher and a white settler, I need to understand the devastating effects that colonial research has enacted on Indigenous peoples in what is now North America and do what I can do to counteract unequal power relations in my own study.

Another way I can bring decolonization into the research project is to embrace many knowledge systems and ways of knowing. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses, relying solely on the written word, especially in academic institutions, can silence the voices of Indigenous people, who also rely on oral histories and embodied knowledges. To make this project more accessible to a general public, I chose to highlight audio interviews along with images and artworks, allowing participants to utilize the knowledge sharing systems that

[1]"Concrete Ways to Decolonize Research" by Hugo Asselin and Suzy Basile is an excellent article exploring the work of many Indigenous researchers and writers as they experiment with methods for decolonizing research.

they feel most comfortable using. Lastly, I structure concepts of reciprocity within my project as a way to show gratitude for the participants' contributions. As well as planning a celebration for the participants and other members of the project, I intend for each participant to use this experience to connect with other artist/activists and showcase their work to the wider community. I am hoping that this project becomes a resource for emerging artist/activists just beginning their careers.

In the context of decolonial research, it is important that I acknowledge my own positionality as a white settler. This is vital because not only do I hold power as a component of the colonial institutions of academia and research, but I also hold power through my white and settler identities. Because I am benefitting from- and operating within- larger systems of oppression, it is not possible for me to fully decolonize my research study in many practical senses. I cannot dismantle the institutions of which I am a part, and I have only a small amount of power to question or change the methods of research I employ. Because of this, I have to be very careful that I am not simply appropriating the concept of decolonization while perpetuating harm to the community I am studying. Tuck and Yang's "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor" addresses the harm that settlers can cause when they adopt 'decolonial' methods without actually interrogating the systems of oppression they are perpetuating. They say, "turning decolonization into a metaphor allows for a series of evasions, or "settlers' moves to innocence", which problematically attempt to reconcile settler's guilt and complicity, thus rescuing settler's futurity" (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 1). According to Tuck and Yang, decolonization cannot be a metaphor, it must include the radical restructuring of colonial systems. In this view, decolonial research becomes an oxymoron with 'decolonization' referring to the very real and practical challenge to institutions, while research represents just such an institution. As this tension is much bigger than myself or

my research, it is not possible to find a solution or conclusion adequate to cover its complexity within the scope of this project. What I am able to do however, is to learn more from Indigenous scholars and researchers in an effort to better understand myself and my work in relation to colonization and decolonization. My attempts at working towards decolonization may not always be as successful as I hope, and I am grateful for opportunities to continuously learn more and do better.

Gratitude

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Of course, thank you to my friends and family for reading drafts of my thesis and encouraging me to keep going when I felt overwhelmed. I could not have finished this project without the support of my mom and the kindness of my family, thank you to all of you. Thank

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The activist contributions of the 2SLGBTQ+ community have been historically grossly underrepresented in traditional archives and media sources, especially the contributions of queer Black and Indigenous activists (Ware, 2008). This absence from the mainstream narrative can result in major implications for the queer community. Without robust systems of documentation, the lives and experiences of queer people may be misrepresented in- or absent from- mainstream narratives, leading to further stigmatization and marginalization of the queer community. Queer people themselves also need to see their community represented in archives and media sources to fully embrace their identities and cultures. Accessible and justice-based archives can contribute to greater societal understanding and celebration of queer people, but they can also help queer people find pride and validation in their own identities. This is especially true in the case of multi-generational queer activist relationships. When the activist contributions of older generations are communicated to their younger counterparts through archival work, emerging queer activists are able to gain inspiration and support from the work that has already been done by their elders.

1.1 Counter-Archiving

This thesis project posits that a 'neutral' public archive cannot exist and that all archives carry the possibility of perpetuating colonial and imperialist power relations. As Syrus Marcus Ware asserts, the construction of a physical archive is an intentional practice in which a creator or creators choose which events or figures deserve to be remembered and carried into the future (2008). Despite good intentions or even an effort to reduce bias, the traditional archive often excludes the voices and experiences of queer activists of colour.

In addition, these individuals often experience higher barriers of entry to these archival establishments due to their locations, admissions, or other prejudices.

While no project has the power to fully erase the inequities found in the fields of history-making and archive creation, many queer historians and community members have turned to counter-archiving as a method of highlighting the personal experiences of queer activists (Kelland, 2018). The counter-archive does not have a universal standard of practice, adapting to the needs of each archivist, however many counter-archives contain similarities in vision and values. Counter-archives resist the assumption that archiving is an objective field, embracing the subjectivity of the archivist. Counter-archives also acknowledge the power relations that exist within archives, from the hierarchies of information storage to the favouring of certain voices over others to the inaccessibility of the archive to many communities. Counter-archives acknowledge that these inequities cannot be erased fully, but they can be reduced through the archive's design.

The goal of this project is to challenge the erasure of 2SLGBTQ+ activists from traditional archives by using counter-archiving approaches on a digital audio archive of queer arts-based activism in Toronto. To put counter-archiving in practice, this project actively engages the participants in both the research process, and in the design and creation of the archive. The participants are empowered not only in what they include in the archive, but also what interview questions they would like to be asked, and how they would like their content to be presented to the public. This archive is also designed to be more accessible to the wider community. It can be found online as an oral history project hosted by Toronto's queer archives called The ArQuives, and can also be accessed through QR code stickers, which will be placed around the city of Toronto during the final phase of the project.

1.2 Research Questions

My primary research question asks, “what are the ways collaborative digital archiving techniques can be used to create an audio archive of queer arts-based activism in Toronto?”. This question provides the basis for my project, articulating the goal of creating a digital archive of queer activism as well as the location of Toronto and the focus on collaborative design.

My goal of creating a counter-archive that involves the participants in the research design and archive creation leads to my second question, which reads, “how can community action research help involve the participants in designing a more equitable and justice-oriented archive?”. I am especially focused on challenging and restructuring aspects of the research-creation process, empowering the participants to add their voices much earlier on in the research process, making decisions that are usually reserved only for the researcher. I am also interested in ensuring that the participants are able to tell the stories they feel are most important for others to hear. By asking participants to choose their own interview questions and making decisions about the structure of the online audio archive, I aim to reduce the hierarchies of power inherent in research and archiving processes.

My third and final question asks, “what are the ways audio storytelling and public engagement methods affect community involvement around queer activism in Toronto?”. With this question, I target the larger impacts to the community, asking how such an archive might make a difference for the queer community in Toronto. I would specifically like to explore the ways the participants were affected by the methods of the project, and how the community might be affected by encountering the archive in public spaces.

1.3 Project Description

This project consists of two parts: the collaborative archiving workshops with participants, and the community engagement portion. First, five Toronto-based emerging artist/activists were selected as participants and were asked to join two collaborative workshops. To see the written outlines of the workshops, please see Appendix A.

The first three-hour workshop was virtual and introduced the participants to one another and to the concepts of archiving. After a short get-to-know-you period, I outlined the goals of the project as well as the rights and protections of the participants according to my Research Ethics Board Approval. We were then joined virtually by Lucas LaRochelle, a Canadian artist and designer who works with queer archiving. Lucas conducted an introductory workshop on archiving for the participants as well as a short, pre-recorded talk on their own experiences of archiving, which is available to all students and staff in the OCADU community. Next, participants used Sketchboard, a digital collaboration tool to begin thinking about what five elements or topics they would like to include in their audio archive.

The second three-hour workshop occurred three weeks after the first and was focused on audio recording. Participants were audio and video recorded as they engaged in a communal discussion about the topics they chose at the first workshop. Once the second workshop concluded, I edited the audio file into five shorter audio clips, based around the five topics chosen by the participants. I sent these audio clips and other documentation from the project to the participants for final approval before posting them on the We Are Connected digital archive website, which can be viewed here: www.weareconnected.ca. Simultaneously, participants were asked to fill out a short survey about the project, describing their experiences as participants.

The last workshop will be a celebration of the project and the work of the participants. It will be held outside at Dufferin Grove Park around the fire pit. Participants are encouraged to invite family, friends, and loved ones to the event, and will have a chance to speak about their experiences while working on the project. As well as a bonfire, attendees can wander around the park, looking for QR code stickers placed on the surrounding trees. These stickers are colour-coded, with each colour referring to a specific audio file. When the QR code is scanned with a smartphone, it connects the user to the corresponding audio file on the We Are Connected archive website as well as images, videos, links, and other information relevant to that audio file. To hear all five audio files, someone would have to find and scan all five QR code stickers. Attendees and participants will be encouraged to take a set of five stickers themselves to post around their own neighbourhoods.

These QR code stickers constitute the community engagement portion of the project. As the stickers begin to appear around neighbourhoods in Toronto, the general public may become interested, treating the stickers like a scavenger hunt with the goal of listening to all five audio files and in the process, learning more about Toronto's queer activist community.

1.4 Chapter Overview

This thesis document has five main chapters with several sections within each. The literature review section will cover the foundations and theoretical underpinnings of archiving, questions of space and identity, and contextual works with connections to my own thesis project. Next, the methodology section will explore queer and decolonial methodologies and give a short overview of community action research design, before describing various aspects of the project's methods including participants, workshops, and

interviews. Chapter Four is the findings section, which will discuss the participants' experiences and my own reflections about the project. I will then analyse the data, drawing connections and conclusions. The last chapter is the conclusion, which will summarize the goals and findings of the project before exploring possible next steps and future ideas for this website archive.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

In this section, I explore literature and other contextual works that contribute and expand on the ideas of my thesis project. To further organize this section, I have categorized the works into three sections and several subsections. The first section is the archiving and counter-archiving section, which will first explore the foundations and theory of archival studies, before moving into counter-archiving of digital works and human experiences. The study of archiving and counter-archiving is especially important in the context of my thesis project because it provides a theoretical grounding for the specific method of archiving that I have chosen to undertake. This section of the literature review outlines the ways archives are constructed, and offers critiques against traditional archives, suggesting opportunities to decolonize and deconstruct the injustices of the traditional archive. Using Sara Ahmed's characterization of citations as feminist building blocks (2017), I acknowledge the work that has been done before mine, and the ways this community of scholars have influenced my own work.

