QUEERING COMO: AN EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY OF QUEER

GEOGRAPHIES IN COLUMBIA, MISSOURI BETWEEN 1991-2021

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by

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DEDICATION

This is for the queers who came before, who marched and died to get us here.

I'm grateful.

This is for the queers yet to come, who will create a world we cannot yet imagine.

I'm hopeful.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

In an effort to continue bringing light to underrepresented queer histories and experiences, this exploratory project investigates and maps the queer geographies of Columbia, Missouri from 1991 through 2021. I argue that Columbia is an ideal site for research into queer geographies of small cities as it falls outside of the geographic parameters of similar studies. Building on a foundation of queer theory and queer geographic work engaging with lived queer experiences, this study uses semi-structured interviews and secondary archival and media research to identify spaces and places that have played significant roles for queer people in Columbia as well as individual experiences associated with said spaces and places. Themes collected through participant interviews show that the fluid and contradictory nature of queer experience is indeed present in Columbia's specific queer history and culture, with various queer identity groups experiencing place and space differently. Locations and associated times identified through these interviews were used to create digital maps that reveal geographic patterns and shifts over time. These maps show that the number of queer-intended spaces and places in Columbia has been decreasing since 1991, yet those spaces that do exist have moved increasingly closer to the central, high-visibility downtown area. I argue that these trends are due to both an increase in societal acceptance of queer people over time as well as the characteristics of Columbia as a unique place.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

"When I got to the gay bar, I could be authentic, accepted, and validated. And I didn't have to pretend to be something that I wasn't. I could just be myself."

These are the reminiscent words of a gay man reflecting on his experiences frequenting gay bars in Columbia, Missouri during the 1990s. Coming out shortly after moving to Columbia in the mid-1980s, he found himself thrust into the position of embodying an identity that, at that time, had the potential to threaten his employment, relationships, and safety. Indeed, he experienced numerous incidents of written threats and taunts, personal property destruction, and social pressure to remain silent as a result of his active, outward expression of the then-taboo sexuality. One of the few spaces in which he found respite from these realities were gay bars – places where he could not only safely disclose his queerness but could in fact celebrate it with others similarly stifled by the outside world. Through his words, we begin to see the very real significance that queer spaces and places have held, and continue to hold, for queer people in Columbia. What follows is a detailed look into the various forms that such spaces and places have taken over the years and the role that they have played in the lives of queer people in Columbia.

Research Questions & Objectives

In an effort to contribute to a more queer-centered understanding and representation of Columbia, Missouri's social geography, this project seeks to begin uncovering and illuminating the spaces and places in Columbia that have played a role in the lives of queer people. To this end, the overarching research question for this study is plainly put: **what places and/or spaces have been significant to queer people in Columbia, Missouri between 1991 and 2021?** Sub-questions include:

1. What are the lived experiences of queer people in relation to places and/or spaces in Columbia, Missouri between 1991 and 2021?

2. Have there been shifts in the number or geographical distribution of queer places and/or spaces throughout this time period?

In pursuing these questions, this study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the unique experiences of queer people living in Columbia, MO between 1991 and 2021 through semi-structured interviews.

2. Develop a visual representation of significant places and/or spaces for queer people in Columbia, MO by compiling and mapping spatial information identified through participant interviews and secondary research.

3. Identify changes in locations and interpretations of the queer geographies of Columbia, MO between 1991 and 2021.

It is very important to note that this study does not claim to produce an exhaustive or definitive representation of Columbia's queer geography. The scope and methods used in this study instead lead to a foundational interpretation of the historic and contemporary productions of queer space in Columbia that can then be used to encourage and bolster more specific future research efforts (see Chapter 6 for further discussion of such proposed areas for further research).

Terms Used

Throughout the following chapters, I will often use the term "queer" when describing people and places relevant to this study. Unless otherwise specifically noted, my use of the word "queer" serves as an umbrella term representing non-heteronormative gender identities and sexual orientations. This usage can be seen as an analogue to the common acronym LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and/or questioning), but is intended to be more inclusive in its ambiguity. In this way, I use "queer" as a shorthand to convey that a space, place, or group of people contains unknown or mixed identities or intended audiences of a non-heteronormative nature. Several participant quotes use other terms, such as LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) and LGBTQ, to convey the same broader non-heteronormativity. Participants may also use the term "queer" interchangeably for more specific, but unknown, identity markers, which is a common practice in the contemporary queer community. Similarly, the personal pronouns used to refer to participants or others mentioned throughout the study are those that were specifically identified by participants. In the case that personal pronouns were not definitively known or identified, third-person pronouns "they" or "them" are used. Finally, I also use the plural word

"queers" at times to refer to queer people. This is not meant in its historically derogatory sentiment – it is a term increasingly used within the queer community as means of reclaiming it through our own connotations and use.

Overview of Chapters

Chapter 2 will provide a review of queer theory and queer geography literature relevant to this specific study, ultimately showing that Columbia, Missouri is an ideal site for a geographic study examining the interactions between people's queer experiences and a city's queer geographies. Chapter 3 outlines the multiple methods used in this mixed-methods study: primary semi-structured participant interviews, secondary archival and media research used to triangulate and support findings, and the development of digital maps to represent the spatial distribution of places and spaces identified through primary and secondary research. Chapter 4 explores in detail the results of the study, including the different categories of places and spaces identified, the geographic distribution of these places and spaces as well as their shifts throughout the timeframe of the study, and the wide range of experiences that participants discussed having with these places and spaces. Chapter 5 then returns to the literature to further analyze the results of this study in comparison to other research on queer communities in small cities. Chapter 6 summarizes the results and subsequent analyses of this study before offering areas for potential future research stemming from this work.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Queer Theory

Origins

This project's overarching goal of seeking out the conventionally unseen (or intentionally masked) histories of queer folks is built on a foundation of queer theory. Originating as a distinct term in the early 1990s, queer theory began as a direct opposition to conventional structures of heteronormativity (and, arguably, homonormativity). In the defining text *Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities*, de Lauretis (1991) argued for an active decentering of heterosexuality and binary gender constructs as the assumed norm, advocating instead for an adaptable and fluid view of identity. She identified three goals that could be addressed by a distinctively queer theory: refusing heterosexuality as the basis for sexual identity, re-examining the conception of gay and lesbian studies as a combined unit, and focusing on the role of race in sexual bias. Despite being a new and emergent theory, queer theory reflected and developed on the works of Michel Foucault (1988), Judith Butler (1990), and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1990) among others, each of whom critiqued normative, binary epistemologies of sexuality. Their questioning and refiguring of sexuality and gender were crucial for de Lauretis in concretizing queer theory. Indeed, as Jack Gieseking (2008) suggested, queer theory began as a "framework of ideas that suggests identities are not stable or deterministic, particularly in regard to an individual's gender, sex, and/or sexuality.".

The limits and effectiveness of queer theory have been debated from its inception. Many initially bristled at the attachment of the word "queer" – at the time a predominantly fringe, derogatory term that had only recently been taken up by queer activism groups – to an academic endeavor that was focused on non-heterosexual populations (Warner 2012). This was, however, a deliberate shift on de Lauretis' part meant to disrupt the confines and limits of "lesbian and gay studies" which worked primarily within white, male, middle-class models of analysis. Despite preliminary critique and doubt, queer theory was quickly swept into the scholarly fold, to which some, including de Lauretis, took umbrage (Warner 2012). A little more than a decade after its inception, David Halperin decried queer theory's transition into institutional acceptance, claiming that it was failing its own goals of upheaval and refusal of conventional systems. Halperin (2003)

argued that if it were to effectively work toward its proclaimed goals, queer theory would need to salvage its radical roots that had the "capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not yet been thought." Noreen Giffney (2004) also re-emphasized the importance of separating gay and lesbian studies from queer theory, citing the broad applicability of a queer theoretical framework to fields other than those dealing directly with queer populations and cultures.

This ongoing debate highlights an important aspect of queer theory – that while it *can* be used to refer to and inform research primarily involving "non-normative" sexual and gender identities, its scope does not end (or begin) there. The disruptive theoretical foundation of queer theory lends itself to applications across diverse fields and objectives, allowing scholars to "queer" their subjects by viewing them through a more fluid, less binary lens (Gieseking 2013). Indeed, those working in sociology, feminist theory, and Indigenous studies, among other areas, may find it beneficial or even unavoidable to adopt and adapt a queer theoretical framework to access perspectives that have been obscured through hegemonic approaches. In the larger project of decolonization studies, for example, queer theory has been noted as an epistemological model for flipping colonial systems of knowledge on their head, especially as it relates to binaries such as settler and native (Vimalassery, Pegues, and Goldstein 2016). Native feminist theorists Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill similarly emphasized the need for "imagining and enacting a future for Indigenous people" as a tool for working towards decolonization. To do so requires a concept of futurity, originally developed by queer theorist Lee Edelman, that is meant to facilitate visions of alternate realities for queer people that may not even appear as possible within our current colonized social structure (Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill 2013). Sociologists have also pushed for the consideration of queered methods and approaches as a way to assess the validity of and challenge essentialist categorizations of subjects, gender/sex-based or otherwise (Valocchi 2005; McCann 2016; see below for further discussion).

Unsettling Binaries & Disrupting Norms

Queer theory may have evolved beyond the original parameters centered specifically on personal sexual identity, but the goal of disrupting binary structures and normative systems of thinking has remained key. In this sense, queer theory overlaps naturally with the concept of

intersectionality formalized by Kimberlé Crenshaw in the late 1980s. Attending to the identity-specific struggles of Black women, Crenshaw argued that attempting to analyze someone's experiences solely through the lens of their race *or* gender without taking their combined effects into consideration results in a falsely one-dimensional representation that further perpetuates the restrictive "established analytical structure" (Crenshaw 1989). By addressing how different factors of identity intersect within an individual's lived experience, Crenshaw showed the very real implications of living between and across the supposedly rigid categories of race, sex, gender, etc. Spade (2015) took these ideas into the realm of queer studies by highlighting the ways in which transgendered people grapple with rigid state-defined gender categories when interacting with government administration, such as when applying for a driver's license or trying to gain access to a gender-specific homeless shelter. The binary system of gender in U.S. society is so embedded and consistently reproduced that it is seen as "innocuous" and unworthy of questioning. Inherent to Spade's argument is an intersectional approach applied on a broader scale which considers how "racism, sexism, capitalism, xenophobia, settler colonialism, and ableism combine to produce and sustain these violent systems" even when focusing on the effects experienced specifically by trans people (Spade 2015).

Kath Browne echoed the need to question hard-and-fast definitions of sexuality, specifically within the fields of queer and sexuality studies themselves. She called for increased queer intentionality in the design and execution of quantitative sociological questionnaires that collect information about gender and sexuality, arguing that conventional methodological practice "(re)creates (rather than objectively measures) identities and categories" (Browne 2008). For Browne, as for Spade, queer theory offers a context within which to question not only the validity of specific categorizations of sex and gender, but also the validity of creating categories to begin with. As an example of this, urban planner Petra Doan described the inescapability of rigid gender binaries implicit in both public and private arenas for transgendered and intersexed individuals with regard to the built environment (2010) and reiterated Browne's push for queering population measurement strategies to more accurately gather data on queer interactions with space (2016).

Queer Geography

Embracing Sexualities in Place

Reflecting the post-structural shift toward cultural and sexuality studies beginning in the 1970s, the field of geography experienced a cultural turn that allowed for studies of sexual and gender-related activities, identities, and experiences. This emerging field of critical geography – which in its beginnings lacked a firm title, evolving from broad descriptors such as "geographies of sexualities" to more specific, period-appropriate sexuality markers like "gay and lesbian geographies"— became increasingly less taboo throughout the 1980s and was well established by the early 1990s. At a time when spaces explicitly marked as non-heterosexual often only existed in very specific and transient circumstances, Foucault's concept of heterotopias was foundational in understanding the roles that spaces and places played in forming and reinforcing sexual identity and activity. In what would also prove central to the anti-essentialist goals of queer theory, heterotopias demonstrated the often-contradictory perceptions, meanings, and uses that any one place can embody, shifting depending on the actors involved, the time of day/year/history, and the social needs present at any given moment. Heterotopic spaces are often those of "otherness", pushing back against hegemonic understandings and uses. Awareness of, and entry into, certain iterations of a heterotopic space may only be available to those of a certain subjectivity; a public park, for example, may simply be an outdoor recreation area for some, while simultaneously serving as a cruising spot for queer men in the know of the space's clandestine use. In simpler terms, Foucault argued that places can be multiple things with multiple meanings and uses for different people at the same (or different) time (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986). Expanding and embracing the possible understandings of place and space in this way helped open the door for researchers looking to study previously neglected geographies of sexualities.

At the forefront of these investigations were David Bell and Gill Valentine. Bell (1991) provided a summary (and critique of the notable dearth) of existing work on geographies of lesbian and gay folks, which led to *Mapping Desire*, the first scholarly collection of work on sexuality geographies (Bell and Valentine 1995). This collection served as Bell and Valentine's response to Bell's (1995) own call for elevating "alternative geographies of the erogenous," urging fellow

geographers to step outside of conventional reticence surrounding discussions of sex and sexuality. While *Mapping Desire* was groundbreaking, it focused predominantly on white queer folks in the United States and United Kingdom, which reflected the authors' own positionalities (Peake 2016). Perhaps as a reaction to this geographically- and racially-skewed scope, Jon Binnie (1997) made the case that geography should not only embrace studies of sexuality and alternative sex and gender practices, but should also truly incorporate a "queer epistemology" into the field. Doing so, he argued, would help to fill in research gaps created by both traditional positivist methodologies and cultural and feminist geography. According to Binnie, an intentionally queer approach – again pulling on tenets of queer theory – was needed to fully promote the interests of "sexual dissidents" within geography and the academy in general.

Shifting Definitions

Queer geographers have in many ways taken up Binnie's call to reimagine approaches to and interpretations of non-normative geographies. Often, such re-conceptualizations have come in the form of dissections, expansions, and challenges to the current practices. Although such critiques are a fundamental application of queer theoretical principles, they are only the first step in the process of actualizing real futures that fully acknowledge and respect queer existences. In one such critique, Kath Browne (2006) re-examined the foundational definitions of queer geography and insisted that the subfield is necessarily distinct from the field of geographies of sexualities as a whole. She pointed out that queer geography leans specifically on queer theory, which requires comfort with ambiguity, unanswered questions, and contradictions. Larry Knopp (2009) echoed this distinction, explaining that while the realms within which queer geographies and geographies of sexuality operate may *overlap* (see Johnston and Longhurst 2010), their primary approaches are fundamentally different. For Browne, the assumption that queer geographies deal exclusively in non-normative *sexualities* is a risky misconception. Instead, she pushed for a new understanding of the term that allows for studies examining the "slippages and spaces of betweenness that highlight the (re)production of everyday life" (Browne 2006).

It would appear that Browne's reasoning has resonated, as greater attention has recently been given to liminality and the everyday lived experiences of "in-betweenness" (Knopp 2007;

March 2020). In one such study, Alessandro Boussalem (2020) pushed back against conventional (Western) binaries of public/private and in/out in the disclosure of sexual orientation and identity of LGBTQ people with Muslim backgrounds. In opposition to the dominant conception of a linear path that triumphantly culminates in "coming out of the closet," Boussalem contends that sites of silence and subtle sexual communication are equally valid and important to consider within queer geographies. Through this lens we can see the crucial (and often overlooked) role that spaces in between "in" and "out", for one example, play in queer folks' everyday lives.

Just as definitions of queer geography are fluid and contested, there are regular calls to restructure queer geography's relationships to other subfields. With the goal of making room in geography for "messy realities, including fluidity, hybridity, incompleteness, moralities, desire, and embodiment," Larry Knopp (2007) proposed a strengthened alliance between feminist and queer geographies. Queer geography, he suggested, can expand feminist work on space, place, and movement by delving into the unseen, transient, and contingent spaces and places that exist liminally. Outside of geography, arguments have been made to weave anarchist thought into queer geography projects, such as those of the Richmond, Virginia queer activist community analyzed by Farhang Rouhani (2012). In Rouhani's eyes, integrating anarchism and queer geographies would aid queer anarchists in developing more effective space-making practices while simultaneously providing geographers with more nuanced understandings of potential geographic realities created by alternative groups. This assertion once again relies on an adoption of queer theoretical roots, upending traditional conceptions of where and how spaces can be created and maintained – indeed, as Rouhani noted, "anarchists conceive utopia as a process, rather than a product" (Rouhani 2012). In sum, the scope and applications of queer geography have expanded significantly since the 1990s, encompassing ever-varying iterations and angles.

Shifting Venues

The Urban

As understandings of queer geographies have shifted over the years, so have trends in study sites. Although initial geographies of non-normative sex and sexualities focused on urban areas (and the white, cisgendered, gay men within them) in the United States and United Kingdom

(e.g., Bell and Valentine 1995; Peake 2016), the past 25 years have seen a steady progression towards greater diversity in research locations. A central site in urban-centric queer geographic study of the 1990s was the queer-coded village or area within a city, more commonly referred to as a "gayborhood." Gayborhoods were (or are) spaces with higher-than-average concentrations of queer individuals, resources, and symbols (I use the term "queer" here as an umbrella for various gender identities and sexual orientations, but this term would not necessarily have been widely used in the 1990s). Although widely conceived of as havens for queer folks amidst hostile homophobic social norms, gayborhoods were not universal sites of acceptance and equity. One study (Doan 2007) noted that transgendered individuals experienced more fraught relationships with gayborhoods and were often subject to greater in-group discrimination and feelings of not belonging. The same could also be said for those outside of gay male identity groups, as queer women were often either unwelcomed in these areas or were relegated to specific spaces within.

Originally created at a grassroots level by queer people seeking refuge, gayborhoods eventually received societal acknowledgement and acceptance. As societal attitudes towards queer populations inched towards tolerance, city administrations began formally recognizing and even promoting gayborhoods and similarly queer-coded districts as symbols of progress, inclusion, and a creative economy (Bell and Binnie 2004). Mainstream recognition (however genuine or superficial it may have been) played a part in eventually diluting and even erasing many lesbian and queer neighborhoods, as these areas were identified as desirable centers of culture and value, drawing wealthy white gentrifiers and subsequently driving housing prices past manageable levels for original queer residents (Gieseking 2020a). These combined social and economic factors led to a decrease in both the queer population and authentic vitality of gayborhoods and caused some gayborhoods to effectively disappear from the urban landscape.

Some have argued that the phenomenon of disappearing gayborhoods was not necessarily a condemnation of a vibrant future for queer folks in cities. Amin Ghaziani (2014) claimed that increased social acceptance and political presence paved the way for queer folks to lead full, thriving lives as their authentic selves without the need for defined queer neighborhoods. What was once a space of refuge for many has now come to feel like a site of assimilation into an exaggerated

sense of identity centered entirely around sexuality. In response to the fact that gayborhoods are predominantly gay and male, Browne and Bakshi (2011) noted the diminished role that explicitly queer places and spaces play in the leisurescapes of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans people. If most LGBT socialization takes place in spaces other than perceived "havens" (such as homes, public parks, non-queer-coded bars or events), then vanishing gayborhoods need not be interpreted as a sign of queer doom. We may not even need to have placed so much weight on explicitly queer spaces to begin with; if we were to employ a binary-bashing queer theory mindset, we would see that spaces are not heterosexual in their natural state, simply waiting to "be queered" with the presence and intentions of queer community. Spaces can be "queer," "straight," or neither all at the same time. Attaching essentialist signposts (metaphorical or otherwise) to a space does not allow for a more accurate reading of its uses and interactions. The realities of queer urban people living outside of "gayborhoods" similarly challenge binary interpretations by calling into question the sociospatial metaphor of "center vs. margin" in queer urban existence (Myrdahl 2013; Gieseking 2015) .

The Rural, The Midwest, The South, & The In-Between

Aside from questions of gayborhoods, early queer geography work was preoccupied with cities, and especially those on the coasts of the United States. While many urban sites, communities, and situations warrant valid examination (see Bain, Payne, and Isen 2015; Holland-Muter 2019; Gieseking 2020a, 2020b for a brief selection), an important shift towards locales outside of the metropolitan and the coasts has been gaining ground in recent years. In what Knopp would identify as a result of the overlapping goals between queer geographies and geographies of sexualities, scholars began to offer detailed and varied looks into the construction and reproduction of interactions between rurality and sexualities, often including queer/LGBT subjects (Poole and Gause 2012; Gorman-Murray, Pini, and Bryant 2013). This work emphasized the need for unassuming approaches to geographies of sexualities (including those that are queer) as a means of breaking past conventional expectations of those living in rural areas (e.g., closeted, isolated, unable to fully embrace sexuality). Specific examples of rural queer geographies in the United States include those in the Midwest (Kazyak 2012; Donovan 2016; Cramer 2020) as well as the

South and Appalachia (Gorman-Murray, Pini, and Bryant 2013; Garringer 2017, n.d.). To make clear the breadth of unique queer experiences that can be found in rurality, studies such as these make a point of analyzing particular positionalities, as opposed to "queerness" or "sexuality" in general. Black lesbians in rural Georgia, queer "fabulachians" in Appalachia, and lesbian farmers in Missouri mark real, specific lives that point to not only rural queer existence, but rural queer *thriving*.

A parallel shift can be found in work that includes and attends to spaces and places that do not fall neatly or entirely within defined regions or landscape classifications. Browne, for instance, critiqued the categories of rural and urban, as well as the geographic division that these terms imply is inherent in the study of place. The rural lesbians in her study existed in a liminal state of sorts, living in small towns yet feeling compelled to meet the "utopic" urban-centric model of gay living that champions outward expression of sexuality and explicitly marked queer spaces (Browne 2009). For these lesbians, their existence occurred both *and* neither within urban and/or rural spaces. Donovan (2016) added to this fraught model of being, detailing the social expectations of interaction experienced by queer people in rural and urban places (refraining from visible acts of queerness and bearing a responsibility to enact a visible queerness, respectively). Both analyses underscore the emotional and mental acrobatics that are often required depending on – or even regardless of – current physical location. For example, gay men living in New York City suburbs – not as urban as "the city" yet decidedly not rural – were found to have different conceptualizations of their personal identity that included varying degrees of sexuality expression (Brekhus 2003). Despite enacting their queerness in different styles, all participants indicated (explicitly or otherwise) an awareness of social rules dependent on certain temporal, situational, and locational circumstances that could limit or influence their expression. Especially interesting were participants' perceptions of the suburbs themselves as a null site, existing as either unremarkable in terms of queer life or as a metaphorical waypoint along the way to the "true" site for queerness in the city.

Beyond, or perhaps *in between* realms of rurality and/or urbanity, lie questions of place size and place character. For example, if growing attention is being given to small rural towns and large urban cities, what about small cities that slip between the scales of analysis? Clare Forstie

(2020) made the case for small "ordinary" cities as prime sites for future developments in queer theory. According to Forstie, such sites are ideal for researching LGBTQ communities because their manageable population and physical size allows researchers to draw broad theoretical conclusions with limited risk of inaccurate extrapolation. Along with other work (e.g. Rouhani 2012; Rosenthal 2017), Japonica Brown-Saracino's *How Places Make Us: Novel LBQ Identities in Four Small Cities* (2018) represents a clear shift to the queer geographies of small cities. Brown-Saracino compared queer women's experiences in four small cities that, while not geographically similar or near one another, met a shared set of criteria (total population, progressive reputation, long-standing lesbian, bisexual, and/or queer (LBQ) population). By making these selections, she was able to more reliably articulate differences in experiences across sites and develop potential explanations for those differences. Somewhat unsurprisingly – yet novel for the field as a finding – Brown-Saracino concluded that each place's unique *character* had more to do with LBQ community perceptions than other factors (e.g., cost of living, location relative to major cities, area of the country). This once again reinforces queer calls to resist overreaching categorizations and blanket characterizations, showing that indeed, every place is suitable and worthy of queer geographic study.

Turning Towards CoMo

This study builds on the anti-essentialist foundations of queer theory while contributing to the empirical and theoretical work on the queer geographies of small cities. Columbia, Missouri is an ideal site for a geographic study on queer experience because it crosses the boundaries of, yet is not fully encapsulated by, multiple regions and kinds of population. It is a small city surrounded by a rural landscape that is situated at what some consider the boundary of the Midwest and the South. Columbia has a longstanding queer history, and most importantly, following Brown-Saracino (2018), is its own unique place with a unique character that deserves attention (see Chapter 3 for additional relevant background on Columbia's specific cultural landscape and history). In line with queer theory's push for queered methods that seek liminal and contradictory understandings of existing cultural structures, this study seeks to bring to light the underrepresented histories and experiences of queer Columbians.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In this exploratory case study, I used a mixed-methods approach that combined semi-structured interviews, archival and media research, and digital mapping to develop an understanding of queer places and spaces of significance in Columbia, Missouri from 1991 to 2021. As this is the first documentation and interpretation of queer places and spaces in Columbia during this timeframe, I intentionally chose a diverse set of methods that could draw out various aspects of this queer geography, including not only brick-and-mortar queer establishments (such as gay bars or queer resource centers) but individual experiences with queer places and spaces as well. Mixed methods also offered an opportunity to compare and triangulate information gathered from each data collection method, with the aim of developing a more comprehensive and accurate representation of the places and spaces identified in the research.

