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Abstract

As a focal point of neoliberalism in the US, New York City has been made the advance guard of both welfare reform and order maintenance policing, making the 2008 recession all the more destabilizing among low-income LGBTGNC (gender nonconforming) residents. At the same time, expanding gay rights have accompanied this neoliberal turn, defining while masking new intersectionalities of oppression, policing some raced and classed sexualities and genders while protecting others, producing an urban landscape conducive to neoliberal aims (Ferguson, 2004; Puar, 2007). In the process of attracting capital, homonormative discourses and practices have increasingly bolstered white and multicultural class-privileged gay space at the expense of low-income racially and ethnically diverse LGBTGNC communities.

Such contradictions have been seen most clearly by those managing the brunt of policy change. A team of low-income LGBTGNC co-researchers set out in a participatory action research (PAR) project to explore these dynamics, including a survey of 171 low-income LGBTGNC residents of NYC. Following McKittrick's

(2007) application of paradoxical space to black geographies, case examples demonstrate low income LGBTGNC spatializations of homeless shelters as paradoxical constructions of freedom that challenge neoliberal conceptions of freedom for capital and the homonormative, multicultural individual freedom to consume.

Keywords

"LBGT" "shelter" "neoliberal" "public space" "race" "poverty" "urban space"

Introduction

When the US recession of 2008 started throwing low income lives and organizations into further economic crisis, the neoliberal gutting of government and nonprofit community supports in New York City (NYC or The City) had been underway for decades. Among racially and ethnically diverse low income Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Gender Nonconforming (LGBTGNC)[2] communities, the recession meant working harder to survive while sustaining everyday struggles for justice. Yet the violence of neoliberalism in low income LGBTGNC communities continues to be overwritten by homonormative success stories, rendering invisible the processes that are reconfiguring the city on neoliberal spatial and cultural terms. This makes knowledge from low income LGBTGNC perspectives crucial for understanding how such communities are being affected and how their responses constitute "paradoxical spatial" practices (McKittrick, 2007) that challenge neoliberalism-driven homonormative (Duggan, 2003), multicultural (Melamed, 2006) urban space.

Paradoxical space as theorized by Gillian Rose (1993) points to women's uses of space that exist within and disrupt constructions of patriarchal transparent space. Katherine McKittrick's (2007) application of paradoxical space to black geographies of slavery - including the plantation, the auction block, and black women's bodies - makes it possible to examine spatial practices that do not get seen but are lived, differential constructions that are particular to managing and resisting enslavement, uses and obfuscations of space that preserve black life and culture. As I will show, McKittrick's (2007) lens provides vital access to low income LGBTGNC spatial practices by recognizing the scale of historical violences being negotiated in social welfare institutions and how these contribute to queer, raced and classed urban space making, despite, amidst, and in defiance of neoliberal transformations. These are particularly important to analyze in light of attempts to generate images of conflict-free urban diversity while keeping a tight hold on

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[2] This article is based on research conducted by low income LGBTGNC people who chose this acronym. Similar acronyms such as "LGBT" or "LGB" are used when the research or theory cited uses such descriptors instead.

acceptable sexualities, genders, and racial/ethnic expressions restricted with and through class-based spatializations.

Drawing on findings from a participatory action research (PAR) project in NYC with the advocacy organization Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ) and thinking through austerity measures and the 2008 recession in NYC, I explore low income LGBTGNC struggles over neoliberal urban space - particularly public space in the form of homeless shelters. The paucity of government and nonprofit poverty institutions in theorizations of urban public space, particularly gay urban public space, means what is at stake in queer struggles over welfare services in the city is virtually absent from these analyses. In what follows, I question whether and how racially and ethnically diverse low income LGBTGNC people are challenging processes that are boundarying a white and multicultural gay-friendly city. I am focused especially on the ways low income LGBTGNC people are not only actively working to hold onto and queer public space but are also transforming poverty institutions into sites of liberation, challenging neoliberal definitions of freedom.

After developing the context of neoliberal austerity in New York City, I will discuss how dynamics of homonormativity, which advocates a depoliticized, private gay life focused on consumption in ways that bolster US sexual exceptionalism (Duggan, 2003), and neoliberal multiculturalism, which promotes particular racial and ethnic formations of US cultural tolerance alongside ongoing internal and external racial and ethnic violence (Melamed, 2006), are helping to define the parameters of neoliberal urban space, particularly public space and gay urban space. I will then show how black geographies render low income LGBTGNC spaces legible and use cases examples to illuminate practices that are queering and transgendering the homeless shelter system in a low income LGBTGNC city.