The second section highlights space and identity, exploring concepts of queering space and the queer use of space, including queer organizing and activism. As my project will focus heavily on the use of both virtual and physical space, it is important to understand the theoretical underpinnings of queer spaces and their uses.

Lastly, the contextual works section will cover oral history projects, collaborative archives, and queer mapping initiatives in the Toronto area and beyond. These projects provide an understanding of the work that has already been done in the Greater Toronto Area and what areas are in need of more archival work. This will ensure my project provides

a meaningful contribution to the archiving of queer Toronto without re-creating a project already in existence.

2.2 Archiving and Counter-Archiving

This section draws on existing literature to define the archive in the context of this project and to discuss the foundations of archival studies. Next, I will explore literature that critiques the traditional archive and offers alternatives that are more accessible, collaborative and justice oriented. Finally, this section will explore some of the specific affordances of counter-archives to see how emotions, trauma, and other ephemeral experiences could become a part of an archive.

2.2.1 Foundations of Archival Studies

Jacques Derrida (1995) begins his book, *Archive Fever* with a brief etymology of the archive as it first appears in the ancient Greek. This word, deriving from the word Archon, or magistrate, refers to documents of governance and public life that would be stored, guarded, and interpreted by the magistrates as necessary. Derrida writes, "entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law: they recall the law and call on or impose the law. To be guarded thus, in the jurisdiction of this speaking the law, they needed at once a guardian and a localization" (1995, p. 1). In the ancient Greek context then, archives were physical spaces as much as they were records of public memory, held and controlled by those in power. Pierre Nora's concept of "Lieux de Mémoire" (1989) or 'sites of memory' similarly acknowledge that archives can be objects or spaces, often representing a national or cultural identity. Specifically, Nora states that sites of memory can be physical objects such as statues or monuments, or something more abstract such as a colour or

fictional character. While these sites of memory are constructed by the individual memories of the public, they are often legitimized and institutionalized by governing bodies, leading to the creation of one national history crafted from countless personal experiences. Nora explains, “in the past, then, there was one national history and there were many particular memories. Today, there is one national memory, but its unity stems from a divided patrimonial demand that is constantly expanding and in search of coherence” (Nora, 1989, p. 635).

In contrast to the physicality of the archive discussed by Derrida and Nora, Michel Foucault writes, “the archive is first the law of what can be said, the system which governs the appearance of statements as unique events” (1972, p. 129). Foucault acknowledges the power involved in writing a national history and in interpreting that history as knowledge. For Foucault, those with the power to create and maintain archives have the most epistemological power. Like Nora then, Foucault’s thinking situates the archive as a preserver of national identity, constructing one narrative out of sometimes messy and contradictory personal identities. John Gillis’ *Commemorations* (1994) takes this concept further, arguing that we are constantly changing our identities in relation to collective memories, and that those memories are in turn influenced by individual memory in a perpetual cycle.

These two notions of the archive– the physical archive explored by Derrida and Nora and the intangible archive explored by Foucault and Gillis– share many similarities, most notably their methods of control by those in power. In both understandings of the archive, governing systems have the power to shape and re-write public memory, often to the detriment of marginalized people whose stories and experiences are misunderstood or missing from public record. Gillis writes, “women and minorities often serve as symbols of a

'lost' past, nostalgically perceived and romantically constructed, but their actual lives are most readily forgotten" (1994, p. 10).

2.2.2 Internet Archives

If physical archives such as museums, and intangible archives such as collective memory, perpetuate the injustices of the culture in which they exist, what would an accessible and non-hierarchical archive look like and how can we construct a more just archive? One solution is to turn to the internet. Ekaterina Haskins' "Between Archive and Participation" examines the ways public memory is affected and constructed when archiving moves into digital spaces (2007). In particular, Haskins notes that internet archives equalize the power when it comes to storing and accessing data. Haskins writes, "formerly limited in time and space, ephemeral gestures can be preserved in still and moving images, ready to be viewed and replayed on demand" (2007, p. 405). By preserving ephemera such as a person's gestures or emotions, Haskins argues that internet archives can more accurately represent the experiences of the communities they archive.

Another affordance of the digital landscape is the ways in which users can collaborate in what Haskins refers to as collective authorship. Communities separated by distance have the space to house, share and disseminate resources in ways they would not have the power to do before. Abigail De Kosnik (2016) speaks of the 'rogue archive' in the context of the internet, exploring the ways that marginalized people such as queer and racialized individuals use the internet to create and collect content they don't see represented in more traditional archives. Artwork, fanfiction, video montage, and other techniques help these 'rogue archivists' carve a space for themselves and their identities in the culture of the internet.

Of course, Haskins and De Kosnik recognize the disadvantages and complexities with this kind of internet counter-archiving. Internet archives generally require a significant amount of ongoing user labour, and digital storage can be very expensive. In *Twilight Memories* (1995), Andreas Huyssen warns of a concept since coined 'big data': the idea that online interactions result in massive amounts of data that must be parsed in order to find the content one is actually searching for. Huyssen argues, "speed destroys space, and it erases temporal distance… The more memory we store on data banks, the more past is sucked into the orbit of the present, ready to be called up on the screen" (1995, p. 253). Huyssen wrote about internet archiving while such a thing was still quite new, but his concerns have since been echoed by scholars such as James Bridle in his book, *New Dark Age* (2019). Bridle argues that while much of the world's information is at our fingertips, this content becomes increasingly inaccessible as the structures that make up the internet become more complex.

Another disadvantage of internet archiving is the intangibility of the medium. As Derrida points out, "the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event" (1995, p. 17). In essence, the particular affordances of the internet archive affect what contents can be stored within it. A physical object or place would need to be photographed or otherwise captured digitally in some way to be added to an internet archive, thus affecting the content. This very McLuhan-esque view could be extended to more intangible content as well, such as an emotion or an experience, something that will be discussed in the next section.

2.2.3 Archiving Emotion and Ephemera

Ann Cvetkovich's *An Archive of Feelings* (2003), advocates for an approach to archiving that acknowledges and records emotional experiences and trauma. Using the dual lenses of trauma studies and queer studies, Cvetkovich argues that most established archives deal with public traumas without actually exploring the personal experiences of individuals. As asserted by Gillis (1994), public memory is often shaped and recorded by those in power, thus public archiving tends to exclude the voices of women and queer people. Cvetkovich's solution to this issue is to develop a queer approach to archiving that engages with the private sexual and emotional trauma of queer women. In *Archive, Media, Trauma*, Amit Pinchevski posits that such an archive of feelings is possible on the internet, where images and videos can help viewers connect with the trauma of others on a deeper level (2012). Pinchevski writes that digital space "… presents new opportunities for the construction of collective memory, away from and beyond national or genealogical constraints" (2012, p. 256). As Pinchevski argues, on the internet, collective memories can be constructed by those who are often excluded from traditional archives.

José Esteban Muñoz's "Ephemera as Evidence" (1996) suggests another approach in the archiving of individual queer experiences. Muñoz argues that despite the erasure of queer experiences from traditional archives, the lives of individuals exist as traces or ephemera within those archives. In essence, the actions and experiences of marginalized communities make their mark on the archive, simply by existing within the culture that the archive records. Citing the often obscured or fleeting nature of queer identity, Muñoz argues that queerness already exists as ephemera in public spaces, expressed in secret to avoid threats of violence. Ignoring the ephemera of queer existence threatens to erase or delegitimize queer experiences within archives as well, something Abram Lewis proposes

(2014). Lewis writes, “by insistently positing the queer archive as an archive of absence, we risk becoming poorly attuned to its peculiar and capricious presences. Upon closer inspection, the apparently empty archive may, in fact, be much more bountiful, and much queerer, than we expected” (2014, p. 28).

These two approaches – to create a counter-archive dedicated to queer experiences, and to find traces of queer experiences within traditional archives – imagine queer lives in relation to a broader cultural context. Lewis specifically advocates for observing the traces of queer lives within archives that are not queer-focused, describing the ways queer people function in their day-today lives. The next section moves from a conversation around public archiving and public memory to one of intentional queer spaces and queer actions.

2.3 Space and Identity

This section explores the literature surrounding the queering of space, movements, and identities. First studying critical geographies of queer and racialized spaces, this section will define and elaborate on queer uses of space and the ways queer spaces are created. Next, I will explore literature on queer activism and activity in a Canadian context, providing a historical and theoretical context for the queer activism we see today.

2.3.1 Queer Space

The term queer space is used by many thinkers in the realms of critical geography and queer studies. David Bell and Jon Binnie (2004) define queer space as any physical or virtual location that is actively refusing heterosexuality. While they would argue that spaces are not inherently heteronormative, the creation and occupation of spaces by those in power can make them so. In *Critical Geographies and the Uses of Sexuality* (2008), Natalie Oswin

outlines a critique of this reading of queer space, arguing that simply reading a space as 'homosexual' is too prescriptive. Instead, Oswin argues for a broader and more critical "queer approach to space" that includes a destabilizing of heteronormative hegemony, but also challenges and makes strange all hierarchies and assumptions within that space (2008, p. 91). Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (2006) takes a unique look at the 'queer use' of spaces and objects, using the study of phenomenology to study the way a queer body can be oriented within a space. In essence, this text asks, how does sexual orientation affect a person's physical orientation and how does being queer in a heteronormative space affect the physical body? Ahmed writes, "a queer phenomenology would involve an orientation toward queer, a way to inhabit the world that gives support to those whose lives and loves make them appear oblique, strange, and out of place" (2006, p. 179).

Sherene Razack's *Race Space and the Law* (2002) examines the ways spaces are created within social and political climates, highlighting the ways hierarchies and divisions can be translated into physical spaces. Unlike Bell and Binnie, Razack sees these spaces, tangible or otherwise, as inherently coded with the biases that exist within the culture in which they are created. Rather than seeing the emergence of public spaces as a natural and neutral growth, Razack uses a term she calls "unmapping" to expose the purposeful decisions by people in power that go into creating these spaces. Similarly, Jack Halberstam (2003) would argue that queer spaces are created and fostered within a wider queer culture, thus emulating the feelings and experiences of that culture. Halberstam writes, "queer uses of time and space develop in opposition to the institutions of family, heterosexuality and reproduction, and queer subcultures develop as alternatives to kinship-

based notions of community" (2003, p. 313).[2] However, Halberstam also acknowledges the ways queer communities tend to take up space that is disregarded or undesired by mainstream heteronormative culture. Thus, queer space is doubly framed by biases in the wider culture while also being pushed into spaces undesired by the same culture.

