Queer Kinship: An [Art]iculation

by

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Dalhousie University is located in Mi'kma'ki, the

ancestral and unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq.

We are all Treaty people.

This Thesis is dedicated to queer communities of past, present, and future.

May the queer community yet to come benefit from my work as I have from those preceding me.

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Abstract

Creativity and arts-based research methods bring value to anthropology because artistic expression can and should be used as a gateway into personal experience. Queer kinship studies have highlighted the importance of active negotiation, ritual performance, and legal recognition as unifying themes within the broad possibilities of queer kinship. However, little research has been done to combine arts-based research and the study of queer kinship. This qualitative, arts-based action research explored kinship through the lens of artistic expression, asking that participants create a piece of art about their queer kinships and fill out 14 days of guided diary entries. The intention of this research was to answer the question: How do LGBTQ+ and polyamorous individuals experience art creation about their self-defined queer kinships for public display? The result of this research was a snapshot of queer kinship in Halifax in 2023-2024.

This work also aimed to maintain and increase understanding and acceptance of queer lives. The participant-created art was displayed in the Halifax Central Public Library from March 10th to April 13th, 2024. This exhibition drew on the rawness of physical display to forge and strengthen emotional connection to queer kinship within the wide variety of individuals who make use of the library space. Altogether, this research found artistic themes of the presence of the natural world, a full spectrum of rainbow colors in use, and a high inclusion of faces. These themes highlight queer kinships as a part of the natural world, as well as creating a connection to broader associations of the LGBTQ+ community. This project also assembled participants definitions of both family and art to highlight the individualities and commonalities between them. Participants found completing this project to engage them in creating deeper understandings of their kinships and artistic selves.

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To everyone who participated in this research, thank you. Without your willingness to share about your families, I would not have been able to do this work. I am grateful for your trust, and I am honored to display your work both in the Halifax Central Public Library and in this text.

Chapter 1: Introduction

As an anthropology student long interested in queer kinship, I am delighted to be situated in a space such as Halifax where I can explore and expand my knowledge of queer families for this Master's thesis in Anthropology. The suitability of Halifax to my research was clearly established in my mind on my first day in the city when I walked down Spring Garden Road and noticed that all the crosswalks were Pride flags. Later that evening, I saw two older masculine-presenting people holding hands, walking down the sidewalk. As a queer person who grew up in an environment where a same-sex couple could not walk holding hands and putting a Pride flag on one's own property– much less city property– was nearly unheard of, I immediately felt comfortable being queer in Halifax.

The inclusion of queer people was further cemented as I explored the city; Glitter Bean Cafe is a proud queer gathering space that I now frequent, and nearly every person I exchange emails with since I have moved to Halifax has their pronouns in their email signature. Even in setting up a bank account, I felt safe being queer. The employee who was completing the setup of my account asked for my gender, and I said, "non-binary," expecting to be asked to choose between male and female for the sake of the computer system. Instead, the employee said "That's wonderful! We recently had that option added to the system and this is the first time I've gotten to use it!" His genuine delight makes me smile to this day.

Drawing on these experiences, my research explored queer kinship in the Halifax area through visibility via artistic expression, and inclusion in physical and social institutions. My research question was: How do LGBTQ+ and polyamorous

individuals experience art creation about their self-defined queer kinships for public display? What meaning can be found from a blending of formal, thematic, and narrative analysis of the resulting artwork with participants' emotional experiences as recorded in daily diary entries?

It is important to establish a working definition of queer. In this thesis, the terms 'queer families' and 'queer kinship' describe members of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and beyond (LGBTQ+) communities, and those who do not conform to monogamous expectations of commitment and love, commonly termed 'polyamorous' people and families. To discuss these identities under the label 'queer' is not to claim that they are identical. Nonetheless, they are all groups marginalized from heteronormative understandings of kinship for their romantic, sexual, and family practices. For instance, polyamorous kinship queers the societal narrative of 'one true love,' and can clearly be seen as an 'other' in relation to mainstream monogamous pressures and expectations. Yet not all polyamorous or LGBT people identify with the label 'queer.' My project engaged with polyamorous and LGBT people that *did* find the term queer applicable to them. Engaging with both LGBT+ and polyamorous communities as subjects of queer kinship highlights the experience of being part of kinships that face marginalization.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this section, I address kinship in the classical anthropological sense, then briefly examine the literature particular to Halifax and note the role of queer, LGBTQ+, and polyamorous kinships. Here I offer exploratory ideas for what this literature and my work could bring for how those marginalized by mono- and hetero-normativity activate kinship language and practices to assert their experience of belonging, love, and family as real. The third topic addressed in this literature review is arts-based research. Although Rudolf Arnheim used artistic expression in research in the 1950s and 1960s, and Elliott Eisner (1981) distinguished scientific and artistic approaches to qualitative research, arts-based research only became common in the social sciences in the 1990s. Due to the relative newness of this methodology as of this project even in 2024, and the key role it plays in my research, considerable space is devoted to its usefulness, limitations, and practice in the literature thus far. Lastly, I address the concept of libraries as museum spaces, illustrating how theory that informs professional, inclusive, and engaging displays in museum spaces can be applied to library spaces as well. Applying the anthropological literature on museum spaces to libraries is important to my research because the art that was created by my participants was designed for display at the Central Branch of the Halifax Public Library from March 10th to April 13th, 2024.

2.1: Kinship in Classical Anthropology

The anthropological concept of kinship describes ways in which people are intimately linked together, consider each other family, and form groups that navigate a variety of social and environmental circumstances together (Chapais 2014, Oswald 2002, Schneider 1980). Anthropology as a discipline has long been interested in the

variety of kinship systems worldwide. For instance, the classic text “When Brothers Share a Wife” (Goldstein 1987) examines the practice of fraternal polyandry in Tibet. Fraternal polyandry is a system of marriage and kinship in which two or more brothers marry the same woman. The brothers share the duties of the household, and each has a sexual relationship with their wife (Goldstein 1987, 39). Goldstein documents the reasoning behind fraternal polyandry as consolidation of family property in a relatively inhospitable environment, and outlines the issues that arise within it, such as a lack of upward mobility for younger brothers within the family (Goldstein 1987, 41-43). Goldstein noted that the practice of fraternal polyandry was in decline in Tibet. This is confirmed in a 2020 study by Aghaghia Rahimzadeh who found that fraternal polyandry is becoming less economically beneficial and fewer people now find it appealing as a kinship pattern (581-582).

Anthropology’s enduring interest in kinship systems is partly due to the discipline’s search for commonalities between them. Chapais (2014) argues that despite historical anthropology often seeking human ‘universals,’ years of research in both sociological and biological anthropology refute their existence. Chapais argues that any expectation of uniformity across cultures is undermined by the scientific record, writing that “[o]ne does not expect categories such as motherhood, fatherhood, or marriage to be cross-culturally uniform and unisemantic” (2014, 762-763).

Even terms such as ‘motherhood’ have numerous meanings depending on their cultural and subcultural context. For instance, in North American cultures, a ‘mother’ is most synonymous with ‘biological bearer of a child’ (Letherby 1994). However, this is not always the case. In the drag scene, wherein people perform in exaggerated dress for

entertainment, self-expression and community, a ‘mother’ is the drag queen who initiated another drag queen into the practice. A drag mother teaches her daughter how to wear drag makeup and clothes, teaches her performance skills, and provides support (Farrier 2017). This aligns with motherhood expectations associated with biological bearing, such as providing guidance, nurturance, and support; it is, nonetheless, a variation which has enormous cultural meaning, and is distinctly disconnected from biology. Kinship in classical anthropology may functionally leave space for a variety of structures and roles, but it often fails to explicitly address queer kinship in the nuance it deserves. To rectify this within my own work, I now turn to literature specifically addressing queer kinships.

2.2: Kinship in Queer Literature

In this work, I refer to queer connections in terms of kinship, rather than family. This aligns with Lewin (2016), Roseneil & Budgeon (2004), Donovan et al. (2001) and Oswald (2002), who challenge the usefulness of ‘family’ to describe queer kinship, arguing that for the potential of queer social support structures to be explored, scholars must move away from terms that relate queer structures to normative expectations. In this work, I take on this perspective as an important theoretical throughline, while also acknowledging that my participants' writing will likely relate their own experiences to normative expectations.

It is important to position the term queer in relation to queer theory and its application in anthropology. In academic theory, the slippery, undefined nature of queerness has the potential to feel overwhelming and disadvantageous to engage with. However, the unsettling aspect of queer theory is a strength. Queer theory is one of

several approaches that disrupts or unsettles the entanglement of colonialism with anthropology, along with, for instance subaltern studies, and feminist anthropology. Anthropology is steeped in a history of colonialism, and queer theory creates space to question systems of power, for knowledge about life within and beyond systems, and for movement away from codifying– and therefore restricting– every relationship and way of existence (Morgensten 2016). Margot Weiss (2016) acknowledges the use of queer as an identity term and discusses how queer can co-exist as a theory and as an identity. Weiss argues for a queer that encompasses desires for knowing and is also part of a different way of thinking, identification with a particular institution or community, and, perhaps most importantly, "as more vulnerable and queerer work of trying to know another" (Weiss 2016, 634). Queerness is a shared project, an imagined future, a desire for solidarity, knowledge, and connection (Weiss 2016). In this project, queerness takes on both an identity and theory aspect: identity in that those who participated did so based on their involvement in queer kinships, and theoretical in that the creation and viewing of art are both acts of trying to know oneself and others, without relying on easily codified systems.

