On the Edge of Urban 'Equalities': Framing Millennial Suburban LGBTQ+ Activisms in Canada

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Since the emergence of the gay liberation movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s, LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer plus) activisms in the urban West have been associated with political challenges to the heteronormative social order waged through public demonstrations and, particularly in North America, space-claiming at the centre of large cities. At the turn of the millennium in Canada, however, highly publicized incidents of gay rights activisms began occurring in the suburbs of its major metropolitan centres. This paper reads a suburban LGBTQ+ print media database (1985-2015) (n=1,763) for cases of suburban LGBTQ+ activisms in this era for two of Canada's largest cities, Vancouver and Montreal. It argues that frame analysis of print media coverage of suburban LGBTQ+ activism from this era can broaden understandings of the historic queer metropolitan by extending it to include its periphery. Drawing on frame analysis, the paper examines newspaper representations of three landmark case studies of suburban LGBTQ+ activism just before the era of 'equalities.' Millennial Canadian LGBTQ+ suburban activisms were part of a broader, multiscalar expansion of this social movement, but the print media worked through an urban-suburban binary that, while questioning the proper place for LGBTQ+ activisms, reinscribed suburbia's persistent heteronormativity.

Keywords: *Canada; suburbia; activisms; LGBTQ+; print media*

INTRODUCTION

LGBTQ+ activisms are political actions that seek to contest societal hetero- and cisnormativities, advocate for legal and policy changes, and create spaces for LGBTQ+ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer plus) people. In the urban West, such activisms initially developed as part of the "urban social movements" seeking liberation from sexual and gender repression in the late 1960s and expanded to involve rights demands, space claiming and community building (Collins, 2004; Marche, 2017; Ruting, 2008; Sibalis, 2004; Stein, 2012; Valocchi, 1999). Canadian LGBTQ+ so-

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cial movements were primarily launched in its largest cities in the 1970s following the 1969 decriminalization of private sexual acts between persons of the same sex (Warner, 2002). The 1980s brought the claiming of inner-city areas (Nash, 2006), the development of stronger organizational structures (Warner, 2002), and a politics of rights through the legal entrenchment of Section 15 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Smith, 2005). While their targets were multi-scalar (Grundy & Smith, 2005), the movement itself remained centred in its larger metropolitan areas (Vancouver, Toronto and Montreal) (Tremblay, 2015). After 1996, when discrimination based on sexual orientation became prohibited grounds in the Canadian Human Rights Act, institutional activism was extended to many realms of social life. Scholars have drawn attention to the opportunities created by this enfranchisement (Grundy & Smith, 2005; Smith 2005, 2012), but shifts in the spatiality of LGBTQ+ activisms during this period remains unexplored.

This paper examines print media representations of Canadian "suburban" LGBTQ+ activisms between 1996 and 2005, the year that the extension of civil marriage rights to same-sex couples ushered in the Canadian "equalities era" (Nash & Catungal, 2013). During this period, the Canadian media brought three major cases of direct suburban LGBTQ+ activism to the public's attention which all featured the individual activisms of cis-gender, white middle-class gay men. The first was the case of an interim pastor of a Presbyterian church in the Montreal suburb of Lachine, Quebec, who was denied ordination in 1996 because he was openly gay and living with a male partner. The next was the Surrey book ban case, a multifaceted fight for LGBTQ+ rights in a suburban school system launched in 1997 by gay kindergarten teacher. The third, a protracted case, developed in 2001 when a gay couple living in Pointe-Claire, Quebec accused two different neighbouring households of homophobic harassment. Widely covered in the media, these are some of the first publicized examples of LGBTQ+ activisms in Canada's suburban areas. However, in contrast with the more collective activisms of the central city and rights claims that addressed provincial and national level governments, these stories arose directly in relation to discriminations taking place in suburban institutional spaces – the church, the school, and the neighbourhood.

In response to the metronormativity critique of queer studies (Halberstam, 2005), this paper argues for attention to more peripheral LGBTQ+ activisms, specifically those of North American suburbia, a "bastion of heteronormativity" (Gorman-Murray, 2007). While the critique has focused on disrupting the urban-rural binary, this paper highlights the production of suburbia as the periphery of the queer urban. Drawing upon these case studies of suburban LGBTQ+ activism during the transition to the Canadian equalities era, the paper asserts that qualitative differences between the more visible collective and familiar queer urban and the less visible suburban can be read through newspaper frames of these events. While there was increased societal acceptance of LGBTQ+ rights, a journalistic "urban gaze" (Fiedler 2011) on the suburban rehearsed, reworked and, at times, disrupted

metronormativity's sexual urban-suburban binary. The paper begins by situating suburban LGBTQ+ activisms in the queer urban and suburban studies literatures. It then provides a framework for the analysis of LGBTQ+ activisms in the Canadian print media. The empirical section details the three case studies. The conclusion summarizes these spatial stories and highlights their implications for an enlarged understanding of the queer metropolitan.