2.3.2 Queer Activism

The edited collection of interviews, essays, and poetry *Marvellous Grounds* (Haritaworn, et al., 2019) explores the organizing, community building, and lived experiences of queer people of colour in Toronto over the past several decades. This archive of storytelling makes clear the erasure of people of colour, especially migrant workers, trans sex workers and other vulnerable people, from traditional narratives. The same authors of Haritaworn, Moussa and Ware along with Rio Rodriguez edited a similar collection of work titled *Queering Urban Justice* (2018) that focuses specifically on the activism and organizing within Toronto's queer communities of colour. The book focuses on critical geographies of space while interrogating how queer people of colour occupy and claim space in a city and culture that marginalizes their identities. Syrus Marcus Ware's "All Power to All People?" (2008), similarly addresses Black LGBTQ+ organizing in the face of the erasure of the Black queer community from traditional archives. By exploring the ways activists have attempted to re-insert themselves into public narratives, Ware illustrates the importance of archiving the experiences and activism of marginalized communities.

[2] For more on queer space and queer identity, please see Bell & Valentine (1995), Nash (2006), Browne (2006) and Muñoz (2009).

2.4 Contextual Works

This section of the literature review provides a survey of some of the queer archival projects that are currently available to the public in order to understand what has already been done and where there is room for new material. The contextual works section is divided into two subsections: oral history and collaborative projects. The oral history section considers archived audio content with a similar scope and focus to my own project, referencing its impact on the community where possible. The second subsection explores several collaborative projects with complimentary styles or foci to my own project.

2.4.1 Oral History

"The Queer Peel Oral History Project" (University of Toronto, 2020) is a student-led initiative at the University of Toronto, Mississauga campus to archive the experiences of queer people living in Peel region. The set of six audio files are hosted on the University of Toronto's website and cover topics such as coming out, finding community, mentors and role models, and gender identity. The goal of the project is to highlight the experiences of queer people outside of Canada's major cities where there are often fewer resources and queer communities may be more challenging to find. Despite that though, this project illustrates the vibrant queer experiences of each person growing up outside a major city. Additionally, this project demonstrates the effectiveness of collaborative student-led methods for archiving the experiences of queer people outside the city centre.

"The Lesbians Making History: Oral History Project" (LMH, 2014), is a set of interviews with nine women about their experiences as lesbians in 1930s to 1960s Toronto. Conducted by the Lesbians Making History Collective (LMH) between 1985 and 2000, the interviews explore the lives of each woman including their slow acceptance of queer identity

and their entrance into the queer community. The LMH originally came together to create the tapes after seeing similar oral history projects being conducted in the United States and eventually donated the tapes to the ArQuives in 2014. Since then, the tapes have been transcribed and several have been digitized as part of an online exhibit that also includes photographs and other content. The entire project is available publicly on the ArQuives' website. This project is an excellent example of an archive that embraces the complex emotions and thoughts of its participants rather than attempting to distill complex queer identity down to manageable truths.

"The Archives of Lesbian Oral Testimony" (ALOT) (Chenier, 2010) is an ongoing oral history project started in 2010 out of Simon Fraser University's library. The archives host publicly donated audio files and other content about the lives of lesbian, bisexual, two-spirit and transgender women among others, with a focus on preserving the experiences of queer people for future generations. The project is supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) grant which helps the facilitators digitize and organize newly donated content. ALOT has recently introduced a new program called 'Bridging the Gap', which explores the ways participatory methods within digital archives can promote better public engagement with the content. This initiative is especially interesting to explore in the context of this project as it illustrates the diverse ways archives have embraced community participation with their own materials and histories.

"Not A Place On The Map: Desh Pardesh, 1988-2001" is an oral history project created by Alisha Krishna and Amal Khurram in collaboration with Saj Soomal from the South Asian Visual Arts Centre (SAVAC) and the LGBTQ Oral History Digital Collaboratory, a 5 year SSHRC project directed by Elspeth Brown at the University of Toronto (2016). The project follows the inception, peak, and final years of the South Asian arts festival Desh

Pardesh, created by the Toronto-based Khush collective – an organization of gay South Asian men. Incorporating written testimony, audio interviews, and historical documents, the project outlines some of the creative tensions, successes, and cultural contributions that resulted from the arts festival. This project provides a template for my own project because of its use of a multimedia approach to archiving and its interest in storytelling and personal experiences of the participants.

2.4.2 Collaborative Projects

"Queering the Map" is a collaborative mapping website created by Lucas LaRochelle (2017). When visiting the Queering the Map website, users can place a virtual pin anywhere on a digital map that holds significance in their own life and write a short description of what makes that space special. All pins are anonymous and moderated by a small group of volunteers before they become publicly viewable. While the subject matter of each pin varies from first dates to crushes to coming out, this collaborative queer archive provides a relatively safe space for individuals to share their stories in meaningful ways.

From March 14th to April 7th, 2019, Myseum of Toronto in collaboration with Black Artists Network Dialogue (BAND) held the exhibit "Legacies in Motion: Black Queer Toronto Archival Project" (BAND, 2019), as part of the Revisionist Toronto Festival. The exhibit highlighted Black queer organizing and activism in 1980s and 90s Toronto, drawing from private archives and personal photographs. The goal of the project was to combat the erasure of Black LGBTQ+ voices in mainstream media and traditional archives and connect a new generation of Black queer activists to the generation that came before.

"Archive Counter-Archive" (Marchessault, 2018) is a collaborative archive and research-creation project funded by a SSHRC grant and facilitated by the four universities of

York, Ryerson, Queens and Concordia as well as over 60 other archives, collections, and participants. The goal of the project is to archive and make accessible historical Canadian audio-visual resources that document the experiences of marginalized communities such as communities of colour, Indigenous communities, immigrants, and the 2SLGBTQ+ community. The goal of the project is to create a counter-archive of content that challenges the erasures of marginalized communities from traditional archives and to train the next generation of archivists in collecting and protecting the stories of marginalized communities.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section will outline the methodologies and methods present in this research project, along with a rationale for their inclusion in the study. First, I will discuss queer and methodologies and the ways they have been integrated into all parts of the research process. I will then lay out the research design, including an in-depth description of Community Action Research and co-design methodologies, and finish with an exploration of my methods and process.

3.2 Queer Methodologies

This project uses a queer methodological approach as a way to complicate and destabilize traditional hierarchies of research practice (Browne & Nash, 2010). In this sense, 'queer' refers not to an explicit sexuality but to an interrogation of normative ideologies (Oswin, 2008). In practice, my project seeks to involve the participants in the research-creation process, thus re-defining the researcher-participant relationship and the hierarchies inherent within it. Using a queer methodology, I aim to empower the participants to archive their own experiences as an act of queer resistance against the erasure and neglect of marginalized voices in traditional archives.

My research practice is informed by the critical queer geography of Natalie Oswin (2008), Sara Ahmed (2006), and Sherene Razack (2002). This field of thought presupposes a complex relationship between an individual and their physical environment or social relationships. Using queer methodologies, I attempt to leave space within the study for unexpected findings and shifts in meaning. Because this thesis is a co-creation project, it is designed to evolve in relation to the desires of the participants, allowing space to expand or

change course if needed. I acknowledge the complexity of identity, especially when brought into a collaborative dynamic such as a workshop environment. I aim to celebrate fluidity and encourage new directions in this project.

Not only is a queer methodology about embracing fluidity and re-defining the field of research, it is also about practicing care for the community. As a white settler living and working in the racially and culturally diverse backdrop of downtown Toronto, it is important that I recognize the socio-cultural factors that make up 'queer identity'. While I identify as a queer person and an artist similar to my participants, there may be many identities I do not share with my participants. As a result, my queer identity might look very different to those of my participants. In doing this work, I must take care to understand how identity is shaped in connection to broader social factors and highlight the ways my positionality as both a researcher and as a person with many privileges affects my relationship with the participants.

Queer methodologies ask us to challenge normative ideologies, but they also require that we acknowledge the limits of our abilities to deconstruct a system that is engrained within us (Browne & Nash, 2010). When oppressive systems such as racism, sexism, classism, and homophobia cannot be deconstructed within the context of this study, it is important for me as a researcher to acknowledge those systems and to actively work against them to the best of my ability.

3.3 Project Design

Action research is a cyclical process of action and reflection, usually centred around a social justice issue (Clark et al., 2020). The goal in an action research project is to enact social change and improve conditions in a community or organization by working

collaboratively with participants and other community members. In this way, action research challenges and subverts many traditional notions of research, which state that the researcher must be an unbiased observer rather than an active participant in the study. Action research can be especially helpful in engaging with and finding solutions to practical problems by empowering the community members themselves to share their knowledge and become involved in the research process. The reflection portion of the action research model is also helpful as it allows for multiple interventions and solutions to problems with room to evaluate and iterate between each action period.

Of course, action research is not without its disadvantages, the first being the lack of objectivity for the researcher or research team (Coghlan & Brannik, 2003). In action research, the researcher is often integrated or is currently a part of the community they are researching, resulting in a possible conflict of interest while carrying out the research project. This is certainly an aspect to be aware of, however all research projects contain some level of researcher bias. Another disadvantage of action research is the possible resistance to change by the wider community or certain community members (Parsons & Kimberlee, 2002). When doing this type of research, it is always important to be aware of the community's desire for change in relation to their desire for maintaining the status quo.

This project is loosely based on the Community Based Participatory Action Research (CBPAR) model outlined by Burns et. al (2011). This model divides the research process into five stages: Project Design, Community Engagement, Data Collection, Results Analysis, and Results Reporting. For better explanation of the research process, I have added a sixth stage between Community Engagement and Data Collection titled, 'Set Goalposts'.

Fig. 1: Stages of the CBPAR model

As this figure illustrates, the CBPAR model seeks participant feedback in the very early stages of the project, before the project goals have been finalized. According to Burns et. al, a CPBAR study begins with a general project design, either with or without participant involvement (2011). In this section, the researchers narrow down the specific problem they would like to address as well as any immediate boundaries to the study, such as what geographic location they will choose for the study. In the case of my project, I identified the problem as the absence of 2SLGBTQ+ voices in research and archiving endeavors, and my boundaries as being queer artist/activist communities in the city of Toronto. Next, researchers connect with key stakeholders in the community. In the case of my project, these community members would be my participants.