My review of studies of queer kinship highlighted themes of active negotiation, ritual performance, and legal recognition. Since queer kinship structures frequently vary from hetero- and mono-sexual norms, they have the burden and opportunity to create new roles and kinship meanings (Oswald 2002, Vaccaro 2010). Doing so requires actively and intentionally negotiating relationships. As Oswald (2002) writes:

> Intentionality refers to the strategies used by gay and lesbian people and their heterosexual loved ones to create and sustain a sense of family within a societal

> context that stigmatizes homosexuality and fails to provide social or legal recognition for a variety of family network relationships. (375)

For instance, Annemarie Vaccaro (2010) writes about a family wherein four people (one couple of two men and one of two women) co-parent a child. Parenting in a four-person unit presented serious challenges with regulating closeness and distance, requiring a high level of trust by all parties. When the two fathers eventually ended their romantic and sexual relationship, they continued to parent their child. With multiple forms of therapy, and work based on their strong foundation, the family remained a unit for their child (Vaccaro 2010). This intensity of active and present negotiation is a pervasive theme in the developing queer kinship literature.

Sasha Roseneil and Shelley Budgeon (2004) write that in their research participants actively distanced themselves from romantic entanglement, choosing instead to build lives around platonic friendships. Within the homes they formed, there was a steady flow of other people, creating even more distance between their intimate lives and the norms of other-sex couples and nuclear families (Roseneil and Budgeon 2004). The term ‘queer kinship’ encompasses a variety of queer social connections and allows queer people to self-define without distinguishing between friend and family.

Queer kinships also engage in ritual, by which I refer to conscious practices, patterns of behavior, and symbolic performances that cement kinship relationships by linking individuals to something larger than themselves. Rituals create group cohesion and collective identity (Oswald 2002). Instances of queer kinship ritual include but are not limited to LGBTQ+ Pride celebrations, weddings, and attending queer-inclusive religious spaces (Oswald 2002). Bermea and colleagues (2019) write~~s~~ about a queer

stepfamily headed by two men. One of the fathers notes that he makes sure their kids clearly know what is happening on a day-to-day basis, and what is expected of them. This is done in a way that recognizes their children as individuals even as they are also under the authority of their fathers.

This system of respectful authority is a daily ritual in their family. Other forms of ritual in this kinship group include dinners, trips, and movie nights. These activities create positive memories and connections between group members, strengthening their bonds. This aspect of family life is not exclusive to queer families. However, because of the marginalization and devaluation of queer kinship, those in queer kinship networks are more likely to engage in such rituals with conscious intention (Bermea et. al. 2019, Oswald 2002).

It is important to note that one can negotiate kinship actively between kinship network members, can perform it socially by living together or otherwise functioning as kin, or ritually via actions that embody the relationship and affirm its meaning, while also living in a place that does not legally affirm the kinship. Legal recognition is an extension of social recognition, but those terms are not synonymous; generally accepted does not mean legally sanctioned. Are socially legitimized structures less queer? What about those that remain illegitimate– are they forced underground, or do they seek legitimization as well? These are difficult questions in discussions of queer kinships. Yv Nay (2015) argues for "broadening the distinction between normative and non-normative ways of relatedness and their associated politics" (49-50). Judith Butler (2002) makes a similar point, arguing that marriage, adoption, and other forms of reproductive technology should be accessible to all who seek them. Butler (2002) argues that to constrain reproductive

services to those with exclusive relationships or kinship connections limits the potential for new ways of life. The literature addressed in this section highlights active negotiation, ritual performance, and legal recognition as unifying themes within the broad possibilities of queer kinship. This literature encouraged me to be aware of these potential themes within participant submissions. These are not the only important aspects of queer life and kinship that I must consider, however. Every place has a distinct historical and present context of queer life and community. Thus, it is important to locate my research in the context of Halifax.

2.3: We are Here, We are Queer: LGBTQ+ and Polyamorous Kinship in Halifax, Nova Scotia

In the following section, I will outline the queer history that Rebecca Rose (2019) records in her book, *Before the parade: A history of Halifax's gay, lesbian, and bisexual communities: 1972-1984.* In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a flourishing of Canadian organizations formed to fight for LGBT rights (Rose 2019). Toronto Gay Action demonstrated before the Canadian Parliament against the higher age of consent for queer sexual acts, and for the reduction of police brutality, among other causes. Other action for civil rights at the time included The Nova Scotia Project, which challenged racism across areas such as education and housing. The methods used by this and other preceding civil rights organizations, such as sending a variety of couples to view the same housing to determine if the landlord was discriminating against marginalized groups, became models for subsequent queer activism (Rose 2019, 25).

In 1969, Canada passed amendments to the Criminal Code that ostensibly decriminalized homosexuality based on the idea that the government should play no role in the bedrooms of their people. However, this did not affect laws that

criminalized sex acts, such as laws against buggery, or anal penetration, and gross indecency, or those which criminalized homosexual acts that fall short of actual intercourse (Rose 2019, 24). Because these laws did not address identity, but rather the specific acts commonly engaged in by the LGBTQ+ community, gay sex remained functionally illegal. In short, it became okay to be gay if one was fully private about it– and other than being gay– conformed to societal expectations such as living with an exclusive sexual partner.

In Halifax in the 1960s and 1970s, gay men found community via cruising. Cruising is the act of moving through public space seeking sexual contact– particularly favored areas in Halifax included the Public Gardens and Camp Hill Cemetery, both accessible by Spring Garden Road. The public nature of the cruising community made it a target even after homosexuality was ostensibly decriminalized (Rose 2019, 27). Lesbian women found community in university settings and in select bars and clubs, such as the beverage room at the Dresden Arms Hotel (Rose 2019, 31). For both gay men and lesbians, the locations of gatherings shifted frequently, depending on pressures from police and the public eye.

In 1972 the Gay Alliance for Equality (GAE) was founded, which created space for LGB people to be out, express themselves, and organize. GAE established a political agenda of getting involved in social matters that impacted the community and protecting themselves from the rampant queerbashing engaged in by police. At the time, a gay person could be fired, evicted, and beaten by authorities with no path for recompense. GAE aimed to stand up against this treatment (Rose 2019, 40). One of the first steps taken was to create the Gayline, a phone hotline staffed by volunteers a

few nights a week, that provided support for people struggling with being LGB and directed them to community resources (Rose 2019, 42). Despite GAE and their human rights complaints being dismissed by members of the Nova Scotia Human Rights Organization, they pursued actions such as pushing candidates for public office to state their views on gay liberation. GAE created a political action wing and fought to be able to promote the organization over public broadcasting. Gay and lesbian visibility in Halifax was further heightened by a battle with a bar called the Jury Room, which refused service to gay customers. GAE fought back by first organizing attempts to enter, and eventually by boycotting. The intentionally provoked refusal of service made clear to groups such as the Nova Scotia Human Rights Organization that queer people did, in fact, face discrimination (Rose 2019, 83).

Lesbians organized separately from gay men as well as with them. In 1978 the Atlantic Provinces Political Lesbians for Equality (APPLE) was formed. APPLE created a newsletter, raised money via bake-sales and fundraisers at queer gathering spots such as the bar the Turret, and sought political advancement for queer women (Rose 2019, 93). However, APPLE was short-lived, due to internal struggles over the direction they should take (Rose 2019, 95). GAE remained the most visible and active LGB community organization in Halifax. One way they secured this position was via the Turret (Rose 2019, 97).

A major location in the queer history of Halifax, the bar/community center known as the Turret hosted its first event in 1976. The Turret was run by GAE, in a building that is now the Khyber Centre, a queer-run non-commercial art gallery that houses contemporary visual art pieces. People who went to the Turret describe it as a

place of freedom and report that entering the space had a sense of coming home. The Turret was the location of many drag performances, and this provided both entertainment for bar patrons and, importantly, public self-expression (Rose 2019, 100, 106). As with many of the spaces and organizations in that period of Halifax history, The Turret was a primarily White space. Eventually, GAE struggled to balance running the bar and their political activities. Around the same time that this conflict of aims came to a head, GAE lost the lease on the Turret space and important community space was lost. GAE soon opened a replacement bar, Rumours. This establishment could not live up to the magic of the Turret in the minds of many, but nonetheless was important for giving queer people space to dance, gather, and express themselves (Rose 2019, 122, 125).

The loss of the Turret sparked attempts to recreate queer space to regain the sense of community The Turret had provided. In the 1980s, Jim McSwain and Robin Metcalfe co-curated an art show entitled 'Art by Gay Men,' which included pottery, paintings, videos, and stained glass (Rose 2019, 138). The second 'Art by Gay Men' exhibition was mentioned in a 1983 Dalhousie Gazette, which states that "the work of eight artists from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick was represented…Art by gay men 2 is an [independent], co-operative exhibition" (The Dalhousie Gazette). This art show is important to my research because it highlights that queer people have found power in creating and displaying art before academic interest-shifted to such topics.

The diversification of queer community spaces led to a desire to bring people together. Coupled with the changes in law, public gathering became more feasible for many queer people. In 1982, Canada introduced the Charter of Rights and Freedoms,

which banned discrimination on grounds such as sex and orientation (Rose 2019, 156). The first Pride March in Halifax was in 1988 (Halifax Pride). It announced: We are here, and we will not be invisible.

Certainly, queer kinships existed in Halifax before they became more visible in the 1970s. However, these kinship connections did not catch the public eye. The organized and visible presence of a few queer people empowered a wider group of people to accept themselves and develop queer kinships of their own. For instance, drag self-expression and community, is a highly visible queer art form, even as individual performers may not be easily identifiable when out of drag (Farrier 2017).