Neoliberal Austerity in NYC

New York City was the vanguard for welfare reform in the 1990s, instituting work requirements and pushing recipients aggressively off the rolls in the years leading up to the federal Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Act of 1996 which eliminated the 60 year entitlement to cash assistance. This "neoliberal urbanism" (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner, 2009) pressed upward in championing social program cuts as part of an increasingly effective economic agenda at the national level. Federal welfare reform then not only cut down on government outlays, it also fueled neoliberal ideologies by undermining the idea of the welfare state itself (Abramovitz, 2000). The new program, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), which limits monthly cash grants known as "welfare" or "public assistance" according to time rather than only need, is one of the most maligned social programs in US society. Rooted in a history of moral encoding of the "unworthy poor," program cuts became the logical and ethical

choice when anti-black panic over sexuality was once again made to stand in for the causes of poverty. Thus, buttressed by local, national, and historical policies and ideologies, NYC entered the recession of 2008 amidst already established racialized and sexualized conditions of a reduced welfare state.

Such conditions had begun taking hold two decades earlier in NYC when austerity measures were instituted to manage its 1970s fiscal crisis (Harvey, 2007). Control over the city's debt gave bankers the power to push emerging neoliberal economic ideas about how to reorganize governments on behalf of capital accumulation by undermining unions, cutting social spending, and financializing services (such as instituting fees at the previously free city university) (Harvey, 2007). These applications asserted the market as the central organizing principle for economic behavior and social relations using neoliberal philosophy, promoted as superior to Keynesian blends of state-market governance for meeting individual needs and solve human problems (Harvey, 2007). Neoliberalism directs governments to expand private property rights and space, shrink public services, deregulate existing markets, and orchestrate the emergence of new ones in service of freeing capital to circulate for profit-making endeavors which are construed as a good for all (Harvey, 2007; Hubbard, 2004; McArdle, 2001).

Peck (2012) describes contemporary "austerity urbanism" as the naturalized logics and policies of social welfare cuts in cities which are intended as strategies to resolve financial crises. He argues, however, that these are better understood as mechanisms that leverage financial crises to push neoliberal agendas rather than steps necessary for budget balancing (Peck, 2012).

In seeming contrast to urban austerity logic, NYC expanded its food stamps and shelter use during the 2008 recession: food stamp coverage increased by 46 percent, and the homeless shelter census grew from about 34,000 to 47,000 between 2007 and 2013 (Turetsky, 2013). Peck (2012) considers New York City to be one of the few large urban US governments that has been able to stabilize its financial base through capital investment - and has therefore been less vulnerable to supposed imperatives of debt reduction and social program cuts. Here, however, is where the contradictions of austerity urbanism begin to show. The City actually implemented a mix of expansion and withholding of social welfare during the recession, suggesting a strategic preservation of a neoliberal agenda. From 1995 until the recession hit in 2008, NYC pushed two thirds of its public assistance caseload off the rolls, from about 1.1 million to about 350,000 recipients (Cardwell, 2001; HRA Facts, 2000; Lopatto, 2010), yet during and after the recession, despite the obvious need addressed by increasing food stamps and sheltering, TANF public assistance grants did not expand (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2013; Lopatto, 2010).

In addition, shelter use has continued to increase, although not necessarily by recession-driven housing precarity among low income residents. For that, the

2011 termination of The City's Advantage rental assistance program for families leaving homeless shelters has been found largely responsible (IBO, 2014). In other words, NYC undercut support for actual housing for homeless residents while allowing its contracts for shelter services to expand. While speculative, such a move could be seen to reflect a neoliberal approach to "branding" (Clough and Wilse, 2010) that preserves a private property and privatization agenda by cutting housing programs while avoiding images of "street homelessness" that characterize the city's pre-neoliberal past and could detract from further capital investment.