As introduced in Chapter 1, the main research question for this study was "**What places and/or spaces have been significant to queer people in Columbia, Missouri between 1991 and 2021?**", with the following sub-questions:

1. What are the lived experiences of queer people in relation to places and/or spaces in Columbia, Missouri between 1991 and 2021?

2. Have there been shifts in the number or geographical distribution of queer places and/or spaces throughout this time period?

In pursuing these questions, this study sought to achieve the following objectives:

1. Explore the unique experiences of queer people living in Columbia, MO between 1991 and 2021 through semi-structured interviews.

2. Develop a visual representation of significant places and/or spaces for queer people in Columbia, MO by compiling and mapping spatial information identified through participant interviews and secondary research.

3. Identify changes in locations and interpretations of the queer geographies of Columbia, MO between 1991 and 2021.

I chose an exploratory case study as a methodological approach for developing a grounded, bottom-up understanding of the queer geography of Columbia. While John Gerring's (2004) framing of a case study as "an intensive study of a single unit with an aim to generalize across a larger set of units" certainly rings true – Columbia's queer geography indeed has implications for the larger body of work on queer geographies (see Chapter 5) – I am particularly drawn to Eisenhardt and Graebner's (2007) position that case studies "emphasize the rich, real-world context in which the phenomena occur." Combining this approach with the firsthand accounts of participant interviews established a framework for answering the main research question in a way that actively considered the characteristics of Columbia as a unique place.

Site Selection & Background

When selecting the location for this study, gaps in geographic literature, local queer history, and personal considerations all played a role. Extant work has investigated the queer geographies of the Midwest in general (Kazyak 2012; Manalansan et al. 2014; Instenes n.d.), rural Missouri (Cramer 2020), larger Missouri cities (Sawyer 1965; Nusser and Anacker 2013), and even the University of Missouri campus in Columbia (Hoffman 2012). No study to date has focused on the queer geographies of Columbia as a whole, which means that the city's distinctive queer geographies have not been given the detailed attention that the city, like all unique places, deserves (see Brown-Saracino 2018). Following Clare Forstie's (2020) argument that small cities are ideal venues for investigating queer communities, I contend that Columbia is especially primed as a site for a study of this kind. Columbia embodies a geographic crossroads: urban-surrounded-by-rural, sometimes-Midwest-sometimes-Southern, a university town in a Red state – a combination of environments not yet explored in queer geography literature.

Like most places, Columbia has a history of queer existence and struggle. Starting in the 1940s, the University of Missouri – Columbia (a cornerstone of Columbia's identity, economy, and culture which is affectionately referred to as "Mizzou"), as part of a broader national push to purge gay students from higher education (Nash and Silverman 2015), developed a ruthless approach towards identifying and "eliminating" non-heterosexual students and faculty who were considered a threat to the moral integrity of the campus (Niederberger 2016). These "witch hunts" included

fabled sting operations to catch gay men in intimate moments in university library bathrooms, interrogations of those suspected of attending off-campus parties hosted by and for gay men, and expulsions or firings for those determined to be non-heterosexual. This anti-gay campaign was spurred by the growing national consciousness of non-heterosexual individuals and practices, as well as Columbia's reputation as a safe harbor for queer folks traveling from one coast of the country to the other (Husted 2019).

Extreme measures focused on detection and "elimination" began to deescalate toward the end of the 1960s in conjunction with the broader mobilization of the Gay Liberation Movement in which queer individuals were encouraged to step into the light and claim their presence. When they were initially barred from official recognition and permission to hold meetings on campus, the leaders of the newly formed Gay Lib student organization at Mizzou worked its way up the appeals process, ultimately bringing their case to the U.S. Supreme Court. The court's refusal to hear the case in 1978 spelled the first major victory for queer students on Mizzou's campus. This momentum led to a series of re-brandings of the queer student organization over the years, from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance (GALA) of the 1980s, to the Triangle Coalition (TriCo) and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Resource Center in the 1990s, and ultimately leading to its current iteration in the LGBTQ Resource Center. In terms of official university stances on sexuality, Mizzou's nondiscrimination policy in the 1990s either entirely neglected sexual orientation or was framed as intentionally ambiguous in its protections, claiming that all students and staff would be protected from discrimination of "any personal characteristic" (Burke 2008). This calculated oversight was finally corrected in 2003 when Mizzou added "sexual orientation" as a protected class into its anti-discrimination policy (Nilsen 2003). In 2014, "gender identity" and "gender expression" were also included in the policy (Johnson 2014). At the time of this writing (2022), Mizzou's campus scores 4.5 out of 5 stars in its "institutional commitment to LGBTQ-inclusive policy, program and practice" according to the Campus Pride Index (University of Missouri n.d.)

Beyond Mizzou's campus, the city of Columbia has also experienced significant changes in the attitudes and legalities regarding sexual orientation and gender expression. In a relatively early move compared to other places in the United States, Columbia adopted sexual orientation into its

city-wide nondiscrimination policy in 1992, around the time that national conversations surrounding the tolerance of non-heterosexual individuals within the U.S. military had reached the mainstream. This was accomplished through the tireless efforts of local queer folks and allies who maintained a widespread campaign to increase awareness and support. Nearly a decade later, the city expanded its legal protections to include gender identity (Pearl 2011). The Columbia Public School board also voted to include sexual orientation in the district's nondiscrimination policy in 1999, at the same time that Mizzou was remaining ambiguously "protective" in this regard. In 2021, Columbia scored a perfect 100/100 on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index, which evaluates the degree to which a city protects and accepts LGBTQ populations (Columbia, Missouri 2021 Municipal Equality Index Scorecard 2021). This timeline shows that there has been a presence, and increasing tolerance, of queer people in Columbia, yet the significant places and spaces connected to this community and its history are undocumented.

My own positionality also played a role in determining the site for this study. I am a Columbia townie, born here in 1994 and a resident for a cumulative 22 years. Although I currently identify as queer, I identified only as straight for my first 18 years in Columbia before I experienced a shift in my sexuality later in my life while I was living out of state. I therefore saw my hometown with different eyes when I moved back and was deeply curious about the realities of the queer Columbia that I had been largely oblivious of as a child and teenager. Columbia is my favorite place, and one that I am constantly inspired to explore and discover through a myriad of lenses and perspectives. Paired with my enthusiasm for all things queer and map-related, this enthusiasm drew me to the prospect of conducting a study of Columbia that would add a deeper understanding of underrepresented geographies in this small city.

Timeframe of Study

As noted in the previous section, queer people and their struggles existed as early as the 1940s in Columbia (recognizing, of course, that queer people existed in the city long before then). The time and resource constraints of a two-year master's program, however, required narrower time parameters. For a more manageable timeframe, I turned to the timeline of queer history in the United States (Cook-Daniels 2008) and selected 1991 as this study's starting point. The year 1991

follows the revolutionary Gay Liberation movement of the 1970s and 1980s, which brought queer rights out of societal darkness, yet predates the murder of college student Matthew Shepard in 1998 – a tragic act of homophobic violence that activated broader support for gay rights causes. The year 1991 marks a crossroads in United States queer history in which queer folks were largely no longer hidden but were also largely not accepted or protected by laws. Following 1991, the number and visibility of explicitly queer spaces increased, including gay bars, Pride events, and queer resource centers, all of which were of significance to this study. Given the second sub-research question for this study, I chose 2021 as the concluding year to provide a recent queer geography as a contrast to that of 1991. Including these most recent years also lends an opportunity to examine how, if at all, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected queer places and experiences within the queer community. Additional research into queer places of significance preceding this timeframe would certainly yield illuminating results and would continue the important project of deepening our understanding of Columbia's queer geography over time (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Semi-Structured Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were the primary method in this study. Qualitative ethnographic methods such as participant interviews are particularly effective for interpreting not only the broader crossroads of queer theory and sociological studies (Valocchi 2005) but also for investigations specifically into queer communities in small cities (Forstie 2020). While many queer places and spaces could be – and were – discovered by other means, the finer, less obvious experiences of everyday queer people and the places that were significant to them were best revealed through participant interviews, as the lived experiences of queer people in Columbia were sure to uncover certain spaces of significance that may not exist in formal registers. Following what Sara Ahmed (2006) has called a natural application of queer theory, I relied first and foremost on the lived experiences and memories of queer folks. I used participant interviews to elicit what Avery Gordon (2008) describes as "hauntings" – the specific, personal recollections and attachments that go beyond the mere coordinates or structure of a place, and instead bring to light forgotten or erased events, emotions, and affects associated with a place. Interviews ranged from forty five minutes to

two and a half hours and were recorded with audio and/or video over Zoom or in person. Interview locations varied and included participants' homes, coffee shops, and bars. I began each interview with an overview of the consent form and interview procedures, providing an opportunity for questions before consent. After responding to the questions in the interview protocol, interviewees were encouraged to branch off into questions and topics they deemed relevant.

Participant Recruitment

A total of ten participants were identified through snowball sampling, selected on the basis that they:

1. self-identify as any sexual orientation or gender which they considered to fall under the umbrella term "queer" **AND**

2. lived (or presently live) in Columbia, Missouri for any amount of time between 1991-2021.

With respect to the first criterion, four of the ten participants identified as "queer"; the other participants' orientations were gay, lesbian, and pansexual (Figure 1). Self-identified genders included man, woman, trans man, non-binary, and one participant who did not identify with any particular gender (Figure 2). Most of the participants identified as white (eight of ten), with two identifying as Black – one of whom identified specifically as Black and West African (Figure 3). The composition of this snowball sample is likely a reflection of my own identity as a white person and, by extension, my immediate social network. Queer people of color undoubtedly have very different experiences of place and space, and this is an important area for future attention (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

Because queer experiences of place and space vary over time, the snowball sample was stratified by length of residence in Columbia. Interviewing people who have lived in the city for different periods of time was key in answering the second sub- research question examining changes to Columbia's queer geography over time. The sample was also constructed to ensure that in any given year, there were at least two participants who were living in Columbia at that time in order to triangulate historical experiences and recollections (Figure 4). Equally as important, and particularly relevant to college towns such as Columbia, it was critical to stratify the sample by

affiliation to the University of Missouri, actively seeking out those whose main relationship to Columbia was *not* related to the university community. This proved tricky, underscoring one participant's observation that you "can't swing a cat in this town without hitting someone Mizzou!" Although it is undeniable that Mizzou is a large part of Columbia, it is comprised of a student community that, generally speaking, has limited familiarity of, and interactions with, the larger Columbia community. When soliciting potential future participants at the end of interviews, I specifically asked about acquaintances who had no relationship to the university. I also made a point of seeking out participants who were not at the forefront of queer political activism or interest groups, but simply *existed* as queer people in Columbia. Participants who led political movements or centered their queerness were of course extremely helpful in providing a broad picture of queer history, places, and spaces in Columbia, yet most queer Columbians are not in such positions and as such, I wanted to call on a mixture of positionalities to collect experiences of everyday queer citizens as well as community leaders.

RACE AND/OR ETHNICITY

White (8)

Black (1)

Black - West African (1)
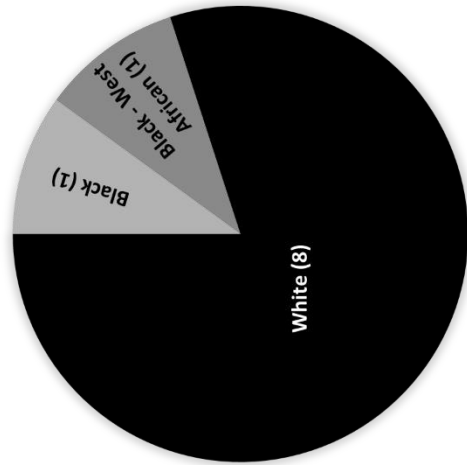
Figure 3. Self-identified races and/or ethnicities of participants

ORIENTATION

Lesbian (2)

Pansexual (1)

Gay (3)

Queer (4)
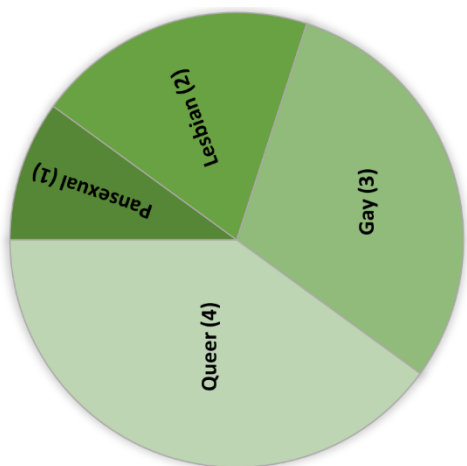
Figure 2. Self-identified sexual orientations of participants.

GENDER

Woman (4)

None (1)

Non-binary (1)

Trans Man (1)

Man (3)
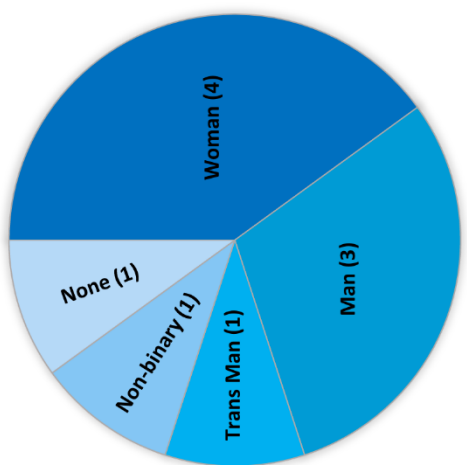
Figure 1. Self-identified genders of participants.

1991 1992 1993 1994 1995 1996 1997 1998 1999 2000 2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021

Figure 4. Years during which each participant, represented by a distinct color, lived in Columbia, Missouri

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Question Development

The scope of interview questions (see Appendix 1) was intentionally broad. Given the exploratory nature of this study, I created questions that covered a range of factors relating to queer places/spaces and people's experiences with them as a means of triggering and encom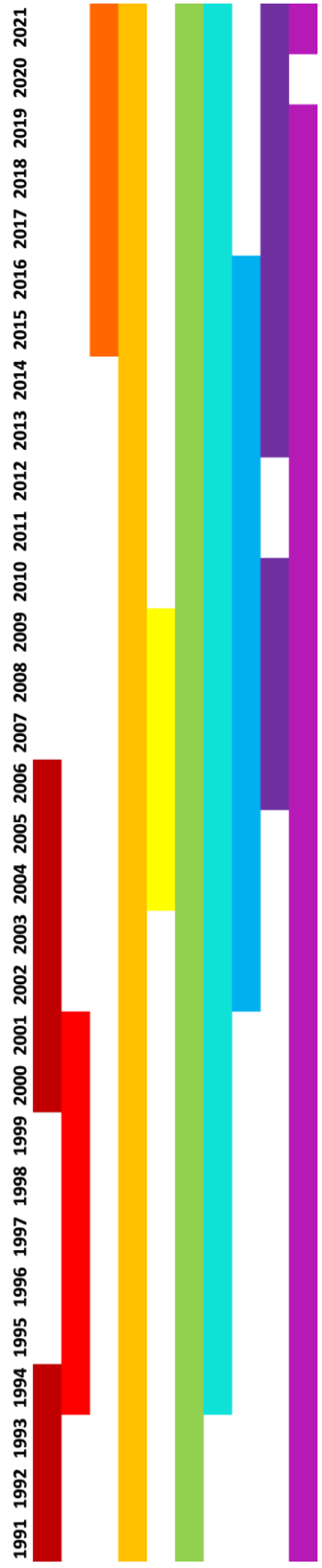passing memories and details that may have otherwise not come up. With regard to the Participant Background questions, participants were asked to define for themselves the specifics of their gender and sexuality identity instead of choosing from a pre-determined list of options. This was done as an intentional move towards "challenging discrete categorizations of the subject" as Hannah McCann (2016) calls for, among other similar arguments for "queering" the normative, limited structure of quantitative questioning (Valocchi 2005; Browne 2008; Doan 2016).

Questions regarding spaces and places were also crafted in a way that sought to shake up traditional, normative approaches that focus on visibly and culturally explicit queer establishments (questions such as "What gay bars did you go to?", or "Where were queer resource centers in town?"), instead creating an intentional space for often-overlooked – or what we could call "unmarked" (Brekhus 1998) – places and spaces (questions such as "Where did you go on "queer" dates?", or "Are there places where you would drop hands with a partner?"). Following Alessandro Boussalem's (2020) call to give greater value to the role that private spaces and spaces of silence and nondisclosure play in queer folks' lives, I also included questions asking about private places and/or places where perhaps "significant" moments did not occur, but where moments of everyday queer life took place.

The influence of temporality also played into question creation, as it was important in uncovering potential "temporal heterotopias" (Foucault and Miskowiec 1986) – or places that take on various meanings and uses depending on shifting circumstances – such as a public park that transforms into a cruising spot after sundown, or, to give an example more relevant to Columbia, an area of town that becomes accessible as a harassment-free zone to queer people in the summer when the bulk of college students have moved away. Relatedly, the opportunity was presented to discuss various other potential factors that may have influenced a participant's experience with place and space as a queer individual, such as their own physical presentation (including clothing,

hairstyles, and speech patterns among other aspects) or the company present (such as friends or acquaintances in a participant's group outwardly expressing their queerness).

In what ultimately ended up being less of a central focus of this study, questions were also developed to discuss the various ways in which a place or space's queer-friendliness was communicated within the queer community. Sub-questions within this category included inquiries into the roles that visible queer-coded signage (such as Pride flags, pink triangle stickers, or the Human Rights Campaign logo) played on identifying either physical establishments or individual persons as "safe" spaces or people to approach and interact with. Word-of-mouth communication was a heavily emphasized example of such communication, as many queer-intended spaces and places were not – especially in the earlier years of this study's scope – publicly listed as such.

Finally, I created specific questions meant to achieve the third research objective of this study regarding shifts in the queer geography of Columbia since 1991. These questions were framed within contexts of both physical shifts (such as a gay bar closing and moving to another location) and cultural shifts (such as the phenomenon of "straight bootlegging" of queer-intended spaces – see Chapter 4 for further discussion), as well as any potential geographic concentrations of queer spaces, whether public or private. This section of questions attempted to get at both detailed explanations of the locational shifts mentioned above as well as broader narratives of how the *number* of queer-intended spaces has or has not changed over the years.

Coding & Database Development

I transcribed all ten interviews through a combination of AI-generated transcriptions using Otter.ai software, and manual transcription and revision. I performed open coding in which I created unique codes for each significant place and/or space, experience, contextual explanation (such as the influence of unique characteristics of Columbia as a city, or of broader societal realities of queer tolerance – or lack thereof – on the existence of queer places and/or spaces), communication method, and personal identity factor that was mentioned. This level of detail, in conjunction with the inquiries and documentation of each participant's positionality (e.g. race/ethnicity, gender, and orientation) were meant as a response to Japonica Brown-Saracino's (2014) guidance that when working with multiple queer subjects in a single site, researchers "should anticipate heterogeneous

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responses," all of which are valid and contribute to the narrative of the site as a whole. I then used thematic analysis coding to nest these highly specific responses into a hierarchy of broader categories that ultimately culminated in themes that served as a framework for gaining a clearer understanding of the overall narrative of queer places and spaces in Columbia and potential factors for the varying experiences encountered (see Chapter 4).

In addition to these qualitative codes and subsequent themes, I then developed a database to document and organize the spatial and temporal information associated with each place and space identified within interviews. I employed longitudinal coding, in which I established additional codes to classify each place and space in regard to its 1) broadscale category of place or space (physical establishment, space, or virtual), 2) specific category of place or space (bar, cruising spot, meeting space, private, religious, etc.), and 3) the degree to which its core function was queer-intended (yes, sometimes, events-only, queer-friendly, queer-friendly *and* events, or not at all) (Table 1). These codes allowed for more nuanced sorting practices among the spaces and places listed, ultimately permitting me to narrow in on the spaces and places that met the specific requirements for the digital map of places of "significance" (see Chapter 4 for more detail).

Code	Definition
Queer-Intended	**The degree to which a space or place is intended for a queer audience**
Y (Yes)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is consistently intended for a queer audience or clientele
S (Sometimes)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is not intended for a queer audience of clientele, but this shifts depending on a conditional factor(s) (such as the time of day, time of year, or the presence or activity of queer people)
E (Events)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is not intended for a queer audience or clientele, nor is it generally recognized by queer people as a safe space to present as queer, but is used as a venue for queer-intended events, whether or not this is known by those who own/operate the establishment or space (includes events like drag shows, meeting space for queer organizations, Pride events)
E-F (Events & Friendly)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is not intended for a queer audience or clientele, but it is generally recognized by queer people as a safe space to present as queer, AND it hosts queer-intended events (includes events like drag shows, meeting space for queer organizations, Pride events)

F (Friendly)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is not intended for a queer audience or clientele, nor does it host queer-intended events, but it is generally recognized by queer people as a safe space to present as queer
N (No)	The primary purpose of the establishment or space is not intended for a queer audience or clientele, nor is it generally recognized by queer people as a safe space to present as queer, nor does it host queer-intended events
Physicality	**The form in which a space or place exists**
E (Establishment)	Permanent physical structure
S (Space)	Open, outdoor areas; general areas without defined boundaries
V (Virtual)	Space existing in digital or media form; exists wherever the reader/interactor is at any given moment of interaction
Place Category	
B (Bar/Club)	Any establishment or space with a primary purpose of operating a bar or nightclub
CO (Coffee Shop)	Any establishment with a primary purpose of operating a coffee shop
CR (Cruising Spot)	Any establishment or space that is not primarily intended to host queer sexual interactions, but was/is in fact where queer sexual interactions took/take place
H (Healthcare)	Any establishment that has a primary purpose of providing medical care or support
MS (Meeting Space)	Any establishment or space that has a primary purpose that is not queer-intended, but was/is used as a meeting place for queer-intended groups or organizations
O (Outdoors)	Any establishment or space that does not have an enclosed indoor element
P (Private)	Any establishment or space that is not accessible or used by the general public
RL (Religious)	Any establishment or space that has a primary purpose of conducting religious functions
RC (Resource Center)	Any establishment that provides queer-intended resources (including health care, general information, events, etc.)
RT (Restaurant)	Any establishment with a primary purpose of selling food
SP (Space)	Open, outdoor areas; general areas without defined boundaries
ST (Store)	Any establishment with a primary purpose of selling goods (not including food)
VE (Venue)	Establishment or space with a primary purpose that is not queer-intended but is used as a venue for queer-intended events (whether or not this is known by those who own/operate the establishment or space
VI (Virtual)	Space existing in digital or media form; exists wherever the reader/interactor is at any given moment of interaction

Table 1. Codes and corresponding definitions used in categorizing spatial database entries

Assigning these codes often proved very difficult, as many queer-intended places and spaces had multiple, ambiguous, or contingent functions and purposes. An example is the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network organization, or RAIN, which was a resource center for those diagnosed and living with HIV and/or AIDS. At the organization's inception in 1992, this organization was arguably most relevant to those in the queer community, as HIV and AIDS disproportionately affected these populations, gay men in particular. For this reason, RAIN was often talked about by participants as a queer space despite the fact that RAIN did not formally advertise itself as serving an explicitly queer-intended audience. While these factors already made settling on hard-and-fast classifications difficult, the intended audience and messaging of RAIN then continued to evolve over the years following the larger shift in HIV/AIDS epidemic, ultimately becoming a less-niche healthcare center that, although still providing extensive HIV/AIDS resources, now offers a broader range of health services and in fact changed its name to one that does not include "AIDS". The question became one of how best to classify a space that has experienced shifts in purpose and audience all while never actually recognizing *itself* as queer-intended. In instances such as these – instances of conflict that Brown and Knopp (2008) would argue are "opportunities to advance knowledge", instead of being barriers – I relied on accounts and assessments provided by participants, as queer people's perceptions of a space or place's intended queerness were ultimately of consequence to this study.

