

Out (and) on the Town

The Evolution of Queer Spaces in Winnipeg

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Research Questions

- 1 How have queer spaces historically been advertised and accessed in Winnipeg? How has that changed?
- 2 What are the differences between historical spaces and contemporary spaces in terms of access, community, and representation?
- 3 What form do contemporary queer spaces take and what form did queer spaces take historically?

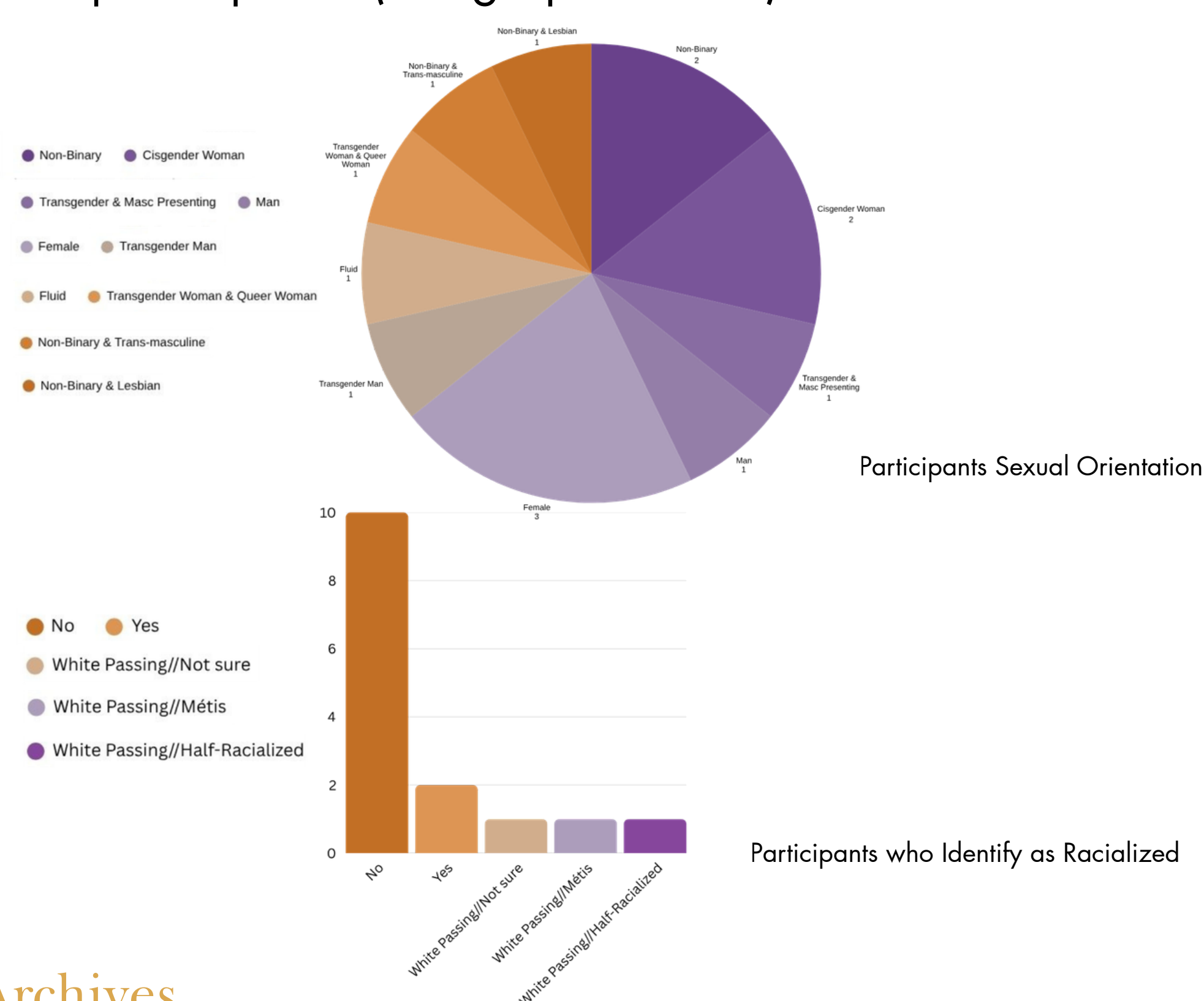
Background

Queer spaces have been essential for safety, community, and self-expression. In Winnipeg, these spaces have ranged from unofficial and hidden sites, such as parks and washrooms, to official spaces, such as bars and community organizations, and now to online networks. This research traces how queer spaces have evolved and questions who is included, who is excluded, why and how to make queer spaces more accessible for all community members.

Methods

Interviews

Contacted by over 50 queer Winnipeggers and conducted semi-structured interviews with 14 of them. Keeping track of demographics was vital for understanding the context of intersectional experiences in queer spaces (see graphs below).



Archives

Analyzed archival materials from The ArQuives, the Two-Spirit Archives, and the Manitoba Gay and Lesbian Archives.

Literature

Drew on foundational scholarship on Winnipeg's queer history, primarily by Dr. Valerie J. Korinek and Dr. Liz Millward.

Findings

Interviews

Interviews showed that queer space is defined by who is present and how people feel, rather than by an official queer "designation." Participants emphasized safety, belonging, and shared experience, though they identified exclusion based on race, gender identity, disability, age, and class.

"When you center queer voices in a space, when you make us welcome and safe there, then it sort of becomes... a queer space" - Drag Performer Participant

Archives

Archival records demonstrated a long history of community-built queer spaces shaped by risk, anonymity, mutual care, and little financial support.

Literature

Existing scholarship highlights Winnipeg's queer history and the gaps in intersectional representation.

Recommendations

For those wanting to create queer space

- 1 Move beyond nightlife
- 2 Prioritize accessibility
- 3 Support different finance models
- 4 Honour queer histories

For future researchers of queer space

- 1 Centre 2SQTBIPOC spaces and experiences
- 2 Attempt to find information from before the 1930s
- 3 Focus on spaces for older queer adults
- 4 Focus on spaces for trans community members

Conclusion

Queer spaces in Winnipeg have continually adapted to shifting socio-political and economic conditions. While forms of gathering have changed, persistent inequity shapes who feels welcome and who is excluded. Intentional, intersectional approaches are essential to sustain accessible and meaningful queer spaces into the future.