LOCATING SUBURBAN LGBTQ+ ACTIVISMS

The past decade has brought an expansion of research on LGBTQ+ activism at the regional, national and urban scale (e.g., Ayoub & Paternotte, 2014; Marche, 2017; Paternotte & Tremblay, 2015; Thoreson, 2014; Tremblay, 2015). This shift has disrupted the "Stonewall myth," the idea that the World's history of LGBTQ+ activisms begins with the 1969 Manhattan riot against repression following a police raid on the Stonewall Inn (Armstrong & Crage, 2006). However, the complex spatialities offered by this emerging corpus remain undertheorized. Paternotte and Tremblay (2015), for example, argue that globalization has diffused LGBTQ+ activisms, but do not elaborate on this spatial process (see Binnie & Klesse, 2016). Urban histories of LGBTQ+ activisms uncritically reinforce the premise that capitalist urbanization created the movement by bringing LGBTQ+ people together in central cities (Stein, 2005).

Queer geographies stress the spatiality of LGBTQ+ activisms (Johnston, 2017). Misgav (2015, 1211) develops the term "spatial activism," "collective action that strives to transform power relations" that is reproduced in and thorough "physical, social, cultural and symbolic space". Major activist themes in geography include the claiming of urban territories (Lewis, 2013; Nash, 2006), performance of "pride" events (Brickell, 2000; Browne, 2007; Browne & Bakshi, 2011; Johnston, 2005, 2007; Markwell & Waitt, 2009; Waitt & Staple, 2011), provision of health services (M. Brown, 1997; M. Brown & Knopp, 2014; Catungal, 2013), production of community centres (Hartal, 2018; Hartal & Sasson-Levy, 2018; Misgav 2015, 2016), and creation of 'queer' alternative (G. Brown, 2007, 2015) or LGBTQ+ "safe spaces" (Goh, 2018; Hartal, 2018). While a few exceptions address non-metropolitan LGBTQ+ activisms (Gorman-Murray et.al., 2008; Hartal, 2015; Muller Myrdahl, 2013, 2016; Rouhani, 2012), there remains a strong urban bias.

Research on peripheral LGBTQ+ activisms questions their relational construction as "empty," "invisible" and "impossible." For Gray (2009), the LGBTQ+ movement's emphasis on "coming out" and "being visible" is a product of the universalization of urban sexuality politics. Hartal (2015, 583) argues that peripheral Israeli LGBTQ+ activists refuse invisibility and marginalization instead "becoming periphery" by manifesting "new temporal, geographical and social meanings for known practices" that subvert metronormativity. Muller Myrdahl's (2013) research

on LGBTQ+ place-making in a smaller, more "ordinary" Canadian city questions the linearity of metronormativity that equates increased visibility with progress in safety, rights and recognition (Muller Myrdahl, 2013). Instead, peripheral LGBTQ+ visibility practices, tempered by a lack of LGBTQ+ venues and a narrower range of public places, should be understood "on their own terms" (Muller Myrdahl, 2016, 37).

The metronormativity critique is predicated on an urban-rural binary, but there is also an urban-suburban binary surrounding Anglo-American suburbia – especially in its post-war form – that likewise suggests that it is no place for queer politics. As Dines (2005, 176) argues, suburbia may well be "the straightest space imaginable." Developed primarily to provide the infrastructure for heterosexual nuclear family reproduction, heteronormativity is built into its spatial layout, land uses and the design of its single-family dwellings (Cowen, 2005). But it has also been interpreted as a location hostile to politics, especially the identarian collectivity of LGBTQ+ politics. As Niedt (2013, 1) argues, "In popular media and academic literature, narratives of suburban conservatism often overwhelm those of inclusion, to the point that suburban life itself appears inimical to social and economic justice." Where urban citizenship is understood as redressing inequality through identity politics and the redistribution of resources, suburban politics focuses on the protection of property, tax-payer entitlement, and the defense of the 'good life' (Purcell, 2001). Due to its privatized civic culture, suburban activists develop an individualized, pragmatic focus on isolated issues rather than adopting activist identities (Lichterman, 1996). Recent research highlights the sustained, progressive, community–based activism of some contemporary suburbs (Basu & Fiedler, 2017; Carpio et.al.,, 2011; Parlette & Cowen, 2011), but Retzloff's (2015) analysis of the Association of Suburban People (ASP) in late-1970s Detroit provides the only academic example of suburban LGBTQ+ activist practices.

This limited literature suggests that suburban LGBTQ+ activisms may be distinct from the urban and the non-metropolitan in several ways. First, suburban LGBTQ+ activisms are embedded in a particularly heteronormative environment. The suburban landscape has been built primarily to house the heterosexual nuclear family, reproducing its norms through the layout of its homes, the allocation of public spaces, and the relationships between land uses. Second, suburban LGBTQ+ activisms primarily focus on redressing exclusions from those spatial institutions that reproduce suburban heteronormativities (religious institutions, schools, neighbourhoods, recreation centres, the family home). Third, suburban LGBTQ+ activisms have tended to be single-issue, individual acts that focus on rights claims. A lack of LGBTQ+ defined spaces and critical mass for developing a broader social movement means that suburban LGBTQ+ activists, while they may have support from activists in the central city, generally act alone or in small groups. Finally, suburban LGBTQ+ activists confront suburbanites and their representative civic institutions (ie. schoolboards, sports clubs and religious congregations), whose politics are informed by the

maintenance of suburban ideals (family-orientation, safety, tranquility, property) and defense against the "ills" of the urban (Purcell, 2001). These distinctions potentially compound the heteronormativities addressed by suburban LGBTQ+ activists, shape their strategies, and inform how they are "framed" in the metropolitan press.