For each place or space, whenever possible, I also recorded the street addresses, latitude and longitude coordinates, year(s) of existence, associated emotions or affects (as provided by participants), and additional notes detailing the source of the collected data or relevant quotes collected during interviews. I compiled these details to gain greater clarity on the exact locations of the places and spaces discussed in order to develop a more accurate digital map later in the research process, as well as to provide an outlined temporal context for any potential shifts in geographic distribution of said places and spaces. While participant interviews do indeed produce nuanced and enlightening understandings of places and spaces, they of course come with the limitations of human memory and recollection. Because of this, many of the additional details listed above were discovered or confirmed through secondary research methods.

Secondary Research

As noted in the previous section, secondary research was necessary to fill in gaps and reconcile the spatial and temporal information for each place and/or space as provided by participants. The main source for this secondary research were the Coming Out (Coming Out Collective 1989) and Outspoken newsletters (Cooper 1999) which were, respectively, "A newsletter by, for, and about lesbians" and "News, reviews and opinions for lesbian, bi- and trans- women" in Columbia. Now archived in the Columbia branch of the State Historical Society of Missouri, these newsletters served as a space for Columbia's queer women to experience community virtually, and included community-submitted essays, poems, opinion pieces (or "rants" as the column came to be called) in addition to community news and announcements. These newsletters proved informative both in their firsthand accounts of queer life in Columbia during these earlier years (read: challenging, fraught, and tense, while at the same time joyous, proud, and hopeful) as well as the final pages of each issue which outlined queer-intended (not just lesbian-intended) resources and events and, most importantly for this study, addresses for each. These directories were immensely helpful for fact-checking participant recollections of locations and years of existence as well as clarifying the purposes and natures of various places and spaces. This sort of supplemental information was also, at times, found among the various articles and advertisements throughout the newsletters.

After consulting the newsletters, discrepancies and gaps still existed, particularly with regard to the specific time periods in which various establishments existed in specific locations between the years 2000 (when OutSpoken ceased publishing) and approximately 2008 (when broader local media began reporting more regularly and openly about queer-intended places and events such as resource centers and Pride festivals). To fill in these gaps, I turned towards archives of local media articles as well as county and state business registration records. Through these combined resources, I was able to triangulate more detailed timelines of where queer-intended places existed and moved over time.

Digital Map Development

   To demonstrate the geographic distribution and shifts of the places and spaces identified from participant interviews and secondary research, I developed three digital maps using ArcGIS Pro software. While mapping practices in general are a valuable technique for "spatializing the queer" (Gieseking 2013) and uncovering hidden histories and marginal voices (see Brown and Knopp 2008; Krupar 2015; Gieseking 2018; Carter 2019), two particular queer mapping projects inspired this project's use of geographic information systems (GIS). Jack Gieseking's multilayered, interactive digital mappings of places of significance as identified by lesbian-queer individuals in New York City from 1983-2008 served as an aspirational model with regard to its robust levels of temporal and categorical specificity (Gieseking 2020c), while the grassroots, web-based, participatory "Queering the Map" project centers specifically on the unfiltered lived experiences that queer folks have had with an ever-growing breadth of places and spaces (LaRochelle 2018). Initially, plans for this study included a map that would represent a combination of these two approaches – one showcasing both official, historical places of significance while also highlighting specific, nuanced personal experiences of queer individuals – and that would be as interactive and public-facing as possible. However, given limitations of time and resources, I ultimately settled on a simplified approach to the maps which represent queer places of significance in a static, non-interactive format. This limited format and scope is one area for further potential work (see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

   The three maps created for this project represent distinct aspects of Columbia's queer geography and show the complex interconnectedness between many of the places and spaces over time (see Chapter 4 for these maps and subsequent analyses). I determined the criteria for which places and spaces to include using the spatial database codes described above. In the case of the Pride festival and queer-intended maps, the places and spaces that met these criteria, along with their corresponding latitude and longitude coordinates, were then sorted into the decades in which they existed at their respective locations. These categorized locations were then converted into XY data points in ArcGIS Pro. For the Pride festival and queer-intended maps, standard

distances were also then calculated for each decade's set of locations to show the average distance that a location would exist away from the mean center.

More Than the Sum of Its Parts

Addressing the main research question of this study and, in a broader sense, developing a foundational understanding of the queer landscape that has existed and changed in Columbia over time, requires a multifaceted approach that considers both the official registers of queer places as well as finer, less-obvious places and spaces of queer significance found through personal accounts. Although participant interviews offered invaluable, affective, and at times emotional insights into Columbia's queer geography, specifics regarding mappable locations often remained vague. Although the maps focused on those places that were identified as queer-intended, their varying uses, characters, and audiences were only made apparent through the detailed, and sometimes contradictory, firsthand recollections of those who interacted with them. Through the combined results of these multiple, mixed methods of data collection and analysis however, a clearer picture of Columbia's queer geography begins to take shape.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

As discussed in the previous chapter, I developed an extensive list of codes throughout the interview coding process that details categorizations of place, experience, personal information, and cultural discourse among other themes. These themes and codes can be found in Table 2 at the end of this chapter. While the primary emphasis for this study ultimately focused on the locations and shifts over time of specifically queer-intended spaces and places in Columbia, these findings would be empty and disconnected without bringing into discussion the various social, geographic, and identity-based aspects of Columbia and its queer residents. The following discussion of results will first introduce the geographic distribution and shifts of queer places and spaces between 1991 and 2021 before providing broader context for Columbia as a site of unique social structures as well as the factors influencing participant experiences with the city's queer geographies.

Places & Spaces

Figure 5 displays a digital map of physical places and spaces present between 1991 and 2021 that were coded, as defined by the spatial database codes introduced in Chapter 3 (Table 1), of being either 1) queer-intended, 2) sometimes queer-intended, 3) a regular host of queer-intended events *and* perceived as queer-friendly, 4) a regular host of queer-intended events but not perceived as queer-friendly, or 5) perceived as queer-friendly but *not* a regular host of queer-intended events (see Appendix 3 for supplementary maps that show these categories for each decade of the study). This map shows that these places and spaces have had a relatively wide physical range of locations but have tended to exist in greater concentrations in and around the downtown area. This is a logical pattern, as most commercial spaces, including those frequented by or intended for queer audiences (e.g., bars and nightclubs), have historically been centralized in the downtown district, expanding increasingly outward over the years. We can also see that queer-intended places specifically have a varied geographic distribution with most being located downtown, but a notable handful existing on the outskirts of town. The historic changes of this distribution will be discussed in a later section discussing shifts in Columbia's queer geography. The following subsections will look in greater depth at the categories coded and shown in this map.
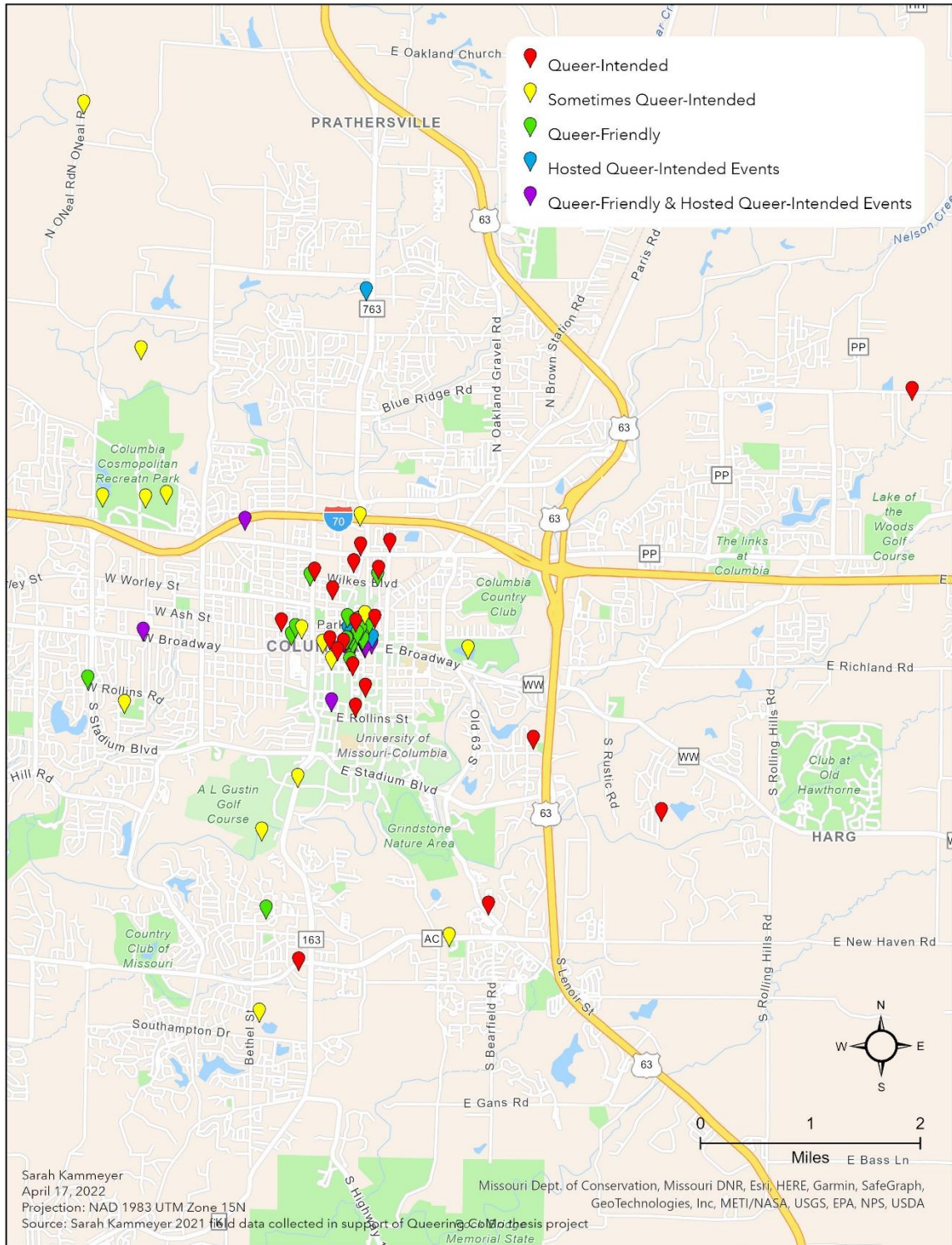
Figure 5. Geographic distribution of places and spaces coded as either queer-intended, sometimes queer-intended, queer-friendly, a venue for queer-intended events, or both queer-friendly and a venue for queer-intended events between 1991 and 2021

Queer-Intended

Physical places and spaces coded as "Queer-Intended" (that is, having a primary purpose that is consistently intended for a queer audience or clientele) ultimately ended up belonging to one of two categories: bars/nightclubs or resource centers. Bars or nightclubs that had a high concentration of queer patrons, had specific days or times of day that catered to queer people, or were regarded as "honorary" queer bars or clubs but were not *primarily* intended as queer spaces are not included in this discussion. A timeline representing the years in which these queer-intended places and spaces existed is shown in Figure 6. In the case that a bar or resource center moved locations, this is represented by multiple, separated boxes containing the same establishment name. We can see in the timeline that there has only been one point in time between 1991 and 2021 during which more than two queer bars have existed. The same is true for queer resource centers. This corresponds with the sense of "competition" among Columbia's queer community, and the queer bar scene in particular, that many participants mentioned in their interviews (this sentiment is discussed at greater length later in this chapter). The timeline also shows that despite the presence of that competitive spirit, Columbia has always maintained *at least* one queer bar since 1991, and *at least* one queer resource center since 1993.

Bars & Nightclubs

"Everybody that went there, you all knew each other at least by face. And there was a sense of kindred – or a bonding – even if you didn't know their name; if you saw them in public, you would maybe acknowledge them. You might not go say hi or whatever, but you'd acknowledge them. It was kind of like a secret fraternity or sorority, and people – it didn't matter, there was all strata there. Poor people, rich people, students, alcoholics, drug addicts, teetotalers..."

This is how one participant described the queer bar culture in Columbia during the 1990s and is a sentiment that is reflective of the larger function of queer bars during this time. When being publicly "out" was likely to attract negative attention, many turned to the safety found within the walls of queer bars and clubs. As this participant notes, these spaces were refuges of sorts in which queers of all backgrounds were able to express themselves authentically without fear of persecution.
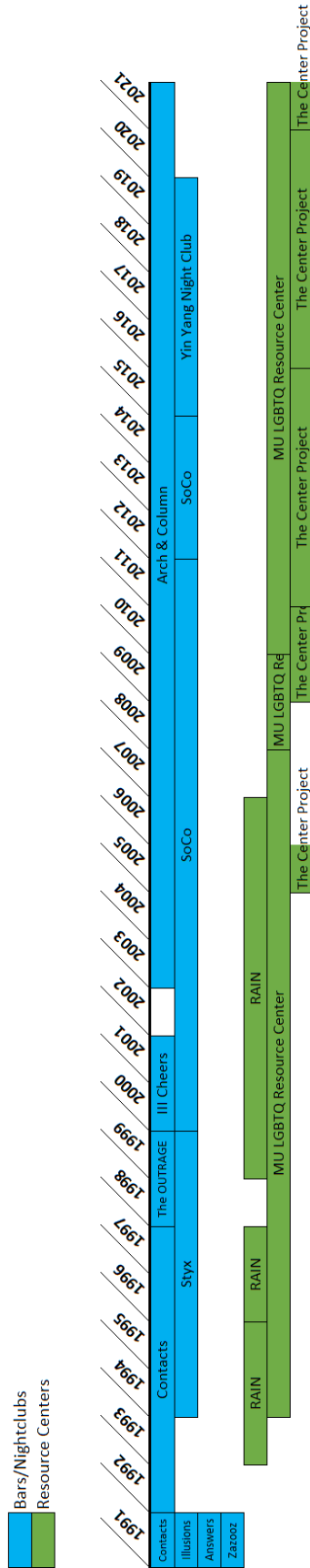
Figure 6. Timeline of years in which queer-intended places and spaces existed in Columbia, Missouri

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Some bars, such as one called Zazooz, offered an even greater layer of security with a nondescript exterior that gave no indication of the clientele within. Zazooz was located on the very northeastern fringes of the city (Figure 7) which allowed for even greater obscurity, as those who were not "in the know" about its location would be unlikely to stumble upon it, let alone recognize it for what it was. Zazooz' distance from downtown further amplified its ability to offer a haven for
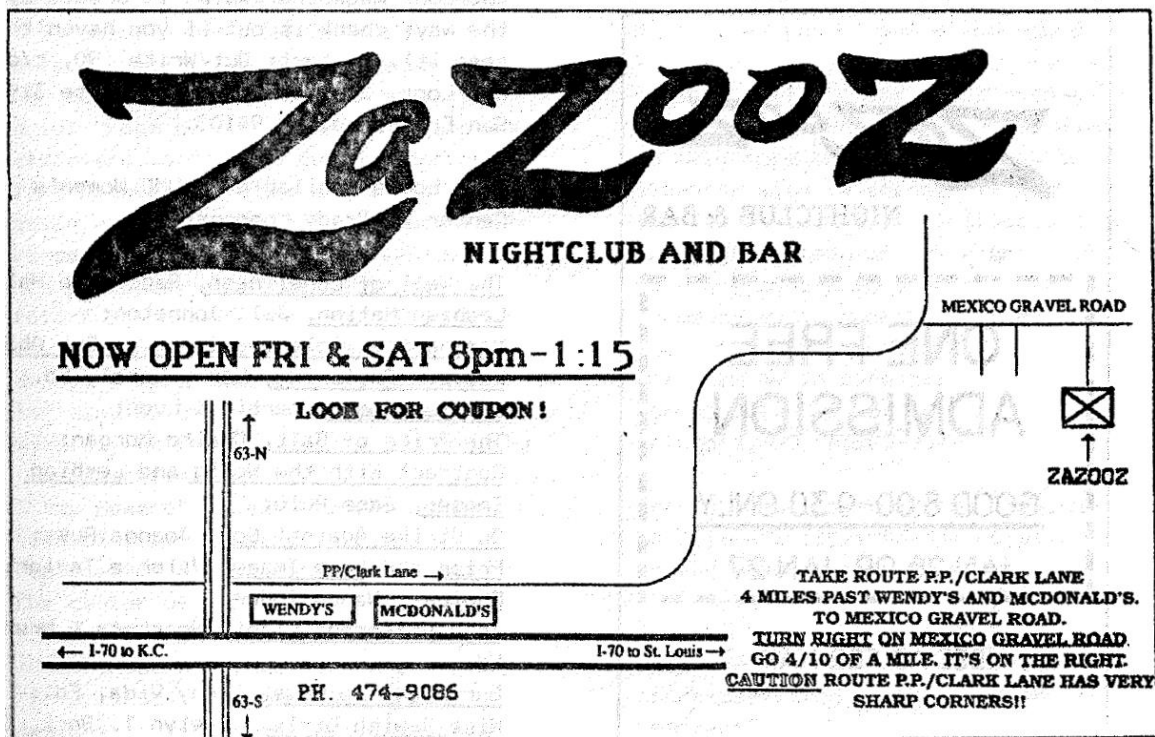

Figure 7. Advertisement for Zazooz Nightclub and Bar showing directions to its location on the outskirts of town; listed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1990)

queer folks, as many saw this as their one opportunity to openly indulge in the queer lifestyle without risk of being recognized by acquaintances or co-workers – something that at the time could lead to harmful personal and professional ramifications. Some participants who went to Zazooz remarked on its accessibility as a result of its distance from central Columbia. Because of its location, which, in the early 1990s was even further away from the city center than would be considered now, Zazooz was only reachable by those who had access to a car. This perhaps led to it trending towards young professionals and older, with most of the college undergraduate population either unaware of its existence or incapable of patronizing it. Zazooz ultimately only survived for two or three years, closing in 1992. Nearly a decade later, another queer nightclub opened in the same

location in 1998, this time under the name The OUTRAGE (Figure 8). The OUTRAGE openly and

actively identified itself as "Transgender Friendly" despite being mainly labeled as a gay and lesbian

Figure 8. Advertisement for The OUTRAGE nightclub showing directions to its location at the previous site of Zazooz; listed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1998)

nightclub. This was relatively unheard of at the time, perhaps indicating a shift in attitudes even

within the queer community towards those still marginalized. The atmosphere at both Zazooz and

The OUTRAGE appears to have been lively, with space for dancing as well as billiards.

Eight other queer bars and/or nightclubs have existed (in several iterations in some cases)

between and beyond the rise and fall of Zazooz and The OUTRAGE. These establishments largely

fell into two camps: high-energy, dance-oriented night clubs, or more laid-back, pub-style bars.

Clubs like SoCo (short for "South Columbia", as it was first located on the southern edge of town)

and Yin Yang both boasted dance floors as well as weekly drag shows. As we will see later in this

chapter, these drag events were often highly attended, and not just by queer people. Columbia's

longest continuously-running gay bar, Arch & Column (often referred to simply as "Arches"), opened

in 2003 and is still operating today. Arches is, as one participant quipped, "basically Cheers" in the

sense that it is a down-home pub where everyone knows your name and has a very regular crowd. Its location just to the north of the downtown area, paired with its longstanding history and relaxed vibes, lend it to be a favorite among older locals. It is just enough off the beaten path to fly under most undergraduate students' radars, except perhaps when the annual Pride festival takes place. It is important to note that although none of these bars or nightclubs were explicitly marketed towards one specific queer identity, they were often frequented by, and perhaps catered heavily to, gay men more than any other group (more discussion will be provided on this phenomenon later in this chapter).

According to participants, the most common way that these places were (and are) communicated about is through informal word of mouth. We could easily expect to find this in the earlier years of this study, as many queer bars in the 1990s would not have found it sensible or safe to communicate the nature of their business widely or visibly to the general public for fear of harassment of the building or its patrons. Back then, you truly had to be "in the know" in order to know where such safe spaces for unwinding on a Friday night were. Interestingly, this appears to still be the case. Almost all participants I spoke with stated that they hear about new queer spaces or events through friends or social media in place of more official channels such as local media.

Resource Centers

The first queer resource center to open in Columbia – the Regional AIDS Interfaith Network (RAIN) – was, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 3, not strictly-speaking a queer resource center. With HIV and AIDS education and case management as its primary objectives, RAIN was technically a resource center for any and all persons living with these diseases. However, because gay men were experiencing contraction at far higher rates than other populations at the time of RAIN's opening in Columbia in 1993, centers of this kind were often perceived to be queer-intended. Indeed, multiple participants suggested RAIN when asked about queer places, and ads for the center ran in the Coming Out newsletters from 1993 through 1999 (Coming Out Collective 1989). RAIN recently transitioned into Spectrum Healthcare, which serves as a broader "healthcare organization" that no longer specifically focuses on HIV/AIDS case management.

Shortly after RAIN opened in its first location, the first iteration of Mizzou's LGBTQ Resource Center opened in 1994 (then called the "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual Resource Center"). Previous iterations had existed in student group form ("Gay Lib", "Gay and Lesbian Alliance" and "Triangle Coalition"), and the university's Women's Center had provided queer-related educational and support resources for years, but this was the first official, stand-alone center dedicated specifically for queer students. In a darkly ironic turn, the center was first housed in a roughly repurposed maintenance closet in what was then known as the Brady Commons building (named after Thomas A. Brady, a former Mizzou dean who oversaw the gay witch hunts in the 1940s and 50s). The center has undergone many shifts since 1994 in terms of both physical location and name, and is now housed in the Student Center – a name change brought about by student protests in the early 2000s against Thomas Brady's leadership role in the witch hunts against gay students in the 1950s as well as segregationist policies (Goldenhersh, Leitner, and Wyatt 2008).

The Center Project is Columbia's newest and arguably broadest-reaching queer resource center. Started in 2004 by a group of local queer folks who saw a need to create a more cohesive and centralized space for the queer community, The Center Project is now stronger than ever, even after four location shifts over the years. The Center Project serves as a rallying point for community engagement, as volunteers regularly staff concessions stands at Mizzou sports games, carry out the yearly Mid-Mo Pride Festival, and participate in the various identity support groups that the center hosts.

Sometimes Queer-Intended

Shifting from the realm of entirely "queer-intended", we move towards places and spaces that have a conditional component that mark them as "Sometimes" queer-intended. For this study, "sometimes queer-intended" refers to any place or space which has a primary purpose that is not intended for a queer audience or clientele but can shift to being queer-intended depending on the time of day, time of year, or the presence or activity of queer people. Perhaps the most obvious example of such spaces is cruising spots. Although not frequently discussed in participant interviews, several areas and locations were pointed out as cruising spots for gay men. These places, including a lake and certain restrooms in the city-run Cosmopolitan (often shortened to

"Cosmo") Park, as well as a local sex store, all have primary purposes which do not involve active sexual interactions yet transitioned to such purposes at certain times of day (primarily nighttime). For example, the local sex store was reported to become a site for hooking up only after the gay bars in town had closed for the night. These cruising spots were often only known as such by those "in the know". This of course does not always remain the case, as a campaign of unknown origin in the 2000s targeted the sexual encounters taking place in the park restrooms by posting flyers as a means of shaming the participating men into ceasing their actions.

Other "sometimes queer-intended" places were identified based on the conditional presence or activity of queer people. Recreational sports teams were frequently mentioned when discussing lesbian-specific geographies in Columbia. Rugby and softball, often considered the two most stereotypical lesbian sports, often provided transient sites of queer community for Columbia lesbians. Given Columbia's lack of lesbian-specific bars, places like Mizzou's Reactor Field and the Rainbow Softball Center in Cosmo Park became regular meeting places for queer women who perhaps did not have a permanent, reliable place to do so. A similar situation came to be with the Lesbian Community Project of Mid-Missouri's adopt-a-highway section of Providence Road near Faurot Field in the mid to late 1990s. While there was an official sign posted at this area listing the group as the area's stewards, the stretch of road only fully became a place of queer women's community during the monthly "trashy dykes" litter pick-ups on Saturday mornings (Figure 9). One participant recalled that the adopt-a-highway sign was stolen numerous times, but instead of an act of homophobia, she believes the culprits were other lesbians who saw the sign as a token of pride.

Another example of this conditional presence influencing a space's queerness are Pride festival venues. Public Pride celebrations have been held in Columbia since 1991 in various spaces – spaces which, with sole exception of The OUTRAGE, are not primarily queer-intended. These events started as small picnics of ten to twenty people and have since ballooned into mass celebrations of up to 5,000. Acting as heterotopic place-events in which a "magical space" is temporarily produced (Bowes-Catton 2021), these Pride celebrations offer a conditional enclave within conventionally hegemonic spaces in which a concentrated, "magical" form of queer community is created.