It is important to note that while *Before the Parade* does little to cover transgender history in Halifax. This is not because trans people are not an important part of the community. Rather, Rose explains, it was beyond the scope of the book, which provides location-specific information about the history and setting of the LGB community in Halifax. Additionally, even if Rose had chosen to include transgender narratives in her text, she likely would not be suitably equipped or had access to such information, as it goes beyond the sexuality labels.

The people Rose spoke to as contemporary elders of the LGB community in Halifax report that when they began their LGB journeys, they lacked activist elders for mentorship (Rose 2019, 19). Community members such as Anne Fulton, a founding member of GAE, Robin Metcalfe, a writer and community organizer as well as local LGBTQ+ archivist and historian, and Randy Kennedy, a GAE member who performed as a drag queen at the Turret and Rumours, each played a role in creating-Halifax queer community as it exists presently (Rose 2019, 1-3). The presence of queer elders matters

because they prove to emerging generations that queer identities and kinships are not limited to youth and affirm the viability of making queer futures. It was activist work such as this that moved the LGBTQ+ community in Halifax toward hard-earned greater social acceptance and rights. The communities Rose describes implicitly contain kinship networks. For instance, the mentor-mentee relationship implied in discussions of elders and youth is a form of intergenerational kinship, and the draw the queer people feel to dance, socialize, and create together is a driving force of creating kinships between community members. The elders Rose spoke to directed her to others that they have bonds with, indicating close and potentially kinship connections between them. It is important to understand that queer activism was and is rife with internal conflicts; the fact that it continues emphasizes kinship values such as those found in research by Willes and colleagues (2019) of love, acceptance, and support.

In her MA thesis, Brooke Edwards (2020) writes about the experiences of polyamorous families in Halifax. This is one of very few accounts of polyamory in Halifax, and Edwards creates a strong contemporary image of polyamorous life in the city. Edwards defines polyamory to entail intense emotional commitments to numerous people. While other forms of non-monogamy may have a solely or primarily sexual nature, polyamory is often defined by the presence of emotional connection (Edwards 2020, 1-2). Edwards explored the navigation of personal fulfillment and commitment by Halifax residents in polyamorous relationships and found that the poly people she spoke to in her research placed a high value on respect, communication, and conscious personalization of each relationship. For instance, a participant named May stated that polyamory was about

> “welcoming any type of love that's out there. So sometimes it's romantic relationships, sometimes it’s sexual relationships, sometimes it's just friendships. But it's not limiting any type of love for me, so I just let a relationship develop as it's going to” (Edwards, 2020, 53).

May does not limit her relationship with another person based on a predetermined expectation. She notes that her current relationships are considered, and that being open to new relationships does not mean disregarding those already in her life. This aligns with Mays belief that polyamory is about welcoming a variety of loves, and the overall themes of respect and communication found in Edwards research. May allows openness in relationships to develop as platonic, romantic, sexual, or a mix; the ways in which new relationships develop are shaped by the boundaries and expectations of the relationships that are already present. This is a valuable insight for understanding LGBTQ+ kinships and its interconnections with polyamory; research on queer families finds an emphasis on the friendship ethic, wherein responsibility is seen as a choice and ideal within platonic, romantic, and sexual contexts. Within these queer kinship labels, everyone is tasked with making their own choices about each relationship in their lives, with conscious attention and respect to those that are already present, often creating individualized dynamics that do not conform to hetero- and mono- normative expectations.

Edwards provides support for a joint discussion of polyamorous and LGBTQ+ communities by drawing on Roseneil and Budgeon (2004), who argue that for those at the shifting edge of social change, there is a centering of friendship, and decentering of sexual relationships. Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) identify a gap in research regarding

the intimacy cultures and practices of those living in such groups. This suggests that similarities in polyamorous and LGBTQ+ communities' subcultural status legitimizes their joint discussion.

Altogether, this history of Halifax and inclusion of poly and LGBTQ+ people locates my research within a rich history and present of queer kinships. The emotional ties that make up kinships are powerful in shaping social realities as well as interpersonal dynamics. Given that art is a potent expression of emotion, to explore queer kinships through the venue of art presents a valuable opportunity for insight.

2.4: Arts-Based Research

Denielle Elliott and Dara Culhane (2017) argue that anthropological research is a process of co-constructing-knowledge with research subjects; additionally, it is always partial, as each scholar chooses a path through which they explore. Because anthropology explores complex practices in an in-depth, qualitative way, it creates space for nuance and embraces potentially contradictory or paradoxical types of knowledge.

Creativity and arts-based research methods bring value to anthropology because, as Ellen Dissanayake (2015) writes, art is a behavior and practice found throughout human history. Dissanayake (2015) defines art as a universal human experience of 'making special,' and argues that artistic expression can and should be used as a gateway into personal experience. Recently, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has embraced 'research-creation' wherein creative methods and academics are combined to support the development of knowledge. SSHRC specifies that the creative process must be "situated within the research activity

and produces critically informed work in a variety of media" (Government of Canada, 2021).

For instance, Karen Scott-Hoy (2003), writes about creating a painting to express knowledge generated during her research in Vanuatu, a small island nation in the South-West Pacific. Scott-Hoy engages in both artwork and the academic process to best present her research findings. Scott-Hoy chose to create an oil painting because she felt more traditional academic expressions lacked emotional depth, or 'heart connection', an aspect she judged to be vital. Much of Scott-Hoy's research was conducted in the interisland language, Bislama, and painting attempts to communicate information that would lose concepts and meanings if translated into English. By painting her insights, Scott-Hoy shifts priority away from textual communication to experience the benefits of visual alternatives (Scott-Hoy 2003). She writes (page 273):

> A tear formed in my eye, and I wiped it away with the back of my hand. It was painful recalling places and events.
>
> Using a small palette knife, I carefully placed a tear in my eye.
>
> One was not enough.
>
> I painted more tears falling from my eyes.

Scott-Hoy is not only engaging with her positionality during the research, but also using her perspective and feelings in the process of representing her understandings (Scott-Hoy 2003). By having the textual representation of her work occur after the visual capturing of her knowledge, Scott-Hoy allows the emotional and embodied knowledge to come to the forefront, while still engaging in accepted and cutting-edge academic

processes (Dissanayake 2015, Government of Canada 2021). The combination of a visual and textual representation also serves to broaden the audience.

Scott-Hoy illustrates the power of arts-based research to communicate meaning beyond the verbal or easily tangible. Notably, Scott-Hoy's work anticipates categories later outlined by Blumenfeld-Jones (2015) such as 'artistic determining,' which asks questions such as: "What stands out as important to represent, and why?" (328). This is an intellectual process of reflection but uses artistic instinct to guide researchers toward understanding what makes a work feel whole and true (Blumenfeld-Jones 2015).

Artistic expression can extend beyond verbal or linguistic capabilities. Engaging with art as research allows for pre-or non-verbal expressions, which carry deep meaning, to be brought into anthropological research. In a 2020 study of children being raised in LGBTQ+ households, researchers asked the children to create drawings of their families. The drawing enabled researchers to examine complex interactions between social forces such as definitions of gender and sexuality, and sense of self. The children were not able to articulate such connections linguistically, but their drawing provided "alternate lines of empathy and understanding" (Dyer et al. 2020, 534). Dyer and colleagues propose that drawing be embraced as a research method "for its ability to express some of the enigmatic nature of children's experiences" (2020, 534). Importantly, Dyer and colleagues brought together the drawing and perspectives of children in queer families; they were able to identify narratives of belief about familial structures, shared disconnection from normative public understandings of family, and imagined futures of queer kinship (Dyer et al. 2020). Given its similarity to my research– that is, arts-based exploration of queer

kinship– the methods employed by Dyer and colleagues were of great assistance in my research design. They looked at the pieces both individually and collectively, which encouraged me to dig deeper into the collective ideas that my project could draw out.

Queer art embodies queer experience. In theory, this makes it possible for straight/non-queer viewers to experience the emotional valence of the queer kinships. It is also important to note that not all queer families are the same, and there will certainly be queer viewers. Impacts on queer viewers could include the alleviation queer from the burden of always self-representing in isolation. This project is therefore about engaging and sharing the emotional experience of queer kinship, regardless of the position of the viewer.

In "From Visual Maps to Installation Art: Visualizing Client Pathways to Social Services in Los Angeles" (Reshetnikov et al. 2017) the authors engaged with the visual maps focused people on in need of and seeking social services and the barriers they face because this form of knowledge representation "connects knowledge, lived experience, and stories." (Reshetnikov et al. 2017, 210). Here, creativity and arts-based methods were used in data collection and organization because they opened possibilities for new understandings at even the earliest stages of research. Eventually, this work became an art installation, wherein a space was transformed to engage and encourage people to think differently.

As audiences engage with art, such as work created by participants in the study by Reshetnikov et al. (2017), they emotionally connect to the issue of people in need of and seeking social services. Even if they are not part of that group,

audiences gain an understanding of the experience. This is a key aspect of the impact of art, and the use of arts-based research to facilitate individual and social change.

To illustrate this further, I present a portion of research by Silvio Machado (2019), who interviewed gay men who faced negative reactions from their parents when they came out, and from their interviews, composed interpretive poetry:

> "You don't have to
> stop saying I love
> you
> when you hang up
> the phone. I miss
> hearing that.
> And finally, no,
> *Don't ask, don't tell*
> does not apply
> between us. You
> don't have to ask,
> but I'm not holding back
> anymore for you."
> (Machado 2019, 857)

As a gay man who had himself faced parental rejection, Machado found poetry to be a genuine and effective expression of his own pain and turmoil and that-of his research subjects (Machado 2019). By using the emotionally evocative form of poetry, Machado increases the chances that readers would form a deep connection to his research

participants and topic. Having read this excerpt, I ask you to reflect on what it was like to read. What kind of feelings came up? When I read this section of poetry, I become aware of a hard feeling in my stomach, a fear of rejection for my queerness that lives deep within me. The first few times I read it, I cried in the library. I experienced mixed reactions to my coming out to my own family; they took a long time to believe me, but never stopped saying they loved me. Now, my queerness is accepted and visible part of me within my family, and I count myself lucky for that. I don't relate to every experience in the poem, but it evokes powerful emotion nonetheless. This form of knowledge translation for sharing data and research findings illustrates that art does not need to fill an immersive space to impact its audience.