'FRAMING' SUBURBAN LGBTQ+ ACTIVISMS

Metropolitan print newspapers, once consumed daily, have been abundant sources of information regarding everyday urban concerns (Harris & Hendershott, 2018). Shaped by commercial interests, they have also been highly responsive to local public opinion and maintain an ideal of public service (Parisi & Holcomb, 1994). The print media archive is a record of this arena, systematically documenting societal debates about urban phenomena. But newspapers are not an unmediated arena: journalists, political figures, informants and readers are all part of the political process of 'framing' the messages of news stories (D'Angelo & Kuypers, 2010). Stemming from Goffman's (1974) exploration of the "social frameworks" used to perceive and interpret meanings from social interactions and their settings, frame analysis has been particularly useful for studying communications resulting in a now extensive literature on frames and framings in news reporting (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011). Products of the cultures that produce them, "frames" highlight distinctive features of the content of a news story, promoting a particular vision of the problem, its causes and solutions, while obfuscating and obscuring others (Entman, 1993). Frames are built through "framing," a contextual process of making and receiving the news that builds upon the shared and persistent principles that make social worlds meaningful (Reese et.al., 2001).

Geographers have explored how the print media portray urban phenomena, including gay villages (Forest, 1995; Miller, 2005). Significant attention has been directed towards newspaper representations of neighbourhoods, especially those that are marginalized through power relations (Burgess, 1985; Kearns et.al., 2013; Liu & Blomley, 2013; Martin, 2000; Richardson, 2014). Digitization has recently made it possible to develop large databases to trace how newspapers depict urban phenomena such as gentrification (Brown-Saracino & Rumpf, 2011; Gin & Taylor, 2010), the new urbanism (Dierwechter & Coffey, 2017), and suburbia (Harris, 2015; Harris & Hendershott, 2018). Brown-Saracino and Rumpf (2011) have used frame analysis to study shifts in the societal interpretation of gentrification. Harris (2015) has examined the stereotypical frames that Toronto journalists use when reporting on suburban areas. Harris and Hendershott (2018) have documented an urban bias in Canadian news reporting that abstracts, universalizes and denigrates suburbia and further entrenches an imagined urban-suburban binary.

While large newspaper databases have yet to be the data source of research into urban sexualities, the field has long underscored the complexity of the LGBTQ+

media relationship, noting how "the straight news" reinforced existing prejudices against gays and lesbians (Alwood, 1996) while also creating the opportunity to increase LGBTQ+ visibility (Gross, 2001). Although LGBTQ+ activists used their own publications to create contacts, communities, and alternative representations (Meeker, 2006; Streitmatter, 1995), after the late 1970s a more neutral press provided a forum for debate regarding LGBTQ+ anti-discrimination policies, the AIDS crisis (Fejes, 2008), and later, same-sex marriage and parenting (Landau, 2009). LGBTQ+ activism, therefore, has been at the centre of this relationship with newspapers providing a valuable record that may be used for its analysis.

COLLECTING, SELECTING AND FRAMING STORIES OF SUBURBAN LGBTQ+ ACTIVISMS

This paper reads selected case studies of Canadian suburban LGBTQ+ activisms through the metronormative "urban gaze" of the metropolitan press. The case studies of LGBTQ+ activisms were drawn from a database of suburban LGBTQ+ newspaper articles from 1985 to 2015. This database was compiled from press clippings files from two archives (the Canadian Lesbian and Gay Archives in Toronto and the Archives gaies du Québec in Montreal) and database searches in English (Proquest Historical Newspapers) and French (Eureka). The English and French keywords used in these searches were developed to capture as many potential articles as possible. The database begins in 1985, the year that the courts entrenched non-discrimination in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, and ends in 2015, the year before data collection began. The final database totaled 1,763 items (including syndicated and local articles, editorial columns, opinion pieces and letters to the editor) about LGBTQ+ people and issues in the suburbs of Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal from three national (*The Globe and Mail, The National Post and Le Devoir*) and seven metropolitan (*La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal, The (Montreal) Gazette, The Toronto Star, Toronto Sun, Vancouver Sun Province*) newspapers. The number of articles grew annually in the first two decades, peaking in 2002, and declining as other sources of news media gained common usage (Figure 1).