Fig. 2: Stages of my project as they relate to the CBPAR model

As Figure 2 outlines, the brainstorming sessions I conducted with participants to choose our conversation topics were a way to fulfil the community engagement and goalpost setting elements of the CBPAR model. Next, results were analysed for common themes and edited into short audio segments, which were then brought back to the participants for feedback and publishing consent. Lastly, the results were shared with the participants and the wider community in the form of an accessible website archive. The objective of the results stage in a CBPAR study is to engage with as many diverse community members as possible with the goal of collecting feedback for possible future iterations.

As illustrated by figure one and two, cyclical design is an important element of most participatory action research projects. While this project only uses one cycle of the CBPAR model, ending with the reporting of results, I will use the findings from this project to inform my future research interests. In this way, the results stage of this study will affect the project

design stage of my next project and so on. Using CBPAR, I hope to embrace iterative learning and alternating cycles of action and reflection.

For several reasons, the Covid-19 pandemic affected the participatory design of my study, making it difficult to fully follow the CBPAR model. The biggest change I implemented to the study as a result of public health measures was a move from in-person workshops to virtual sessions. I felt that virtual collaboration did not provide the same space for trust-building and open dialogue that an in-person space would have provided. Additionally, because we spent the majority of our sessions working on a separate brainstorming platform, we were not able to read each other's facial expressions and connect in that way. Despite these challenges, I feel the Community Based Participatory Action Research model provides a useful structure to the project.

3.4 Methods

3.4.1 Research Question

My primary research question asks, “what are the ways collaborative digital archiving techniques can be used to create an audio archive of queer arts-based activism in Toronto?”. This question provides the basis for my project, articulating the goal of creating a digital archive of queer activism as well as the location of Toronto and the focus on collaborative design.

My goal of creating a counter-archive that involves the participants in the research design and archive creation leads to my second question, which reads, “how can community action research help involve the participants in designing a more equitable and justice-oriented archive?”. I am especially focused on challenging and restructuring aspects of the

research-creation process, empowering the participants to add their voices much earlier on in the research process, making decisions that are usually reserved only for the researcher. I am also interested in ensuring that the participants get to tell the stories they feel are most important for others to hear. By asking participants to choose their own interview questions and making decisions about the structure of the online audio archive, I aim to reduce the hierarchies of power inherent in research and archiving processes.

My third and final question asks, “what are the ways audio storytelling and public engagement methods affect community involvement around queer activism in Toronto?”. With this question, I target the community engagement portion of the project, asking what reactions the public may have to the QR code stickers designed as part of the project. I am curious to find out whether the QR code stickers draw interest to the website archive, and what reactions the public may have to the archive.

3.4.2 Location and Land

This research project was conducted in what is now known as the city of Toronto, Canada. As discussed in my land acknowledgement, the current name of this land originates from the Mohawk word, Tkaronto, meaning “over there is the place of the submerged tree”, a reference to a system of Wendat fishing weirs at the place where Lake Simcoe and Lake Couchiching meet (Bolduc et al., 2021). While this land has been inhabited by humans for 13,000 years or more, it currently falls under Treaty 13 and the William’s Treaty, both of which were signed by Indigenous nations under a cloud of misrepresentation and deception by the colonial Indian Department of the British Crown (Nanibush, 2021). Despite the ongoing colonial efforts of the Canadian government, the city of Toronto continues to be a site of Indigenous celebration, artwork, community support, and resistance from people all

over Turtle Island (Bolduc et al., 2021). Most recently, Toronto is the home of the Mississaugas of the New Credit and other members of the Anishinaabe confederacy.

As a major city and site of trade and commerce in Canada, Toronto also has a long history of immigration from around the world. The diversity of languages, cultures, and religions that make up Toronto's population add further depth to the history of this place. I mention these factors specifically because the complexities of identity and history within the city of Toronto greatly affect the ways the participants may operate as artists and activists within this city. According to Monica Forrester (2018), spaces in Toronto that are specifically branded as queer, such as the Church and Wellesley neighbourhood, are actually very inaccessible to many racialized, disabled, trans, and working-class queer people. Forrester also tells of the queer community's own policing of queer people of colour, queer migrants, and trans sexworkers (2018). Alternatively, Richard Fung's account of Toronto's Chinatowns and suburban immigrant neighbourhoods as places of queer inclusion decentralize the queer experience, illustrating how aspects of queer life exist all across the city (2018).

When designing the QR code sticker element of my project, it was important that I took these viewpoints into account. Rather than focusing on a particular neighbourhood, I encouraged participants to place stickers in areas that are meaningful to them, and that will engage their own communities. Bell and Binnie use the word "appropriation" to refer to the deliberate queering of public spaces (2004), characterizing queer space as a sociopolitical act. This choice of wording is interesting because in one sense, such a stickering campaign is an activist choice, while in another it can be seen as the colonization or appropriation of space. As discussed above, spaces that are intentionally branded as queer may not be accessible to all queer people depending on their intersecting identities (Forrester, 2018). While the intension of the stickering campaign is to engage with the public and make the

archive as accessible as possible, it is important to acknowledge that such a campaign is also taking up or appropriating public space in ways that may not privilege all queer people equally.

I chose Toronto as the location for my research project in part because of its complex intersections of sexuality, race, class, and identity that can be seen throughout the artist and activist communities. Of course, this is not a novel phenomenon: similar intersections can be observed within most major Canadian cities, but what holds Toronto apart is the number of queer outreach organizations, public arts installations, and queer arts and entertainment events. As this project attempts to connect to the general public and spread awareness of queer arts-based activism, Toronto presents an interesting and complex backdrop of diverse queer organizing.

3.4.3 Participants and Recruitment

The goal of this study is to empower emerging queer Toronto-based artist/activists to archive their stories and experiences for future generations. As such, participants were required to possess several criteria to qualify for the project. First, all participants had to reside within the city of Toronto. Because the study is focused on Toronto's activist community, it is important that I include participants who have lived experiences of activism in the city of Toronto. Participants also needed to self-identify as queer. I am specifically interested in queer experiences of activism in this study and as such, I have relied on each participant's ability to identify themselves. I have chosen the queer community to study specifically because of the ways queer identities have been and continue to be erased and misrepresented in traditional archives (Lewis, 2014). I am interested in developing a novel research strategy to combat this marginalization, working collaboratively with participants

from the queer community and utilizing various digital tools. Lastly, participants needed to self-identify as emerging artist-activists. I chose art as a vessel for activist messaging specifically because of its personal and emotional relationship to the artist and to the wider community. Art can be created collaboratively by and for specific communities and has the power to build connections with wider audiences in meaningful ways.

For this project, I relied on the email recruitment strategy, focusing on outreach and community organizations in Toronto dedicated to supporting queer emerging artists and activists. I primarily chose organizations with which I was a member or collaborator, with the goal of recruiting through my existing ties to Toronto's artist/activist communities. Once I had chosen the organizations I wished to contact, I sent each an email with my recruitment poster and a link to the online participant screening form (see Appendix B and Appendix C for these forms), asking each to distribute these materials to their patrons. One such organization I contacted was a queer women's support and social group that has been meeting weekly over zoom during the pandemic. Although the group is independently run and organized, it has connections to the 519, a community centre for 2SLGBTQ+ people in Toronto. I have attended this group sporadically since 2019 and have made many deep connections through that experience. Two members of this support group joined the study as participants.

I also used my connections at OCAD University to find participants, asking my primary advisor Michelle Miller to send my recruitment materials to students in her classes that might be interested in the study, as well as contacting my own community of students. Three of the study's participants came from my connections with the OCADU community.

During the recruitment period, I received eight respondents to the online screening form. Out of those potential participants, one was not accepted due to their lack of

connection to queer arts and activism in the city of Toronto, and one could not attend the online workshops due to a scheduling conflict. I then contacted and accepted the remaining six respondents and invited them to the workshops. One participant dropped out during the first workshop, resulting in five participants involved in this project.

During the defense portion of this thesis project, I had the privilege of having Sheila Sampath, a designer and academic based in Toronto as my external examiner. Sheila's feedback opened my eyes to several elements of my project that treated whiteness as a default and didn't fully address the intersections of race and sexuality as they relate to the participants and the wider community. One such element is the lack of anti-racist recruiting practices in this study. My recruitment screening form does not ask potential participants to self-identify their race, or any other aspects of their identities or community affiliations aside from those previously mentioned in this section. This means that had I received more applications to my study than I was able to accommodate, I would not have been able to make choices that most reflected a diverse group of participants. If I was able to replicate this study, this is one aspect I would certainly change as it is a large missed opportunity for more diverse and equitable recruiting practices.

3.4.4 Workshops and Interviews

This study consisted of two evening workshops, lasting two and a half hours each. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and the safety of the participants, these workshops were both conducted over Zoom video call. The first workshop began with an introduction session in which participants shared their names, pronouns, and a bit about their art practices.

Notably, I didn't include a land acknowledgement at the beginning of the zoom workshops, something I regrettably forgot to include during the planning stage of the project.

If I was able to replicate this study, I would certainly have added a land acknowledgement during all meetings with participants. The importance of land acknowledgements goes far beyond an expression of gratitude for the land and an acknowledgement of Indigenous nations as the original inhabitants and caretakers of the land. Land acknowledgements are also a way to reframe the entire workshop itself, imbuing all following actions with a renewed dedication to decolonization. Land acknowledgements are only the first step in decolonizing work, one that precedes significant action, but they still represent an important reminder of the work that needs to be done.

After the introductions, we discussed some of the responsibilities of the participants and the risks of the study as outlined in the research ethics application. Next, we were joined by guest speaker Lucas LaRochelle, a designer and researcher focused on archiving in the queer community. Lucas discussed their work and the importance of archiving on the queer community before facilitating a discussion with the participants about what the physical archive could look like. During the last half of the session, the participants joined a program called 'Sketchboard', which functioned as a collaborative digital whiteboard, allowing them to add notes, images, links, and drawings. I brought out a series of conversation starters outlined below, and together we began to fill out answers and reactions to each topic, connecting and referencing each other's work. To view images of the Sketchboard, please see Appendix D. The conversation starters were:

1. When did you consider yourself an artist?
2. Who do you consider a mentor or role model?
3. What does activism mean to you?
4. What advice do you have for people starting out as artists/activists?