As with all methods, arts-based research is not without its limitations. There is a risk of dismissing the possibilities of written expression. As seen above, Machado (2019) is effective in using written expression to convey the emotional force of parental rejection. Additionally, arts-based expressions such as the painting created by Scott-Hoy (2003) are contextualized and made accessible to a wider audience through the text that accompanies them. An image has different evocative meanings than written words; that doesn’t mean that it is inherently better for expressing a particular finding or experience.

Arts based research, if undertaken uncritically, risks being limited by the same systems that constrain all academic research and writing (Elliott & Culhane 2017). The usefulness of arts-based research in anthropology is also limited by the fact that even the most sincere, well-meaning attempts at creative collaboration can reproduce social hierarchies such as heteropatriarchy and white supremacy. The academic framework in which researchers work tends to reward the reduction of complex, relational, and

collective processes to a work with a single author. In this way, colonial relations are reproduced and disadvantaged populations are treated as a resource rather than as people with inherent value and important voices.

In her research, McLean (2022) interviewed a female activist who felt that white women who do research from a university base gain prestige from their work with racialized and marginalized communities, without benefiting those communities in a meaningful way. The woman recalls that in a particular case, “refugee and asylum-seeking women were invited to engage in arts-engaged research but were only compensated with transit fare and a free meal for their time and labour” (McLean 2022, 318). This is a visible pattern; queer, disabled, and racialized communities struggle-to balance their participation in research with short-term and casual work, as well as managing precarious assistance such as government disability support (MacKinnon et al. 2021). Community members who participate in research should be adequately compensated and acknowledged. Speaking to this project, my research is underfunded. I have the privilege of working from within a university, but my queerness in gender and sexuality, as well as a lack of permanent residency in Canada, place me at a systemic disadvantage. I dedicated most of the funds received directly to the participation honorarium. I received funding from the Graduate Student Research and Travel Fund to cover direct payments to participants. If a participant completed both the daily diary and the art, I compensated them with a token honorarium of $40 for their time.

Arts based research lends itself superbly to anthropological inquiry by engaging with human experience and expression beyond as well as within linguistic capacity,

creating potential for deeper connection between audience, participant, and researcher, as well as generating creative engagement for social change and space for ambiguity and further questioning.

Based on the extant scholarship, arts-based research is useful for generating new insights about queer kinship because being queer is an emotional experience as well as a practice and identity (Machado 2019). Art taps into the emotional aspects of queer kinship that may be difficult to verbalize, and art creates space in which an audience can be deeply engaged and encouraged to think differently (Dyer et al. 2020, Reshetnikov et al. 2017). By using artistic expression, I hope to produce insights into how the queer people of Halifax understand their kinships and see themselves included or excluded within the physical and metaphorical public space. I also aim to maintain and increase an understanding and acceptance of queer lives.

2.5: Toward Active Inclusivity in Thirdspaces: Libraries as Museums

According to Candlin and Larkin (2020), the modern museum is a space that A) holds and cares for objects long-term, B) is a notable departure from its surroundings in terms of visual appeal or layout, and C) is oriented towards public access and education. For instance, a historic home that is used to highlight local history in an urbanized or updated area meets these criteria. Candlin and Larkin's definition can be applied to library spaces, which care for physical as well as virtual books, are distinct in terms of layout due to the storage requirements of large numbers of books, and perhaps most obviously, are clearly focused on public access and education. The physical presence of art, historic objects, and/or books is an important part of the definition by Candlin and Larkin. Museums hold power in their ability to display physical objects as well as

present the stories that make those objects meaningful. Physical displays of objects or images are widely understood to have a ‘rawness,’ a capacity to have an intense, stirring impact on viewers (Bell 2022). While ‘museum’ is the preferred term for such a display space in the literature I engage, these methods and complications also apply to spaces such as libraries and community centers that fit the definition by Candlin and Larkin.

Spaces such as museums and libraries are also theorized in anthropological literature as ‘thirdspace’ and as ‘sacred space.’ Thirdspace describes spaces in which people experience altered awareness (Bøe et al. in Bjerregaard 2019). They are not places where people live, but places through which people pass, defined by their transitional nature in the perception of the individual, and often used as spaces of leisure and economic activity (Bøe et al. in Bjerregaard 2019). Museums may also be defined as sacred spaces in that they are spaces with inherent meaning (beyond considerations of ‘usefulness’) that link people to systems and understandings beyond themselves (Allen & Anson 2005). Allen and Anson describe sacred spaces as places “where we might go to imagine other possibilities to the one we live now, and also what we choose to carry from the past to give to the future” (Allen & Anson 2005, 37).

According to Allen & Anson (2005) and Bøe et al. in Bjerregaard (2019) museums hold potential as spaces in which people may experience altered awareness and connect to objects and experiences greater than themselves. However, museums are not the only spaces that fit this criterion; third spaces include airports and other transportation hubs, shopping areas, and non-residential community centers (Allen & Anson 2005, Bøe et al. in Bjerregaard 2019). In "The Power of Place: Claiming Urban Landscapes as People's History,” Dolores Hayden (1994) writes that many buildings

are overlooked for preservation because their history is that of women and racialized communities. Hayden writes about a project based around a Black woman named Biddy Mason. Mason's life--which Hayden traced from diaries, Mormon records of colonization, and local newspapers--included a successful midwifery practice and a homestead of her own. Although the building Biddy Mason occupied is gone, "The Power of Place" project created representations of her story in space near its historic location. Displays include an assemblage of motifs likely present in the original building, a tribute to Mason installed in an elevator lobby, and images set in limestone of historic papers that document her life, such as the deed to her homestead (Hayden 1994).

Having established that museum theory can apply-to spaces beyond those explicitly labeled as museums, it is time to address libraries specifically. As stated, libraries care for physical as well as virtual books, have a distinct layout due to the storage requirements of books, and focus on public access and education, placing them within the framework of a modern museum as defined by Candlin and Larkin (2020). Albright (2006) writes that a library holds "the essence of a society translated into text," and argues that libraries function, at least in part, as a mirror that reflects the society in which it resides (Albright 2006, 54). Not only does a library reflect the present realities of a community, it also has the power to make positive change by providing access to materials without discrimination or prejudice, and/or to provide needed context to material that contains anti-queer ideas.

Libraries can also be microcosms wherein people face the dominant cultural and social powers, such as hetero- and cis-normativity, that determine the accessibility and

visibility of queer resources (Bain and Podmore 2020, Albright 2006). As repositories and access points of knowledge, libraries are vital spaces. The inclusion and safety of queer populations in any given library is dependent on how visibly welcomed and represented they are. For instance, a library may have limited LGBTQ+ materials, these resources may not be clearly labeled, and/or placed in less visible and trafficked spaces. Often, a library being a space of LGBTQ+ inclusion is the result of insider activist librarians who place queer literature and other resources in visible areas and create and maintain inclusive programming options (Bain and Podmore 2020).

In 2021, the Halifax Public Library chose to keep a transphobic book on its shelves, despite backlash. This resulted in the official Halifax Pride distancing themselves from the library. Some community members argued that keeping the book on the shelf could be used as an opportunity to have an open discussion, while transgender people pointed out that their existence is not up for debate. The library stated that they were working to identify additional resources and new ways to promote trans affirming works, as well as create space for the transgender community (CBC 2021). As a transgender nonbinary person myself, I am saddened about the accessibility of transphobic texts, and deeply hope that no trans youth are harmed as a result of it; as a researcher and public citizen, I appreciate the value in having these conversations openly, instead of behind closed doors where hateful ideas will only be magnified.

Public libraries often serve a significant community role. While a historic home or art museum may house important objects and provide educational opportunities, public libraries also provide space for people to simply be. They may have seating areas, internet access, and power outlets available for public use without requiring

payment or that people engage in a specific activity (Macrae et al. 2013). Additionally, public libraries may serve as a safe space in times of personal and community upheaval. For instance, during the June 2023 wildfires in the Halifax, Nova Scotia area, the Halifax Public Library system specified on their website that their locations across the HRM were open to provide "comfort in reading familiar stories in the books you borrow, cool down and seek refuge from smokey conditions in one of our air-conditioned branches, or ask staff to help you find trusted and valuable resources to answer your most pressing questions" (*Your Library*).

Spaces purported to be of refuge are not always functionally so. The Salvation Army, an evangelical organization which claims to provide shelter to those in need, is notoriously transphobic, for instance denying trans women access because of a lack of gender-confirmation surgery (Duffy 2023). In 2012, an Australian senior official of the Salvation Army went so far as to say that sexually active LGBT people should be put to death (Park, 2021). Halifax Public Library, by opening itself as a space of refuge that visibly includes LGBTQ+ people, is placing itself in opposition to such hateful exclusion. This is important because when marginalized groups such as LGBTQ+ and polyamorous people are visibly included in spaces being used for refuge and education, those groups are established as a legitimate and accepted population of the community being served.