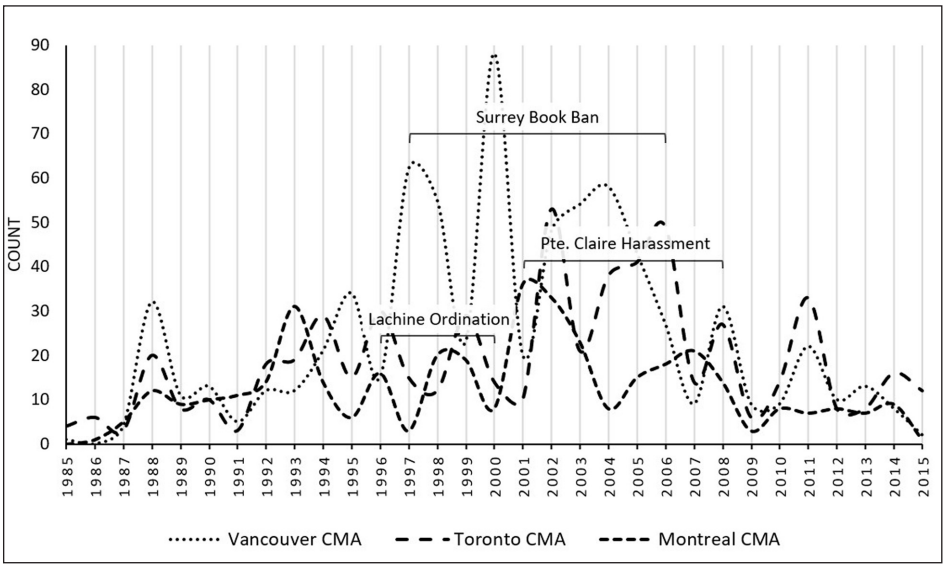
Following the addition of sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1996, there was a notable increase in stories about LGBTQ+ activism in suburban locations. Three cases launched between 1996 and 2001 were particularly notable: the Lachine Presbyterian ordination debate (1996-2000), the Surrey "book ban" (1997-2006), and the Pointe-Claire neighbourhood harassment case (2001-2008) (Figure 1 & Table 1). These three cases were selected because they reported on instances of LGBTQ+ activism when LGBTQ+ people addressed invisibility and exclusion or directly fought back against discrimination or homophobic attacks. Each story also generated a high volume of articles within their metropolitan region

Table 1: Story analysis of three cases of suburban LGBTQ+ activism in the Canadian print media.

	Dates	**CMA**	**# Articles Story Suburb (CMA)**	**Scale**	**Space**	**Issue**	**Opponents**	**Allies**
Presbyterian Ordination (Lachine, QC)	1996-2000	MTL	21 *27* (172)	National	Church	Ordination of openly gay priest	Presbyterian Church in Canada	Congregation
Surrey Book Ban (Surrey, BC)	1997-2006	VCR	144 *270* (731)	Municipal Provincial	School	Adoption of LGBTQ+ books in curriculum	Surrey Schoolboard, parents	GALE-BC, BCTF, BC Ministry of Education
Neighbourhood harassment (Pte-Claire, QC)	2001-2008	MTL	34 *37* (172)	Municipal	Home	Homophobic neighbourhood harassment	Pte-Claire neighbours	Montreal activists, village businesses

and was often the only story about their respective suburban location (Figures 1 and Table 1).

Figure 1: Count of newspaper articles per year by Census Metropolitan Area, 1985-2015.

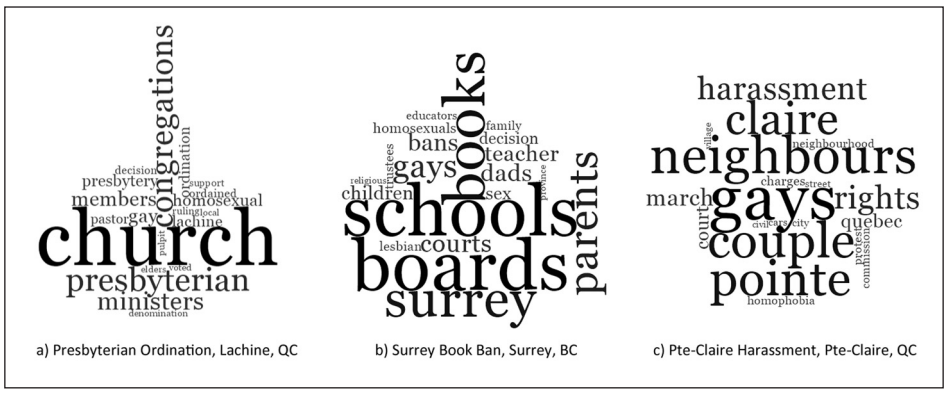


The objective of the analysis is to identify how a journalistic "urban gaze" (Fiedler, 2011) framed suburban LGBTQ+ activisms in a period of expanded sexual rights activism. Goffman's (1974) "frame analysis" originally emphasized context, conceptualizing frames as social settings that are full of clues regarding expected behaviours. Discursive settings such as newspaper reports, whilst derived from Goffman's more concrete places, are their residue, signifying spaces where social meanings are also constructed (Jameson, 1976). This analysis focused on meanings about sexuality politics, activism and metropolitan space circulating through the signifying space of the newspaper where a metronormative urban-suburban binary was reproduced via three spatial elements of this frame's content: 1) the figure of the LGBTQ+ activist, whom is often described as out-of-place (indicated through representations of their presence as surprising, incongruous and unexpected); 2) the suburban landscape, which was frequently used to create a contrast between the figure of the LGBTQ+ activist and idealized suburban space (its tranquility, domesticity, family-orientation, etc…); and 3) suburbanites and their institutions (schoolboards, church committees, local governments, neighbourhood improvement associations), who variably confirm or disrupt the presumed heteronormativity of suburbia informing the "urban gaze" of the metropolitan press.

Table 2: Keyword and contextual analysis of three cases of suburban LGBTQ+ activism in the Canadian print media.