Figure 9. Promotion for the Lesbian Community Project of Mid-Missouri's monthly adopt-a-highway litter pickup meeting; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1997)

To this point, one participant noted that "Pride's like the one time of year I feel in touch with the local [queer] community here." Columbia's Pride festivals were first held in various out-lying city-run public parks, typically in a rented-out pavilion. Celebrants would bring a potluck dish and partake in mostly unstructured activities such as yard games. Since those first picnics, the annual Pride festival that is now held in August and has transformed into a much more commercialized event, has taken place at increasingly more central locations, finding its home for the last seven years at a popular local music venue located immediately downtown.

Queer-Friendly & Queer-Intended Events

Beyond the scope of explicitly or conditionally queer-intended places and spaces, the boundaries begin to get fuzzy. How do we decide how to classify a queer-friendly place as opposed to a place that simply hosts queer-intended events? To answer these questions, I relied on participant-provided contextualization. Spaces and places that were generally perceived to be spaces in which one could comfortably and safely present as queer were coded as "Friendly"; those that were not, yet still hosted queer-intended events (such as drag shows or meeting space for queer organizations) were coded as "Events". Those that were both queer-friendly and hosted queer-intended events were coded as "Events & Friendly".

"Events" & Friendly" places tended to be either coffee shops, specialty stores, or surprisingly to me, religious groups. Several coffeehouses in the 1990s hosted queer-intended events such as open mic nights. One such coffeehouse was the Mixed Company Coffeehouse, which hosted monthly "music for a lesbian audience" nights from 1992-1995 (Figure 10).
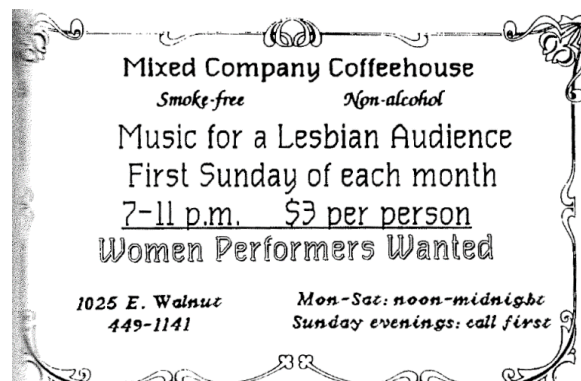
Figure 10. Advertisement for Mixed Company Coffeehouse's monthly "Music for a Lesbian Audience" open mic nights; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1992)

Coffee, Tea & Spice was also very well-known and popular with queer Columbia women, and held

a similar monthly event called "Lesbians and Friends". Even in the early 1990s, multiple local

churches were listed in the resources index at the back of Coming Out newsletters. These churches

also often allowed queer groups to regularly meet in their facilities, or even hosted regular support

groups for queer people living with HIV/AIDS. Specialty stores such as the Bosom of Ishtar and the

Peace Nook, although not specializing entirely on queer material, were openly supportive of queer

people and rights, selling relevant reading materials and hosting support groups. The ad seen in

Figure 11 echoes this mentality, as even though it was not an explicitly queer resource center, the

Peace Nook readily labeled itself as such during a time when publicly available queer resources

were few and far between. This sentiment was echoed by every participant, noting that they either

visited the Peace Nook regularly to browse, or at least knew of its accepting principles due to the

Pride flag that waved outside the store on the sidewalk downtown (it was, notably, the only

establishment in Columbia to do so throughout most if not all of the 1990s).

RESOURCE CENTER
For the Lesbian and Feminist Community

☆ Great alternative bookstore with strong feminist & lesbian sections and non-sexist children's books.
☆ Womyn's music, cooperative games.
☆ *Off Our Backs, Sinister Wisdom & Ms.*
☆ Amazon, pro-choice and feminist T's.
☆ Posters, pins, buttons, bumper stickers.
☆ Natural foods pantry & Blue Planet Buying Club. Good eats at great prices!
☆ We welcome your suggestions, ideas and input.

peace nook

The Nook is your Resource Center
M-W & F 11-7:30, TH 11-8:30, SAT 10-6, SUN 1-5
Volunteer-Run • Non-profit • 875-0539
804-C E. Broadway, Under the Earth Flag

Figure 11. Advertisement for the Peace Nook, a specialty store selling alternative books and goods; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1992)

"Friendly" places and spaces were much broader and subject to differing opinions among participants. To lean on another lesbian stereotype, the Columbia Farmers Market was seen as a go-to spot for queer women (Figure 12). In a write-up detailing "where the girls are", an OutSpoken columnist characterized the farmers market as "the best place to combine buying good-for-you produce with watching nice-to-look-at women." (Cone 1999) A 1996 edition of the Coming Out newsletter made a similar, more detailed claim, calling it "a regular Dyke Central." (Figure 13)
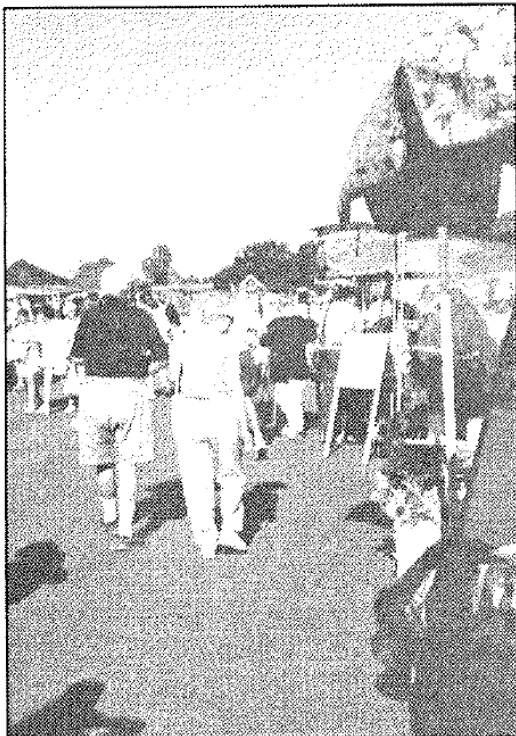
Lesbians can often be spotted in the crowds at the Columbia Farmer's Market on Saturdays.

Figure 12. Photo of people attending the Columbia Farmers Market; printed in OutSpoken newsletter alongside article exploring places frequented by lesbians (Cone 1999)

Sightings

I know that there are some of you out there who are forever complaining to your friends that you never meet any women... okay, *lesbian* women.... okay, *cute* lesbian women... okay, cute lesbian women that you never met before.

"I don't *go* to bars!" you whine.

Because I am the sort of altruistic soul who moves dead squirrels out of the road, I will let you in on one of the best little non-alcoholic lesbian-fests in town...

The Farmers' Market. Yep, it's a regular Dyke Central. Okay, so there aren't *quite* as many women there on a Saturday morning as you find on Sunday afternoon in Provincetown, but it's a lot closer. I have even developed a few conversation starters that are perfectly appropriate to this experience... if *no*where else:

"*WOW!* Those are some tomatoes!"
"*WOW!* Look at those melons!"
"Gosh, does *that* cucumber bring back memories!"

Try to be at least in the vicinity of the vegetables you mention. In case someone takes offense (*unlikely*, you say?) You can bat your eyes innocently: "What? I was talking about *those* (pointing to produce)!"

Vegetables that do *not* lend themselves well to double entendre include green beans, beets and Swiss chard. Likewise, very few women will pick up on the sexy innuendo directed at a firm head of cabbage, for reasons that *completely* escape me.

Figure 13. Commentary on the Farmers' Market as a popular place for queer Columbian women; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1996)

Some participants also mentioned what they called "honorary" gay bars, meaning that despite not being officially queer-intended, queer people often frequented them enough to consider them regular haunts. Among these were Kliks, Shattered (an alternative/punk club located downtown through the late 1990s and into the early 2000s), The Social Room, and Eastside Tavern. Speaking about Eastside, one participant stated that "there were times that I would say Eastside Tavern was

gayer than going to the gay bars." This was in some part due to Eastside's long-running series of "Dirty Disco" parties – alternative scene parties that offer "a place for anyone and everyone." (Pouncy 2017). Other queer-friendly places included local coffee shops, restaurants, and specialty stores. Part of the 1990s campaign to have sexual orientation added to the city's nondiscrimination policy, local queer activist group The Columbia Stonewall Coalition created small business cards (Figure 14) for people to leave at establishments they had just patronized in an effort to spread awareness that the queer community was already well-established and contributing to the local economy and culture. In doing so, they claimed those spaces as queer, if only for a moment.

THE CARDS ARE HERE

The business cards we've anxiously (and I do mean anxiously) waited for have arrived. Below is a lovely display. Several of us have been distributing them with fairly benign results. We are approaching department stores, gas stations, resturants, etc. in an effort to improve visibility and awareness of the money we spend and the businesses we support. They can be left anonymously, or given to cashiers to be forwarded to managers or owners. For your free packet of cards, call Patty Faber, 698-2065.

Lesbians and Gays Support Your Business
Please Support Our Rights

Endorse the inclusion of "sexual orientation" in the
Human Relations Ordinance for the City of Columbia.

The Columbia Stonewall Coalition
P.O. Box 563
Columbia, Missouri 65205-0563
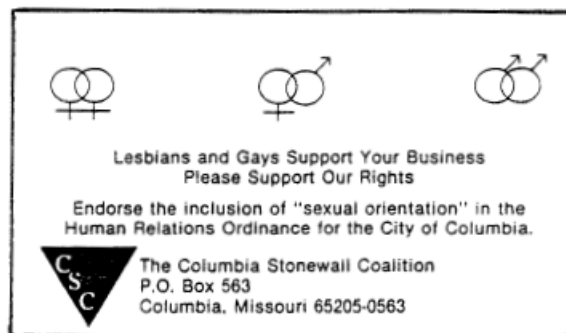
Figure 14. Mock-up of business card designed to be left at local establishments to garner support for campaign to add sexual orientation to Columbia's nondiscrimination policy; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1992)

Places and spaces coded as "Events" only included mostly bars and music venues that hosted drag shows, but one "Events" place stood out as particularly noteworthy. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, queer Columbia women held regular dances at Camp Takimina, an independently run camp site north of town. Known by dance attendees as "Camp Mudd", this venue provided a space that was not only far enough away from town to allow freedom of expression, but

one that was exclusively for queer women – something that the Columbia queer nightlife scene was desperately missing (Figure 15).
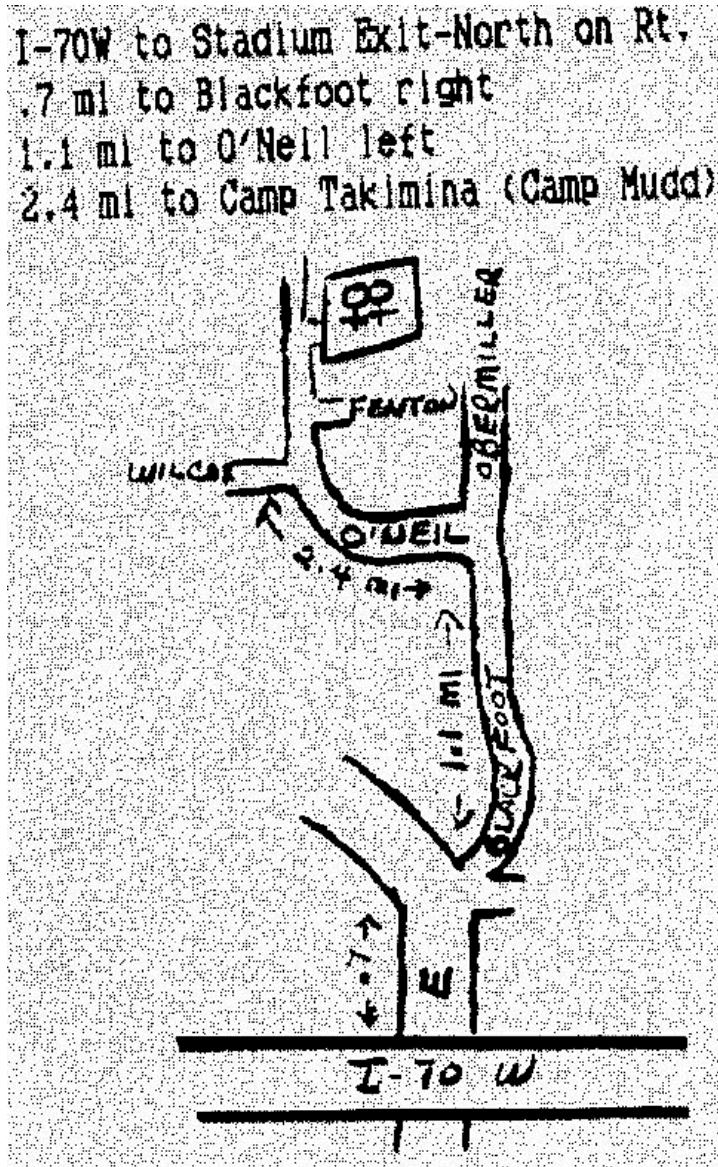
Figure 15. Hand-drawn map showing directions to Camp Takimina/Mudd; printed in Coming Out newsletter (Coming Out Collective 1990)

Virtual Spaces

In addition to physical places and spaces, I also asked participants asked about any experiences with *virtual* queer spaces. For this study, this included any space existing in digital or physical media form that is queer-intended. The media through which participants interacted with

virtual queer spaces shifted over the course of the years explored in this study. In the 1990s, virtual queer spaces existed as radio and print media. As discussed in more depth later in this chapter, local radio shows such as Womenergy, This Way Out, and Gaydar provided a rare platform for queer-intended content including news and music. Though relatively short-lived, these radio shows no doubt held tremendous power in connecting disparate queer folks to the larger queer community, especially those unable to access physical queer spaces. Queer print media existed in the forms of the local Coming Out and Outspoken newsletters created by and for queer Columbia women, as well as national resources such as The Lesbian Connection. Several participants recalled using the "Contact Dykes" resource at the back of The Lesbian Connection as a means of finding a first contact upon moving to Columbia. Local women used the space within the Coming Out newsletter to share stories, poetry, questions, ideas, or complaints about anything they liked, whether it was directly related to their queerness or not. In doing so, the newsletter created a space to ruminate on and celebrate readers' queerness, and to just let one another exist as people through whatever outlet they wished.

Place Shifts

Central to the second sub- research question for this study, we will next explore how the number and geographical distribution of queer spaces and places changed between 1991 and 2021, both physically and culturally.

Physical

Number

To begin, Figure 16 shows us the changes in the number of queer-intended places and spaces (bars/nightclubs and resource centers) that have existed in Columbia over this time. We can easily see that the number of queer-intended places and spaces has been steadily declining since the 1990s. As of 2021, only three queer-intended places exist in Columbia: two resource centers (Mizzou's LGBTQ Resource Center and The Center Project), and one gay bar (Arch & Column). Yin Yang Night Club, opened on the south side of town in 2015, closed as a direct effect of the COVID-19 pandemic in April 2020. It is important to keep in mind, of course, that the final

Number of Discrete Queer-Intended Places/Spaces per Decade
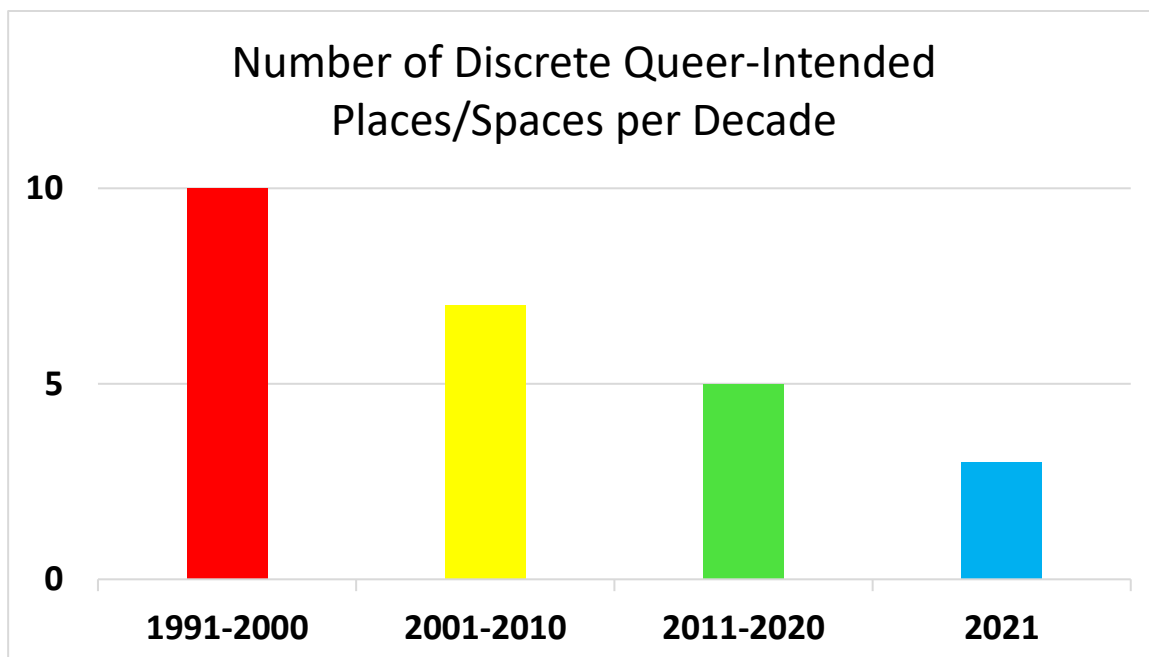
Figure 16. Number of queer-intended places and spaces that existed per decade. Places and spaces of the same name that moved locations, and therefore did not exist at the same time as one another, were only counted once per decade.

bar on the chart represents only one year (2021) as opposed to a decade. It is entirely possible that between 2021 and 2030 new queer-intended spaces and places may emerge.

Participants offered some reflections on this noticeable decline in queer-intended spaces, often musing that perhaps queer spaces are just not as needed as they once were. One participant commented directly on the result of Yin Yang closing, suggesting that, "it sucks that we had to lose Yin Yang, but also now we have several spaces that are... I think that was kind of a blessing in disguise." (these "several spaces" will be elaborated upon in Chapter 5) Another participant reflected on her experience in Columbia from the 1980s until the present day, saying:

> "I think I personally don't feel the need anymore to seek out queer places. In a way, that makes me kind of sad. It's kind of sadly ironic that it took oppression for us to have our own thing. And now we don't have our own thing. Because we don't need our own thing. Right? But in some respects, we still do very much need our own thing."

We will see in the coming years if this dearth will continue to increase, or if a new wave of queer spaces will emerge.

Geographic Distribution

Next, we will look at the ways in which the geographic distribution of queer places and spaces have shifted over time. Figure 17 shows us the average distance away from the mean center of queer-intended places and spaces per decade between 1991 and 2021. We can see that over time, despite the number of queer-intended places and spaces declining since the 1990s, the geographic distribution has grown continuously closer to the downtown area. A possible explanation, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter, is that as social acceptance of queer people has grown over the years, the need to hold queer-intended spaces farther away from populated, commercial areas to be less visible has been reduced. Put differently, when there is less risk of suffering harassment for outwardly presenting as and celebrating one's queerness, why not create spaces closer to the cultural and commercial center of a city? This trend is mirrored in Figure 18, which shows the average distance away from the mean center of Pride celebration venues per decade. The shifts over time are even more profound in this map, as the average location of Pride venues between 1991-2000 is significantly farther from the downtown area than in the following decades. This again supports the idea that as tolerance has increased – and along with it, the number of queer people willing to participate in a public demonstration of queer pride – the need to hold celebrations in the far reaches of town has diminished.
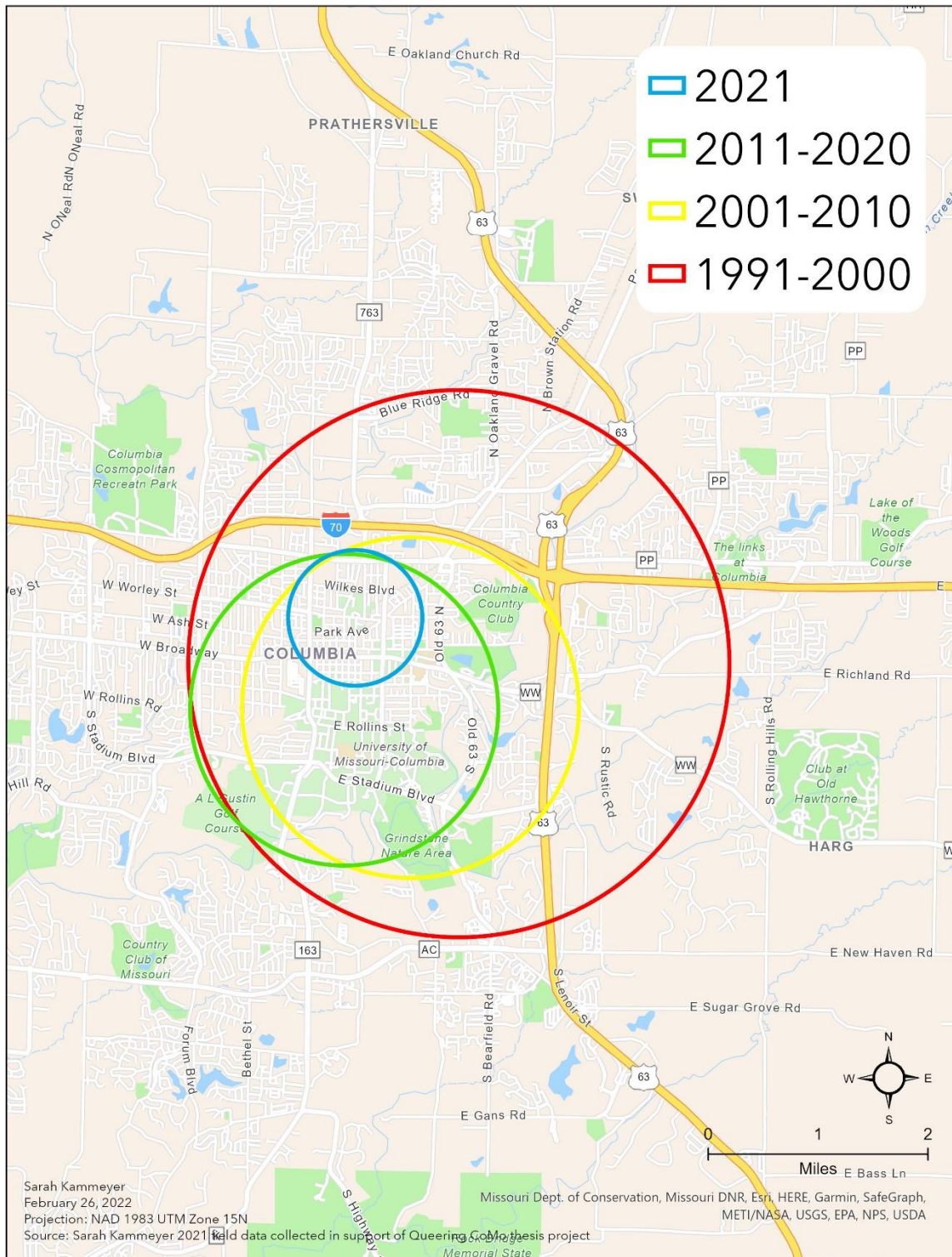
Figure 17. Calculated standard distances showing the average distance from the mean center of queer-intended places and spaces for each decade between 1991-2021
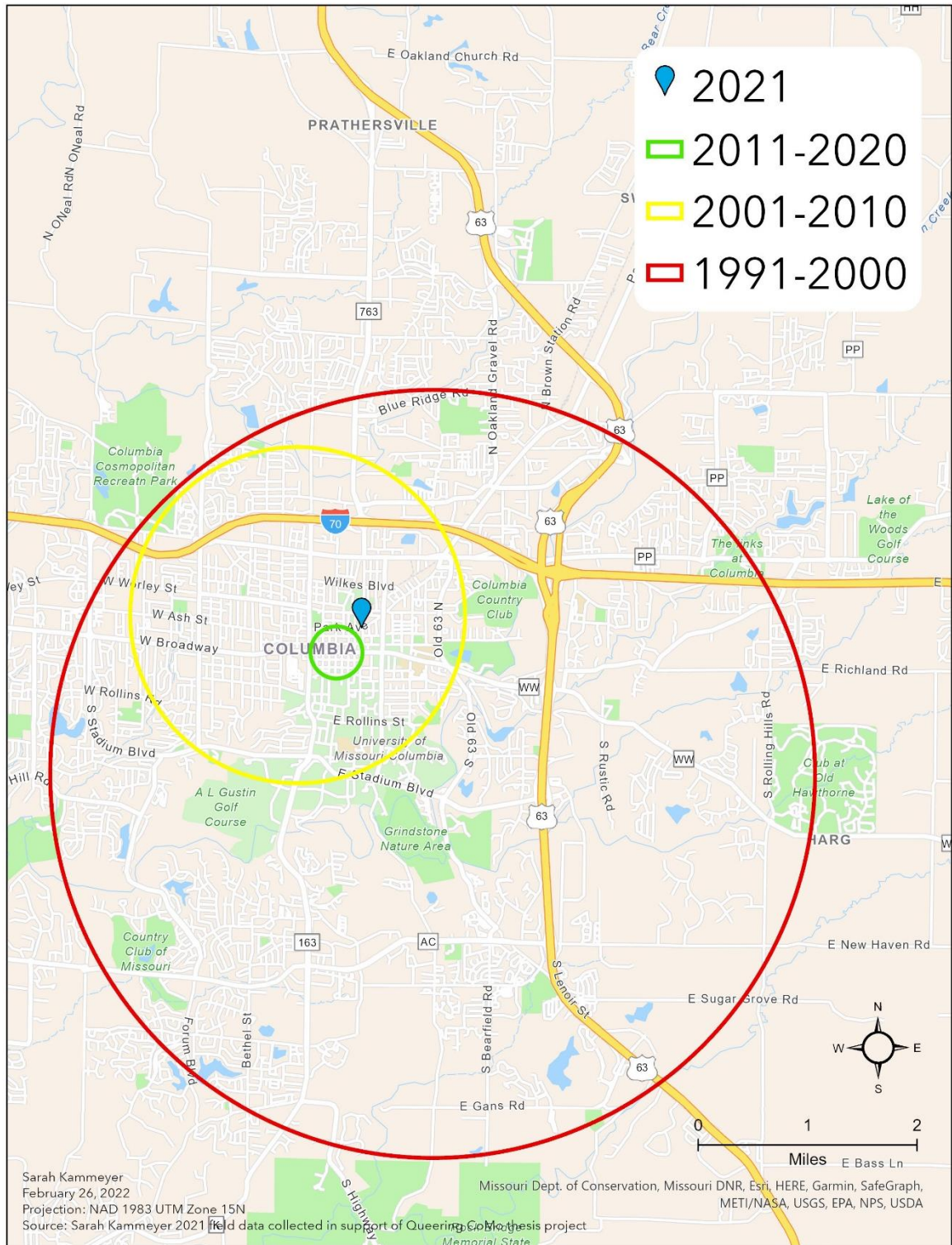
Figure 18. Calculated standard distances showing the average distance from the mean center of Pride celebration venues for each decade between 1991-2021

Cultural

As a counterpart to physical shifts, I identified several cultural influences that played a role in the formation and dynamics of Columbia's queer geography. These cultural factors change either the real or perceived atmosphere, demographics, or social relevance of queer-intended spaces or places. There are undoubtedly other cultural factors playing into these shifts, however I will only be covering those that were discussed during participant interviews.