Depicting Conflict-Free Urban Space

A dominant explanation for the rise of neoliberal urbanism follows the collapse and withdrawal of urban industry and ensuing capital flight in the 1970s, after which cities have moved to make themselves attractive to urban reinvestment through economic strategies such as parks projects and real estate development (Mitchell, 2003; McArdle, 2001). In this way, profit-making in the neoliberal urban economy has become hooked to expanding middle and upper class public space - and the elimination of "common" space that might otherwise include diverse bodies, practices, and meanings of value (Hubbard, 2004; Mitchell, 2003). Analyzing "quality of life" policing in NYC that escalated efforts to prevent homeless people from eating, sleeping, and being in public space in the 1990s (see Vitale, 2008), Mitchell (2003) describes the tensions of pushing public parks and sidewalks into the service of exchange, fostering spatial relations conducive to middle class use values of leisure and consumption while heightening profit-making possibilities (Hubbard, 2004). Police are deployed to secure such space by regulating the presence and behaviors of bodies that detract from capital investment and consumption (Hubbard, 2004; McArdle, 2001; Mitchell, 2003). These practices move racialized bodies that represent threats to safety, order, and economic value out of public and private space and often into custody or spaces of containment like shelters and jails. Examining how such processes are securitizing sexuality and gender means thinking about how securitization is directed at fixing the city and certain neighborhoods as secure, gay-friendly, and acceptably diverse spaces of consumer citizenship (see Folayan, Jones, and Kang, 2001).

When made to appear "singular" (Mitchell, 2003), fixed spatializations naturalize the city's geography, rendering it "transparent" (Lefebvre, 1991) by blocking structural and cultural struggles over its construction from view (McCann, 1999). Erasing such struggles means urban space is more easily inscribed with meanings that serve the forces that dominate that space. In the city, exchange value means, among other things, that urban space needs to be seen as desirable enough to consume. In this way, consumer tastes matter to capital in efforts to attract urban users, consumers, residents, employees, and therefore their employers (see Harvey, 2007). Global cultural shifts toward a moral imperatives of tolerance (Brown, 2008) of sexual "difference" and cultural "diversity" thereby have come to

influence the market value of space, while making distinctions within sexual expressions and cultural identities more visible and salient (see Harvey, 2007).

As expressions of this impulse to tolerance, homonormative and neoliberal multicultural realignments are becoming characteristic of neoliberal society's self-image (see Brown, 2008; Duggan, 2003; Ferguson, 2004; Melamed, 2006; Puar, 2007). Gay-positive policies and social trends in the US are collaborating with race and class privilege to generate new gay subjectivities that abide by a gender binary and private nuclear family forms (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Duggan, 2003; Hubbard, 2004, Puar, 2007). In tandem, neoliberal multiculturalism encourages racially and ethnically diverse, middle-class-ascendant cultural formations which can represent a diverse neoliberal ideal while sustaining hierarchical investment in whiteness and ejecting those whose race or ethnicity is deemed excessive, resistant, or threatening (Melamed, 2006).

Homonormative processes at the level of the city work to reduce and fix a representation of a newly accepted, depoliticized and desexualized gay community, open for business and tourism (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Lefebvre, 1991; Puar, 2007). In this sense, the development of gay neighborhoods in a gay-friendly city can be seen as a set of processes that spatialize exclusion, delineating and normalizing particular kinds of sexual and gender expression. In the process, the functions of refuge and protest filled by gay villages and Pride marches have been relegated to a source of nostalgia and their causes to a thing of the past (Bell and Binnie, 2004). The gay neoliberal citizen becomes one whose overt desire is privately monogamous and whose covert desire (for racial, perverse, and youthful gay, trans*[3], and queer others) can be managed in public through exoticization, exploitation, and policing (Manalansan, 2005; Reck, 2009). Global cities are thereby marketing not only their economic stability and controlled criminality to investors and consumers but also their social tolerance of diverse sexual preferences and racial and ethnic differences to reflect publics capable of peaceful consumption (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Melamed, 2006).

At the same time, while the neoliberal ideal of individual freedom (Harvey, 2007) dovetails effectively with homonormative multiculturalism by multiplying diverse individual consumer subjectivities, these processes also constitute dialectical processes that reflect the inherent instability of neoliberalism (Harvey, 2007; McCann, 1999). The attempt to appeal to 'urban' aesthetic desires among middle and upper class consumers means marketing to a range of identity expressions, styles, and locales, inviting complex spatial practices of representation and use. This places capital interests at risk as they seek to profit from these particularities because validating particular identities-in-place lends them spatial

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[3] Trans* is an open designation for all those who identify with trans identities.

and representational power. This then fuels fundamental oppositions in productions of space by forces that move to bifurcate and homogenize public space on the one hand and those that assert "counter-spaces" and "counter-publics" on the other (McCann 1999, cites Lefebvre, 1991, 381-385).