Of course, it is important to emphasize that the public spaces discussed above, including museums and libraries, must grapple with their own contributions to inequity when seeking to create inclusive spaces and tell inclusive stories. Museums have a long, complex, and colonial history of reflecting the dominant culture's perception of those

considered other. Despite this history, museums, libraries, and other locations of cultural display hold potential for telling inclusive stories (Allen & Anson 2005).

2.6: Considerations of Queer Inclusion

If historically marginalized communities are to be more widely seen, understood, and embraced, it is vital that inclusive stories be told in museums and other public spaces. Highlighting difference as strength allows for accepting mindsets to be fostered, and for marginalized groups to see themselves represented. Thorner (2022) argues that telling diverse and inclusive stories legitimizes the perspectives from which they come, and allows the practices and structures contained within them to become newly relevant and powerful. My Master's project aimed to support the telling of stories about queer kinship, thus supporting the legitimacy of queer kinships.

Curators, anthropologists, staff at historic sites, and anyone else seeking to tell inclusive stories, must listen to the people they seek to represent. Additionally, I encourage you to recall the previously mentioned community-organized 'Art by Gay Men' exhibitions which did not rely on existing systems of authority for their self-expression (Rose 2019). While the literature such as Candlin and Larkin (2020), Allen and Anson (2005) and Ferentinos (2015), focus on spaces such as museums which have mediating authority as a major aspect of their organization, queer people are not reliant on these spaces to express themselves. Rather, those in positions of authority should seek to tell inclusive stories as a way of magnifying marginalized stories, not to take over these narratives for themselves.

Allen and Anson (2005) emphasize that museums should serve as spaces wherein various cultural groups are empowered. According to anthropological

literature, this empowerment can occur when there is community involvement, there are interactive elements to exhibitions, and with acknowledgement of the importance of oral and visual histories. For instance, Susan Ferentinos (2015) writes of an exhibition entitled *Out In Chicago* wherein a variety of LGBTQ+ kinship structures and relationships were showcased. Its representations of families were based on conversations with both cis-straight people and LGBTQ+ people. The cis-straight allies wanted there to be a notable focus on acceptance in families of origin, while the LGBTQ+ people advocated for a larger and more complex image that included the rejections that continue to place LGBTQ+ youth on the streets and other such situations. Importantly, when designing the exhibit, the LGBTQ+ voices and desires were given priority (Ferentinos 2015).

Martin Zebracki, Freek Janssens, and Robert Vanderbeck (2021) emphasize that including one group does not inherently include marginalized groups that overlap. For instance, a space may represent and welcome cisgender, white gay people, but exclude transgender, Black, and bisexual communities. The Homomonument, erected in the Netherlands, consists of three 10-meter pink triangles which form a large triangle. In Nazi Germany, pink triangles were used to mark homosexual men. More than 50,000 homosexual men were persecuted, and often killed in concentration camps, after being marked with this symbol (Rorholm & Gambrell 2019). Over time, the pink triangle has been reclaimed by the LGBTQ+ community as a symbol of solidarity and collective memory (Rorholm & Gambrell 2019). The Homomonument is a deeply symbolic construction that honors LGBTQ+ history and struggles. The space around the Homomonument also serves as a gathering space for queer people (Zebracki et al.

2021). While there is overlap between many communities under the umbrella term 'LGBTQ+,' efforts must be made to ensure stories are intersectional (Zebracki et al. 2021).

Martin Zebracki and his co-authors quote a Black queer woman who questions the inclusivity of the Homomonument as a space for queer gathering:

> If I, as a Black woman, am not included in certain things, how can the monument be for everyone? I think that the idea is that it's for everyone, but I don't think that everyone feels it's for everyone…I don't see myself represented in this struggle, in this history (Zebracki et al. 2021, 20-21).

The decisions made in organizing gatherings, for instance around music, food, drinks, and those invited to volunteer, are based in the culture of the group with the most power in this setting– the white, cisgender, gay men. White cisgender lesbians also experience greater inclusion in Homomonument activities than transgender and BIPOC people but are less likely to feel safe and accepted than their male community members (Zebracki et al. 2021). The nuances of inclusivity must be actively kept in mind throughout the process of planning and storytelling, as systems privilege some groups (e.g., white men) automatically unless someone intentionally intervenes.

Thinking about queer inclusion in museum spaces invites discussion of queer theory to those spaces as well. Robert Mills (2008) argues that queer theory, which looks at gender and sexuality in historical and cultural context, can unsettle the idea that museums serve as normalizing entities. In part, this stems from the fact that queer theory disrupts the normalization narrative which traces the history of sexuality on a steadily moving path from repression to acceptance to liberation. As emphasized in

Ferentinos (2015) and Zebracki et al. (2021), one identity group cannot capture the full range of experiences within a given group. For instance, a discussion of transgender experiences may de-emphasize subjects racial and ethnic identities, making it difficult to place that discussion on a scale of greater or lesser normalization of their experiences. Mills suggests that museums should be spaces in which knowledge is multidimensional and reflective (Mills 2008).

The human experience itself is complex, and storytelling and story hearing engage with our complexity in ways that certain types of spaces can support or deny (Allen & Anson 2005, Bøe et al. in Bjerregaard 2019). To tell inclusive stories, it is important to look closely while also asking questions and allowing others to ask questions. Likewise, one must be reflective, allow for change, make room to hear criticism by others and use feedback as well as the stories themselves to inform the process. Curating an exhibition of the artwork created for this research in a public library has the potential to create feelings of belonging and empowerment for the artist/research participant, while expanding audience knowledge of and emotional connection to LGBTQ+ and polyamorous communities.

Chapter 3: Methods

My research investigated queer kinship through the lens of artistic expression. I engaged with individual understandings shared by participants as well as theoretical and academic understandings of public space, display, and representation. This research was conducted from a social constructionist perspective, which focuses on the action of *doing,* rather than a state of *being*. This returns to themes of intentionality, ritual, and negotiation as key in queer kinships; the kinships themselves are acts of doing, not concrete states of being. This study is qualitative arts-based action research. I asked participants (members of queer families) to complete a fourteen-day Daily Diary as they created a piece of art about their family. Daily Diary data allowed a peek into the day-to-day life of my participants as well as gathering broader information about their conceptions of their kinships. I undertook a qualitative analysis of participants' Daily Diary entries, which were drawn on to write this thesis.

At the time of writing, the display of the art is still in progress, being placed on display in the Halifax Central Public Library from March 10th to April 13th, 2024. As such, no analysis of the exhibition process can be included, except speculatively. Nonetheless, it is important that participants were creating art with public display in mind.

3.1: Recruitment

I recruited individuals who consider themselves part of a queer family. I chose to use the term ‘family’ in my recruitment and questions to participants instead of the term ‘kinship’ because the non-academic pool from which I was recruiting were unlikely to be familiar with anthropology terms like ‘kinship networks’. Participants had to be able

to communicate in English and have consistent access to the internet to fill out the Daily Diary. Within my operating definition of queer kinship, I included monogamous gay and lesbian partners, polyamorous families with some combination of hetero- and homo-erotic, romantic, or platonic commitments, and families in which some people were transgender and/or nonbinary. Participants were included based on self-identification as a member of a queer family. I collected information about participants' families but did not turn participants away if their understanding of queer kinship did not fit my initial conception of the term. I wanted to allow the voices and experiences of queer families to shine; thus, it was important to be open to iterations of queer families that might not have occurred to me. The exclusion criteria of my project were the following: if I was at capacity and had no more space in the research, interest was expressed too late for complete participation, or if respondents expressed-interest in a mocking, homophobic, or otherwise trolling manner. In alignment with literature on arts-based research discussed in Coemans and Hannes (2017), I aimed to recruit 10 to 14 participants, as I estimated this would allow me to effectively use the space reserved for display in the Central Branch of the Halifax Public Library. In total, eleven participants completed this project, and their pieces worked well to fill the space.

When a potential participant reached out to me, I asked them to complete a short screening questionnaire (Appendix 3), including questions such as 'Why are you interested in participating in this project?', 'Please describe your typical form of artistic expression/interests.' and 'Do you have any questions regarding the project?' I engaged in snowball sampling by asking participants on the screening form if they know anyone else who may be interested in participating, including others within their family. Once a

potential participant completed the screening form, and I confirmed they are eligible based on the criteria above, their consent to participate was obtained by signature (see consent form, Appendix 4).

Soon after receiving Ethics Board approval (Dal REB # 2023-6774), I sent my flier and information to Halifax Research Studies, an Instagram account that posts recruitment calls, and received at least one participant directly from it. I also hung posters in Glitter Bean, and The Central Public Library.

Within a week, I received an email from Kirk Furlotte, the Regional Manager of Atlantic Canada Community-Based Research Centre (CBRC). According to their website, CBRC "promotes the health of people of diverse sexualities and genders through research and intervention development…community-led research, knowledge exchange… transforming ideas into actions that make a difference in our communities." (https://www.cbrc.net/about). Kirk spread my recruitment information through his personal and professional networks and scheduled me to speak at 2QTHINKS, a virtual queer health meeting, on Tuesday, March 26, 2024.

Interest in the first week was almost overwhelming. I received an enormous amount of support for queer community members, including the librarian who assisted me in photocopying the first round of my fliers. She was enthusiastic about the project and gave me 14 free copies. The Public Library's enthusiasm for this research was evident in the fact that they selected and enlarged my poster, placing it more visibly on an otherwise clear column. To see a digital version of the poster referred to here, see Appendix 2.