5. What supports or resources do you wish you had access to?

The second workshop was scheduled for three weeks after the first to allow the participants some time to think about possible conversation topics. The workshop began with a quick re-introduction of each participant and an icebreaker activity. Next, we began to view the contents of our collaborative Sketchboard with the goal of choosing conversation topics we wanted to use in our audio conversation. After a short break, we initiated the discussion portion of the workshop. We began with the first conversation topic and moved to the next once we felt we had covered the topic to our satisfaction. Often, the conversation naturally moved from one topic to another, but as an unofficial moderator, I also jumped in with prompts that lead the conversation towards the next topic once I noticed the discussion nearing its end. Lastly, once the audio recording was finished, I shared the next steps of the project including the editing and publishing of the content. The website archive can be viewed here: www.weareconnected.ca.

As discussed in the previous section, my external examiner Sheila Sampath gave me excellent feedback that helped me rethink several parts of my project. One suggestion that came out of the defense process was to think about the prompts I used to stimulate the participants' additions to the Sketchboard. Specifically, the project would have benefitted from a conversation about intersectionality and the ways the participants intersecting identities affected their art and activist practices. While participants mentioned their experiences with race, disability, religion, and other factors, none of the prompts specifically asked participants to reflect on the ways their queerness is affected by their other identities. This means that the final conversation themes didn't focus on topics such as race or class in conjunction with queerness and tended to be broader in scope. This project is also heavily

focused on the accessibility of the archive, and a prompt about access barriers in art and activism would have made for a stimulating and relevant conversation. Lastly, this project discusses the land and queer uses of public space quite frequently. As such, a conversation prompt about the land might have further explored ideas of decolonizing queer spaces and connections to the land as artists and activists.

3.4.5 Data Collection

The data collection can be broken down into four categories. First, I collected data by video-recording the workshops for further study. This gave me insights on the group dynamics and the contributions of the participants during each workshop. The next category of data is the audio recorded conversations themselves, which allowed me to see not only how the participants responded to the study, but also what sorts of content they chose to share about themselves. The third category of data is a short online survey sent to the participants following their workshop with questions related to their experience and opinions of the archiving process. Please see Appendix E for the list of survey questions and answers. These questions give me as the researcher a better idea of how each participant experienced the process, as well as offering a space for suggestions for improvement. Lastly, the final data collection method is an autoethnography approach in which I analyse my own experience and actions in this project, discussing how I felt during the workshops, what surprised me about the experience, and what I might do differently should I carry out this study again.

3.4.6 Analysis

The analysis chapter of this paper will be split into three sections, relating to the three distinct goals of this project. First, this project uses queer and decolonial methodologies to disrupt and complicate traditional research methods. The analysis section titled 'research' will discuss how these methodologies were brought into the research process, and what affect they had on the experiences of myself and the participants. Using a mixture of the four data collection methods mentioned in the section above, I will analyse the effectiveness of this project to challenge hierarchical and colonial notions of research while offering more just and accessible research practices as an alternative.

Secondly, this project explores novel queer archival creation methods that are more accessible and justice-focused than traditional archives. The analysis section titled 'archives', will examine the ways this project challenges the marginalization of queer voices in traditional archives while empowering the participants to experiment with new queer methods of archiving. In this section, emphasis will be placed on the participants' experiences during the workshops, interrogating the ways the study design heightened or lessened feelings of empowerment among the participants.

Lastly, the analysis section titled 'impacts' focuses on the emotional experiences of myself as the researcher, the participants, and the wider community connecting with this work. In this section, I aim to understand the personal impact this study has on all members involved, exploring the collaboration and community-building aspects as well as the possibilities for outside involvement and viewership.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This section explores feedback from the participants and my own experience as a researcher to analyse the ways the project answers my initial research questions. In doing this research, my goal is to create an accessible and justice-based archive by including participants as collaborators rather than research subjects. Specifically, this project offers significant alternatives to three aspects of research work: the research project, the archive, and the impact to the community. In each of these three sections, I analyse participant feedback, identifying common themes and viewpoints. I then discuss the harms of traditional methods, the ways my project aims to challenge or negate those harms, and several elements of the project that were challenging or surprising to me as a researcher. It is my hope that this work not only problematizes the hierarchical and colonial research and archiving practices that have become a standard at many academic institutions, but also becomes a guide for future collaborative queer research projects.

4.2 Reflections on Research

4.2.1 Participant Responses

This section analyzes participant feedback and experiences of the research study with the goal of understanding participant thoughts and feelings surrounding their experiences. For the survey questions and corresponding answers, please view Appendix E.

In general, participants reported that they felt their contributions were respected during the research process. One participant, Madeline, mentioned that the size of the group contributed to an environment where they felt heard, while Arwyn mentioned that they felt as though they were in “good steady hands” and felt “1000% supported and heard”. Liz

wrote, “ultimately I am happy with how honest I was, but that honesty was definitely fostered by that safety net”. Many participants suggest that one reason they felt particularly safe during this project was the control they had over their own information and the ways it was presented on the website. Liz reported that it “felt very safe to know that in the end product I could still opt to have certain things omitted”. For the participants, knowing that any information they shared could be removed or edited later on helped them feel more comfortable being vulnerable during the recorded conversation.

Another factor affecting the comfort level of the participants was the safety of shared identity. Madeline wrote, “I found it really great to be on a call with so many other artists that also use they/them pronouns!” and Reymond mentioned that “you can get some really good stuff when you bring artists together and they start bouncing ideas off of each other”. Arwyn mentioned they are someone who gets very energized being around other people, and “found the collaboration aspect to be hugely fulfilling”.

The safety that participants gained by having control over their own information and working with others with shared identities had many positive outcomes. Most importantly, many participants report that they enjoyed the process overall and felt happy to be a part of it. Alessia mentioned that they “would of [sic] loved to have spent more time with the community built and these incredible people” and Reymond mentioned he enjoyed the possibility of making more queer friends through the research study. This feeling of safety also helped participants open up to one another and share in meaningful dialogue with each other. Liz wrote, “I felt like I could say things I wouldn't say in other spaces”. This honesty and vulnerability from participants could have a profound impact on visitors to the archive, as Arwyn discussed. They shared their hope for the future of the archive as a resource for

young and isolated queer people, saying, “it certainly would have helped me in my undergrad when I was seriously questioning whether I belonged in this world as an artist”.

While the format of the research study had many positive elements, the participants identified some drawbacks as well. One issue with a more unstructured research process was identified by Reymond, who pointed out, “in some aspects, I liked this sort of free-flowing collaboration and on the other hand, my anxiety prohibits me from speaking because I'm scared to say the wrong thing or step on someone's toes”. Another difficulty experienced by one of the participants was timing. Alessia wasn’t able to join the group sessions and had to record separately, which she says made her feel more like a traditional research participant than a true collaborator. The difficulty connecting with the group over video call was a frustration shared by most participants. Liz and Madeline both mentioned that this project would have benefited from being in person if Covid-19 guidelines had allowed, with Madeline saying they “miss being around other queer people and spaces”.

Overall, the research experience was generally positive for the participants. While the timing of the workshops and the Covid-19 measures affected the experience of the group, the participants generally felt that their ideas and contributions were respected during the research process. This in turn helped them feel comfortable with one another and contribute personal information to the recorded conversations.

4.2.2 Discussion

As previously discussed, traditional research methods can have negative impacts on the community they intend to study, and this negative effect is only exacerbated when researching already marginalized communities. In this section, I place the issues with traditional research methods into three categories: research topics, participant engagement,

and dissemination in order to better contextualize my own project within the culture of traditional research practice. I chose these three specific issues out of an exhaustive list because of their relevance to my specific research questions and research methods.

First, what research topics are designated as 'important' are heavily tied to the researcher's worldview and the systems of power they operate within. Thus, the 2SLGBTQ+ community, as a group that continues to be underrepresented in research fields, does not have the same power to study queer issues or to use their desired research practices as other communities. This results in a dearth of queer research scholarship, but it also means that researchers who do not belong to the queer community may end up conducting studies that do not accurately represent the experiences of the queer community. When this happens, participants are often not given the opportunity to engage with the research, becoming subjects, rather than collaborators. Communities may have no access to the research study after their part in the project is over, resulting in a loss of control over the way the research is framed and disseminated. As explored in the previous section, when participants have control over their own information in a study, they are more likely to feel safe and heard, and may share more information with the researcher.

This study attempts to address these three issues with research through collaborative practice and respect for the research participants. First, I chose a research topic that focuses on the queer community, and especially emerging artist/activists in the queer community. I chose this topic because I wanted to conduct research in a community that was relatively underrepresented, and because I felt that being a member of that community itself would benefit my research practice. While it is impossible to fully balance power relations in research, I felt that my own identity helped the participants to feel seen and understood during the research process.

Additionally, I designed the project to give the participants the most control over their information possible. I helped them choose their own research questions and allowed them to edit or change any information on the website archive before it was presented to the public. This allowed the participants to feel secure sharing information during the study, and reduced power imbalances between the participants and myself as a researcher.

While I was very happy with the way the research project came together, I faced several challenges in this work as well. One challenge I faced repeatedly during the project was the effort of maintaining a balance between keeping the project as open as possible to participant control while also maintaining parameters to help participants understand the project goals. I found that leaving the objectives too obscure made the participants anxious, something mentioned by several participants in the final survey. However, giving the participants too many boundaries could have adverse effects as well, as it might restrict their ability to make decisions that benefit them. I found that sharing the more generalized goals of the project with the participants while leaving the specifics up to their control helped to maintain a healthy balance.

Another challenge I faced during the project was fostering a feeling of connection among participants online. Several participants mentioned finding group connection difficult when using a video call program and would have preferred to have the project carried out in person if Covid-19 measures allowed. I noticed that participants seemed very nervous during the first meeting, and that sense of apprehension took much longer to dissipate than in an in-person meeting. One way I dealt with this challenge was to plan an icebreaker activity before recording the audio for the archive. I asked each participant to join the video call with the ‘most interesting thing in your room’. The icebreaker gave participants an excuse to open up to one another and helped them get used to sharing their voices in the

online space. While I encountered several challenges during this research project, the collaborative design helped participants to feel safe and supported in the study and eased many of the feelings of apprehension that tend to come with such unforeseen challenges.