	Top 5 Keywords	**Location Rank in Keywords**	**Activist**	**Suburban Landscape**	**Suburbanites**
Presbyterian Ordination	Church Presbyterian Congregation Ministers Members	10	Gay preacher, gay pastor	Working-class, aging	Gray-haired, stodgy, renegade, defiant
Surrey Book Ban	Schools Boards Books Surrey Parents	4	Gay, homosexual, activist from cosmopolitan Vancouver	Sprawling, "Hotbed of homophobia", morality battleground,	Homophobic, provocative, religious, Evangelical, intolerant
Pte-Claire Harassment	Gays Neighbours Couple Pointe-Claire Rights	4	Gay, homosexual couple	Peaceful, tranquil, sleepy suburb	Bigoted, homophobic neighbours

Figure 2: Wordscapes (Word Clouds) of the 20 most frequent words (over three letters, with stemmed words) in the print media database for three case studies of LGBTQ+ suburban activism.



Identifying frames may involve deductive (searching for keywords, catch phrases and metaphors) and inductive approaches (critically reconstructing news stories and identifying their meanings) (Matthes, 2009; Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011). Therefore, a mixed approach was adopted. The articles for each story were selected and their main storyline was identified (scale, type of space, issue, opponents and allies) (Table 1). Keyword and word-tree analysis was undertaken using NVivo soft-

ware. An overall portrait of the framing of each story began with wordscapes (Word Cloud in NVivo) (Figure 2) where the 20 most frequent words (with stemmed words and excluding irrelevancies) were identified and shown in proportion to their frequency. These brief visual representations of each story also permitted comparison of the centrality of the location (where the name of the suburb appeared in the top 20 keywords), the activist, suburban landscape and other suburbanites and their institutions were to the story (Table 2). Finally, a comprehensive reading of all the articles for each story permitted more inductive analysis and narrative reconstruction.

NEWSPAPER FRAMES OF MILLENNIAL LGBTQ+ ACTIVISMS IN CANADA'S SUBURBS

The following stories of suburban activism primarily involved individual gay men whom, supported by expanding LGBTQ+ social movement institutions, contested exclusion and discrimination in suburban institutions using the human rights frameworks and legal litigation. Such practices mirror what Smith (2005) has argued regarding the form and orientation of LGBTQ+ activism in Canada in the period. Changes and amendments to Canadian Human Rights Act created the political opportunity structure to build a multi-scalar, institutionally-oriented rights movement that, while waged by individuals through legal challenges, was both supported by and used to further mobilize the Canadian LGBTQ+ movement (Grundy & Smith, 2005; Smith 2005). Set in highly localized suburban spaces, the institutions they challenged were multi-scalar as was the social movement infrastructure that supported them. Nevertheless, the discursive setting of suburbia played a central role in their representation in the metropolitan press.

Embodying LGBTQ+ activism in a suburban church

In 1996, the controversy surrounding the ordination of a young, openly gay, Presbyterian minister came to public attention through news headlines such as "Homosexual would-be minister shakes Presbyterian foundations" (Zacharias, 1996a) and "Presbyterians reject hiring of a gay minister" (Ross, 1996). Darryl Macdonald, who had been an interim minister at St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in the Montreal suburb of Lachine, had been invited by the congregation to seek ordination and become their minister. Once Macdonald made the congregation aware of his sexual orientation, most supported his nomination and the Presbyterian College of Montreal recommended his ordination to the Presbyterian Church in Canada (Ross, 1996). However, the national order, under pressure from a few dissenting churches within the Montreal presbytery, rejected this request, arguing that

Macdonald could only be nominated if he remained celibate. Upon appeal in 1998, the national church not only rejected Macdonald's ordination, it revoked his licence to minister to any Presbyterian congregation. The congregation refused to accept this decision, ultimately leaving the Presbyterian Church in Canada in support of their gay minister. Coverage of this case spanned 1996 to 2000 and totalled 21 articles in the database, over three quarters of all stories about the Lachine suburb.

Given that this was a story of a suburban minister challenging a national order, our keyword analysis revealed that the location of Lachine was less central to the framing of the story (Table 2). However, the word trees for "activist", "suburb" and "Lachine" all suggest that the contrast between the figure of the gay minister, a supposedly conservative congregation, and the suburban environment played on the urban-suburban binary (Table 2). Lachine was described as a conservative, aging, working-class suburb, an unlikely place for an openly gay minister to be embraced by his congregation. The journalist for *The Toronto Star* made a point of describing them as "a traditional, conservative congregation, with almost half of the members over 65" (Ross, 1996, A8). Journalists also contrasted the national political challenge that Macdonald embodied with the interior space of this suburban church. Zacharias (1996a, K20), for example, juxtaposed the figure of the young "portly man in black robes" standing at the front of a suburban church whose presence was shaking the Presbyterian Church in Canada to its foundations and the church's quiet, half-empty pews populated primarily by a greying group of elderly conservative congregants. A *Globe and Mail* article similarly highlighted the contrast between the quiet, elderly congregants shuffling through hymn-book pages in the church's oak pews and the man in the front of the church who was "not a minister at all," but rather "a gay man who was recently stripped of his license to preach" (Breckenridge, 1998, A1).