Societal Shifts

Critical to the discussion of cultural factors that influence Columbia's queer landscape are the effects of broader societal changes. As mentioned, whether explicitly or implicitly, in many participant interviews, shifts in the national conversation around, and attitudes towards queer people and queer rights have directly impacted queer people's ability to create, occupy, and celebrate their own spaces. One participant who has lived in Columbia since the 1980s recalled this transition beginning to gain traction in the 1990s, sparked by the national debate around allowing "gays" in the military. Bringing queer rights and issues to the forefront of conversation in this way helped open the door for later queer pop culture touchstones such as Ellen DeGeneres' TV show (on which she came out as gay), Queer as Folk, The L Word, and Will & Grace. The effect of this increased visibility was felt in very real ways by queer people at the time. A participant described this period of transition as perhaps the first opportunity for engagement with the non-queer community, saying that "as soon as we got legs in the mainstream media and you could talk about LGBTQ issues in mainstream media, there was no looking back. All the sudden everyone who read or looked at media had to deal with it. And we were no longer just being swept under the rug."

Although the queer community was experiencing a new-found visibility, this did not immediately translate into acceptance. Another participant described the attitudes of the non-queer community during the 1990s as "shifting from outright disdain to basic tolerance." This "basic tolerance" was largely a "don't ask, don't tell" approach, mirroring the term applied to the policy permitting queer people to serve in the U.S. military. The same participant noted that the unspoken "agreement" offered by non-queers was based in what Kenji Yoshino (2007) calls "covering", or, as

the participant described it, "We know what you are; don't flaunt, don't put it in our face, and we won't kill you! You get to live if we don't ever have to see it." This prevailing mindset no doubt played into the geographic locations of queer-intended spaces in Columbia during the 1990s, existing in areas of lower public visibility than they do now (Figures 17 and 18). Another participant recalled her experiences with presenting as queer in Columbia during this time, saying, "If you were queer, you couldn't be openly queer. You couldn't hold your partner's hand. You couldn't kiss them. You couldn't walk down the street [together]." In other words, while the general population may have shifted to an acknowledgement of queer people's existence, they did not necessarily want to be visibly reminded of that reality. The brutal murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 acted as a catalyst for broader support for queer rights, with greater numbers of non-queer people actively supporting equality for queer people, both monetarily and politically. As many participants emphasized, this shift in opinion was also in large part due to the tireless, constant work on the part of queer people. One participant recalled the blood, sweat, and tears that went into these movements, saying that, "[Queer] people gave every bit of their spare time, every drop of their bravery, and tons and tons of strategic planning." We can again see this move towards acceptance reflected in the shifts depicted in Figures 17 and 18 as increased tolerance allowed for more integration of queer spaces into high-profile areas. Multiple participants also noted that starting in the 2000s, several non-queer bars in Columbia became increasingly queer-friendly despite not necessarily advertising themselves as such.

This trend of increasing queer acknowledgement has continued past the turn of the century and into the present day. Participants who lived in Columbia at the time of being interviewed overwhelmingly stated that they now feel comfortable openly presenting as queer in most spaces in Columbia – a marked difference from participant experiences in the 1990s and 2000s. One participant who has lived in the city since the 1980s illustrated this shift by comparing the reactions she received from non-queer people when mentioning her "partner" twenty years ago and those she receives in 2021. Now, she says, no one bats an eye.

51

Another, more specific cultural shift influencing Columbia's queer geography is what one participant deemed the "straight bootlegging" of queer spaces. The most obvious and most frequently mentioned example of this involves straight women, and bachelorette parties in particular, monopolizing spaces in which drag shows are being performed. Over half of the participants mentioned this phenomenon, saying that they had noticed it occurring in the queer clubs SoCo and Yin Yang where drag shows were regularly performed. It appears that this began happening in Columbia in the mid-2000s, indicating that it is perhaps a reflection of the recent perception of queer culture as intriguing, edgy, and progressive.

Participant responses to this phenomenon ranged from bemused to indignant, though mainly skewed negative. One participant asked of these bachelorettes, "Why does it have to be at our expense? It's always centered around 'Oh, straight people are getting married, let's focus the entire show on them.' They take up a lot of space. I don't think we're here for people's amusement, and that's what it feels like whenever they take over those spaces." This mention of "focusing the entire show" on a bachelorette party has very real ramifications for those performing as well as the queer audience, as one participant who used to be a drag queen explained:

> "Before the supreme court judgement [ruling same-sex marriage legal] ... they would
> reserve tables or whatever. So there was the part of the mindset of, 'hey, I can make some
> money from performing', but they didn't tip well, ever. Then there was, you know, it was
> really kind of rude for them to bring and celebrate their coming nuptials into a place with
> people who couldn't get married."

Another participant offered a possible explanation for this behavior, noting that it's "because they feel safe". In other words, straight women are so used to being under constant threat or harassment or violence when at bars or nightclubs (or, anywhere), that they see queer bars, and gay bars in particular, as havens where no one will make unwanted advances. While this may be true, their movements into queer spaces have begun to jeopardize the haven that *queer* people have made them to be. Whether "straight bootlegging" has prompted or influenced queer people to stop patronizing queer bars and clubs is not clear; all participants expressed irritation but did not

appear to have changed their habits of attendance. Plenty of social commentary has been made on this issue (i.e. Shaw 2017; UNHhhh ep 167 - Drag Show Etiquette part 2 2021), yet it does not appear that much scholarly work has been paid to this appropriation of queer space. I am interested to see if, once the pandemic has adequately abated to allow for the resurgence of drag shows, it will remain an issue.

One participant also noted more recent trends of broader "straight bootlegging", a practice which he had observed as the cultural shifting of a bar or club's demographics and atmosphere from that of predominantly queer to more diverse or "diluted." In his eyes, this has occurred because the queer community is seen as a "taste-making" group that indicates which spaces are most socially relevant. In his experience, several (non-queer-intended) bars and clubs in town that originally boasted a largely queer and trans clientele were identified by the straight community as "the place to be" and were then steadily overtaken by non-queer people. A chain of these shifts took place, with queer people being effectively driven out of one club and finding another in its stead, only for that club to then experience the same phenomenon. The most recent club discussed as falling victim to this effect had become, in the participant's words, "a place that was very white, very straight, whereas before it had been LGBTQ/POC." This trend is particularly disheartening given the decrease in explicitly queer-intended bars and clubs in Columbia.

Technology

A final cultural factor in Columbia's changing queer landscape involves the role of technology in queer culture. Older participants recall queer bars in the 1990s and 2000s being "meat markets", often the sole place that a queer person could go in order to find potential sexual or romantic partners. Starting around 2010, the rise of queer mobile dating apps such as Grindr, Jack'd, and Scruff began influencing this function of the queer bar scene as people were now able to make connections with people from the comfort of their home. Fewer queer people came out to the bars because, as one participant quipped, "half of the reason you're coming to the bar is you're trying to get laid." Another participant pointed directly to this relatively new presence of social media and dating apps as the reason that Columbia has seen fewer and fewer gay bars over the years.

Younger participants did not appear to mourn the loss of the original purposes of queer bars, perhaps because they have never experienced it personally, but also perhaps because of the previously discussed shifts towards greater acceptance and integration of queer people into the overall social structure. In other words, younger participants implied that they did not necessarily see queer-intended spaces as necessary for a robust social or sexual life, as they are able to achieve this through interactions with non-queer spaces and digital apps. The interviews clearly revealed that there exists a certain generational divide in this regard, as older participants (and men in particular) still feel very tied to the physicality of queer-intended spaces as a key factor in developing and maintaining queer community.

Columbia

Reputation

In order to understand the finer complexities of queer place and space in Columbia, we first need to examine how Columbia's broader geography and social structures, queer and otherwise, play a role. Nestled roughly halfway between Kansas City and Saint Louis on the I-70 corridor, Columbia is a small city of approximately 125,000 permanent residents and is home to three higher education institutions including the flagship campus of the University of Missouri. Relative to much of the rest of the state, the city has a reputation of being progressive and educated and is often described as a "blue island among a sea of red". As noted in the previous chapter, Columbia has often been the among the first Missouri cities to introduce policies to offer greater equity for non-heterosexual citizens, including nondiscrimination policies for both the city and school board and, more recently, a ban on conversion therapy for minors.

Participants often noted Columbia's liberal social and political reputation, with one participant specifically highlighting the role that such reputation has played in the experiences and treatments of queer Columbians:

"We couldn't have done what we did in Columbia over the years if we hadn't had a starting point where Columbia was more progressive anyway. Columbia has had this history of, you know, the rest of the state does not understand us, right? They just think we're weird. And so we were ahead of the curve because we had, you know, the hippies. And we had

all that stuff. So that gave us a leg up because we knew that we had at least some people

who, if they thought about us, they could be tolerant."

Other participants identified Columbia as a "haven", "bubble", "utopia", and "oasis" for queer people. Several discussed this reputation as a direct draw for many queer folks in the surrounding areas to either permanently move or commute to Columbia for queer social opportunities. As will be further discussed in sections that follow, Columbia's queer "utopia" status is certainly not seen as such by all queer people, but instead serves as a generalized characterization set against surrounding areas.

Region & Size

Participants also noted, implicitly or otherwise, that Columbia's regional location and size factor into its (in)ability to sustain a robust and well-defined queer community. One participant offered Columbia's Midwestern affiliation, and therefore the general character of its citizens, as a potential explanation for Columbia's history of ill-fated queer spaces, suggesting that Midwestern queer people are perhaps "more apt to stay home and do stuff rather than go out." Instead, private house parties and less-commercialized social activities appear, according to the participant, to be more enticing. Another participant, when discussing a gay bar on the outskirts of town called The OUTRAGE, noted "how Midwestern" it was for a gay bar to be relegated to the borders of the city, implying that having an explicitly queer space visible in the heart of town would be deemed a violation of the social contract by the general public. Both observations illustrate an understanding of Midwestern culture as one of relative modesty, both on the individual and societal level.

Hand-in-hand with these comments on Columbia queers' lack of active, centralized engagement with queer spaces is the issue of Columbia's size. Participants noted that as a relatively small city, Columbia does not have a large enough queer population – and, specifically, one with sufficient expendable income – to precipitate an expansive and diverse array of queer space options. In the words of one participant, Columbia is unique in that "one bar doesn't quite feel like enough... but two bars is probably too much." The limited market has led to what several participants described as a "competitive" spirit among the queer-intended establishments in town, in which only one or two bars could survive at any given time. Although most of these bars were

marketed as broadly labeled "gay bars" that did not serve any one niche of the queer community (such as lesbian-, leather-, or bear- specific bars), one participant explained that gay men, who are more likely to engage with bar and club culture than other subsets of the queer community, often dictated which bars and clubs would prevail as successful through sheer numbers of patronage alone. The limited number of gay bars and clubs in Columbia also often prompted queer people to make weekend trips to the larger urban areas of Kansas City and Saint Louis to access nightlife options that were oftentimes more identity-specific than what was available in Columbia.

Mizzou

Central to Columbia's overall economic and social character is the University of Missouri, commonly referred to as "Mizzou", which employs a relatively large percentage of the city's population. According to participants, Mizzou maintains a contradictory relationship to the larger Columbia community at times, as it both bolsters the local economy and culture through opportunities for employment and enrichment while at the same time perpetuating an insular and selective in-group mentality in which students are often unaware of larger local issues. Participants also noted that community members experience actual or perceived barriers to the campus and its resources – what one participant referred to as a "pearly gate," indicating that "no one outside should be involved" with the inner workings of the university. While several participants did mention personal or secondhand experiences with Columbia community members engaging with Mizzou's queer resources – especially those intended for trans individuals – through the LGBTQ Resource and Women's Centers, they also noted a noticeable difference in the understandings of queer issues between students and staff at Mizzou and the Columbia community at large. One participant who lived in Columbia while attending Mizzou as an undergraduate in the mid-to-late 2000s commented on his experience of this mismatch when attending the city's annual Pride festival, saying that the relatively new usage of "queer" as an identity marker did not appear to be widely embraced among community members, in sharp contrast to its common usage within the Mizzou student population. Differences such as these feed into the separation between these two groups of queer individuals, a reflection of sorts of the larger division between the broader Mizzou and Columbia communities.

Another effect of Mizzou's presence on the queer community in Columbia involves population shifts related to the academic school year. When discussing the role that temporal factors play in the queer geography of Columbia, many participants discussed the differences in accessibility or interest for those not enrolled as students at Mizzou in queer-intended spaces depending on the time of year. Non-students often experience a greater sense of comfort in engaging with queer-intended spaces (and, in many cases, Columbia spaces in general) during the summer months when most undergraduates have left town. In fact, as some participants pointed out, many queer people *only* engage with these spaces during this time, and lesbians in particular. This is due in part to the different attitudes and behaviors that college-aged queer individuals bring to these spaces, as well as the sheer number of people as well. In other words, those looking for low-key interactions based in conversation and one-on-one interactions often feel that gay bars and clubs are not amenable when the student population is in town. Participants also noted the effect that the cyclical nature of student populations has on the ability of Columbia's queer community to create lasting cohesion and systems of support, since "every four years we get a whole new crop of people." This ever-shifting demographic, coupled with the tensions between and within the queer communities of Mizzou and Columbia, helps explain the sense of disconnection between the two realms.

Internal Queer Community Division

Further divisions within the queer community of Columbia have less easily identifiable explanations. Almost all participants noted that Columbia's queer community has a history of being "cliquish", "siloed", "Balkanized", "insular", "non-cohesive", and indeed even "competitive". Discussing the prospects of creating a successful queer community center in Columbia, an article in the OutSpoken newsletter stated that, "There seems to be a utopian vision that burns brightly in many people's minds of the LGBT community as united and all going to the same meetings and smiling at each other. From what I've seen in Columbia, this is simply not who we are." (Wiger 1999) As possible explanations for this division, some participants pointed to the specific scenes towards which queer community gravitates in Columbia, claiming that outside of bar or drag cultures, Columbia queers appear not to be very interested in producing and maintaining cohesive

queer community. Part of this may be tied to Columbia's relative acceptance and assimilation of queer folks into the broader community. As one participant put it, "if you're not careful, you can get kind of stuck in the homogeny that is straight white Christian culture." Put differently, because many places and people in Columbia are welcoming of non-normative gender and sexual identities, many queer folks may find themselves engaging more regularly with spaces not distinctly queer-intended. It is worth noting that this may also be due in part to Columbia's relatively small and homogeneous population. This lack of cohesive, overarching queer culture, coupled with the trend of limited explicitly queer-intended places, results in the need for folks to develop small, disparate groups of queer individuals of similar identities who then do not necessarily communicate or collaborate with other groups.

The sense of "competition" between various queer identity groups appears to have been stronger during earlier points within this study's timeframe, a sentiment that was exhibited clearly and regularly throughout articles and opinion pieces in the lesbian-oriented Coming Out newsletter in the 1990s. In one such piece, one Columbia lesbian discussed the debates over allowing advertisements for men-run businesses in the newsletter, opining that "I feel that businesses in mid-Missouri where lesbians are welcome are so few and far between that I don't care if they're run by a gay man or a purple elephant." (Coming Out Collective 1990a). This issue appeared to persist throughout the decade, as in 1999 when another reader submission pleaded that "Lesbians must begin to respect and listen to the drag queens, gay men must respect and listen to the dykes, all gays must respect the bisexuals – only through unity can liberty be won for the individual." (Coming Out Collective 1999)

Participants were discontented with this "Balkanization," yet a clear avenue for bridging the divisions was not clear. These observations bring us into the larger conversation of whether there is an inherent need to push back against such divisions. As one participant put it, "in the straight community [you] don't need to connect the dots [between various identity groups]. But I think when you are an oppressed community, yes, I think you need to connect the dots, I think you need to have some connectivity." Annual Pride festivals seemed to be the only space and time in which

some participants felt that a broader sense of cohesive queer community was present, but even within these events elements of disconnection were discussed.

Participant Experiences

Overall Impressions

One of the first interview questions I asked each participant had them identify, if possible, a general overall assessment of their experiences with places and spaces as a queer person in Columbia. Responses to this question were mixed, ranging from one participant who said that they "never really had a true negative experience being out [in Columbia]", to another who "left Columbia because [they] were completely and totally exhausted from the daily slog of interrupting homophobia, misogyny, racism, xenophobia.". Others fell somewhere between these two poles, contextualizing their experiences by comparing them against experiences in other locations such as Southeast Missouri, by recognizing that it was dependent on locational and temporal aspects, or by arguing that their personal experiences should not be taken as the standard due to their ability to "pass" as a straight person. Underlying these appraisals are personal and external factors that shaped participants' experiences and perceptions. The following sections will examine several of these factors in more detail.

Identity Factors

Race

As noted in Chapter 3, only two of the ten participants interviewed as part of this study did not identify as white. Not surprisingly, none of the white participants directly mentioned race or ethnicity as a factor (positive or otherwise) in their personal experiences *or* in commentary of queer experiences in Columbia as a whole. This can perhaps be seen as a reflection of what Ruth Frankenberg (1993) detailed as a longstanding perception of whiteness as an "unmarked" quality and therefore incapable of wielding influence over an individual's experience. Conversely, the two participants who identified as Black and Black/West African both mentioned the role that their racial identities played in their experiences with space in Columbia. One briefly mentioned that when interacting with rural spaces surrounding Columbia, their racial identity was more likely to trigger

negative experiences with others than their queerness would. As an interesting reinforcement of this statement, this participant is the same who provided the first quote in the preceding section, the most positive overall experience being queer in Columbia. The other participant noted that fellow gay and trans friends in their social circle often struggled with harassment – both verbal and physical – due to their gender and sexualities *as well as* their racial identities. As discussed in Chapter 3, specific attention to the influence of racial identities was not emphasized in the construction of interview questions, leaving an important gap in the fuller picture of queer folks' experiences in Columbia that will be a needed step in future research (see Chapter 6).

Gender Identity & Sexual Orientation

While this study ultimately culminated in a collective representation of queer places and spaces as identified and frequented by any and all queer identities, it is important to break down the differences in experiences that people of distinct gender identities and sexual orientations have had with these various places and spaces. Participants who identify as men or trans men more often reported having experienced instances of direct harassment than those who identify as women, non-binary, or who did not identify with any particular gender. Instances of such harassment included physical altercations or intimidation, homophobic or transphobic slurs, and attacks on private property (including, appallingly, the smearing of human feces on or under doorways). One participant who did not identify as a man or trans man commented on this trend, recalling that their friends who are men "went through different things than I did", referring to greater negative attention and treatment. Another participant, who identified as a trans man, reflected on the many physical fights he was involved in in the late 2000s when he was with his group of friends on the streets of downtown Columbia after dark. While everyone in the group was often involved in these fights, he pointed out that the gay men and trans *women* in the group were more often initially targeted by the aggressors. This is in line with his larger statement that Columbia, as well as Mizzou, was trans-hostile, particularly pointing to the distinct lack of trans-intended spaces on campus and in town. This trend of violence leveled against gay men and trans women (especially trans women of color) is well-documented at the national scale (Stotzer 2012 and An Epidemic of Violence 2021 - HRC Digital Reports 2021, respectively).

We can also see the effects that certain sexual orientations have on one's experience with queer place and space. Although participants who did not identify as gay men reported less incidents of violence or direct harassment, their overall experiences with physical queer-intended spaces in town skewed noticeably more negative, or perhaps indifferent, than that of gay men. A cisgendered lesbian woman participant who was engaged in bar culture in the 1990s recalled that the landscape of the queer bar scene was almost entirely determined by the gay men in town. Operating under a suggested "herd mentality", the taste making of Columbia's gay men had direct influence on which bars were popular and could therefore survive in Columbia's "one or two gay bars" limit discussed earlier. Another participant who did not identify as a gay man recalled visiting more recently one of the few gay bars in town and leaving shortly after upon realizing that the bar was almost entirely patronized by gay men. While this is likely connected to the trend of queer women seeking community through "feminism and countercultures" as opposed to "building commercial institutions" (Ghaziani 2015), it still contributes to the feelings of internal community division felt between subsects of Columbia's queer community.

Although it seems that queer people who are not gay men have struggled to find authentic queer community in physical queer-intended spaces such as gay bars, it appears that they have had greater success in doing so via private and virtual spaces. Although no participants thought that Columbia has the equivalent of a "gayborhood" like many large cities do, several mentions were made of private, residential spaces that were either deliberately or unintentionally developed as queer spaces. According to one participant, "there's not the 'gay ghetto', but there are areas of town that have different [queer] concentrations." One participant who identified as a bisexual and lesbian woman during her time in Columbia during the mid to late 1990s organized "The Dyke Den" – a private home occupied by the participant and eight to nine other lesbians. The Dyke Den was directly across the street from a Mizzou fraternity house and was externally decorated with rainbow symbols. This deliberate co-opting of space in the heart of Mizzou's Greek Town was meant to disrupt the assumed heteronormativity of the area and, as the participant noted, was only safe to occupy in this manner due to the relatively high number of women living in the house, which provided some security against harassment. Similarly, another participant recalled a roughly

fifteen-year time period in the 1990s and 2000s in which a "pack of lesbians" bought up cheap houses on a couple blocks of a street located in Central Columbia and fixed them up over time. Known informally by some as "Lesbian Lane", this residential area was not necessarily a site known outside of the queer community (or possibly the lesbian community more particularly) as a concentration of queerness, but nevertheless provided a space for queer women to create a specific, likeminded sense of community.