4.3 Reflections on Archives

4.3.1 Participant Responses

During the final survey, participants reported that they liked the design of the archive and felt it had an effective structure for displaying their information. Arwyn called the archive accessible and visually pleasing, and Madeline wrote, “I do think the website accurately portrays my stories and experiences”. As well as analyzing the archive’s effectiveness at translating the participants’ experiences into digital format, Arwyn shared their feelings about the archive’s ability to connect with the original goal of the project. In the final survey, they stated that the archive “highlights the importance of this undertaking - queer activism in the arts”. As another measure of the participants’ feelings about the archive and its design, three participants said they wouldn’t change anything about the archive when asked, while one participant answered the question by adding another resource and another corrected a small mistake on a transcript.

Interestingly, several participants mentioned that viewing the archive aided in self-reflection and a greater understanding of their own identity. Reymond acknowledged that the website could never fully represent his experiences, but said, “getting these little tidbits out there is helping me learn and accept more about myself. Alessia remarked on the experience of seeing their own identity represented in a new format, noticing they didn’t cringe when hearing their own voice. Liz wrote that they attempted to listen to the archive as though they were a visitor with no prior knowledge about the project and that “it was also

nice to imagine what it might be like to listen as someone not in this conversation, because it is very conversational". The structure of the archive helped the participants to listen back to their own data in new contexts, and for many, provided an opportunity to reflect on their contributions from an outside perspective.

When asked to share their hopes for the future of the archive, most participants responded with a similar wish that the archive would reach young queer people and those who felt isolated in their daily lives. Madeline acknowledged that many of the queer people who may encounter the archive may not be young, writing, "I hope that anyone who is newly coming into their queer identity will be able to encounter this archive, especially artists/creative folks. Whether that be high school students, university students, adults, or the elderly". It is clear that Madeline sees this archive as a tool of outreach for members of the public who are not as connected to the queer community. This is echoed by Alessia, who wrote, "I hope young queer artists will listen to this and see a future that they could of only imagined and know that there are so many possibilities where their life could lead them and here are some real examples".

According to the participants, the archive is both an effective format for sharing their stories and experiences, as well as a tool for exploring their own identities. As many reported, they hope the project connects with others in the queer community and becomes a source of support and community for isolated queer people.

4.3.2 Discussion

Just as section 4.2 outlines the issues with traditional research methods, this section reflects on problems with traditional archiving methods. I chose to discuss and problematize three aspects of traditional archiving practices that I feel contextualize my project in

connection to archival studies and highlight the ways my archiving methods differ from traditional methods. These issues are: archival materials, archival institutions, and access to archives. By exposing inequities within these three aspects of archival practice, I hope to illustrate the need for new ways of archiving, presenting my own methods of archiving explored in this study as an alternative.

The first issue of archival materials relates to the question, 'what is allowed to be archived?'. As they are mainly physical institutions, archives require large amounts of funding in order to function, meaning a group must appeal to a government or other official funding agency should they want to archive content. Materials that are seen as more favourable or more worthy by funding agencies are therefore more likely to be archived, creating an unequal field that privileges some communities over others. This leads to the second question, 'who is allowed to archive?'. Again, this becomes complex when studying the path that a certain person must take to become an archivist. To be welcomed in archival spaces, an individual must first complete many years of education and experience, which is a significant barrier of entry to many people. This means that access to archives is often limited to archivists and other academics and may be completely inaccessible to the general public. Thus, communities that face too many monetary and cultural barriers to archiving their own content may also find themselves shut out of other institutions that are archiving their experiences. Clearly these three issues can have major implications for a community that is already under-represented in archives and in wider cultures. As previously discussed in this paper, when the queer community is underrepresented in archives, they may experience higher levels of stigma and stereotyping from others and may not have access to community support or pride in their own identities.

One of the goals in carrying out this project is to broaden the scope of the archive, shifting the power of memory work from large institutions to small-scale community-oriented archival projects. With this study, I aim to illustrate the ways queer communities can archive their own content using digital technology. This is not the only benefit digital tools can bring to the archiving process, however. Digital archiving can also address the issue of access within marginalized communities. Unlike a physical building, digital archives can be widely accessed by many members of a certain community and are relatively inexpensive to create and host. This study uses the QR code stickers to further promote community engagement with the We Are Connected archive by prompting members of the public to access and explore the archive. The last way this study offers alternatives to the issues of traditional archiving methods is by involving the archival subjects as participants while they are still engaged in the experiences they wish to archive. Many queer stories are told through second-hand accounts or written documents long after an event has taken place or a key figure has passed away. This type of archival work is vital for protecting and honouring the work that has been done by the queer community in the past, but it is also important to perform memory work while subjects are still alive. This ensures that queer people are able to contribute to the ways their information is presented to the public and acknowledges the incredible work that is happening in queer activist spaces today.

While this project had many successes in its attempt to re-design a more accessible archive, there were challenges involved as well. The first was the difficulty of supporting participant involvement with the design of the archive. Due to time constraints, it was not possible to ask the participants to choose their own research questions while also deciding on the appearance and functionality of the website. Thus, I as the researcher made many of the decisions that went into the website's design with feedback and commentary from

participants. During the first workshop, the guest speaker, Lucas LaRochelle, worked with the participants to begin imagining what a queer archive could look like. Participants communicated that they wanted the archive to feel exploratory and that they appreciated bright and colourful aesthetics, something I attempted to incorporate into the final design. Another factor complicating the participants' involvement with the archive design was their lack of knowledge on archiving practices. This may have limited the aforementioned conversation on participant desires for the design of their archive. Despite these challenges however participants reported that they liked the design of the archive and felt it accurately portrayed their information to the public.

4.4 Reflections on Community Impacts

4.4.1 Participant Responses

One of the most important goals I have when approaching this project is to ensure the participants felt comfortable during the study. My larger goal is to design a justice-based archiving practice, but such a thing would not be possible without a baseline of comfort and safety among the participants. Thus, when interrogating the impacts of the study on the participants, I first focus on participant comfort level. Madeline commented on their experiences of the study in the final survey, mentioning that "the other collaborators were… mindful of each other and created a non-judgmental space", something that they say was influenced in part by the open-minded and inclusive design of the study. Reymond also reflected on the kindness of the other participants but mentioned that they felt shy during the project. They predicted that this shyness may have affected their ability to speak in the recorded conversations as much as they would have liked. When asked what could have been done to make them feel more comfortable, Reymond said, "I don't know what else you

could have done to make me more comfortable. I just have a hard time opening up and talking to people". From these two accounts, it would seem that the kindness and approachability of the group made a significant impact on the comfort levels of the other participants, and that creating a non-judgemental space helped participants feel safer sharing with the group. Even if some participants felt they did not fully open up to the others, group cohesion seemed to be a significant factor affecting the participants' positive experiences in the project.

As well as feeling comfortable with the group, it seemed that participants benefitted from hearing one another's stories and experiences. Specifically, Madeline reflected on their interactions with fellow participant Arwyn, saying "I also appreciated hearing Arwyn's experiences as I don't often get the chance to talk with queer folks that are older/in a different stage of life than me". Madeline further mentioned that hearing about other's art practices that were different from their own was particularly interesting and fostered engaging conversations with the group. Alessia suggested that she would love to collaborate with the participants in the future, saying, "something to think of if Covid permits and you continue this is gathering in person and making art together". Similarly, Liz mentioned that they had connected with the other participants through their stories and would "… particularly like a in person celebration to meet the people's whose stories I got to hear about". This desire to meet in person and continue working together illustrates the connection the participants were able to achieve with one another over the course of the two workshops. As illustrated by participant feedback, creating community and connection appeared to be a large factor in the comfort of the participants and their enjoyment of the study.

4.4.2 Discussion

This section reflects on the ways traditional research negatively impacts the participants and the wider community, offering alternative methods that reduce these negative impacts. In this section, I have chosen to focus on the topics of reciprocity for participants and opportunities for involvement for the community. I chose reciprocity specifically because it is a key method used by the queer activist community and is therefore an important element to include in a research project with a focus on that community. I chose to reflect on the second issue of community involvement because while I have discussed the impacts to individual study participants, I would also like to further problematize the ways traditional research projects affect the wider community. Thus, in this section, I argue that a researcher should not only be attentive to the needs of the participants, but to the entire community at large.

In many research studies, participants are required to volunteer their time and energy to contribute to the project but may not receive compensation, monetary or otherwise. Many research projects have been carried out in ways that extract resources from marginalized communities without actually addressing the issues those communities face. When academics are rewarded for their work while participants are not, participants end up donating their time and energy to a study without experiencing positive impacts from their work. Additionally, as previously discussed, when the community experiences significant barriers to access the results of such research studies, they may have little understanding of how their data was used or what information was shared about their experiences. When research data can greatly influence public policy decision-making, it is imperative that communities are able to access and understand the goals of the research project in which they are involved.

In the context of the We Are Connected research project, I established reciprocity for the participants in several ways. First, I wanted to ensure that participants were able to cite their involvement in the project as collaborators first and foremost. In the 'About' section of the website archive, participants have a space to add their names, pronouns, biographies, and links to their portfolios or other professional information. My goal is to promote the artistic careers of the participants and allow them to network with one another and the wider artistic community in Toronto. The second way I brought reciprocity into the research project was through the planning of a final celebration for participants and their loved ones. This celebration will not be related to the research at all and will be a way for participants to feel valued and acknowledged for their hard work. This final celebration will be a bonfire and picnic in a public fire pit in Toronto and will include an exploration of the QR code stickers and a short speech about the experience from the participants. This final celebration is also a way to address the study's impacts on the wider community. By fostering opportunities for Toronto's queer activist community to encounter and engage with this study, I hope to reduce the community's barriers to access in this research project.