Throughout coverage of this case, the press could rely on the paradox of an openly gay minister to generate interest in the story. For example, during the appeal in 1998, the French-language press announced the story using the titles such as "Homosexual priest" ("Prêtre homosexuel," 1998, A3, author's translation) or "A gay pastor fighting for his rights" ("Un Pasteur gay," 1998, A13, author's translation), implying an oxymoron between "gay" and "priest". However, it was the unexpected reaction of the suburban congregation that could generate the most sensation because it required a reworking of the binary between the progressive urban and the regressive suburban embedded in the "urban gaze" of the metropolitan press. This shift is especially prominent in coverage of the case in 1999, when this suburban congregation chose to ordain their minister and leave the Presbyterian Church in Canada. As a result, the congregation was reframed, described more as rebellious than conservative. The headlines now read "Breakaway parish to ordain gay pastor" (Shepherd, 1999, p. L14), and "Renegade church ordains gay minister" ("Renegade church," 1999, p. A8). As a journalist for *La Presse* remarked, one congregant, "an affable insurance broker for 46 years, who seems like he was born in a suit and tie," was "probably

the first to be surprised to find himself involved in the fight for gay rights" (Arcand, 1998, p. A1, authors' translation). A church elder told the press that the order was "behind the times" and, referring to homosexuality, that "she did not think it was a sin" (Zacharias, 1996b, A7). In contrast with what might have been expected of these aging suburban congregants, times were changing, and suburbanites could not necessarily be relied upon to confirm the urban-suburban binary.

Challenging LGBTQ+ invisibility in suburban Vancouver's "Bible Belt"

The case of James Chamberlain, a Surrey, British Columbia kindergarten teacher who sought permission of the local schoolboard to include three children's books depicting same-sex parenting in the curriculum, came to public attention in 1997, when the board and its trustees refused to approve them and, two weeks later, voted for an outright ban. Chamberlain (with the support of Gay and Lesbian Educators of British Columbia, the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association) initiated a legal challenge through the Supreme Court of British Columbia in 1998 which overturned the ban arguing that it violated the principles of secularism guaranteed in the province's School Act. While in 2000 the province's Court of Appeal reversed this decision, upholding the ban in recognition of pluralism in secular institutions (Smith, 2005), the Supreme Court of Canada finally ruled that the board could not reject books based on religious opposition to depictions of same-sex relationships in 2002. Although the schoolboard approved other books depicting same-sex families for the Surrey curriculum in 2003, the original books were never approved due to their purported weak storylines and poor grammar. A long case that continued to generate debate after the Supreme Court decision, news coverage spanned the nine-year period between 1997 and 2006 totalling over 144 reports, letters and editorials in the database.

Initial reports focused on Chamberlain and his activism, with the press publishing photographs of him in his kindergarten classroom and quotations from the interviews he granted. Keyword searches for his name revealed physical descriptions and other biographical information that both embedded him in this landscape and marked him as out of place. An article by *Globe and Mail* columnist Valpy (1997, A23) provided a detailed portrait. The link between his homosexuality and his job teaching young children was accentuated: "Mr. Chamberlain, a Surrey kindergarten teacher, is homosexual" (Valpy, 1997, A23). There were also physical descriptions that built on gay stereotypes: Chamberlain was described as a "tall, slight, tidy, earnest" man who "lives with his partner in cosmopolitan East Vancouver" (Valpy, 1997, A23). This spatial opposition between the cosmopolitan urban and traditional suburban rehearsed cultural tropes regarding the proper place for LGBTQ+ people and their politics. Chamberlain is thus depicted as an urban disrupter of suburban heteronormativity who ventures there to demand LGBTQ+ representation but then returns home to the city, the proper place for sexuality politics. But

Chamberlain was careful to situate himself within Surrey, describing how he "came out" at work after gaining tenure and his personal history growing up in the area. As he told Valpy (1997, A23), "I grew up in Abbotsford [farther up the Fraser Valley from Surrey] in the Bible Belt. I know what it is all about."

As the story progressed, the focus shifted from Chamberlain's activism to a discourse on the intolerance of Surrey's suburban institutions, specifically its schoolboard and its parents. In our wordscapes and keywords, "Surrey," "schoolboard," "parents," and "books" were the most prominent, attesting to the centrality of Surrey as a place in this story and to the family and the schoolboard as its most central suburban institutions (Figure 2 & Table 2). The idea that Surrey officials were "banning books," in effect censoring curriculum content, had raised the spectre of religious intolerance in a secular society. Headlines such as "Board head wants to ban gay books in school" highlighted such intolerance and contrasted Surrey with the rest of the province by describing it as "the book-banning capital of BC" (Spencer, 1997, A8). While "religion" only ranked twentieth among the top 20 keywords, this story framed Surrey as a "morality battleground" where the role of religion and sexuality in British Columbia schools was debated. Journalists frequently referred to Surrey's location within the "Bible belt," a set of suburban municipalities in southeast Vancouver with a concentration of Evangelical Christians (see Collins, 2006).

In contrast with the Lachine congregants, the actions and beliefs of Surrey suburbanites and their representative institutions confirmed if not accentuated the urban-suburban binary for journalists. In an article titled "Homophobia 101," the journalist ridiculed the schoolboard's argument that books depicting same-sex families would spread homosexuality, pointing out that were that the case, everyone would be gay in a few years, "Except for the people of Surrey. The folks in Surrey will be abstinent homophobes" (Murphy, 1997, A40). A *Globe and Mail* editorial argued that homophobia could now be added to the "theatre of lurid headlines" regarding news stories of skinheads, racial intolerance and violence in Surrey. Sullivan (1999, A19) pointedly argued that while the sign that greets anyone entering this "sprawling suburb" is "Surrey, B. C., City of Parks" (suggesting a "a clean, safe and beautiful city in which to live, work and play"), it should really read "Surrey, B. C., Hotbed of Homophobia." The attitudes of the Surrey parents and its schoolboard was seen as contrasting with the rest of the province, and especially Vancouver where most residents were "progressive" and "tolerant" (Sullivan, 1999, A19).