Given the risk that individuality can pose (Harvey, 2007), therefore, the conflict embedded within a "diverse" urban setting must be strong enough to validate society's tolerance but mild enough not to actually threaten it. A singular "gay and lesbian" community struggling over the right to marriage offers a suitable amount of demonstrable national tolerance of sexual difference. Sets of complex, emergent LGBTGNC communities struggling over welfare, criminal justice, public space, and proliferating racialized gender and sexual expressions, however, throws neoliberalism's fundamental economic and governance principles into question and is therefore addressed by discourses of threat rather than tolerance.

Neoliberal Public Space and Gay Urban Space

Urban public space is a core site of analysis for critical geographers examining neoliberalism, activism, homelessness, sexuality, race, and the importance of dissent (McCann, 1999; Mitchell, 2003; Shepard and Smithsimon, 2011; Harvey, 1997; Whyte, 1988) many of which emphasize public space as an ideal of "diverse, self-regulating interaction" (Shepard and Smithsimon, 2011). "Right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1968) research into specific contests over homeless and queer public space amidst neoliberal claims for privatize use and exchange are especially important for the current project (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Mitchell, 2003; Shepard and Smithsimon, 2011). At the same time, such analyses are often limited to definitions of public space as "open air" such as streets, parks, and plazas grounded in the ideal of the commons and the idea that "anyone" can or should be able to use it, despite the fact that most of these same analyses result in arguments that anyone is increasingly not able to use them and that multiple policing, disciplining, and aesthetic strategies are preventing swaths of classed, raced, and sexual and gendered bodies from using such public space (Mitchell, 2003; Shepard and Smithsimon, 2011). Critiques of neoliberal gay or queer space tend to focus on gayborhoods (Reck, 2009), bathhouses, bars, and cruising grounds (Bell and Binnie, 2004). This then calls into question what counts as public space and where else might diverse, self-regulating interaction be occurring. Do homeless people who have been kicked out of public parks, waterfronts, sidewalks, and subways have public space? Do they create it in shelters when they stay? Sweeping out the welfare state apparatus includes the privatization and demolition of social welfare spaces such as government and nonprofit offices, public housing developments, hospitals, and homeless shelters. Are such drastic changes accounted for in the disappearance of gay urban space (see Shepard and Smithsimon, 2011)?

I am approaching homeless shelters as a form of constrained public space in order to think through places where low income LGBTGNC communities *are*, as

well as how they use and shape spaces of social welfare under neoliberalism. I argue that queering public space from a low income LGBTGNC perspective means incorporating public welfare institutions into analyses of queer and public spaces, which are always already racialized as well. Shelters then, may be seen as highly punitive community centers where the only people who "want" or "need" to go are those poor enough to need a place to sleep. This, however, does not make shelters any less "public" in the sense of spaces that strangers, acquaintances, and known others are in and travel through, connecting with each other or not. Shelters, of course, are also public like public schools, hospitals, and housing complexes in the sense of institutions established in law and funded and overseen by governments to serve the general public, all of which are undergoing privatization schemes. How punitive and privatized public space is being managed by LGBTGNC shelter residents is well-served by black geographic frameworks of paradoxical spatial freedom.

Paradoxical Spatial Freedom

While she does not offer a taxonomy per se, McKittrick's (2007) elaboration of black geographic freedom across various sites of enslavement includes the capacities to imagine, manipulate, impose, modify, and map space. Such reworkings of a geography of enslavement include such examples as a woman's seven-year self-imposed encasement/escape in the garret of a home in the town where she had been enslaved, and her spatial efforts to throw the slaver off her tracks by having mail posted to him from various cities up the East Coast of the US (McKittrick, 2007) and another woman's threat of suicide while standing on an auction block were she to be placed on the plantation of a notoriously violent slaver (McKittrick, 2007, 84). Those surviving the violence of slavery work its geography in their favor, reorganizing space, including the space of the body, as sites of (constrained) freedom.

This suggests a theory of "paradoxical spatial freedom" which makes it possible to address the multiply sourced violences directed at low income, racially and ethnically diverse LGBTGNC communities whose lived experience is only partly understood through queer theory. While low income LGBTGNC communities can be seen to queer the public space of the shelter with typically queer practices of "resisting" and confronting sexual and gender norms while "transgressing" and "subverting" disciplining processes of race, class, ability, etc. (Puar, 2007, 24), their efforts at survival need another name.