Starting in the second week of recruitment, I posted fliers in Uncommon Grounds, Venus Envy, Autism Nova Scotia, and The Loop (a local yarn store), as well as sending a virtual copy to Dr. Margaret Robinson. I sent a flier to organizers of the NSCAD Queer Collective via the social media app Discord and sent my information to the Artistic Co-Directors of Eyelevel, Sally Wolchyn-Raab & Cinthia Arias Auz. Eyelevel is an artist-run space that "supports the production and presentation of socially engaged artistic practices." (http://eyelevel.art/about). As I continued to send information out, interest was steady, with approximately two interested emails per week.

By October 26, 2023, I had four completed submissions, and preliminary analysis completed on the first of these. Around this time, I distributed fliers at a pop-up art market, and at Maneland Hair, a nonbinary hair shop. In early November of 2023, a few people who had reached out early sent me their signed consent forms, and by November 7th, 2023 I had five completed participants, with four initial analyses complete and preliminary overall analysis begun. I closed recruitment on November 25th 2023. This closing was earlier than I had anticipated. One participant entered later than this, an exception made based on their helpfulness in earlier recruitment efforts, and the intensity of their interest. Eleven participants completed this project. Ending recruitment early helped the project remain manageable. Expressions of interest that were expressed after the cut-off date had their emails added to a private list to be contacted regarding future research opportunities regarding queer kinship and art.

3.2: Data Collection

Participants admitted to the study were asked to fill out 14 daily diary entries. They did so in spaces of their choosing, over the course of two weeks. I chose the daily

dairy method because it allows for insight into the contexts of the participants as they create their art and provides information about internal shifts in their perceptions of kinship on a day-to-day basis (Reis, 2012, Bolger & Rafaeli 2003). I used daily diary entries to contextualize the individual artworks and-to draw out themes of queer kinships across the participant group. Participants were anonymous, with the option to have their name associated with their daily diary entries and artwork should they desire to do so. Given that this research is about queer visibility, six out of eleven participants wanted to have their art displayed with their name. Unless it was directly relevant to the analysis, I did not disclose whether a participant used a pseudonym or not.

After a participant completed the screening form and consent form, they were sent a OneDrive link to access an anonymized document in which to fill out their daily diary entries. This ensured that only the participants and researcher were able to access the daily diary entries, and that the document in which the data is stored primarily traced back to me, the researcher. If a participant missed more than two entries/days in a row, they were sent a reminder email.

Each daily diary entry had three questions. The first was required, and changed daily; examples included ‘How do you define your family? Where do you draw a line between family and non-family?’ and ‘How do you define public? For instance, this project culminates with a display in a library; in what ways would you consider that space more or less public than a cafe, living space, or a city sidewalk?’ For a full list of questions, see Appendix 5. The second question alternated days. On odd numbered days, I asked ‘How are you feeling about your family at this moment? For instance, are you feeling connected, disengaged, comfortable?’ and on even numbered days I asked ‘How

are you feeling about your artwork for this project at this moment? For instance, are you engaged, frustrated, excited?' This was done with the intention of keeping art and family at the forefront of participants' minds during the research. Lastly, each day, I asked 'Is there anything else you want me to know about your family, your artwork, or this experience?' This option gave participants space to write what was on their mind that could not be addressed in the questions and provided additional context for their other responses and art.

The expectation was that participant art would be complete and submitted to me at the end of the two weeks of daily diary entries. If a participant's art was electronic, participants emailed it to me; if it was physical, we arranged a time and place to meet so I could pick up their art. In general, I expected participants to provide and use their own art supplies because I was not limiting their modality to any one type of art, and I wanted them to create something they loved. This was most likely to happen with materials and supplies with which they were familiar and likely to own already.

After a participant had delivered their art and completed all daily diary entries, they were asked to sign the Finished Art Release Form (Appendix 6), confirming their consent to display their art. It also asked how they wish to receive the $40 compensation, with the two options being E-Transfer or electronic gift card to the business of their choice. They received this compensation upon signing the document. Lastly, the document asked if they would like to have their art returned to them after the display ended. If they chose this option, I retained a picture of the art for future reference. If the final art piece included potentially identifying details about a child,

they were sent an additional consent form to certify that the art could be displayed (Appendix 7).

Participants were given the opportunity to have their art returned to them after the display ended; only one opted to do so. The other pieces were donated to The ArQuives, a Canadian archive that focuses on LGBTQ2+ information and materials in any medium, by and about community members. I have retained images of the art, and I may engage with both the art and diary entries in future publications, teaching, and research contexts. In future uses, I will identify participants by initials rather than name.

The production and display of art was suitable for my research because it created emotional meaning and connection between individuals; it could build an image of an internal world and reveal insights into the individual and the social spaces they inhabit (Willes et al., 2019). For instance, in arts-based research conducted at a LGBTQ+ Pride celebration by Willes and colleagues (2019), the researchers found themes of *love, acceptance*, and *support*, encompassed under the larger theme of *no matter what*. Participants in Willes et al. placed an emphasis on individual characteristics rather than biological or legal ties. This was evident in the artwork, which depicted families engaging in activities together. That highlighted time together as important, and that the roles played by individuals mattered more than bio-legal relationships. Additionally, some drawings included multiple distinct family units, suggesting that kinship relationships were not limited to one group. Some extended their kinship to those who had died, typically depicted as angels-with halos and/or wings. In short, art allowed Willes and colleagues to get at the core of the kinship connections experienced and

participated in by the people at this Pride celebration and allowed for insight into the structure and emotional components involved (Willes et al., 2019). Similarly, I anticipated that the art I put on display in the library would contribute to viewers' understanding of the internal worlds of queer kinships. This research also guided me to ask my participants specifically about the activities they engage in together as part of their family time.

3.3: Art Display

The context in which a display is made is a vital part of the exhibit itself. Understanding the role of the library for queer communities in Halifax is important to achieve the study aims of increasing positive queer visibility and affirming public inclusion.

Opened in 2014, the Halifax Central library is located near two important landmarks, the Halifax Citadel (a National Historic site of fortifications) and Halifax harbor. The Central Library contains two cafes, an auditorium, and community rooms as well as an extensive selection of books. It is connected to space outside by walls of glass that provide easy lines of sight into and out of the building. With the mission to support life-long learning, the library wants to encourage connection and community (Nevárez 2021). It is an overall queer friendly space in that it contains many texts which positively portray LGBTQ+ people and families, both fiction and non-fiction, and has gender-neutral bathrooms available (*Central Library*).

The library primarily serves two groups of people. First, there are those who see the library as an extension of their living space, and regularly spend time there. Secondly, there are those who use the library for literature, and other resources such as

DVDs, and may visit less frequently. Those who visit the library consistently have strong and positive emotional ties to the space (Macrae et al. 2013). Macrae and colleagues (2013) were specifically writing about the previous library building in downtown Halifax, the Spring Garden Road Memorial Library. Nonetheless, it is likely that the same holds true for the new Central Library. By placing my final thesis display of queer kinship art in the Halifax Central Public Library, I aim to tap into the library as a thirdspace wherein individuals are placed in a state of altered or heightened awareness, and experiences of knowledge expansion are made special (Allen & Anson 2005, Dissanayake 2015).

My agreement with the Halifax Central Public Library stated that I had access to the circular, 2D display area located in the back left corner of the first floor for display of my Masters' thesis on the topic of queer kinship. At the time of writing, the display of the art is still in progress. This display began on March 10th of 2024, and continued until April 13th. With prior communication, I had access to the Library on Sunday mornings between 10am and noon (staff hours) to install and edit the display (See Appendix 1).

As previously stated, exhibiting the artwork resulting from this research in public space has the potential to foster feelings of belonging and empowerment for the artists, while expanding audience knowledge of and emotional connection to LGBTQ+ and polyamorous communities. There were eleven submissions overall, two physical and nine digital. I had the nine pieces that were submitted digitally printed onto foamcore by The Printing House in Halifax for the display. While the artworks themselves are displayed with minimal individual contexts, consisting of the first name and pronouns of

the participants who created it, the display was clearly labeled as being made up of queer family art, and some text about the project itself was made clearly visible. This was to provide context essential to understanding why this art matters.

Chapter 4: The Submissions

Once participants' art was submitted, I wrote out a description to summarize how I perceived the artwork using form analysis. Form analysis focuses on the way that details are organized, looking at the structure of the elements within an artwork (Munro 1943). I wrote in order of my own noticing, describing– as appropriate to the piece– the individuals pictured, their arrangement, the colors used, and elements such as flowers, animals, and the use of light. When describing the people pictured, I used terms such as ‘femme-presenting’ and ‘masc-presenting,’ and wrote pronouns as ‘[she/they]’ or ‘[he/they].’ Each participant was sent an analysis with these terms and had the chance to specify gendered terms or pronouns if they wanted to, but all chose to keep the descriptions as I had initially written them.

I engaged in a blend of thematic and narrative analysis. Thematic analysis entails looking at the data in terms of ongoing themes, such as those identified in Willes et al. (2019). By looking for and engaging with themes in the diary entries, I was able to get an understanding of overarching similarities and links between queer kinships. To do this, I use my initial analysis of the artwork and read the diary entries with an eye to repeating thoughts or words. I also used narrative analysis to look at participants’ diary entries. This approach focused on individual kinships and experiences as documented by participants and was used to create a frame that contextualizes the artwork.