Domestic LGBTQ+ activism in an idealized suburban landscape

In 2001, Roger Thilbault and Theo Wouters were featured in the press because they were organizing a demonstration in their suburban neighbourhood in Pointe-Claire, Quebec. Claiming that they had been harassed by two sets of their neighbours, the couple had filed many police reports, obtained restraining orders, filed complaints with the Quebec Human Rights Commission and later launched a civil suit. But this story of suburban activism is complicated. In 2010, the Quebec Human

Rights Commission tribunal finally found one neighbouring family guilty of harassment and forced them to pay Thibault and Wouters reparations (Kramberger, 2013). Another neighbouring household, however, was acquitted of criminal harassment and assault charges in 2003. The household later filed a defamation suit against Thibault and Wouters that concluded in 2008 with a large out-of-court settlement ($150,000CAN) and admission that their accusations had been baseless (Kramberger, 2013). Nevertheless, the discourses surrounding the case in the press exemplify the representation of LGBTQ+ suburban activism in the print media in the era of emerging equalities in Canada.

Unlike the previous two case studies, the activism of Thibault and Wouters, who were "Fighting homophobia in their own back yard" (Thanh Ha, 2001, A3), lay at the centre of this story. Their centrality is evidenced by the prominence of the words "gays" and "couple" among the top five keywords for this story (Table 2). Press coverage focused on their 'respectability' and built interest in the story by describing them as "non-ghetto gays", gay men who live outside the traditional urban core and prioritized homemaking and career (Lynch, 1987). Wouters was a "couturier to the Montreal establishment" and Thibault was a photographic technician and post-secondary educator (Hamilton, 2001, A5). The press highlighted their stable monogamous domesticity, describing them as a couple who had been together for 28 years and living in their suburban home for 23 (Hamilton, 2001, A5). They were two professionals who led a quiet life and had a perfectly manicured garden. It was also noted that they were "discrete": they never went out of the house without a shirt on, never walked in the streets in shorts, and never kissed in public (Hamilton, 2001, A5).

Although the activists remained central to the story, the contrast between "gay identities" and the idealized suburban landscape was still used as a rhetorical device. "Pointe-Claire" was a prominent keyword. It was repeatedly described as a typical North American suburb: "peaceful," "sleepy," and "tranquil," a place with streets named "Coolbreeze" and "Bowling Green" (Boisvert, 2001, E1). Two other prominent keywords, "rights" and "harassment" were also tied to this opposition between urban and suburban. The harassment described in the press was particularly suburban: their neighbours had cut a hole in their shrubs to spy on them, driven golf balls into their yard, and tried to run them over in their driveway (Thanh Ha, 2001, A3). The proper place for "gays" was also a component of this harassment: at trial, it was alleged that the harasser had called Thibault and Wouters "fucking faggots" and said that they should "move back to the gay village" (Tu Thanh, 2002, A10). Allegedly, the harasser had argued that gays should not be living in an area that's for families (Foglia, 2001, A5). When speaking to the press, the activists turn this idea on its head: Thibault stated that "Gays and lesbians have the right to live in a family neighbourhood. We're considered families too" (Peritz, 2001, A6).

The idea that LGBTQ+ activism is misplaced in a suburban community, was echoed in the reporting on May 27, 2001 "Saying no to violence march." Working with

activists from the greater Montreal LGBTQ+ community, Thibault and Wouters launched this demonstration to "get the message out to people all over Canada to stop violence against gay people everywhere, in villages, everywhere" ("Gay couple's neighbours," 2001, D10). While the Pointe-Claire municipality was initially supportive, Wouters and Thibault did not agree to the route that the Mayor chose to avoid residential areas and prevent conflicts with the harassing neighbours. As he told reporters "Pointe-Claire is a residential community; its not Ste. Catherine Street" referring to Montreal's gay village (Boone, 2001, A2). The Mayor also requested that marchers wear "appropriate attire" and avoid the scanty dress of gay pride parades because "The park at 2:30 on a Sunday afternoon is occupied by a lot of children" (Hamilton 2001, A5). The press ridiculed this suburban Mayor's use of anti-urban, homophobic stereotypes, arguing that his concern "suggests that the only people who support gay rights are homosexuals and that all homosexuals are either transvestites or exhibitionists" (Boone, 2001, A2).

Thibault and Wouters ultimately defied the Mayor's request and used their networks in the Montreal LGBTQ+ community to mobilize the resources of the gay village. Demonstrators from Montreal arrived at the commuter train station and marched through Pointe-Claire, passing the couple's home and ending in a park on the other side of this suburb. The perpetrators of the harassment left home for the weekend. Instead of getting support from the municipality, the bars of the gay village provided buses and furnished portable toilets and a stage. Political dignitaries and local LGBTQ+ community leaders marched alongside neighbours and demonstrators from throughout the Montreal area. One ally made a point of telling the press that "gay couples have the right to live without harassment in a normal suburb where life is quiet" ("Gay couple's neighbours," 2001, D10).