Puar's (2007) critique of the inherently transgressive nature of "queering" offers a warrant for thinking through how low income LGBTGNC spatializations are served by concepts of black spatial freedom. In particular, she is concerned with the ways queer subjects fold back into liberal norms (Puar, 2007). Queer practices not only do not save queer subjects from liberal individualism, but may be complicit with it in their resonance with "the rational, liberal...fully self-

possessed speaking subject" (Puar, 2007, 22-23). Puar (2007) draws on Ahmed (2005) in linking queer subjectivity to liberal geographies of movement:

> Freedom from norms' as a 'regulatory queer ideal that demarcates the ideal   queer...depends on the exclusion of others' with differential 'access to queerness, suggesting that queerness can be an elite cosmopolitan formulation   contingent on regimes of mobility (22).

Instead, Puar (2007) suggests critiques that acknowledge "the fluidity of queer resistances and complicities" (24) (with white, class, able-bodied, and citizenship ascendance) as an ongoing conundrum. Black geographies address such irreducible complexity, theorizing 'making a way out of no way' by recognizing mobilities exerted within immobilizations as impossible yet lived responses to violently imposed norms that expose an incessant struggle over economic, sexual, gendered, and racialized spatializations.

A further importance of paradoxical spatial freedom is the ability to recognize and therefore theorize space from perspectives that do not center transparent space. If the homeless shelter is only imagined as a space of race, class, heterosexual, cisgender, and ableist dominance, it becomes less possible to see how low income LGBTGNC communities are using and transforming such space. As I will show, such communities are actively manipulating, modifying, and mapping space based on a queer raced and classed imaginary through which they survive and thrive even as they struggle against economic, identity, and spatial injustice.

Case Examples: Low Income LGBTGNC Paradoxical Spatializations of Shelters

In 2006, I co-founded the Welfare Warriors Research Collaborative (WWRC or Welfare Warriors) with 13 co-researchers (expanding to more than 20 over the course of the project) through a participatory action research (PAR) project at Queers for Economic Justice (QEJ). QEJ was a grassroots advocacy organization committed to economic justice in tandem with racial, sexual and gender liberation that worked toward low income LGBTGNC access, dissent, and possibility. QEJ sought to insert queer poverty issues into the agendas of anti-poverty and LGBT organizations, engaging in education campaigns that heavily critiqued gay military policy, gay marriage, and hate crimes legislation, many of the homonormative policy moves that mark the emerging gay neoliberal citizen. QEJ promoted visibility and importance of public assistance and housing programs in the lives of queer people and provided low income LGBTGNC leadership development and action campaigns. QEJ closed in 2014 in the fiscal and political crunch following the 2008 recession.

To explore whether and how low income, racially and ethnically diverse LGBTGNC struggles over the public space can be understood as efforts to hold

onto and queer them as sites of survival and liberation, I draw on findings from data collected by the WWRC in 2009. The Welfare Warrior co-researchers, most of whom identified as low income people of color, represented many sexualities and genders, ages, degrees of access to education, abilities, and disabilities. As a genderqueer, white, class privileged doctoral student and a consultant, I worked with a QEJ staff person to create leadership development and PAR trainings, recruit co-researchers, and support the research team in our twice weekly meetings. Together, the WWRC designed, conducted, and analyzed a mixed-method study, gathering data through a community survey, 10 video recorded, semi-structured, in-depth interviews, and participant observations of our meeting discussions. Our survey reached 171 low income LGBTGNC adult residents of NYC (18 years old and over), a rare and impressively high number achieved through co-researchers' purposive sampling (Barbour, 2001; Mays and Pope, 1995; Patton, 1990) among the neighborhoods, shelters, and community groups they lived in and cared about to recruit survey takers that are otherwise overlooked in research and theory. Based on the findings, the team self-published a 68-page report and produced a 30-minute documentary video (Welfare Warriors Research Collaborative, 2010).

The Welfare Warriors' (2010) research helps make visible low income LGBTGNC presence in urban public life and theorize how their presence, use, and engagement with urban spaces constitute spatial practices that work to both hold onto and queer public welfare institutions as sites of liberation. I begin by describing the research participants and some findings then describe three case examples of low income LGBTGNC paradoxical spatializations of shelters.