In addition to private spaces, queer women also occupied virtual space successfully for a number of years in the 1990s. The local radio show "Womenergy", hosted by one of the participants of this study, played lesbian-specific music and relayed relevant public affairs information weekly from 1989-1994. Although the station administration would later push back against and ultimately terminate Womenergy, it was an indispensable resource and "safe space" for lesbian and queer women at that time. As said participant noted, "there were many nights when I felt like I was just talking to the void. But then I'd think 'maybe there is that one lesbian in Moberly, and this is her lifeline every week'." Another crucial virtual space for queer women during this time (from 1989-2000 to be exact) were the Coming Out and OutSpoken printed newsletters. As mentioned in Chapter 3, these free newsletters existed as a virtual space where queer women's events, news, poetry, announcements, and political organizing took place. The newsletters also identified relevant information such as support groups, Pride festival planning committee meetings, resource hotlines, and queer events taking place locally, in the surrounding areas, and even across the country. While there was always – as there often is with grassroots-run publications such as these – financial and participation support concerns, these newsletters managed to create and maintain an intentional space for queer women to feel seen and be informed on issues relevant to their lives for over a decade.

Personality

Another factor influencing some participants' experiences with places and spaces within Columbia dealt with personality. One participant noted that "I feel pretty much comfortable going just about anywhere because I'm like 'it's not my problem whether or not you can deal with me'." This sentiment was echoed by several other participants who expressed that there were not very

many places or spaces that felt inaccessible or in which they felt unsafe as a queer person. These participants were quick to follow up that this was more than likely due to their outgoing and confident personalities in general than their queer identities. It is important to note that despite a professed confidence and security in entering most any place, this did not necessarily prevent these participants from ever experiencing negative interactions. On the contrary, one participant explained that her self-assurance and proclivity for proudly asserting herself in non-queer spaces gained her a reputation on campus that triggered physical threats by non-queer individuals.

Mizzou Status & Affiliation

Closely related to self-assured personality is the factor of personal or organization status or affiliation. Several of the same participants who acknowledged the role that their assertive personalities played in their comfort levels with places and spaces also stated their ability to feel this comfort, as well as their ability to avoid excessive harassment or administrative barriers, was in part due to the degree to which their affiliation with Mizzou was known publicly. This was reinforced by another participant who claimed that "the safest way to be queer in Columbia would [be] to get involved on campus as much as possible... it provides insulation for which folks can explore their identity safely with the support of people who genuinely don't give a fuck." This touches on a previously discussed issue regarding the differences between the Mizzou queer community and the Columbia queer community at large, in that Mizzou is seen as having highly tolerant and progressive enclaves in which individuals of non-homonormative queer identities can feel free to express themselves fully and openly.

A different participant, in a directly contrasting experience with the effects of public visibility than that mentioned in the previous section, said "I felt visible enough on campus with all of my activities that I was probably overconfident and never really felt unsafe on campus at all". It would appear that the differences between these two participants' experiences – both lesbian women attending Mizzou in the 1990s – lies in the nature of their campus activity. The first became the face of queer activism on campus, leading the student side of the fight for inclusion of sexual orientation into the university's nondiscrimination policy and regularly appearing with a megaphone in the free-speech area on campus called Speakers Circle to openly advocate for queer rights. The

second was involved in the Residential Life program, student government, and other official, programs on campus, which were less "disruptive" and therefore offered more respected social capital.

Presentation

Mentioned less frequently, but equally as important in shaping someone's experience with places and spaces, are issues of presentation. Presentation refers to the various ways in which someone outwardly expresses themselves, including variations in clothing, stance, gait, speech patterns, behavior, or people that they are accompanied by. In a particularly striking example of the effect that this can have, one participant recalled that when she was on her own, she was "pretty neutral femme-presenting" and could therefore "pass" as a straight woman and be afforded the relative inattention that came with it. However, when she was with her girlfriend who was "masculine-of-center", it became clear to onlookers that they were a queer couple, an observation that had the potential to draw lingering gazes or worse. Because of this, she often made it a point when traveling to surrounding rural areas to always go alone – a choice that many straight women may actively avoid for fear of vulnerability, but one that she undertook for fear of an even greater threat if she were to be understood as being queer in the country. On the other side of this, a different participant commented that she and her partner were both feminine-presenting and as such never really had to worry about attracting unwanted attention when out in public or on a date since most people assumed that they were just friends. Another participant – the same participant that mentioned the frequent physical altercations that he encountered while downtown at night – described the chances of these fights occurring as exponentially higher when he was out with a certain group of friends that were loud, high-fiving, or even voguing down the sidewalk. In his words, "once there's alcohol involved and your friends are visibly queer, it's a completely different story."

External Factors

Aside from personal identity aspects, there were a handful of external factors that participants mentioned in regard to their ability to influence experience with a place or space. Temporal factors were often discussed, with several participants noting that after dark, the downtown area often felt more likely to produce negative interactions from straight people. This

increase in anti-queer aggression was often accompanied by the increase in alcohol consumption that takes place at night downtown. As an amplification of these two combining factors, some participants also stated that they tended to avoid the downtown area during college football game weekends, as the sheer number of intoxicated people in the area often spelled even further danger. One participant pushed back on this idea slightly, claiming that it wasn't necessarily any certain set of temporal or locational factors that would inevitably yield a negative experience, but instead depended more heavily on *who* the people were in a given space at any time. For this participant, that meant that the presence of white men was often the most reliable sign of a potential threat. Finally, safety in numbers was also discussed as a deterrent in provoking negative interactions with straight people, regardless of the location or time. In other words, when queer people were present in semi-large numbers, the risk of being accosted or singled out was significantly lessened.

A Balancing Act

This examination of physical, cultural, and experiential aspects of Columbia's queer geography has revealed a complex, reactive, and dynamic landscape. Physical queer spaces have given way to virtual avenues for queer connection, increased societal acceptance has perhaps led to a bittersweet reduction in the perceived need for queer-intended spaces, and various queer identity groups have experienced queer space in drastically different ways. Several underlying questions touched on by participants highlights the conflicting nature of queer spaces and places: how do we reconcile the desire for a vibrant and robust queer community with our recent increased integration into mainstream culture? How do we carve out spaces meant specifically for us without going back to the isolated reality we fought to climb out of? Participants may not have had direct solutions to these questions, or even a consensus on what a thriving queer community "should" look like, but it was evident that these questions weigh on their minds. This chapter has attempted to provide a historical, geographical, and cultural foundation upon which to further explore such questions.

Theme	Code	Subcode	Definition
Place			**Names, locations, and uses of places and spaces**
	Establishment		Permanent physical structure
		Bar/Nightclub	Any establishment with a primary purpose of operating a bar or nightclub
		GayBar	Any establishment with a primary purpose of operating a bar or nightclub that is intended for a queer audience
		HonoraryGayBar	Any establishment with a primary purpose of operating a bar or nightclub that is not intended for a queer audience but is considered by a participant to be an "honorary" gay bar
		CoffeeShop	Any establishment with a primary purpose of operating a coffee shop
		Healthcare	Any establishment that has a primary purpose of providing medical care or support
		Religious	Any establishment that has a primary purpose of conducting religious functions
		ResourceCenter	Any establishment that provides queer-intended resources (including health care, general information, events, etc.)
		Restaurant	Any establishment with a primary purpose of selling food
		Store	Any establishment with a primary purpose of selling goods (not including food)
	Space		Open, outdoor areas; general areas without defined boundaries
	Private		Any establishment or space that is not accessible or used by the general public
	Virtual		Space existing in digital or media form; exists wherever the reader/interactor is at any given moment of interaction
	Mizzou		Any establishment of space owned or operated by the University of Missouri-Columbia
	PlaceShift		Various ways in which a place or space's quality, queer-intendedness, or physical presence has changed
		COVID	Changes in the conditions or features of a place or space directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic

Place	**PlaceShift**	Number	Change in the number of queer-intended spaces and/or establishments
		Physical	The material relocation, closing, or destruction of a space or place
		StraightBootlegging	Shift in the culture of a queer place or space in which it is overtaken, intentionally or otherwise, by non-queer folks. This may lead to changes in demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folks, and/or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folks in that space or place
		TimeOfDay	Changes in the demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folk, or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folk of a space or place related specifically to the time of day
		TimeOfYear	Changes in the demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folk, or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folk of a space or place related specifically to the time of year
Experience			**Participant experiences**
	Neutral		Participant experiences that have an overall association that is neither positive or negative
	Positive		Participant experiences that have an overall positive association
		General	Experiences explicitly or implicitly deemed positive by the participant for unspecified reasons
		ActiveInclusion	Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved active and/or intentional welcoming of queer identities
		NonQueerSupport	Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved support (emotional, monetary, legal, etc.) provided by non-queer person(s)
		Religious	Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved interaction with religious institutions or individuals
	Negative		Participant experiences that have an overall negative association
		General	Experiences explicitly or implicitly deemed negative by the participant for unspecified reasons
		Discrimination	Experiences which involved legal, administrative, or personal rights discrimination due to their gender or sexual orientation

Experience	Negative	InternalDivision	Division (whether social, ideological, or physical) among members of the queer community
		Physical	Experiences which involved physical harm, harassment, or hostility
		Religious	Experiences which involved interaction with religious institutions or individuals
		Rural	Experiences which involved perceived or real threats to safety due to rural location
		Silencing	Experiences in which a queer person was encouraged to or was made to keep their gender or sexual orientation undisclosed
		Singularity	Experiences in which they or another individual were the only queer person in a space or place
		Tokenism	Experiences which involved a queer person being singled out, spotlighted, or falsely represented as proof of progressivism and/or inclusivity
		Verbal	Experiences which involved either written or spoken derogatory, offensive, or threatening language
	Mizzou		Experiences involving University of Missouri-Columbia places, spaces, and/or affiliated individuals
		CampusInvolvement	Participant involvement in university organizations, sports, or other activities or groups
		GreekLife	Experiences related to university fraternity and/or sorority events, locations, members or institutions
Communication			**The means through which qualities or places and spaces were/are communicated about**
	Code		Specialized words with alternate meanings used to communicate queer information without outing oneself
	Publication		Printed or digital media that communicated queer-friendliness of a space or place
	Signal		Visible features of a place or individual that outwardly signal(led) acceptance of queer people; could include pride flags, stickers, posters, rainbow decoration, pins etc.

Communication	**Signal**	Present	Physical signals of queer friendliness are present at the space/place or on an individual
		Absent	Physical signals of queer friendliness are not present at the space/place or on an individual
	WordOfMouth		Knowledge of place/space's queer friendliness communicated through informal spoken network
PersonalInfo			**Information regarding a participant's personal characteristics and/or background**
	General		Personal details about a participant not included under other codes
	Orientation		The sexual orientation with which a participant self-identifies
	ComingOut		Time period or experience related to a participant's disclosure of sexual identity
	Gender		The gender with which a participant self-identifies
	Pronouns		The personal pronouns by which a participant prefers to be referred
	Hometown		The town, city, neighborhood, region, state, country, or other location which a participant identifies as "where they are from"
	YearsInColumbia		Any and all years in which a participant (has) lived in Columbia, MO
	Presentation		The manner in which a participant presents to the public, specifically referring to the external expression of their sexual orientation and/or gender. This can include the presence or absence of body/facial hair, hair styles, clothing, gait, or speech qualities, among other features.
	Personality		Aspects or qualities of a participant's personality
		SelfAssured	The quality of being self-confident and/or sure of oneself, either as perceived by the investigator or as identified by the participant
		Uncertain	A lack of the quality of being self-confident and/or sure of oneself, either as perceived by the investigator or as identified by the participant

PersonalInfo	Personality	SocialStatus	The degree to which a participant is known by the public, either by name, appearance, or actions
	SexualIdentity		Aspects of or issues relating to a participant's sexual identity, including gender and orientation
		Secure	Being aware of and comfortable with one's sexual orientation and/or gender
		Nonsecure	A lack of awareness or comfort with one's sexual orientation and/or gender
CultureShift			**Shifts in broadscale cultural attitudes or perceptions toward queer people/lifestyles**
Columbia			**Information pertaining to the unique character, culture, politics, or physical features of Columbia, Missouri**
Quote			**Anything that stands out as particularly interesting, noteworthy, or relevant to the research questions and objectives**

Table 2. Hierarchical organization of themes, codes, subcodes, and their respective definitions as identified from participant interviews. Specific locational information for individual places and spaces are not included in this summary figure; see Appendix 2.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

There are several ways in which the findings from this exploratory case study of Columbia, Missouri can be extrapolated and contextualized within the larger body of geographic and queer literature. Using Japonica Brown-Saracino's (2018) ethnographic study of lesbian, bisexual, and queer people in four cities as a model, we can begin to tease out the ways in which Columbia's unique character as a place impacts its queer geographies and queer social landscapes. Despite the fact that Brown-Saracino examined queer communities solely on the east and west coasts of the United States, her project serves well as a basis for comparison for several reasons, the first being directly tied to the bicoastal distribution of sites. Recalling the need for more queer research in Midwest locales (Manalansan et al. 2014), comparing Columbia's queer geography to Brown-Saracino's findings on the U.S. coasts helps to fill in this geographic gap while adding to the foundation of work on queer communities in small cities (Forstie 2020). The framework for comparison is also based on similarities among the sites investigated in both studies. While the four cities discussed in Brown-Saracino's work (Ithaca, NY, San Luis Obispo, CA, Greenfield, MA, and Portland, ME) all have slightly lower populations than Columbia, they are all considered "small cities". Similar to those sites, Columbia is a politically progressive city that has at least one higher education institution, serves as the county seat, has a predominantly white population and relatively high median income (QuickFacts - Columbia city, Missouri n.d.), and is within two hours of a major city. An important difference, however, lies in the populations studied. Brown-Saracino's focused exclusively on lesbian, bisexual, and queer (LBQ) individuals, whereas my study on Columbia examined the queer population at large, including gay men. This difference notwithstanding, Brown-Saracino's findings were drawn from a broad enough spectrum of the queer population to be used comparatively.

From more than 170 participant interviews, Brown-Saracino identified three components to a city's "ecology" that appeared to be crucial to LBQ identity culture formation (Brown-Saracino 2018). The following sections will give a brief overview of each of these components before examining how the findings of my own study compare.

Abundance & Acceptance

The first ecological component is "abundance and acceptance", a concept that Brown-Saracino defines as "the amount of LBQ residents who live in an area relative to the total population, and how they are dispersed across the metro area [...] as well as the city's indicators of acceptance." In other words, "abundance and acceptance" refers simultaneously to the number of queer people, whether they tend to be residentially concentrated in certain areas, and what the overall perceived rate of acceptance of queer people of a given city is. Indicators of a city's acceptance include the presence of queer-affirming religious institutions, progressive city governments, and higher education institutions. Brown-Saracino found that LBQ communities in cities with higher perceptions of abundance and acceptance (Ithaca and Greenfield in her study) experienced a "departure from identity politics" and increased integration into the community at large. Those existing in cities with *lower* perceptions of abundance and acceptance experienced the opposite, that is, a collective sense of "outside-togetherness" in which the LBQ community reacted to a perceived lack of acceptance and safety from the larger community by creating a tight-knit community heavily centered on their queer identities.

It is fairly easy to see on which side of this spectrum Columbia falls. While current U.S. census surveys do not explicitly solicit gender identity or sexual orientation information, we can glean some insight into the queer population of Columbia through a rudimentary, binarily-coded stand-in from the Williams Institute in 2019 that estimates the population density of same-sex couples by county (LGBT Demographic Data Interactive 2019). Columbia accounts for roughly 68% of the population of Boone County which has an estimated 6.79 same-sex households per 1,000 households, placing it over the national average and third highest among Missouri counties in terms of same-sex population density. In addition to these rates of high queer abundance, the queer population in Columbia has typically not, as we have seen, been organized into residential geographic enclaves (with the exception of "Lesbian Lane" in the early 2000s). As detailed in Chapters 3 and 4, Columbia also has a longstanding reputation as a politically and socially progressive place, often referred to as a "blue island among a sea of red". Even in the early 1990s, multiple religious organizations were listed as queer-friendly (or, at the very least, queer-*tolerant*)

in resource sections of the Coming Out newsletters. This environment of "acceptance" (or tolerance) has been reflected in Columbia's local politics, queer-related or otherwise. As previously discussed, sexual orientation was added to the city's nondiscrimination policy in 1992 and a ban was placed on queer conversion therapy for minors in 2019 – the first city in Missouri to do so.

Columbia's relatively high rate of queer "abundance", paired with its perceived atmosphere of "acceptance", place it in the same cultural category of "post-identity-politics integrationist" as the cities of Ithaca and Greenfield in Brown-Saracino's study. We can see this culture reflected in participant comments that Columbia's queer community is fractured and non-cohesive. This is, as Brown-Saracino explains, a result of the queer community responding to overall feelings of inclusion within the larger Columbia community and thus not feeling as compelled to create distinct, identity-centric community as a means of providing safety or comfort. While this explanation highlights the role that the outside community has on the formation and culture of the queer community, we will also see that a positive feedback loop is created by and for the queer community itself.

Place Narratives

The second component in a city's queer ecology involves "place narratives". Place narratives refer to "the stories a city tells about who it is", and can include communication avenues such as tourism campaigns, local media, and signage around the city. Brown-Saracino argues that these narratives have the power to imply to someone what type of person they should be in the space of the city, to mold or restrict someone's interpretation of statistics regarding the city (such as crime rates or population numbers), and to create deliberate distinctions between the city and other places. In her study, the influence of place narratives took many forms, including municipal marketing campaigns designed to brand their particular city as an "escape" from the real world (leading visitors and residents to understand their role in the city as one of luxury and indulgence), queer people downplaying the frequency of anti-queer hate crimes or violence within their city, and the creation of subjective divisions between their city and those that share similar characteristics. These place narratives can paint a city's identity culture as unique, novel, and enticing – a narrative that ultimately influences how and who someone within its borders is to be.

When thinking about Columbia's place narratives, a quick visit to the city's Convention and Visitors Bureau website quickly begins to tell a story of how the city talks and thinks about itself. One page on this website lists Columbia's many "accolades", which are based on inclusion in third-party lists such as "Best Places to Live", "Most Educated Cities", "Best College Towns", "Most Artistic Towns", "10 Best Film Festivals", "50 Best Farmers Markets", and "Best Urban Trails" (Columbia Accolades n.d.). These descriptions echo how many residents of Columbia characterize the city: an appealing hub for the arts, outdoor opportunities, and education. They also reflect participants' characterizations of Columbia as a "haven" or "bubble" of progressive values and culture set against the surrounding areas. This overall place narrative, then, feeds back into people's perceptions of the city, enticing outsiders who champion similar values to visit or move to the city, even shifting current residents' behaviors and values to more closely align with those of the city.

Of the sixty-six accolades listed on the Bureau's webpage, only one relates to the queer community ("a perfect score of 100" on the Human Rights Campaign's Municipal Equality Index). While this may seem to contradict the assessment that Columbia is widely seen as accepting of queer people, it in fact does the opposite. If having high queer abundance and acceptance leads to a greater "integrationist" queer culture, it follows that the queer community would not necessarily be openly lauded. In other words, since Columbia's queer community is diffused through the larger community, it is less likely to be singled out as a noteworthy feature. Instead, Columbians (including queer Columbians) appear to focus more heavily on the overall political and social progressivism of the city. As a lifelong Columbian, I can also attest to this seemingly conflicting narrative. In all of my conversations about Columbia over the years, whether with fellow residents or outsiders, I cannot recall myself or anyone ever specifically mentioning the presence or role of its queer community. This is not to say that it does not exist – we have shown that it surely does. Instead, Columbia's general progressive character appears to preclude any thought of the queer community specifically.

The ability of a place's narrative to alter or override an individual's own personal experiences also shows up in the findings of Columbia's queer geography. When asked about their

overall experience with place and space as a queer person in Columbia, several participants first labeled it as positive but later went on to mention first or secondhand incidents of discrimination, harassment, or a lack of inclusion. We can see this as a result of the phenomenon discussed above, in which the overarching perception of Columbia as progressive and accepting of queers plays a strong role in an individual's initial appraisal of the city as a whole, only to recall contradicting details when given further thought and attention. To be fair, some participants were recalling incidents that took place before the start of the study's timeframe, when Columbia was not as tolerant and progressive as it is today. Despite this concession, it is evident that queer Columbians can, at times, hesitate to offer up personal experiences that are contradictory to Columbia's progressive image.

Beyond the specific narrative of Columbia itself, participants also compared the city to other places. This tended to happen in one of two ways, either positively contrasting Columbia's queer geography against neighboring towns such as Moberly or Mexico, Missouri, which have markedly more negative place narratives regarding queer acceptance, or negatively critiquing Columbia's queer geography in comparison to larger cities such as Kansas City or Saint Louis. Participants whose characterizations fell into the former category tended to either be originally from Columbia or from smaller, more rural towns. Those who saw Columbia's queer community as too small, fractured, or inconsistent tended to have past experiences with queer community in larger cities or ended up moving to larger cities after living in Columbia. Participants from both groups made comments comparing Columbia's queer culture and geography to coastal metropolises such as New York City, typically with regard to Columbia's lack of a "gayborhood" which is commonly associated with larger cities. Regardless of one's stance on Columbia's queer geography as compared to other places, all participant comments tended to reflect a view of Columbia's queer community as modest or limited in terms of size, engagement, and cohesion.

Socioscapes

The final ecological component in a city's LBQ identity culture is what Brown-Saracino terms the "socioscape", referring to the way that residents, and queer populations specifically, experience the community around them. The most abstract of the three components, a city's socioscape combines the first two components to form a collective understanding of a city's (queer)

social dimensions. Newcomers in a city will look both to the broader messaging of a city's place narrative as well as their interactions with other queer people as a means of "figuring out" the social structure of the city and understanding how to fit into it (or not). Implicitly and explicitly, such interactions convey the identity culture of the city's queer community, such as someone offhandedly mentioning a past incident in which a younger queer woman was discouraged from joining a softball league made up of mainly older women, or someone negatively commenting on another's tendency to stay in instead of joining others at a gay bar. It is through the observation and collection of such small social cues that those new to a city begins to interpret its queer identity culture. This then becomes another positive feedback loop in which new residents observe, adopt, and reconstruct the social character of the queer community to future newcomers, regardless of whether they authentically believe or support it.

Columbia's socioscape, then, combines the overall perceived queer acceptance and place narratives attached to and reinforced by its residents. This was evidenced by the participants' sweeping characterization of Columbia's queer community as splintered or weak regardless of an individual participant's ability to resonate with that message. For example, multiple participants were actively frustrated or put off by the splintered queer community, despite the fact that some were working toward cohesion whereas others were unintentionally perpetuating division. There were also participants who referenced this lack of cohesion without any particular emotion attached, instead simply stating it as fact. In this combination of reactions, we can see that Columbia's disconnected queer socioscape exists as a broader narrative that most queer people appear to at least be aware of if not opinionated about.

It is important to note, as Brown-Saracino does, that these three ecological components of a city's character work in tandem, with certain components holding more weight than others depending on the specific city as well as the point in time. These components, and the resulting queer culture they produce, are "evolving, idiosyncratic, dynamic, and best approached holistically." Put more simply, the specific combination of features found within each of these components is unique and subject to change, just like the cities they exist within. Not only do they work in conjunction with one another, they also inform and feed off the thoughts and behaviors of the people

who live in the city, creating and maintaining an ever-turning wheel of social reproduction that can be slowly steered in different directions but is rarely broken.

Shifts in Queer History & Geography

Brown-Saracino's work also offers perspective on the changes in queer space and place in Columbia, discussed in Chapter 4. She argues that to understand a place's queer culture and its geographies, we need to investigate its specific local cultures from the past, present and future. As an example, she discusses the often-pointed-to "disappearance" of lesbian bars in the United States. Acknowledging that the number of lesbian bars has been declining in recent decades, Brown-Saracino argues that this has not shut out any possibility of queer community creation. Her research points to the ways in which the queer population instead employs "creative methods for coming together" that are not dependent on physical queer-intended spaces such as a gay bar. As a means of adapting to the change in queer-intended resources available, queer people have moved towards less official, sometimes conditional spaces such as potlucks, hikes, or the occupation of non-queer bars after community sports events. "As one institution closes", Brown-Saracino finds, "another appears or residents begin organizing more informal opportunities to gather." She uses this observation to caution against defining a city's queer community based solely on the number of "demarcated institutions", or what we could call "marked" queer spaces (Brekhus 1998). Instead, we should be looking for those spaces where community is still being created and experienced. This is not to say that marked spaces do not have significance, as they are often a crucial to the formation and understanding of what queer community was and is, especially for older generations of queer people. There is indeed something to be said for the capacity of queer bars to produce a sense of commonality for anyone who enters – a capacity that cannot necessarily be found in non-queer-intended spaces that are queered only for moments in time by the presence and activity of queer people. Brown-Saracino argues that instead of simply forgetting or moving past these spaces as "irrelevant", we should move past the idea that marked space was or is the *only* way to do queer community.