A fascinating surprise I encountered while conducting this study was the discovery of the ways that anonymity fostered the sharing of vulnerable information within the study. Initially, I chose to incorporate the collaborative digital whiteboard app Sketchboard into my project as a way for participants to brainstorm their conversation questions. When choosing the app, I didn't realize that each collaborator's contributions would not be identified with that person's name, meaning that the participants were able to share personal information without fear of revealing themselves. As discussed above, participants liked these affordances of the Sketchboard app and were more likely to share vulnerable topics with the group. The participants overwhelmingly celebrated the candor of their collaborators, leaving

hearts and stars over content they loved, and commenting validating statements on each other's words. Once it came time to record the group conversation, many of the themes that had initially shared anonymously in the Sketchboard were addressed again verbally with participants identifying themselves as the authors. It seemed that the validation participants received through anonymity translated to a greater confidence and pride in themselves once we began to record. I found that even as a researcher, I was nervous to share my experiences with the group and certainly felt more comfortable after reading the supportive comments the participants had left on my content. If I conduct similar research in the future, I will make sure I include an element of anonymous sharing early in the project to help participants organize their thoughts and validate one another’s opinions before sharing vulnerable information publicly.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

5.1 Project Summary

This study critiques the ways the 2SLGBTQ+ community has historically been represented in research and history-making practices. Queer people, especially Black and Indigenous queer people, are often misrepresented in– or absent from– traditional archives. This can result in further marginalization of the community in mainstream media and culture. Further, the absences of queer-focused archives deprive young queer people of the connection to mentors and elders that share their experiences. When queer stories of activism and strength are accessible to younger generations, it can empower emerging artists and activists to feel pride in their identities and validity in their work. Thus, it is essential that such archives exist not only to help the broader community understand and celebrate queer identity, but to connect emerging queer activists to older generations and feel pride in their own identities.

The archiving process explored in this project seeks to challenge the marginalization of the queer community by empowering emerging queer artists and activists in Toronto to collaborate on an online audio archive of their stories and experiences. More specifically, the research questions ask: What are the ways collaborative digital archiving techniques can be used to create an audio archive of queer arts-based activism in Toronto? How can community action research help involve the participants in designing a more equitable and justice-oriented archive? And what are the ways audio storytelling and public engagement methods affect community involvement around queer activism in Toronto? With these questions, I highlight the project's goals of reducing hierarchies and unequal power dynamics between the participants and myself as a researcher, making an effort to shift the locus of power to the participants. I also emphasize the accessible and public-focused

elements of the study, outlining my goal of connecting to members of the public that may not have access to traditional archives or queer history-making.

Using queer methodologies of connection and community-building, the participants gathered to engage in an audio-recorded conversation-style interview based on five main themes they chose together. The audio and other content collected by the participants was then edited and refined before being placed in the We Are Connected website archive, which you can view here: www.weareconnected.ca. As the final part of the research project, QR code stickers will be printed and distributed to each participant, linking to the website archive. Participants will be encouraged to post the stickers anywhere that feel important to them around the city of Toronto. After six months, the website will be sent to the ArQuives, a 2SLGBTQ+ archive in downtown Toronto as a permanent oral history project.

Rather than focusing on the final product of this project- in this case the archive- in my findings section, I chose to analyse my study's research methods, specifically exploring the participants' experiences of collaborating on this project. Through participant feedback surveys and my own observations, I interrogate whether giving participants more freedom to choose their own research questions and frame their own data helped them to feel more comfortable and more empowered during the project. Participants reported that having control over the research questions and their representation in the archive corresponded to feelings of comfort and safety during the project. Additionally, participants mentioned their appreciation for the collaborative aspects of the study, suggesting that the supportive group dynamics also played a role in their comfort levels. Interestingly, I found that having an initial anonymous brainstorming session significantly increased participants' comfort levels for sharing vulnerable information later in the recording process. From this study, it seems that treating participants as research collaborators and encouraging cooperation among the

group results in a safer and more empowering environment for the participants and myself as a researcher.

5.2 Scope and Limitations

One complexity of working with participants from vulnerable populations such as the queer community is the balance between aiding in the sharing of empowering stories of personal struggle and perpetuating the extraction of information from communities that may be used to harm them. While this project would benefit from a discussion of the ways that archives can be weaponized against their creators, such a conversation is outside of the scope of the project. To properly and completely address such a complex issue would require more resources than were available for this study.

Additionally, the study would have benefitted had the participants met for more than two workshops, preferably in person. While this was not possible with Covid-19 health measures and the time frame of the project, meeting in person would have helped the participants get to know one another better and may have aided in group cohesion and a greater sense of comfort among the participants and myself. While the online tools we utilized for this study such as Zoom and Sketchboard were helpful in brainstorming and collaborating efforts, the process would have been much easier in person where participants could physically work together. Despite these limitations however, the participants seemed to find connections with one another and reported feeling supported and heard during the research process.

5.3 Project Future

There are several elements of this project planned for the coming year of 2022. The first is the printing of the QR code stickers and their distribution to the participants. Participants will be encouraged to put the stickers in places that are meaningful to them, with the understanding that members of the public might encounter them and learn more about the We Are Connected archive. In April of 2022, the talk given by Lucas LaRochelle at the first workshop will be presented again, this time to all members of the OCADU community over a video platform. In May of 2022, we will hold a celebration of the archive and the hard work the participants put into it. The celebration will be held at a public park around a campfire and will be open to the participants, their loved ones, and anyone from the OCADU community. We will present the QR code stickers, discuss the project, and enjoy each other's company. After six months, the We Are Connected archive will be handed to the ArQuives, a queer archive in Toronto. The ArQuives will save a copy of the website and store it as an oral history on their internet database for the foreseeable future, making it accessible to anyone who is interested in the project.

While these are all the activities currently planned for the future, this project has the potential to expand much further. To further encourage community engagement with this project, neighbourhood walking tours could be established, leading community members from sticker to sticker, listening to the audio and exploring the content on each page as they walk. Additionally, this archive has the potential of connecting with other queer archives in other cities or inspiring the creation of similar archives in other cities. While the initial We Are Connected study is nearing its conclusion, this is hopefully only the beginning of this project. It is my hope that this project inspires those who encounter it to bring archiving into

their own lives, and I hope that the experience will be as meaningful to them as it has been to me.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A: Workshop Outlines

Workshop 1

- Held on Tuesday February 2nd from 7:00pm–9:30pm
- All participants joined through zoom
- The workshop was video and audio recorded

7:00 – 7:15
The group shared their names, pronouns and introductions. Participants were asked to share a little bit about their art and activism work.

7:15 – 7:30
We went over the project including the rights and protections of the participants. I answered questions about the workshops and the process.

7:30 – 8:00
Workshop with Lucas LaRochelle, scholar and artist working with queer archiving. Lucas first presented on their own work and the reasons archiving is so important in the queer community, then led us through an exercise to help us think about what our archive could look like.

8:00 – 8:15
Break.

8:15 – 9:30
We joined a collaborative online whiteboard call sketchboard.io. Each participant chose a space to work, and began by practicing adding images, links, and text bubbles. Then I asked the below questions and the participants added elements that answer those questions.

- Early memories, early beginnings.
- Who or what gives you inspiration?
- Community and support systems
- Resources and advice
- Challenges and rewards

Workshop 2

- Held on Tuesday February 22nd, from 7:00pm–9:30pm
- All participants joined through zoom
- The workshop was video and audio recorded

7:00 – 7:20
The group reminded each other of their names and pronouns and did a short icebreaker activity that involved showing each other the coolest thing they had in their rooms.

7:20 – 7:30
I shared information about the future of the project as well as the rights the participants had to privacy and control of their information during the recording phase.

7:30 – 8:00
Participants re-visited the Sketchboard and began sorting and categorizing the items into five themes: Growing up, mentors, identity and fluidity, activism and daily life, and resources.

8:00 – 8:15
Break

8:15 – 9:30
Record audio conversation focusing on five main themes.

Appendix B: Recruitment Poster

We Are Connected
Collaborative Audio Archiving
In Toronto's Queer Activist Community

Calling all Emerging Queer Artists

The Masters thesis, *We Are Connected: Collaborative Audio Archiving in Toronto's Queer Activist Community* is seeking to bring together three to four artist/activists for two evening workshops of collaboration, learning and co-creation in February. Our goal is to make a contemporary audio archive of your stories and experiences that will last long into the future. We are looking for artists just beginning their careers or just starting to work with activist concepts in their work, so we welcome those who are new to the community!

Together, we will decide on the themes for our archive, audio-record interview-style conversations, and add the audio to the website archive. We will place QR code stickers around neighbourhoods in Toronto inviting the public to engage with our archive, and finally we will have an outdoor celebration of the archive with friends and family.

Why Join the Project?

Possible benefits of participation include networking and collaborating with other emerging artists, sharing your name and artwork with the wider Toronto community, and learning more about archiving your work and experiences.

What are the Risks?

It is possible that some topics during the discussion may bring up strong feelings. Participants are welcome to pause or leave conversations whenever they need to and mental health supports will be readily available. It is also possible that speaking negatively about your experiences in the arts/activist community may result in fewer funding or job opportunities in that community. Participants are given the option to edit or remove any content they record and nothing will be published without signed consent from all participants.

If you have any questions about this study or require further information, please contact the Student Investigator Mairead Stewart or the Faculty Supervisor Michelle Miller using the contact information below. This study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Research Ethics Board at OCAD University (approval # 2021-76). If you have any comments or concerns, please contact the Research Ethics Office through research@ocadu.ca.