Low Income LGBTGNC Survey

The WWRC's (2010) survey taker demographic data provide a problematic but useful basis for imagining low income LGBTGNC communities, an important move in a context in which few researchers or theorists address class along with racialized sexuality and gender. Because statistics risk fixing identities and communities, the description of survey takers as members of "low income LGBTGNC communities" should be understood as a means to discuss shared issues rather than delimit an identity group. The WWRC asked survey takers to describe themselves along the lines of identity listed in Table 1, resulting in a sample of participants predominantly from communities of color across a range of sexualities and genders, well-distributed by age. Participants could check as many boxes as they felt applied to them, write in responses, and/or check a box labeled "prefer not to answer":

Table 1: Low Income LGBTGNC Survey Taker Demographics

(percent responding)

Race/ethnicity*		Sexuality*		Gender*		Age	
African American/ Black	37	Gay	23	Female	45	Mean=37 years	
Latino	32	Lesbian	23	Male	35	18 to 25 years	30
White	16	Straight	21	Transgender MTF	15	26 to 44 years	40
Caribbean	7	Bisexual	17	More than one gender identity checked	10	45 to 70 years	30
American Indian/ Indigenous	4	More than one identity checked	10	Transgender FTM	4		
Multiracial	4	Queer	10	Two Spirit,	4		
Asian/ Pacific Islander	2	Two Spirit	5	Genderqueer, Gender Nonconforming	4		
Other	3	Transgender (write-ins)	5				
		Pansexual	3				
		Same Gender Loving	2				

WWRC, 2010 *Respondents could choose as many as applied.

Over two-thirds of low income LGBTGNC survey takers report income levels lower than the federal poverty level of $10,830 per year (WWRC, 2010). Further, as shown in Table 2, most respondents combine earnings from work with - or rely entirely on - public benefits to support for their health, housing, and daily subsistence. In addition, almost two-thirds of survey takers report being homeless or living in precarious housing, including over one-third living in homeless shelters (Table 3).

Table 2: Low Income LGBTGNC Survey Taker Use of Public Benefits*	
Subsistence Benefits	
SNAP (food stamps)	49%
Public Assistance (monthly cash grant)	19%
Housing Assistance	16%
Health Insurance and Disability Benefits	
Medicaid/Medicare (Federal health insurance)	35%
Supplemental Security Income/ Social Security Disability insurance (SSI/SSD)	28%
HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA)	14%

WWRC, 2010 *Respondents could choose as many as applied.

Table 3: Low Income LGBTGNC Survey Taker Housing	
Homeless shelter	36%
In one's own apartment	32%
On the street or in a temporary situation	22%
With friend, relative, or in an SRO*	21%
Other	7%

WWRC, 2010 *Single Room Occupancy hotel

Importantly, the WWRC examined government and nonprofit institutions, including adult homeless shelters, as sites of violence by staff, guards, and police. Over two-fifths of respondents (43 percent) report being refused social services in programs such as Medicaid, housing assistance, and welfare benefits (WWRC, 2010; WWRC, 2010b). When compared with those living in their own apartments, currently homeless survey takers were twice as likely to be stopped and searched (44 percent versus 22 percent) and three times as likely to be falsely arrested or physically assaulted (35 percent versus 11 percent for both forms of harm) in social service agencies including shelters. Further, one-fifth of currently homeless LGBTGNC respondents reported sexual assault in government and nonprofit agencies compared with none among those housed in apartments. High rates of unjust policing further demonstrate state violence that betrays the exclusionary enforcements of homonormative and neoliberal multicultural ideals: in the two

years prior to the survey almost half of respondents had been arrested, almost a third had been strip-searched, and almost a fifth had been physically assaulted by police (WWRC, 2010). Transgender, Two-Spirit[4], and currently homeless participants reported rates of unjust policing from 50 to 200 percent higher in these categories (WWRC, 2010). Such scales of violence in and outside of agencies, shelters, and public space offer a window onto the kinds of daily struggles faced by low income, racially and ethnically diverse LGBTGNC people in NYC, a view necessary for envisioning and appreciating low income LGBTGNC paradoxical space-making.

Paradoxical Spatial Freedom in Homeless Shelters

The unlikely LGBTGNC spatializations of shelters as sites of liberation I analyze here concern gendering processes as well as LGBTGNC public space-making through which the shelter becomes a space of engaged struggle. These struggles include gender identity expression and safety, gender policy knowledge sharing, the shelter as a site of support, and links across low income sexual and gendered public space.