I would like to emphasize the importance of the following paragraph to facilitate a clear understanding of the upcoming information and analysis. In the next section, I present the work by each participant, centering their voices. I have placed a page break

between each participant to not place artworks next to writing without a direct relationship. Where it is important, I have included contextual information, such as elaborating on popular culture media mentioned. While there is some interpretation in the section which looks at each artwork individually, the deeper connections and discussion of meanings is in the following section, labeled ‘Analysis.’ The usefulness of narrative analysis was limited by the length of diary entries; for those who wrote at length, I was able to create a stronger frame than for those who wrote minimally. This can also be seen in the length of each individual analysis; some participants have several pages, while others are addressed in a single page. Those with shorter direct analyses nonetheless have strong contributions to the discussion of artistic themes and kinship that takes place in combined analysis. The interpretation which directly follows each artwork is intended to focus in on individual details of the artworks, the noticing of which allows for connections to be drawn between them after each has been presented. I present each participant's artwork in the order that I received it. I encourage you to look at the art presented here on its own before reading my writing about it. Take it in: what stands out to you? Why? What feelings come up around each piece?

4.1: Wendy

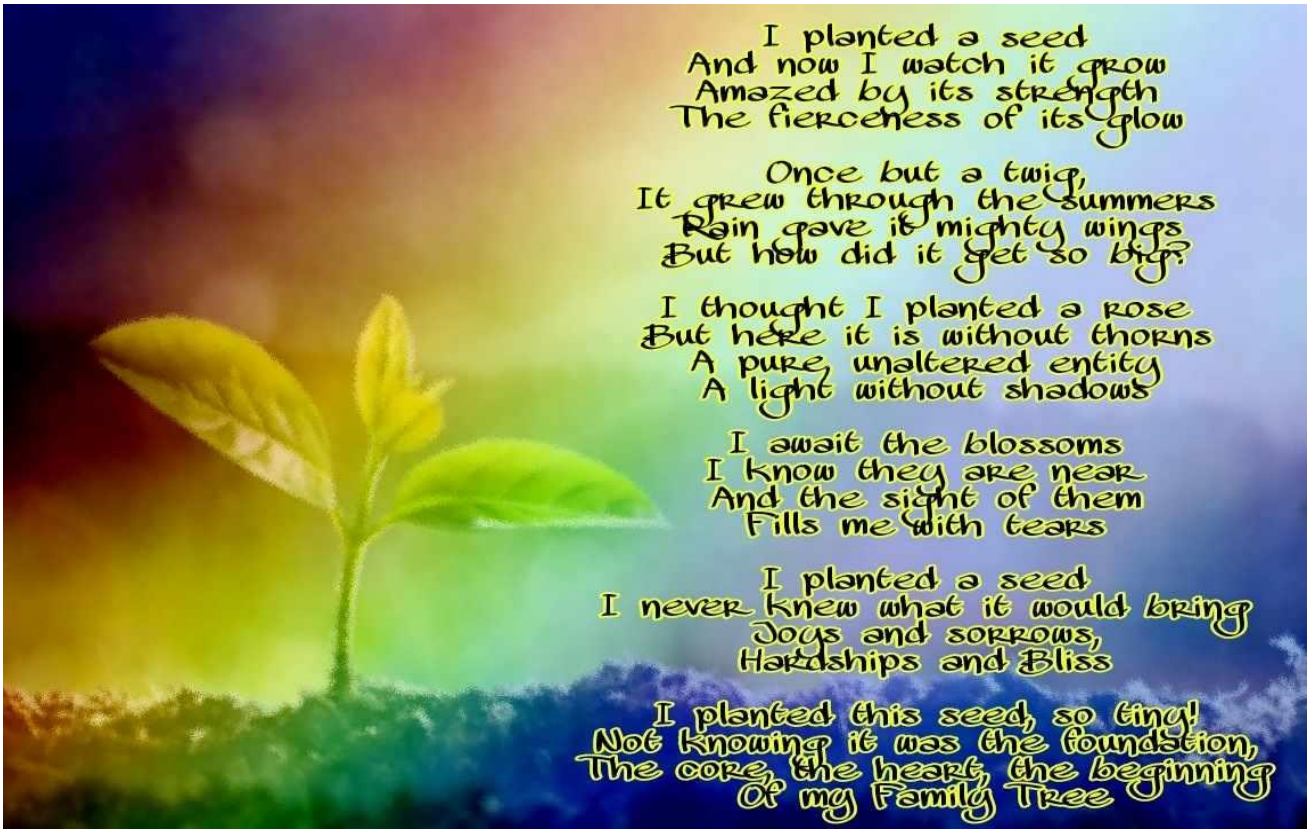

Figure 1: Wendy's Art

When analyzing this poem, I drew on my undergraduate training in creative writing and poetry analysis. First, I looked at its visual structure. Then, I looked at the content of the poem, including rhyme scheme, punctuation and capitalization, and themes. Themes were addressed in relationship to the other visual aspects of the piece, namely the colorful background and image of a seedling plant.

Wendy, who uses esse/esseself pronouns, has been married to esse's wife for five years with two children. 'Esse' is a neopronoun, a term used to describe pronouns that are not he/him, she/her, or they/them. Neopronouns are most often used by transgender, non-binary, and gender-nonconforming people who find that pronouns such as he/him, she/her, or they/them are inadequate to fully express their gender. Other neopronouns include ze/hir/hirs and ey/em/eir (Human Rights Campaign 2022). While 'esse/esseself'

may appear unfamiliar within this text, Wendy stated that “You used my pronouns perfectly. I feel honored to be a part of this” (Personal Communication, October 25 2023)

Esse wrote a poem that consists of 6 stanzas, with 4 lines each. The text is center-aligned but is not in the center of the page and is in a script-style font. While I was not able to identify the exact font in use, two that appeared close to it are the script fonts Mansalva and LeoHand, pictured respectively below.

Mansalva:

LeoHand:

These are less legible than the standard fonts used in writing, such as Times New Roman or Arial. In “Is less readable liked better? The case of font readability in poetry appreciation” by Gao et al. (2019), the authors write that their experiment suggests “breaking the natural flow of reading has an influence on the way people experience poetry” (15). By making the reader pause, the handwriting-like font not only clearly places a person behind the poem, but also makes the reader consider each word and line more closely. The lower legibility of esses font choice could make the art less accessible to readers with reading difficulties such as dyslexia or low vision.

The poem has a classic A-B-C-B rhyme opening, but overall, shows little attention to a specific rhyme scheme. Instead, themes and imagery of nature hold the consistent throughline. This poem is a ‘concrete poem,’ one which provides the reader with an image along with the text (Meyer 2017). Meyers writes that “concrete poetry may

be more easily digested than other forms of poetry because it enlists visual images to help shape the reader's interpretation" (50). In this case, the image of the rainbow and early plant growth set the theme of early ground in new kinship-making before the reader begins the poem itself.

There are line repetitions throughout the art. "I planted a seed" is the opening in line 1, and is also line 13, stanza 5. Line 21, stanza 6 is very similar, but exchanges 'a' for 'this.' These suggest that the previous line of thought has ended and draws the reader to treat this stanza as a new beginning. The repetition of lines seems to be a linguistic substitute for the use of periods.

There is a consistent use of commas throughout, and only two uses of ending punctuation. Line 8, stanza 2, reads "but how did it get so big?" and line 21, stanza 6 reads "I planted this seed, so tiny!" This creates a sense of wonderment. There is excitement and reflection, but without an ending such as a period. This is a mirroring of esse's family; Wendy has been married to esse's wife for five years, and they have two children together. Both children have the same father, and each parent carried one child. The mirroring here is in that as a family, they are open to the possibility of more children, and while acknowledging that that would require another person, esse writes that

> "I do not see myself with anyone else, and I feel very bonded to my lover. We are one." (Diary Entry 4)

There is excitement, reflection, and possibility in esse's family that can be seen in the poem, all the way down to the use of punctuation, or lack thereof.

There are notable capitalizations in the middle of lines: "Rose" (line 9, stanza 3), "Bliss" (line 20, stanza 5), and "Family Tree" (Line 24, stanza 6). In diary Entry 2, esse

writes that “Art is what binds us to Nature, because it is the closest we get to true creation.” The word ‘Nature’ is also capitalized mid-sentence in entries 6 and 9, when discussing family time. The capitalization of the word Nature personifies the dispersed and abstract natural world, setting it up as a being which Wendy relates to and engages with. As in the poem, esse uses mid-sentence capitalization in esse’s diaries to place emphasis and power within certain words.

Wendy has a deep connection to the natural world, perhaps even viewing it as a being in and of itself.

> “I am trying to feel my way through many things, and the autumn colors are helping in that sense. They calm me, make me feel the ever renewed circle. Life, waning into death, back to spring and rebirth…” (Diary Entry 3)

The theming of this poem is not a one-off noticing; it is part of an abiding understanding of esse’s position in the world.

This poem invokes a familiar image of the family tree and is a reflection on beginning. This is echoed in the use of seedling on the image on the left side. The background is a rainbow gradient, invoking the colors of the Pride Flag. The yellow of the rainbow is positioned across the plant, suggesting both the sunlight and rain needed for growth.

Wendy responded to Daily Diary prompts robustly and with reflection. Esse found filling out entries to be fulfilling throughout the 14 days, writing that

> “this diary has made me feel ideas, a way to perhaps express what I am feeling, what I mean, and make others feel it as well.” (Diary Entry 2)

In another entry, esse wrote,

"I like the way this diary asks me to think" (Diary Entry 11)

In the last entry, Wendy wrote,

"Oh I can't believe it's already over!...I learned to express myself about things that aren't always told out loud, and for that, I am very grateful." (Diary Entry 14)

Wendy was the first participant who reached out to me, and esse's submissions to this research aligned with and even exceeded the engagement I was hoping to receive. This early-on positive impact buoyed me throughout the rest of the research process.