To this point, Brown-Saracino (2011) makes a related case, proposing that the recent integration of queer people into the broader social structure has led some queer women to move

from a sense of "real" community – one that is defined by the geographic concentrations of queer people – to one of "ambient" community – one that is defined by more abstract feelings of connection and belonging not contingent on physical proximity to other queer women. This idea is supported by other research that shows successful queer community is less and less contingent on the presence of queer-coded neighborhoods (Ghaziani 2014), queer-intended commercial spaces such as gay bars (Browne and Bakshi 2011), or queer public spaces in general (Batiste 2013). The shifts in societal acceptance that precipitate shifts in queer spaces reinforce the idea that queer geographies do indeed appear to be evolving beyond the hard-and-fast boundaries of gay bars and queer resource centers, instead permeating an increasingly broad array of place and space formats.

The new reality of queer geographies rings true when applied to this study. As we have seen, the number of physical queer-intended establishments in Columbia has been steadily declining since the 1990s. While this may appear disheartening at first, perhaps more so to older generations of queer people, by following Brown-Saracino's guidance we can see that this does not necessarily equate with the decline of queer *community*. Queer people in Columbia still exist and connect with one another, but the places in which this happens has shifted from physical spaces "marked" as queer-intended to those that are not. We have seen one example of this shift in the use of mobile dating apps such as Grindr or Scruff, which allow users to create queer space wherever they are while also enabling them to access and develop relationships with queer people and spaces across the larger Columbia community.

One particularly interesting example of this newfound ability to embody queer space in innovative ways is found in the operations of a new queer organization in Columbia. The closure of Yin Yang Night Club in April 2020 left a hole in the queer nightlife scene in Columbia, and drag culture in particular, as Yin Yang was the only permanent queer-intended space that regularly hosted drag shows in town. As a direct reaction to this gap, a group of Yin Yang regulars decided to create a "lifestyle production company" that could provide a wide array of queer resources and opportunities. The result was Nclusion Plus (stylized as Nclusion+), which advertises itself as a collaborative organization that strives to "promote LGBTQIA+ events, media, and education within

our community." (NclusionPlus 2021) Events include a variety of drag performances (such as shows, bingo brunches, story times, and laser tag events), speakers series, and involvement in area Pride festivals. Educational resources come in the form of queer reading lists, queer health information, and a monthly newsletter showcasing influential queer figures. To promote and support local talent, they offer performers assistance in marketing and professional development.

While the events and services that Nclusion+ offers are not necessarily revolutionary (drag shows and educational resources have traditionally been available at Columbia's queer night clubs and resource centers, respectively), the *structure* through which these events and services are offered departs from established precedents in two ways. First and foremost, Nclusion+ is not based in a permanent physical location. The group's founders intentionally made this decision to free up funds that would have gone towards monthly rent for a physical space, using that money instead to develop and enhance the events and resources themselves. As the founders of the organization note, the lack of a brick-and-mortar base, which has historically spelled doom for queer organizations, is now a distinct advantage because it allows the organization to adapt more quickly to changes in financial situations without collapsing (Wells 2021). As a solution to the issue of space, the organization operates largely through temporary "pop-up" drag events, creating a series of spaces that would fall under this study's spatial code of "sometimes queer", defined by the transient, impermanent presence and activity of queer people (see Table 1 in Chapter 3). Since 2020, Nclusion+ events have taken place in more than 15 venues in Columbia alone. These "unmarked" spaces have a wide range of primary purposes, including bars, public parks, event centers, restaurants, medical marijuana dispensaries, a salon, and even an orthodontics practice. The organization is active in seeking out local businesses interested in hosting events and does not limit possible collaborations to only those that are conventionally perceived of as queer-friendly. Despite the fact that many of these places are far from queer-intended in their everyday uses, Nclusion+ is able to generate ephemerally queer-coded, heterotopic atmospheres that celebrate difference and otherness.

A second innovative element to Nclusion+'s approach is the way in which it solicits and develops inclusive buy-in to the organization and its goals. Operating under a tiered monthly

membership model, anyone in the community can have a role in the development of the organization's mission and programming by contributing monetarily. Members are encouraged to join the various specialty committees within the organization to have their opinions more directly heard. This is an intentional step towards bridging the gaps of internal queer community division that participants in this study discussed. In establishing a proactively inclusive framework, Nclusion+ has effectively given Columbia queers a straightforward way in which to self-determine the degree to which all identity groups have a seat at the table when it comes to creating and maintaining a more cohesive queer community.

The recent addition of the Nclusion+ organization into the Columbia queer community has introduced a new and resourceful avenue for addressing the modern shifts in queer geographies. The flexible nature of its pop-up approach to queer events has the potential to ease concerns of older generations that queer establishments are disappearing, while at the same time playing to younger generations' understandings of queer space as fluid and transitory. It also has the potential to not only continue offering queer-intended spaces, but perhaps even to provide a stronger sense of queer community – one that is developed and enjoyed by people of all identity groups – than Columbia has previously seen.

Columbia as a Queer Place and a Queer Future

By applying Brown-Saracino's framework of ecological components to the results from Columbia, we can see that the city is primed to cultivate integration of queer people into the larger community due to its relatively high rates of queer abundance and acceptance. This diffused queer community feeds into and plays off broader place narratives that highlight Columbia's reputation as progressive, all while implicitly downplaying the distinct role and presence of the queer community. The resulting socioscape of Columbia thus allows for and encourages queer integration into the mainstream landscape, which creates a less-than-robust queer community, which is then held as the standard reality that "naturally" occurs within Columbia. This unique combination of cultural place-based features, paired with broader societal trends moving towards greater acceptance and integration of queer people, helps explain patterns in participant perceptions that Columbia's queer community is disconnected and its queer geography is disappearing. To push

back against both interpretations, one recently established local organization offers a new and innovative means of creating queer space, proving that waning numbers of permanent, physical queer-intended establishments do not have to mean the end of queer community. The results of this study of Columbia's queer culture help to clarify historical shifts in queer geographies from past to present, while also pointing toward inventive and promising forms that queer geographies may take in the future.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

As an exploratory case study using a combination of participant interviews, secondary research, and digital mapping techniques, this study has produced a representation of Columbia, Missouri's queer geographies from 1991 through 2021. The core finding is that the number of queer-intended spaces and places in Columbia has been decreasing since 1991, yet those spaces that do exist have moved increasingly closer to the central, high-visibility downtown area. Both phenomena are due at least in some part to the evolving public attitudes towards queer people over time, leading to more and more queer people feeling comfortable occupying non-queer, high-profile spaces while outwardly presenting as queer. The relatively new ability to meet and connect with other queer people through digital media such as dating apps has also played a role in this shift, as queer bars are not deemed by many younger queer people to be as necessary for socializing as they once were. This shift has caused mixed reactions among participants, generally along a generational divide, with participants from older generations expressing a broad sense of loss for a cohesive queer community that has resulted from integration into mainstream culture, and younger generations lamenting specific shifts that have more of an effect on in-the-moment experiences such as the straight bootlegging of queer spaces.

I also identified differences in experience with queer spaces and places between identity groups within the queer community, with bar culture largely defining gay men's sense of community and queer women developing connections more so through virtual and conditional spaces such as newsletters and sports or music events. Participants specifically discussed a distinct lack of trans-specific spaces, a historic precedent which largely holds true today. Using the framework of Japonica Brown-Saracino's *How Places Make Us* study, I discussed the various ways in which the unique cultural characteristics of Columbia as a place create a positive feedback loop that determines the narratives that the queer community tells about itself. I then discussed Nclusion+ as a recently introduced organizational approach for shaking up this narrative and establishing a new precedent for creating and maintaining a stronger and more cohesive queer community despite not having queer-intended establishments. The combination of these findings and factors shows us that Columbia's queer geography is complex, evolving, and specific to Columbia.

Limitations & Areas for Future Research

Recalling that this project was not intended to be a complete or definitive investigation of Columbia's queer geography, there were limitations of scope and content inherent to the exploratory nature of this case study. To achieve the larger goal of developing an increasingly robust and intersectional understanding of Columbia's queer landscape, these limitations deserve consideration. Several constraints and proposed areas for future research will be discussed here.

Through participant interviews and secondary research, it became clear that queer spaces in Columbia existed long before the beginning of this study's timeframe of 1991. Several participants discussed their experiences with various other (often short-lived) queer-intended bars during the 1980s, including a possible earlier iteration of the location of Zazooz and The OUTRAGE called The Paradise Retreat that was lesbian-centric – a rare occurrence in Columbia's queer geography. The presence of queer individuals in Columbia as early as the 1940s (Niederberger 2016) also leads me to believe that there were specific queer-intended spaces or places during this time as well. Although such places may have tended to be private in nature, this would still add valuable context for the transformations of queer space in Columbia over time. Additional research into these earlier queer geographies would certainly help paint a fuller picture of the longstanding presence and struggles of queer people in Columbia.

It is also necessary to carry out further research that more intentionally focuses on the experiences of groups further marginalized within Columbia's queer community, such as transgendered, queer and trans people of color (QTPOC), and non-binary or gender fluid individuals. As noted in Chapter 3, these communities face a rate of discrimination disproportionate to not only the general population, but also white and cisgendered queer populations. The sole participant in this study who identified as a trans man made frequent note of the distinct lack of trans-intended spaces in Columbia, a sentiment that would no doubt be confirmed by other trans individuals. When participants discussed the issue of internal queer community division as it relates to Columbia's bar culture, the conversation mostly centered on spaces intended for either gay men or queer women, implicitly not considering the lack of spaces created by or for trans, non-binary, or gender fluid people. As briefly discussed in Chapter 4 by one participant, there is sufficient

evidence that queer and trans people of color have significantly different experiences with places and spaces in Columbia than white queer people. More intentional investigations into these experiences geographies are a natural and necessary direction for future studies of Columbia's queer geography. An understanding of Columbia's queer geographies is not complete without considering the experiences of all groups within the queer community, and as such, turning a deliberate lens to these details will be a crucial next step in this research.

Another area for future investigation is the conventionally unmarked spaces with which queer people engage. As discussed earlier, permanent queer-intended spaces are becoming fewer and farther between. Increased attention to the everyday interactions of queer people with space and place may reveal more accurate and timely insights, as queer people are increasingly creating community in non-commercial leisure spaces (Browne and Bakshi 2011). This would require a greater focus on the role of private spaces, spaces of nondisclosure and silence (Boussalem 2020), queer interactions with non-queer (unmarked) spaces (Brekhus 1998), or spaces of conditional queerness such as pop-up drag shows or other queer events. Such work could be accomplished through queered methods similar to that of Queering the Map, which allows queer people to share specific, unfiltered experiences that they associate with any space or place on a public, digital map (LaRochelle 2018). This approach to queer geographies removes potential misinterpretations of a third-party researcher while at the same time increasing the public's access to a deeper understanding of the queer landscape surrounding them. Informational isolation has historically been a barrier to queer people's ability to feel a sense of belonging and self-acceptance; a more public-facing representation of the various experiences (positive or negative) that other queer people have had with places and spaces would be an additional tool in expanding this awareness.

The Future is Here, The Future is Queer

"Start here. We exist."

These words affirming the existence of queer people open a 2016 National Park Service study on historical sites of LGBTQ life in the United States (Springate 2016). Though this may seem a simple and even obvious statement, it is at the heart of any project seeking to investigate the lives and experiences of queer people. Being queer is not a contemporary social trend; queer people have

always existed. Recent advances in public awareness and acceptance of queer people and rights may be relatively new, but queer people have lived, struggled, thrived, mourned, and celebrated for just as long as straight people. While acknowledging and honoring this fact is a crucial first step, there is much to gain from deeper explorations of the beautiful intricacies of queer lives. This study has attempted such an exploration for one small city in the Midwest, but there is no telling what insights we will encounter in other places if we are curious enough to explore with queered eyes the spaces around us.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Participant Background
   - What are your preferred pronouns?
   - Do you have a certain orientation and/or gender that you identify as?
   - Were either of those identities different during the time(s) that you lived in Columbia?
   - Race and/or ethnicity identifiers?
   - Are you out as queer [their preferred orientation]?
     - If yes, when did you come out? Was that before or after you came to Columbia?
   - Where are you from?
     - Do you feel that your upbringing was conducive to being queer?
   - What years were you in Columbia? (/When did you move to Columbia?)
   - *Overall*, was your experience as a queer person interacting with places/spaces in Columbia more so positive or negative?

2. **What were/are places/spaces where you felt comfortable as a queer person?**
   - **Where did/do you go on "queer" dates?**
   - Public places?
     - Establishments? Named, official places? Certain streets? Areas/neighborhoods of town? Parks?
   - Private places?
     - Friend's houses? Dorms/Greek housing?
   - Virtual places?
     - Social media? Internet groups? Text conversations?
   - Places/spaces that you don't necessarily associate with a specific event, but more everyday/mundane activities where you felt comfortable as a queer person?
     - Conversations? Coming out?

3. **Were/Are there places/spaces off limits to you as a queer person (or that you feel to be so)?**
   - **Are there places where you would drop hands with a partner?**
   - **What was it about those places that lead you to feel that way?**
     - Have you experienced direct antagonism in these places? Verbal/physical harassment? Graffiti/written hate speech or derogatory language?
     - Less direct prompts, such as lingering stares, noticeably icy/cool interactions compared to those with non-queer people?
     - Did this perception come from secondhand information about the place? Or firsthand experience?
   - Were there places where you felt that you could not divulge your queerness and felt compelled to hold back personal information that could identify you as queer?
     - If so, how did you feel about this?
   - Do you think that you would you feel more comfortable interacting with those spaces if you altered the degree to which you outwardly express your queerness?

4. **Did/does a place's accessibility to you as a queer person change depending on certain factors?**
   - Your physical presentation (including clothing, hair, speech, etc.)?
   - Whether you are alone or with a partner/another queer person?
   - Time of day?
   - Another factor? Time of year, game weekends, etc.

5. **How were/are queer spaces communicated about within the queer community?**
   - Was/is there public-facing, intentional acknowledgment from establishments that theirs was/is a safe space?
     - Physical signage? Queer imagery or symbols such as pink triangles or rainbows?
   - **To what degree were/are safe queer spaces communicated to you via information from other, "in the know", queer people?**
   - Were/are queer spaces known as such outside of the queer community?
     - Are you aware of any "reputations" that queer places/spaces have within the non-queer community?
     - In your experience, have non-queer people seen queer places/spaces as enticing or desirable sources of nightlife? If so, how has that perception translated into non-queer people's actions towards those spaces?

6. **Were there any noticeable shifts in the number or distribution of queer spaces during your time in Columbia?**
   - **Did specific establishments disappear or change, either physically or in their availability as a safe queer space?**
   - Did queer spaces/places tend to be located in a similar area?
     - If so, have you noticed such areas change?

7. **Is there anything that I haven't mentioned or asked that you think is important to this conversation?**
   - Are there any places/spaces that you feel have played a role in your life as a queer person?
     that we haven't already discussed?
   - Is there anyone that you feel would be a good participant in this study?
     - Would you be willing to provide me their contact information and/or offer to put them in contact with me?

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW CODES

- Place
  - Place_Public
    - Public_Establishment
      - Establishment_Bar/NightClub
        - Bar_BlueNote
          - Music venue and bar located at 17 N. 9th Street
        - Bar_Fieldhouse
          - Bar located at 1107 E. Broadway
        - Bar_GunterHans
          - European-themed pub located at 7 Hitt Street
        - Bar_ThreeCheers
          - Bar formerly located in the Tiger Hotel at 23 S 8th Street
        - Nightclub_DejaVu
          - Nightclub formerly located at 701 Cherry Street
        - Nightclub_MyHouse
          - Nightclub and bar located at 119 S. 7th Street
        - Nightclub_PianoBar
          - Piano bar, operating alongside Roxy's, located at 1025 E Broadway.
          - Permanently closed in 2020
        - Nightclub_Roxy's
          - Nightclub operating alongside The Penguin Piano Bar, located at 1025 E Broadway.
          - Permanently closed in 2020
        - Nightclub_Shattered
          - Shattered_Cherry
            - 111 S 9th Street
          - Shattered_Broadway
            - 514 E Broadway
        - Nightclub_TheSocialRoom
          - Nightclub located at 220 N. 8th Street
        - Bar_GayBar
          - GayBar_Arch&Column
            - Gay pub located at 1301 Business Loop 70 E
            - Opened 2002
          - GayBar_Answers
            - Gay bar formerly located above where Central Bank is now. Entrance via the alleyway.
          - GayBar_BlueMoon
            - Shortlived gay bar (Blue Moon may not be the name)
            - 27 S. 10th Street
          - GayBar_TheCircleK
            - Gay bar formerly located at 2416 Paris Rd.
          - GayBar_Contacts
            - Gay nightclub and bar
            - Contacts_Old63

- - - 1213 Old 63
    - Contacts_Ninth
      - 306 N Ninth St
    - Contacts_Broadway
      - 514 E. Broadway
  - GayBar_Illusions
    - Gay bar briefly located in 1991 at 912 Business Loop E
  - GayBar_TheOUTRAGE
    - Gay bar formerly located at 6870 E Mexico Gravel Rd
  - GayBar_TheParadiseRetreat
    - Gay bar formerly located at 6870 E Mexico Gravel Rd
  - GayBar_Questions
    - Gay bar formerly located downtown
  - GayBar_SoCo
    - SoCo_South
      - E Nifong Blvd Ste E
    - SoCo_Downtown
      - 119 S. 7th Street
  - GayBar_Styx
    - Gay bar formerly located at 3111 Old 63
  - GayBar_ThreeCheers
    - Gay bar formerly located at 1301 Business Loop 70 E
  - GayBar_TheWheel
    - Gay bar formerly located at 111 S 9th Street
  - GayBar_YinYang
    - Gay bar and nightclub formerly located at 128 E Nifong Blvd Ste E
  - GayBar_Zazooz
    - Gay bar formerly located at 6870 E Mexico Gravel Rd
- Bar_HonoraryGayBar
  - HonoraryGayBar_EastsideTavern
    - Bar located at 1016 E Broadway
  - HonoraryGayBar_Kliks
    - Bar located at 205 N 10th Street
  - HonoraryGayBar_Tellers
    - Restaurant and bar located at 820 E Broadway
- Establishment_CoffeeShop
  - CoffeeShop_CherryStreetArtisan
    - Coffee shop formerly located at 111 S 9th Street
  - CoffeeShop_TheChez
    - Coffee shop formerly located in the basement of the Presbyterian Church located at 16 Hitt St.
  - CoffeeShop_CoffeeTea&Spice
    - Coffee shop formerly located at 601 Business Loop W
  - CoffeeShop_LakotaDowntown

- Downtown location of Lakota Coffee Company located at 24 S. 9th Street
  - CoffeeShop_MixedCompany
    - Coffee Shop formerly located at 1025 E Walnut
  - CoffeeShop_Osama's
    - Coffee shop located at 11 N. 9th St.
    - Now called Coffee Zone
- Establishment_Healthcare
  - Healthcare_PlannedParenthood
    - Planned Parenthood branch located at 711 N Providence Rd.
  - Healthcare_SpectrumHealthcare
    - Later iteration of RAIN
    - 1123 Wilkes Blvd.
  - Healthcare_UniversityHospital
    - 1 Hospital Drive
- Establishment_Religious
  - Religious_BethelBaptist
    - Baptist Church located at 201 E Old Plank Rd
  - Religious_CalvaryEpiscopal
    - Episcopal church located at 123 S 9th Street
  - Religious_ChristTheKingAgape
    - Church formerly located at 515 Hickman Ave
  - Religious_TheCrossing
    - Church located at 3615 Southland
  - Religious_NewmanCenter
    - Church located at 602 Turner Avenue
  - Religious_RockBridgeChristian
    - Church located at 301 W Green Meadows Rd
  - Religious_UnitarianUniversalist
    - Church located at 2615 Shepard Blvd
  - Religious_UnitedCovenantMission
    - Church formerly located at 19 E Walnut Street
  - Religious_UnityCenter
    - Church located at 1600 W. Broadway
- Establishment_ResourceCenter
  - ResourceCenter_TheCenterProject
    - LGBTQ nonprofit community organization
    - TheCenterProject_UU
      - Formerly housed within the Unitarian Universalist Church at 2615 Shepard Blvd.
    - TheCenterProject_Fairview
      - 805 Fairview Avenue
    - TheCenterProject_Hickman
      - 515 Hickman Avenue
    - TheCenterProject_StJames
      - 300 St. James Street
    - TheCenterProject_Ash
      - 907 E. Ash Street

- ResourceCenter_RAIN
  - Regional AIDS Interfaith Network; support and resource center for individuals living with HIV and/or AIDS
  - RAIN_Garth
    - 117 N Garth
  - RAIN_Providence
    - 800 N Providence Rd
  - RAIN_Broadway
    - 4250 E. Broadway
  - RAIN_Wilkes
    - 1123 Wilkes Boulevard
- Establishment_Restaurant
  - Restaurant_Addison's
    - Restaurant located at 709 Cherry Street
  - Restaurant_Billiards
    - Restaurant and pool hall located at 514 E Broadway
  - Restaurant_CafeBerlin
    - Café and music venue located at 220 N 10th Street
  - Restaurant_Chevy's
    - Restaurant formerly located at 1010 Interstate 70 SW
  - Restaurant_CJ's
    - Restaurant and bar located at 704 E Broadway
  - Restaurant_Denny's
    - Restaurant formerly located at 1601 Rangeline
  - Restaurant_Ernie's
    - Diner located at 1005 E Walnut St.
  - Restaurant_FlatBranch
    - Restaurant and brewery located at 115 S. 5th St.
  - Restaurant_Heidelberg
    - Restaurant and bar located at 410 S. 9th St.
  - Restaurant_Murry's
    - Restaurant located at 3107 Green Meadows Way
  - Restaurant_PastaFactory
    - Restaurant formerly located at 1020 E. Broadway
  - Restaurant_Shakespeare's
    - Downtown location of Shakespeare's Pizza located at 225 S. 9th Street
  - Restaurant_Tellers
    - Restaurant located at 820 E Broadway
- Establishment_Store
  - Store_Aardvarx
    - Head shop located at 17 N 10th Street
  - Store_BocomoBay
    - Adult store formerly located at 1122 Wilkes Blvd
  - Store_BosomOfIshtar

- Spirituality store formerly located at 1027 E Walnut
  - Store_CoolStuff
    - Novelty items store formerly located at 810 Broadway D
  - Store_Eclectics
    - Adult bookstore formerly located at 1122 Wilkes Blvd.
  - Store_Gunthers
    - Arcade formerly located at 923 E Broadway
  - Store_OldeUnTheatre
    - Adult store located at 101 E Walnut Street
  - Store_PeaceNook
    - Environmental- and social justice-oriented store located at 804 E Broadway C
  - Store_StreetsideRecords
    - Record store formerly located at 401 S. Providence Rd.
  - Store_Sinclair
    - Sinclair gas station located at 2100 W Rollins Rd
  - Store_Target
    - Chain store located at 2400 Bernadette Dr.
- Public_Space
  - Space_AdoptAHighway
    - Section of Providence between Mick Deaver Rd and Stadium Blvd formerly maintained as an adopt-a-highway by the Lesbian Community Project group
  - Space_AntimiLake
    - Lake located within Cosmo Park (1615 Business Loop 70 W) used as a cruising spot in the 1990s
  - Space_BethelPark
    - City-run public park located at 4500 Bethel Street
    - Used as Pride fest location in 1990s
  - Space_CosmoPark
    - City-run public park located at 1615 Business Loop 70 W.
    - Used as Pride fest location in early 2000s
  - Space_ElmStreet
    - Section of Elm Street between 6th and 8th Streets used as Pride fest location in 2010 and 2011
  - Space_FlatbranchPark
    - City-run public park located at 300 S Providence Rd
    - Used as Pride fest location in mid 2000s
  - Space_KiwanisPark
    - City-run public park located at 926 College Park Drive
    - Used as Pride fest location in early 1990s
  - Space_RainbowSoftballCenter
    - Softball complex located within Cosmo Park (1615 Business Loop 70 W) used as venue for several lesbian softball league games
  - Space_ReactorField
    - University-owned sports field used for women's rugby practices
    - Located at 2001 S Providence Rd