This opposition between urban and suburban was also prominent in press descriptions of the demonstration. *The Gazette*, for example, announced that "Gay pride came to suburbia yesterday in a parade through the land of Volvos and barbecues" (Peritz, 2001, A6), pointing out that "as gay pride marches go, this was one tailored for the neighbourhood": it was "appropriately low-key and tranquil" with only a few "flamboyant, leather-clad folks from Montreal's gay village" (Peritz, 2001, A6). As the headlines of *Le Devoir* so aptly put it, the "Saying no to violence march" was "a suburban version of a gay pride march" (Dufour, 2001, A1 , authors' translation).

CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to disrupt metronormative interpretations of LGBTQ+ politics by reading the frames structuring news reports of Canadian case studies of suburban LGBTQ+ activisms at the turn of the millennium. Stimulated by the opportunity structure for sexual minority rights created by the addition of

sexual orientation to the Canadian Human Rights Act in 1996, the individual activists profiled in these case studies expanded the movement beyond the central city, addressing LGBTQ+ rights and homophobic discriminations embedded in suburban locations and institutions. While these cases were part of a broader, multiscalar expansion of this social movement, press representations initially framed them through an urban-suburban binary that saw suburbia as implicitly heteronormative and dictated that the proper place for sexuality politics was still the progressive central city.

However, the "urban gaze" through which journalists viewed suburban LGBTQ+ activisms was unstable: both the binary between the progressive urban and conservative suburban and that of the queer urban and heteronormative suburban were variably untethered through the frame building process (Vliegenthart & van Zoonen, 2011). Journalists began by describing LGBTQ+ people and their politics as "out-of-place," incongruous with the suburban landscape and at odds with suburban institutions, but as the cases developed, attention was directed towards the reactions of suburbanites and their institutions. In the Lachine case study, journalists set up a juxtaposition between the gay minister and the suburban congregation, highlighting its traditional character and suggesting that it was an unlikely place for LGBTQ+ activism. However, they quickly switched to sensationalizing the rebelliousness of this aging suburban congregation as they supported their minister and broke away from their national organization. In the Surrey case study, the activist kindergarten teacher was depicted as an "urban infiltrator" bringing progressive urban values to a suburban public-school system, an institution that lay at the interface between conservative religious families and the suburban public sphere. In this case, newspaper discourses quickly shifted away from the LGBTQ+ activist and towards Surrey residents and their institutions, ultimately sensationalizing the suburb's predictable homophobia and the religiosity of the Fraser Valley's "Bible belt". Finally, in the case of the Pointe-Claire gay couple fighting homophobic harassment from their neighbours, the urban-suburban dichotomy led directly to debates about the proper place for queers within the metropolis. Their harassers argued that "gays did not belong in suburbs" while the demonstrators asserted that LGBTQ+ households are also families and have a right to inhabit a "family-oriented" environment. When the municipality raised concerns about disrupting suburban families, the press ridiculed the Mayor's stereotypical view of LGBTQ+ people, gay pride and the city's gay village. In summary, the interplay between urban/suburban and queer/heteronormative in newspaper frames of LGBTQ+ suburban activisms and their components (the misplaced activist, the idealized suburban landscape and the anti-urbanism of suburban institutions) were ultimately variable.

This paper also proposed that the analysis of newspaper framings of Canadian LGBTQ+ suburban activisms in the period preceding the "equalities era" offers the opportunity to tease out the qualitative differences in such activisms brought by location. While not conclusive, these cases of Canadian LGBTQ+ suburban activ-

isms represented in the print media did have some location-specific characteristics. Like other forms of suburban activism (see Lichterman, 1996), they were primarily "single-issue" – in this case "rights-claims" enacted by individual white gay men – and took place within specific suburban institutional spaces. As expressions of LGBTQ+ activisms, they are also particular, responding to their location through contests over spaces typically intended for heterosexual social reproduction (school, the church and the home). As the Pointe-Claire case demonstrates, they often disregard a more politicized identarian politics (gay people should be allowed to live in a quiet environment like everyone else). They drew on downtown LGBTQ+ activist networks and imported forms of downtown activism (such as a march through the streets) but these acts are tempered by the 'privacy', quiet and conformity required by a suburban location. Finally, given the lack of public spaces and their peripheral location, they had much more limited visibility in physical space and therefore come to public attention through the print media.

An additional argument of the paper is for greater attention by geographers to more peripheral LGBTQ+ activisms, proposing that suburban activisms have been particularly neglected and warrant greater scrutiny. The paper contributes to that objective by deepening understandings of how such activisms were framed in a Canada on the edge of the equalities era. Based both in the expanding literature on LGBTQ+ activisms and suburban citizenship, it highlights suburbia's potential difference from the more familiar queer urban. However, the paper's limitations would be clear were its findings generalized beyond its own context. It describes the first three instances of suburban LGBTQ+ activism in a country with a specific history of LGBTQ+ rights claiming located in a region where suburbia as a cultural artifact has had an especially heteronormative historical meaning. Its data source and time period dictated that the LGBTQ+ people most empowered in the public sphere (cis-gendered, gay white men) were the story's central actors. Finally, its landscapes appear particularly anachronistic given the complexly differentiated suburbs of contemporary Canada. An enriched queer metropolitan that includes the suburban remains to be charted.

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