Constructing a Men's Shelter as Transgender-Woman-Of-Color Space. In a spatial economy of transphobia, the shelter can become a paradoxical space of freedom for those who face even stronger gender constraints in other housing settings. One trans*-identified woman of color participant in the research had kept her gender expression in check with family for years in order to maintain her housing because she would not have been allowed to stay with her family if she presented as a woman. She described using her shelter stay to express her gender more openly, wearing an earring in the men's shelter where she stayed (WWRC, 2010).

While this resident uses the shelter as a space to inhabit her more authentic embodied identity, she is doing more than constructing the space of her body as transgender. She is also constructing the male shelter as a transgender-woman-of-color-space. The idea that she is actively constructing gendered space rather than entering and confronting a "preexisting" landscape of normative racialized masculinity follows theorists like Mitchell (2003) and Harvey (1997) who argue that urban space is continually emerging through multiplicitous processes of construction and contestation. While men's shelters in New York City may have seen many men with earrings over time expressing a range of sexualities, genders, and cultural expressions, this research participant's transgendering joins them in constructing not just a range of identities "in" the shelter but cracking open the

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[4] The term Two-Spirit originated in 1990 during the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnepeg to refer to the multiplicity of contemporary and traditional gender roles and sexual identities in Native and non-Native American cultures (Jacobs, Thomas, and Lang, 1997).

"male" gender confines of the shelter itself and exposing a struggle between transparent and paradoxical space-making.

Because it is useful in thinking about the partial nature of her transgender spatialization, it may be significant that she reports wearing an earring - a small visible cue - rather than women's clothing. This may indicate the strength of forces that continue to construct the transparent masculinity of men's shelters, which are known among residents for their violence and danger. This points to the paradoxical nature of the participant's self-expression. Its impact on the imagined space of binary gender may be minute or imperceptible. However, its relevance for low income LGBTGNC liberation is significant because for her and many trans* and gender nonconforming homeless people, transphobia is yet another risk to personal safety and stability in a list of racial, economic, sexual, and disability risks, such that creating shelters as spaces safer for a wider range of gender expressions establishes a place where they are more able to be and sleep.

Transgendering the Shelter System. In 2006, a coalition including QEJ 's Shelter Organizing Project won a pilot policy in NYC that allows shelter residents to reside in the shelter that matches their self-identified gender, a change motivated by ongoing transphobic violence and discrimination by staff and residents (WWRC, 2010). Whether and how shelter staff are actually implementing the policy, however, has been questionable. One research participant reported informing a transgender woman residing in the men's shelter where they both stayed that she had a right to residence in a woman's shelter (WWRC, 2010). Such transfer of information builds low income trans* and gender nonconforming community while transforming a binary gender shelter system into a more complex network in which men and women with transgender histories and identities exist within and move among male and female shelters. At the same time, the transparent space of dichotomous male and female shelters remains powerfully clear. Therefore, this resident-to-resident exchange represents movement in a gap opened by the policy that makes the transparently male shelter a paradoxical site of freedom, a spatialization that imagines the larger shelter system as open to transgender women and men, rather than the constrained system without such openness, manipulating the shelter system's binary gender to add self-determined transgender mobility.

Modifying Shelter Space toward Sexual and Gender Support. During its existence, QEJ provided volunteer-run weekly groups in shelters, spatializing the shelter as a site of sexual and gender community building as well as a space of support, a crucial function rarely offered by the shelter and vital for residents facing threats and violence from staff, guards, and police in government and nonprofit agencies. QEJ's consistent efforts to leverage shelter space and time for LGBTGNC residents to talk openly about their struggles, whether specific to sexuality and gender or not, reorganized the shelter as a site of validation, shared issues, and

information exchange. This is especially significant because the dispersal of homeless LGBTGNC people across urban space makes identifying shared experiences and desires for change more difficult. By recognizing the shelter as a place where homeless LGBTGNC people *are* in a locatable space together, QEJ paradoxically spatialized the shelter as a public space where community members could meet, gather support, and organize for change.

Connecting Shelters and Streets: Marching Homelessness in Pride. In addition to weekly support groups, QEJ supported a tradition, initiated in the early 2000s by the director of the Shelter project, organizing a contingent of homeless LGBTGNC shelter residents in NYC's annual Pride march. Organizing shelter residents is a labor intensive effort that includes funding subway passes, coordinating communication with reluctant shelters, volunteer escorting of residents from shelters to the Pride site, and ensuring health support with water, homemade sandwiches, and a van for resting. The contingent grew over the years from a tiny handful to 100-plus marchers in peak years 2011 and 2012.