- Space_RockQuarryPark
  - City-run public park located at 2002 Grindstone Pkwy
  - Used as Pride fest location in 2000
- Space_StephensLakePark
  - City-run public park located at 2001 E Broadway
  - Used as Pride fest location in late 2000s
- o Place_Private
  - Any space or place which is not accessible to the general public (e.g. homes, offices, lands, property, etc.)
    - Private_TheDivaHaus
      - Private residence occupied by punk/queer/alternative individuals
      - located at 301 N 5th Street
    - Private_TheDykeDen
      - Private residence occupied by 8-10 queer women in the late 1990s
- o Place_Virtual
  - Virtual_bumble
    - Dating app for various genders and orientations which allows only for women to initiate conversations
  - Virtual_ComingOut
    - Local newsletter for queer women in the 1990s
  - Virtual_Discord
    - Online server platform designed for communication within interest-based communities
  - Virtual_Facebook
    - Online platform with potential for virtually-connected specialized social groups
  - Virtual_gay.com
    - Online chat app for gay men that operated from 1994-2016
  - Virtual_Gaydar
    - KOPN radio show highlighting gay men's news and music that ran from 1991-1994
  - Virtual_Grindr
    - Dating/hook-up app for gay men
  - Virtual_Hinge
    - Dating app for various genders and orientations
  - Virtual_Jack'd
    - Dating app for gay men
  - Virtual_LesbianConnection
    - Magazine covering lesbian-centric news and interest stories. Also includes index of lesbian contacts in cities across the U.S.
  - Virtual_LesbianGayInfoline
    - Local resource hotline for queer people in Columbia
  - Virtual_OutSpoken
    - Later iteration of Coming Out newsletter; local newsletter for queer women that published from 1999-2000
  - Virtual_ThisWayOut
    - KOPN radio show highlighting gay and lesbian news that ran from 1990-1994
  - Virtual_Tinder
    - Dating/hook-up app for various genders and orientation
  - Virtual_Womenergy

- KOPN radio show that highlighted lesbian music, issues, and news that ran from 1989-1994
- o Place_Mizzou
  - Mizzou_General
  - Mizzou_AS110
    - Allen Auditorium lecture hall in Arts & Science building
    - 110 Arts and Science Building
  - Mizzou_ChildDevelopmentLab
    - Childcare center located at 31 Stanley Hall
  - Mizzou_CounselingCenter
    - University counseling center located at 406 S. 6th Street
  - Mizzou_Fountain
    - Large outdoor fountain located in the plaza between the Student Center and Strickland Hall
  - Mizzou_GreekLife
    - Place_Mizzou_GreekLife_Fraternity
      - A space or place owned or operated by Mizzou fraternity organizations
    - Place_Mizzou_GreekLife_Sorority
      - A space or place owned or operated by Mizzou sorority organizations
  - Mizzou_HonorsCollege
    - Academic unit on Mizzou's campus that provides services for Honors students, housed in Lowry Hall.
    - 210 Lowry Hall
  - Mizzou_JohnstonHall
    - Women's-only residence hall located at 1100 Rollins St.
  - Mizzou_LGBTQResourceCenter
    - Social justice center on Mizzou's campus that provides resources, support, and education around queer and transgender issues.
    - LGBTQResourceCenter_BradyCommons
      - Located at 901 Rollins Street from 1994-2008
    - LGBTQResourceCenter_MemorialUnion
      - Located at 518 Hitt Street from 2008-2010
    - LGBTQResourceCenter_StudentCenter
      - Located at 901 Rollins Street from 2010-2021
  - Mizzou_RelationshipAndSexualViolencePreventionCenter
    - Social justice center on Mizzou's campus that provides resources, support, and education around topics of relationship and sexual violence.
    - G216 MU Student Center
  - Mizzou_SpeakersCircle
    - Plaza on Mizzou's campus where anyone is allowed to speak to a crowd without a permit. Officially designated as a space for protected speech in 1987.
  - Mizzou_StotlerLounge
    - Event space on Mizzou's campus located at 518 Hitt St.
  - Mizzou_TriangleCoalition
    - LGBT student organization
  - Mizzou_WatersAuditorium
    - Lecture hall in Waters Hall building on Mizzou's campus
    - 1112 University Ave

- Mizzou_TheWomen'sCenter
  - Social justice center on Mizzou's campus, originally opened in 1975 in Gentry Hall.
  - WomensCenter_BradyCommons
    - Located at 901 Rollins Street from 1994-2008
  - WomensCenter_MemorialUnion
    - Located at 518 Hitt Street from 2008-2010
  - WomensCenter_StudentCenter
    - Located at 901 Rollins Street from 2010-2021
- Place_PlaceShift
  - PlaceShift_COVID
    - Conditions or features of a place or space directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic
  - PlaceShift_Number
    - Change in the number of queer-intended spaces and/or establishments
  - PlaceShift_Physical
    - The material relocation, closing, or destruction of a space or place
  - PlaceShift_StraightBootlegging
    - A shift in the culture of a place in which a queer place or space is overtaken, intentionally or otherwise, by non-queer folk. This may lead to changes in demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folk, and/or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folks in that space or place
  - PlaceShift_TimeOfDay
    - Changes in the demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folk, or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folk of a space or place related specifically to the time of day
  - PlaceShift_TimeOfYear
    - Changes in the demographics, projected attitudes towards queer folk, or levels of acceptance or safety for queer folk of a space or place related specifically to the time of year
- Experience
  - Experience_Neutral
  - Experience_Positive
    - Positive_General
      - Experiences explicitly or implicitly deemed positive by the participant for unspecified reasons
    - Positive_ActiveInclusion
      - Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved active and/or intentional welcoming of queer identities
    - Positive_NonQueerSupport
      - Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved support (emotional, monetary, legal, etc.) provided by non-queer person(s)
    - Positive_Religious
      - Experiences deemed positive by the participant which involved interaction with religious institutions or individuals
  - Experience_Negative
    - Negative_General
      - Experiences explicitly or implicitly deemed negative by the participant for unspecified reasons
   - Negative_Discrimination

- Experiences which involved legal, administrative, or personal rights discrimination due to their gender or sexual orientation
  - Negative_InternalDivision
    - Division (whether social, ideological, or physical) among members of the queer community
  - Negative_Physical
    - Experiences involving physical harm, harassment, or hostility
  - Negative_Religious
    - Experiences involving interaction with religious institutions or individuals
  - Negative_Rural
    - Experiences involving perceived or real threats to safety due to rural location
  - Negative_Silencing
    - Experiences in which a queer person was encouraged to, or was made to, keep their gender or sexual orientation undisclosed
  - Negative_Singularity
    - Experiences in which they or another individual were the only queer person in a space or place
  - Negative_Tokenism
    - Experiences which involved a queer person being singled out, spotlighted, or falsely represented as proof of progressivism and/or inclusivity
  - Native_Verbal
    - Experiences which involved either written or spoken derogatory, offensive, or threatening language
  - o Experience_Mizzou
    - Mizzou_CampusInvolvement
      - Participant involvement in university organizations, sports, or other activities or groups
    - Experience_Mizzou_GreekLife
      - Experience_Mizzou_GreekLife_Fraternity
        - Experiences related to Mizzou fraternity events, locations, members, or institution
      - Experience_Mizzou_GreekLife_Sorority
        - Experiences related to Mizzou sorority events, locations, members, or institution
- Communication
  - o Communication_Code
    - Specialized words with alternate meanings used to communicate queer information without outing oneself
  - o Communication_Publication
    - Printed or digital media that communicated queer-friendliness of various spaces/places
  - o Comunication_Signal
    - Visible features of a place or individual that outwardly signal(led) acceptance of queer people; could include pride flags, stickers, posters, rainbow decoration, pins etc.
    - Signal_Present
      - Physical signals of queer friendliness are present at the space/place or on an individual
    - Signal_Absent
      - Physical signals of queer friendliness are not present at the space/place or on an individual
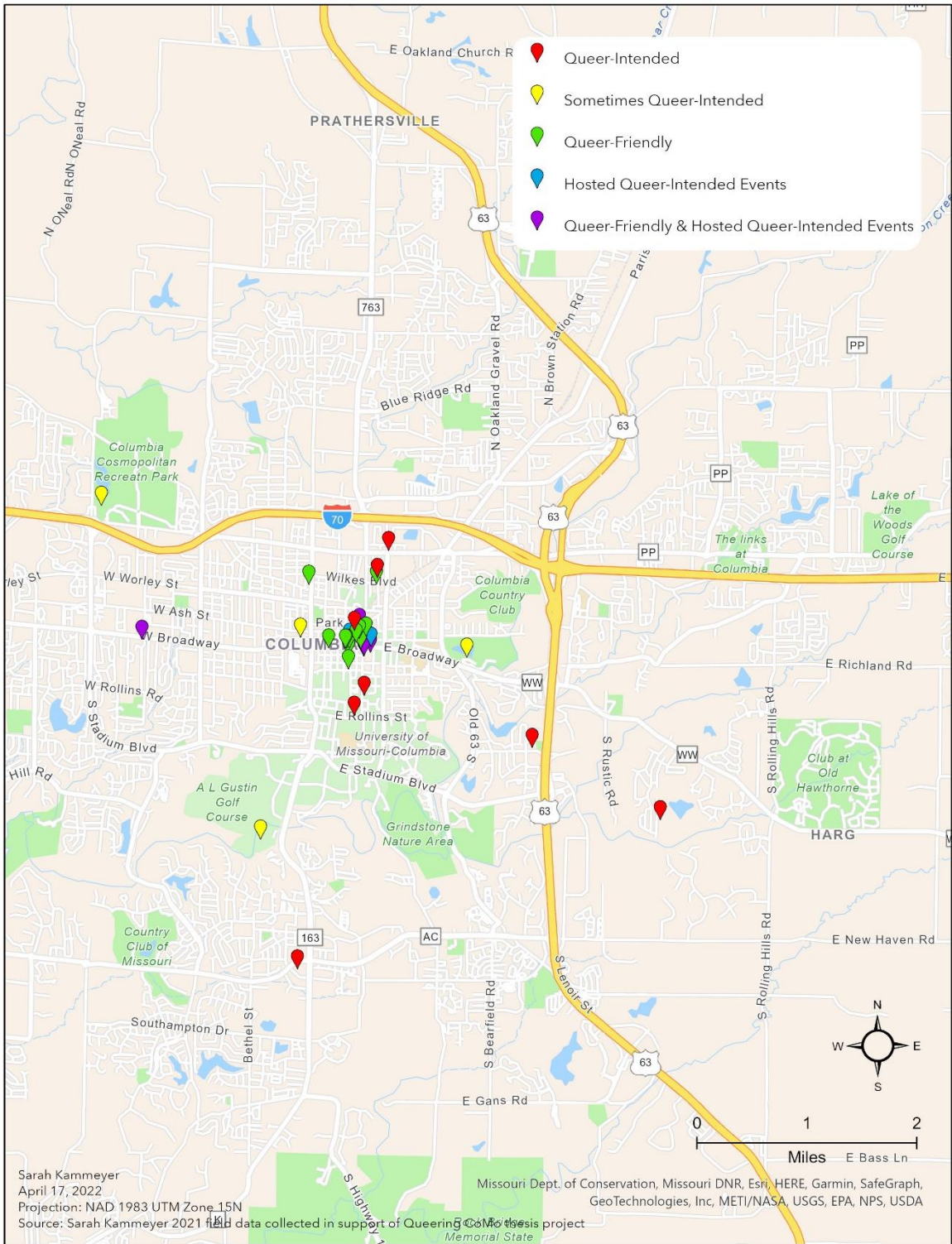 - o Communication_WordOfMouth

- - - Knowledge of place/space's queer friendliness communicated through informal spoken network
- PersonalInfo
  - PersonalInfo_General
    - Personal details about a participant not included under other codes
  - PersonalInfo_Orientation
    - The sexual orientation with which a participant self-identifies
    - Orientation_Gay
    - Orientation_Lesbian
    - Orientation_Bisexual
    - Orientation_Queer
  - PersonalInfo_ComingOut
    - Time period or experience related to a participant's disclosure of sexual identity
  - PersonalInfo_Gender
    - The gender with which a participant self-identifies
  - PersonalInfo_Pronouns
    - The personal pronouns by which a participant prefers to be referred
  - PersonalInfo_Hometown
    - The town, city, neighborhood, region, state, country, or other location which a participant identifies as "where they are from"
  - PersonalInfo_YearsInColumbia
    - Any and all years in which a participant (has) lived in Columbia, MO
  - PersonalInfo_Presentation
    - The manner in which a participant presents to the public, specifically referring to the external expression of their sexual orientation and/or gender. This can include the presence or absence of body/facial hair, hair styles, clothing, gait, or voice among other features.
  - PersonalInfo_Personality
    - Personality_SelfAssured
      - The quality of being self-confident and/or sure of oneself, either as perceived by the investigator or as identified by the participant
    - Personality_Uncertain
      - A lack of the quality of being self-confident and/or sure of oneself, either as perceived by the investigator or as identified by the participant
    - Personality_SocialStatus
      - The degree to which a participant is known by the public, either by name, appearance, or actions
  - PersonalInfo_SexualIdentity
    - SexualIdentity_Secure
      - Being aware of and comfortable with one's sexual orientation and/or gender
    - SexualIdentity_Nonsecure
      - A lack of awareness or comfort with one's sexual orientation and/or gender
- CultureShift
  - Shifts in broadscale cultural attitudes or perceptions toward queer people/lifestyles
- Columbia
  - Information pertaining to the unique character, culture, politics, or physical features of Columbia
- Quote
  - Anything that stands out as particularly interesting, noteworthy, or relevant to the research questions and objectives
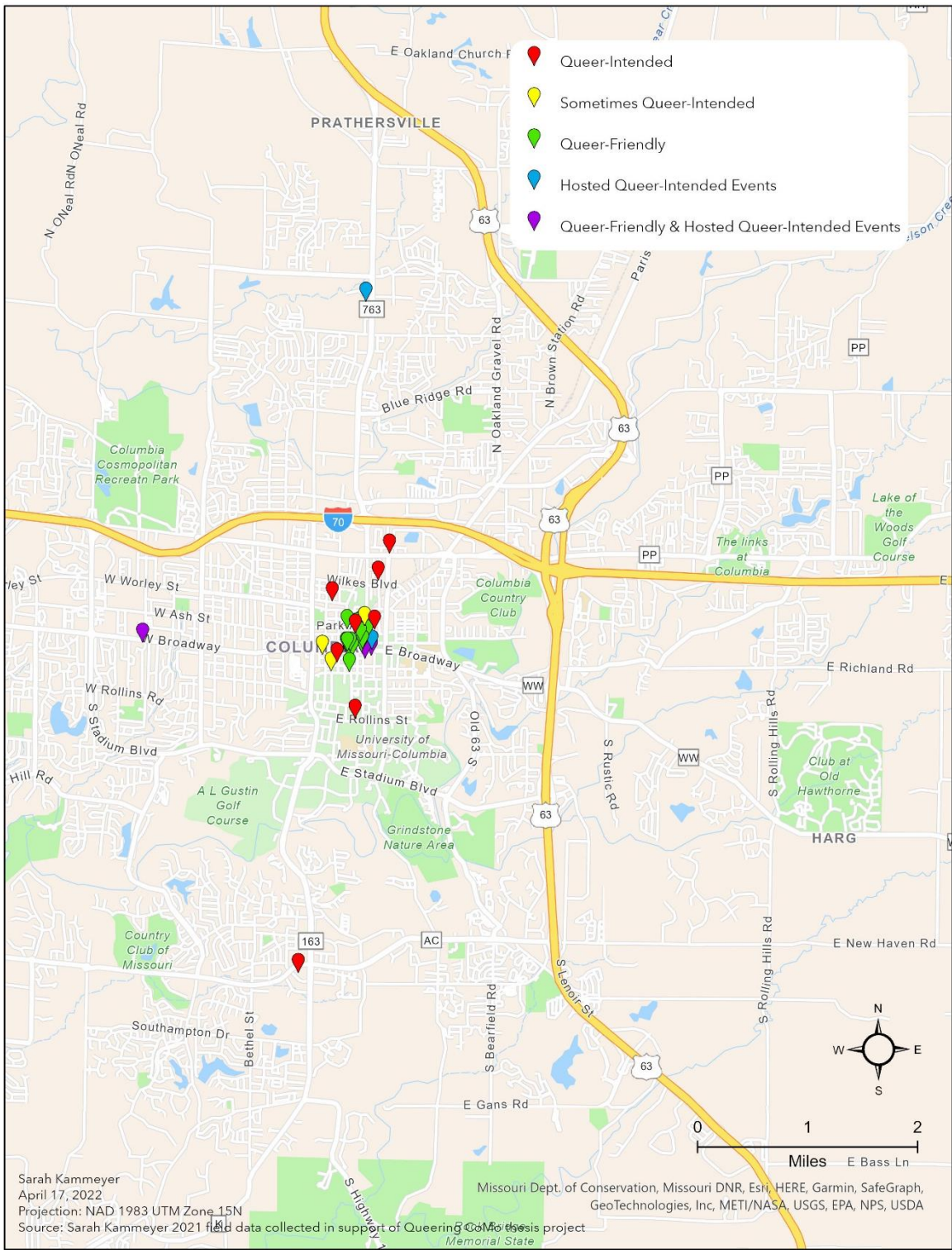
APPENDIX 3: SUPPLEMENTARY MAPS

The following pages contain maps that represent the geographic distribution of places and spaces coded as either queer-intended, sometimes queer-intended, queer-friendly, a venue for queer-intended events, or both queer-friendly and a venue for queer-intended events for each decade of the study's timeframe. See Figure 5 in Chapter 4 for a summary map of all the spaces and places included in these maps.
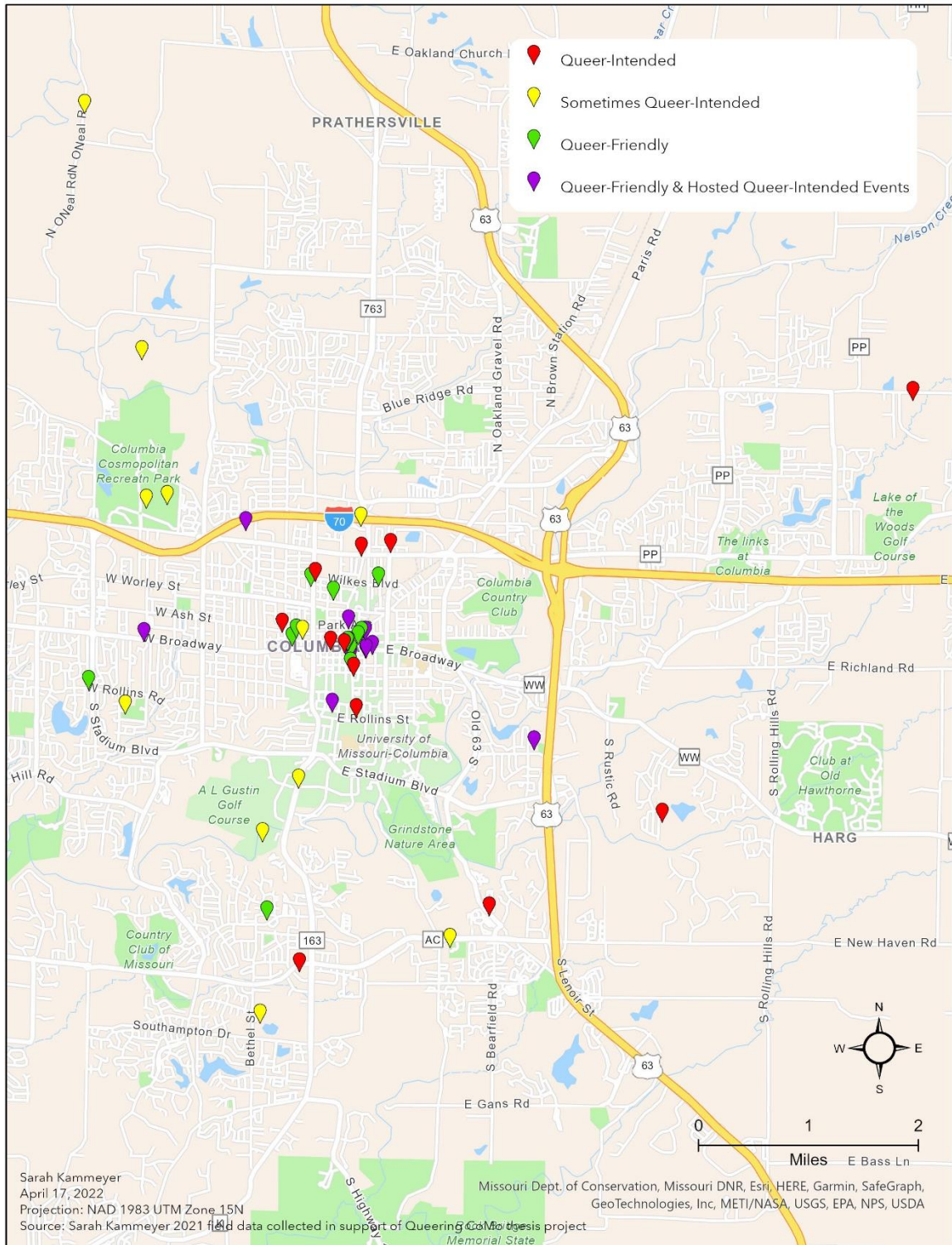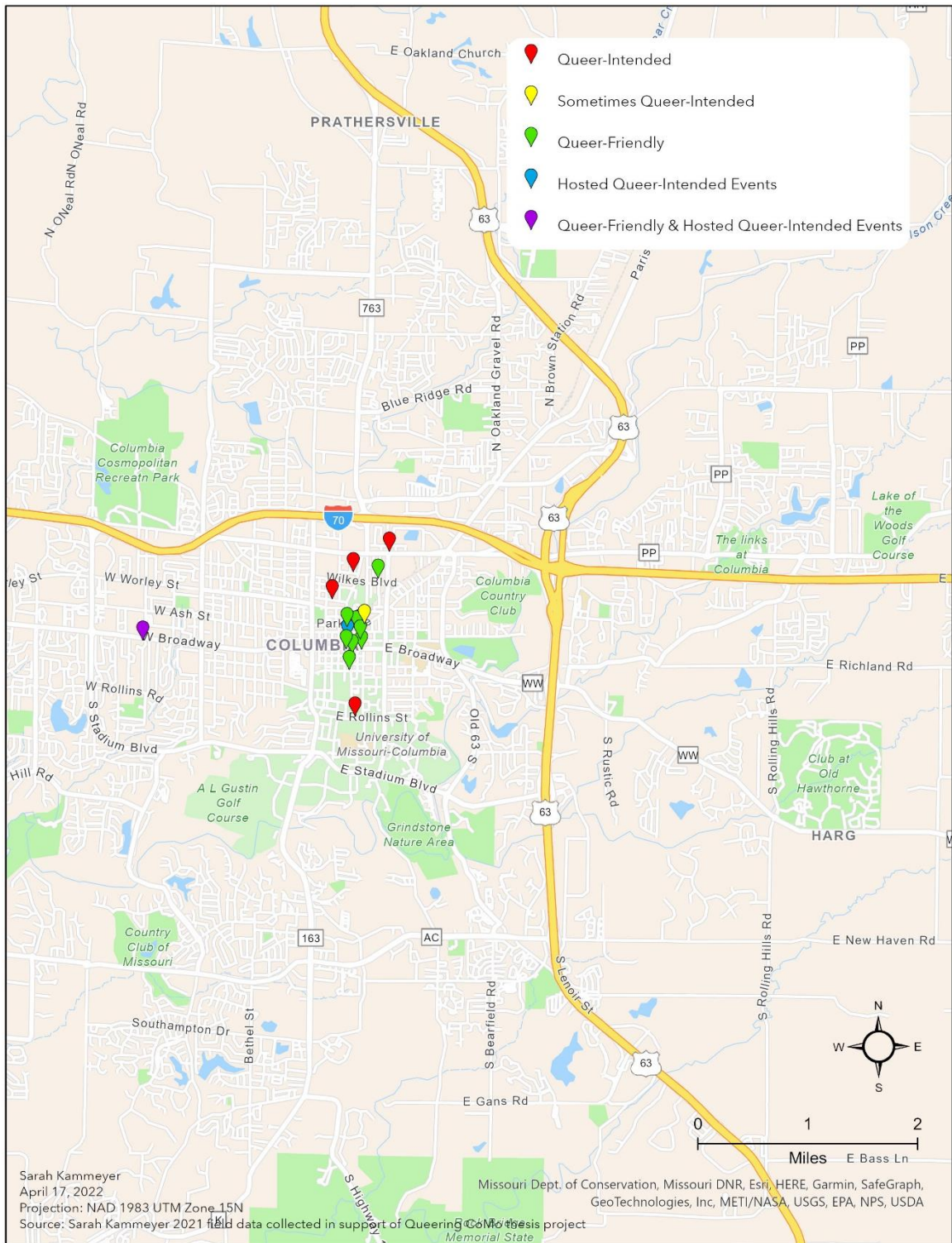
1991-2000

2001-2010

2011-2020

2021