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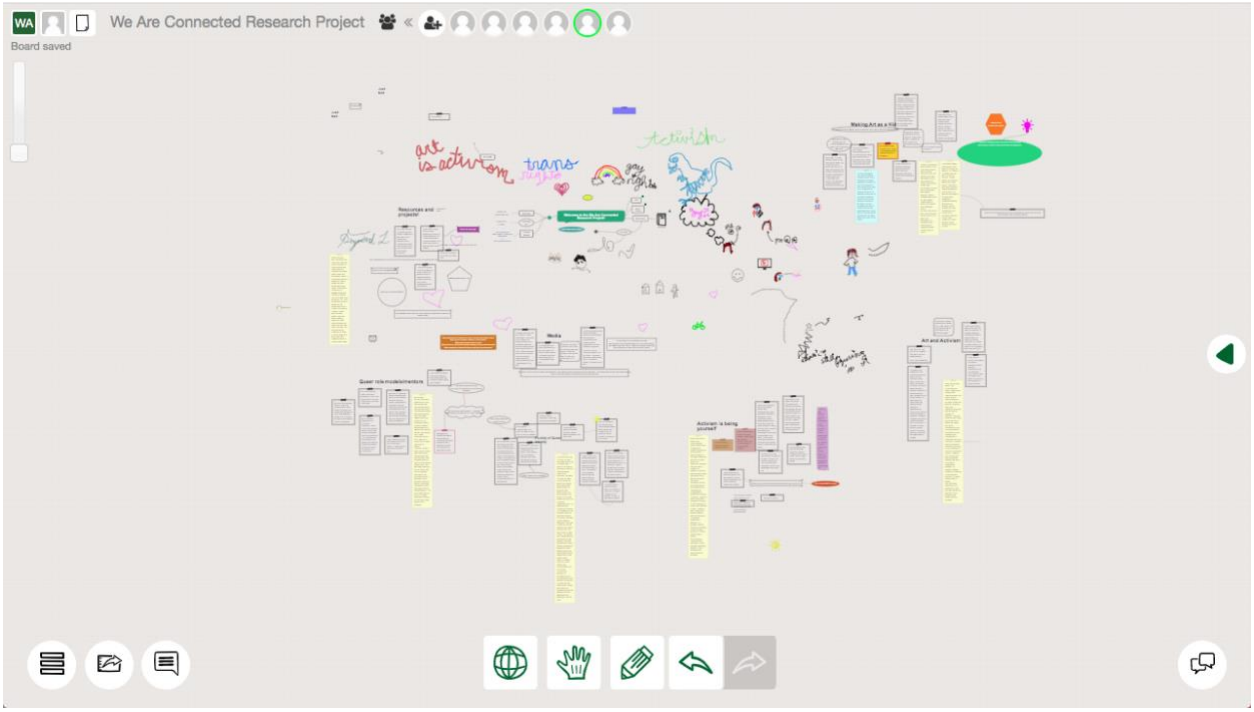
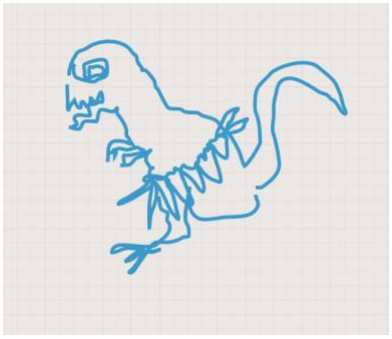
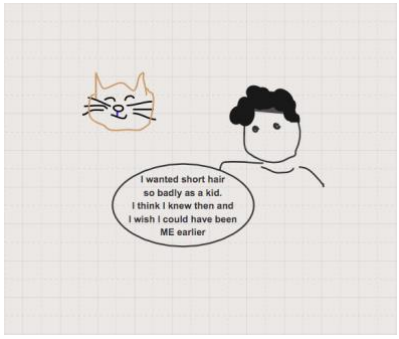
Appendix C: Participant Screening Form

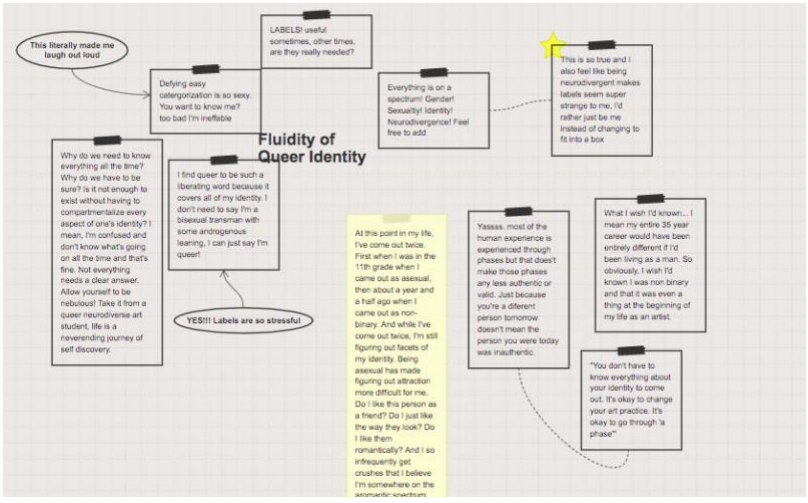
1. What name would you like to go by for this project?
2. What is your email?
3. Do you identity as a member of the LGBTQ+ community?
4. Have you created artworks with activist messages or used the arts in your activism? You don't need to be a professional artist, as long as you enjoy creating art!
5. Do you live in Toronto?
6. This project involves two required online workshops, which will be from 7:00pm-9:30pm on weekday evenings in February. There will also be a celebration at the end of the project that you are invited to attend. Are you able to participate?
7. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, this project will be held over Zoom with microphones and cameras on. Do you have access to the technology to make this possible?
8. Are there any opportunities to make this experience more accessible for you?

Appendix D: Sketchboard Documentation









Appendix E: Final Survey Questions and Answers

Describe your experience of exploring the website archive. Do you feel the archive accurately portrays your stories and experiences?	
Arwyn	Wow!!! Well done Mairead. I didn't have a conception of how this would look in the end, and I have to say I'm amazing. It is so clear-sighted! It's accessible, visually pleasing, and it really highlights the importance of this undertaking - queer activism in the arts.
Reymond	Yeah everything looks so cool! I mean I know it will never fully encapsulate my whole experience as a queer person but getting these little tidbits out there is helping me learn and accept more about myself.
Alessia	Yes! I think You've done something so beautiful here. I don't cringe at the sound of my own voice.
Liz	I really enjoyed it! It felt very discovery-like navigating the online format. It was also nice to remind myself of what was said by me and my peers! It as also a weird experience hearing myself speak on audio but it was also nice to imagine what it might be like to listen as someone not in this conversation, because it is very conversational.
Madeline	I found that it was well organized and appreciated that the audio was divided into thematic segments. The inclusion of quotes from our brainstorming sessions was also a nice touch. Yes, I do think the website accurately

	portrays my stories and experiences. I think Mairead did a good job of editing and selecting audio.

In what ways did you feel supported and listened to during this project? Is there anything you wished had been done to make you feel more supported?	
Arwyn	I felt 1000% supported and heard. Thank you.
Reymond	Yeah everyone was so nice honestly I don't know what else you could have done to make me more comfortable. I just have a hard time opening up and talking to people.
Alessia	I think hearing the stories of others through the website is such a wonderful way to feel less alone.
Liz	:3 all good. I felt like I could say things I wouldn't say in other spaces.
Madeline	The environment that Mairead fostered was very open-minded and inclusive. They did a good job at listening and prompting the group. The other collaborators were also mindful of each other and created a non-judgmental space.

Describe your experience of working with other artist/activists. How do you feel the collaboration aspect of the project worked or didn't work?	
Arwyn	

	I'm someone who gets very energized by working with other humans and I found the collaboration aspect to be hugely fulfilling!
Reymond	I think you can get some really good stuff when you bring artists together and they start bouncing ideas off of each other, it's just getting over that initial ice breaker that's the hard part.
Alessia	I wish my schedule would of been more flexible. But something to think of if Covid permits and you continue this is gathering in person and making art together.
Liz	I loved it! That's why I would particularly like a in person celebration to meet the people's whose stories I got to hear about.
Madeline	I found it really great to be on a call with so many other artists that also use they/them pronouns! I think that was a record for me. I also found it interesting to hear about others' practices, especially those that were different from my own. I also appreciated hearing Arwyn's experiences as I don't often get the chance to talk with queer folks that are older/in a different stage of life than me.

In this project, participants were involved in designing the research questions and choosing how their content is represented. In what ways did you/did you not feel like a full collaborator in this project?	
Arwyn	I always felt like I was in good steady hands with Mairead as facilitator and I feel the project was extremely well thought through. Bravo!

Reymond	In some aspects, I liked this sort of free-flowing collaboration and on the other hand, my anxiety prohibits me from speaking because I'm scared to say the wrong thing or step on someone's toes.
Alessia	Again, because of my schedule I wish I had more of an opportunity to collaborate with others but that's on me. I think because of this however I do feel more participant than collaborator but I'm so happy I got to participate at all.
Liz	I felt collaborative, and it felt very safe to know that in the end product I could still opt to have certain things omitted. Ultimately I am happy with how honest I was, but that honesty was definitely fostered by that safety net.
Madeline	I think this part turned out quite well. Everyone was able to contribute ideas and I think everyone's voices were heard. It was a good idea to have a big page to brainstorm on that everyone could see and add on too. Pulling directly from that to create questions/topics was an effective way to incorporate everyone's experiences. I think that if this was a bigger group, there may have been more issues with feeling heard, but this size of group was perfect.

Describe your hopes for the future of the We Are Connected archive. What kind of people or communities do you hope will encounter it?	
Arwyn	

	I hope it will reach young people and artists who may be feeling isolated. The archive is beautifully hopeful. I would like to think receivers will see themselves in it, and feel themselves as a part of this community. It certainly would have helped me in my undergrad when I was seriously questioning whether I belonged in this world as an artist.
Reymond	I want to make more queer friends! I need friends.
Alessia	I hope young queer artists will listen to this and see a future that they could of only imagined and know that there are so many possibilities where their life could lead them and here are some real examples.
Liz	Queer people! Straight people! All people - I will definitely share it with some people. Speaking of, is this the sort of thing I could mention on a CV situation as a collaborator I would word it as "Participant" so as not to confuse that this was your project! And only if you're comfy with that.
Madeline	I hope that anyone who is newly coming into their queer identity will be able to encounter this archive, especially artists/creative folks. Whether that be high school students, university students, adults, or the elderly. I hope that they will feel a sense of community and solidarity from our conversations. And maybe it'll make them feel seen and a little less lonely.

If you could do this research project over again, what would you change and why?	
Arwyn	Nothing. Truly. Well done!
Reymond	Talk more, I have a lot to share I'm just terrible at timing.
Alessia	My schedule!!!! Arghhh I would of loved to have spent more time with the community built and these incredible people.
Liz	More time! I am so busy I feel like I didn't get to spend as much time as I may have liked.
Madeline	I think if the circumstances were different, this would have been a really great in-person collaboration! I miss being around other queer people and spaces.