Such investment demonstrates a low income LGBTGNC desire for celebration and inclusion, solidarity with LGBTQ people of color organizations and agendas, as well as a demand that class issues be addressed by the mainstream LGBT movement. Not only were shelters reconstructed as a ground for collective organizing, but the homeless LGBTGNC contingent challenged the neoliberal conversion of Pride from gay protest to gay consumption (Bell and Binnie, 2004), confronting homonormative urban space as it was being constructed. Shelter resident and activist insertion of homeless shelters in the list of participating organizations linked them as sites of feeder organizations for "gay pride," networking them together and remapping Pride in a low income LGBTGNC city.

Discussion

Low income LGBTGNC spatial practices at the individual, interpersonal, shelter, and city levels can be seen to trouble transparent race, gender, and sexuality within and among shelters, reconstructing them as LGBTGNC public spaces and linking them with networks of gay affirming and LGBTQ people of color organizations across the city. In a context of homonormative, multicultural neoliberalism that seeks to undermine the welfare state in favor of private property and individual consumption, such paradoxical spatial interventions work to preserve the use value of shelters for homeless people and queer them for validation, community building, and organizing purposes. When homelessness in what is conceived of as the LGBT community is made visible during Pride, homeless LGBTGNC bodies assert the function of the march as protest, now challenging the homonormative buy-in to neoliberal desires. The majority people of color marchers further challenge a neoliberal multicultural diversity that divides by race in order to distinguish tolerant neoliberal subjects from intolerant others (Brown, 2008), patriots from terrorists, security-loving citizens from criminal

threats, acceptable gays from perverse gender benders. Paradoxical spatial freedom echoes black geographic reworkings of raced and sexed economies by recognizing the severe limits placed on low income LGBTGNC space-making without giving up their ability to contest totalizing frameworks.

A broader context of neoliberal austerity in New York City makes analyzing public welfare institutions as queer public space crucial because what happens to social welfare institutions happens to low income LGBTGNC space. However, the imaginary of a gay culture available for all to enjoy helps prevent the spatial and economic costs of austerity in low income LGBTGNC lives from coming into view. This is due in part to the assumed triumph of gay acceptance: society's seeming cultural success means gay people no longer suffer. The enduring logic of fiscal restraint and cuts to social welfare means that the loss of public resources among low income LGBTGNC communities in New York City does nothing to mar the city's gay friendly reputation.

I have argued here that the neoliberal desire to appeal to certain investors and consumers has given rise to the leveraging of "identity" for its exchange value, including the cultures, accessories, and places through which such identities are expressed (Bell and Binnie, 2004; Duggan, 2003; Manalansan, 2005). In the process, class-privileged normative gay and multicultural subjectivities are contributing to an emerging neoliberal citizen with the freedom to consume in a diverse marketplace (Melamed, 2006; Rose, 2000). This citizen is further constructed against racialized, ethnic, and sexually deviant populations whose use of state-funded programs is cast as an obvious hindrance to free labor markets. Constructing this as an inability to engage the market properly then reinforces the rightness of disinvestment from welfare and marks welfare recipients as threats to national well-being (Abramovitz, 2000; Hubbard, 2004). At the same time, LGBTGNC paradoxical spatializations in shelters reflect a city as yet unacknowledged by analyses of homonormative urban space. In challenging the neoliberal idea of individual freedom as the ability to choose in the neoliberal marketplace, low income racially and ethnically diverse LGBTGNC shelter resident use of shelters to express their particular genders and connect and organize with others in shared experience, makes freedom partial yet real, constrained yet possible. Rather than a freedom restricted to economic expressions, paradoxical freedom reflects expressions that not only "oppose dehumanization (but)… enable creative, expansive self-actualization" (hooks, 1990, 15) and manifestations of community. Such improbable possibility endures in shelter organizing work that has continued beyond QEJ's existence.

The impact of the 2008 global financial crisis reverberated to the heart of low income LGBTGNC organizing when QEJ closed in 2014. As former director Kenyon Farrow (2014) explains, QEJ's radical politics had already been difficult to fund with philanthropic and government grants before the recession and were

sacrificed in its wake. Despite such loss, the financial crisis has not meant the end of low income LGBTGNC organizing; planning for Jay's House, an initiative to create an LGBT homeless shelter, began at QEJ prior to its closure and continues in living rooms and shelters around NYC. While homonormative neoliberalism continues to claim public space and poverty policy, low income LGBTGNC people continue in their efforts to take and make urban public space their own.

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