This poem is a reflection on the beginnings of the family tree, suggesting a starting over, a disconnect from the biolegal family that one may have been assigned at birth. This interpretation is supported by the statement that esse's paternal uncles are "rigid and old school, and although I respect them and their views, they do not do the same for me" (Diary Entry 1). As documented by DeChants and colleagues (2022), biolegal rejection is an aspect of queer experience that is often quite painful; coming out as LGBTQ+ to one's biolegal family can result in increased household conflict, heterosexist and transphobic rhetoric, abuse, and even the loss of housing altogether. After coming out, youth may be told by unaccepting family members that they are sick, that it is just a phase, or that they are lying. In Machado (2019), the author uses poetic synthesis to convey the emotional force of parental rejection, writing in part that

Don't ask, don't tell

does not apply

between us. You

don't have to ask,

but I'm not holding back

anymore for you.

(Machado 2019, 857)

This bio-legal rejection can cause serious repercussions, including difficulty moving forward emotionally due to painful familial connections, and physically or financially moving forward due to housing instability (DeChants et al., 2022).

Even in the face of biolegal and other potential rejections, Wendy does not hide the form of esse's family. Esse writes that

> "I don't want to fit into the norm. We are the norm. A loving caring family can be anything, as long as we are caring and loving. 'Straight' families do not have the wonderful track record they seem to think they have." (Diary Entry 10)

These simple sentences contain within them an immensity of complex social relationships; the 'norm' has two different and yet convergent meanings. There is the norm of the 'straight' families, and the norm of family as a unit of loving and caring. Wendy does not seek association with the 'straight' families, rather seeking an opening of the heteronormative expectations to include that which is currently considered different. Additionally, by defining family as loving and caring, Wendy can include esse's own family, and to simultaneously judge straight families as not always sufficient.

When writing about family time, Wendy states:

> "we are concentrating on us, so it can be the Holidays or book reading time, or playtime, we love playing board games together or taking long walks in Nature and picnics. Family time is the time where we are at peace." (Diary Entry 6)

An activity not mentioned in this quote is making pancakes. Nonetheless, making pancakes is mentioned twice in the optional additional information question. In both Diary Entry 8 and Diary Entry 10, esse mentions making and/or having promised the kids pancakes. This is not a low-effort meal; it often requires simultaneous attention to a hot stove and to the people being fed. In a busy life, as Wendy references in entries 7 and 9, taking the time to make pancakes for the family on a consistent basis stands out as a location of family ritual. Due to the marginalization and devaluation of queer kinship, those in queer kinships are likely to find such rituals valuable for fostering collective identity (Oswald 2002).

In Diary Entry 13, Wendy writes “It's a gray day, but we are happy together, that is all that matters.” Altogether, these ideas create an image of family as connected by a spirit of care for each other and the space they inhabit.

4.2: Charlie

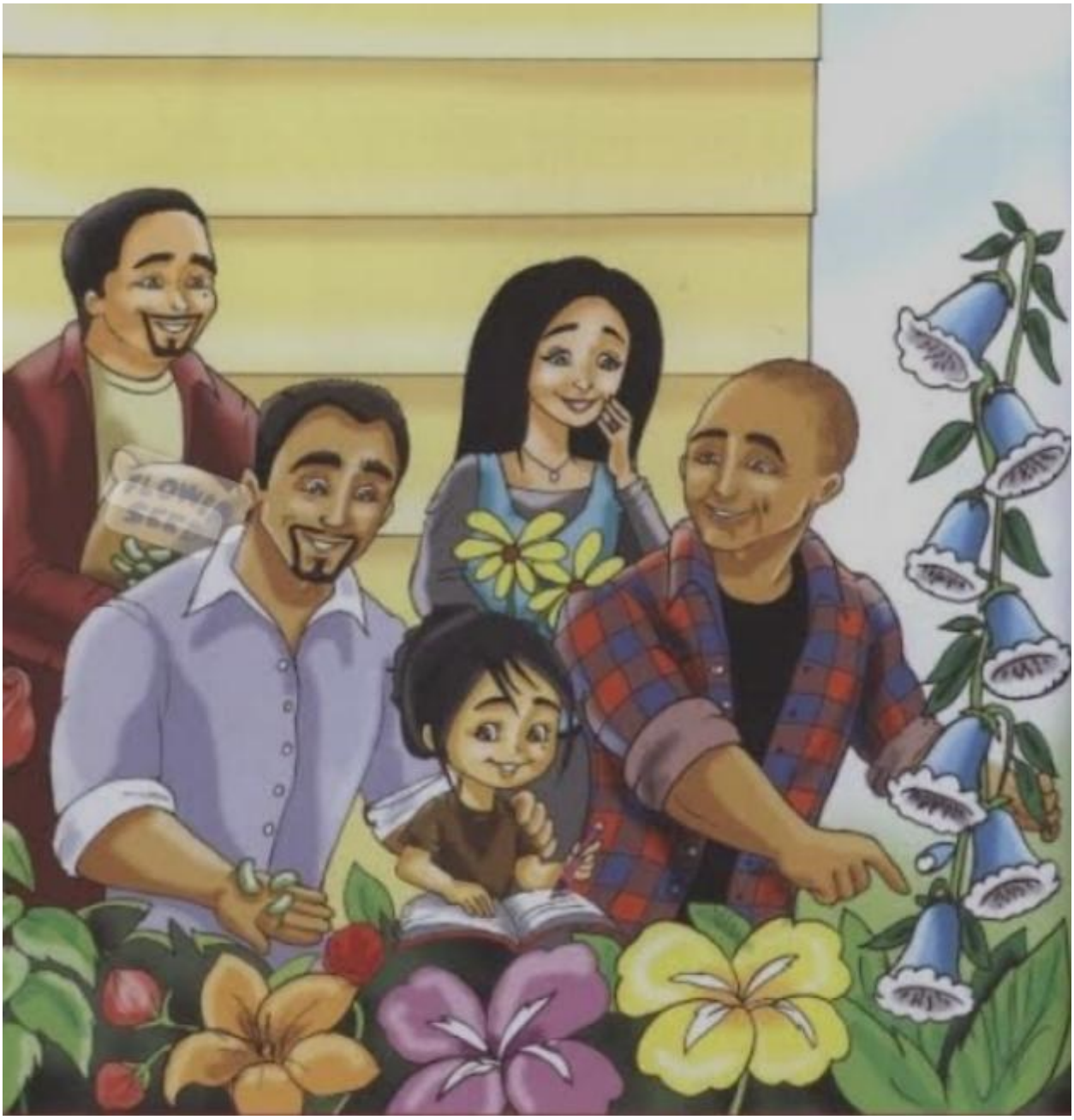

Figure 2: Charlie's Art

This image depicts five people, three masc-presenting adults, one femme-presenting adult, and a femme-presenting child. They have a variety of skin tones, and the child is centered in the image. All the people are smiling, and their gazes are focused on each other. There is a border of blooming flowers and leaves around the bottom and

up the right side. The flowers on the far right of the image appear to be bluebells; in the Victorian language of flowers, bluebells represent constancy, love, and gratitude (*Wildflowers*). Behind the family is yellow siding that suggests a house.

The person to the farthest back on the left side is wearing an unbuttoned red collared shirt and is holding a bag labeled 'Flower Seeds' with an image of seeds on the front. In front of [him/them], a masc-presenting person in a blue button down holds physical versions of the seeds printed on the bag. [he/they] has the other hand on the child's shoulder. The child is writing in a book and looking at the seeds. To the right of the child, the third masc-presenting person is wearing a red and blue checked collared shirt that is unbuttoned and has the sleeves rolled up. This could suggest that [he/they] is ready to get their hands dirty, both literally in the garden and metaphorically in the work of nurturing. The femme-presenting adult has long dark hair, is holding flowers, and has one hand on [her/their] face, looking proud. The image is colorful, with lots of yellow from the house in the background and bright flowers. There are at least four different types of flowers visible, in a variety of colors including red, blue, and orange. Each person is distinct, and there is intimacy between them, indicated by their physical closeness and centered attention to each other and the child. This art shows secure bonds and suggests an environment of growth and nurturing. The strong presence of a garden positions the depicted kinships with the natural world.

Charlie's family is monogamous, queer, and has been together for 10 years. She writes: "I see my family as one body because we unite together with love and affection" (Diary Entry 1). The knowledge that her family is monogamous is interesting because in my initial understanding of the art, I interpreted there to be a polyamorous dynamic

between the adults in the image. This additional knowledge reshapes the meaning of the art to show important non-romantic kinships, linking this work to literature such as Roseneil and Budgeon (2004) wherein participants actively distanced themselves from romantic entanglement, choosing instead to build lives around platonic connections. Returning to the image above, perhaps there is a genetic connection between the two masc-presenting individuals on the far left of the image who have matching goatees. As a family, they are very busy during the week, at school or work, and have a full house during the weekend, when Charlie writes:

> "Family time is simply having fun together with your family, in our family time we…talk about fashion, education, and most importantly we talk about [the] next fun day." (Diary Entry 6)

A focus on talking about the next fun day suggests a high value on an imagined future together. This invokes Weiss (2016), who characterizes queerness is a shared project, an imagined future with the desire for knowledge, and connection. Perhaps the garden depicted in this artwork is representative of the shared project of connection and imagined futures via which Charlies' kinships are collectively shaped.

She does not hide the true form of her family, stating

> "I am open to anyone, if you wish to accept me you are free if you feel like not accepting me is truly your wish. My family is my pride." (Diary Entry 10)

Charlie is hopeful about the future, writing that "my family in the future is enticing, with more affection" (Diary Entry 12).

4.3: Emma

Figure 3: Emma's Art

This image depicts six people, set on a black background. From left to right, there is a light-skinned femme-presenting person hugging a femme-presenting Black person from behind, and kissing [her/them] on the cheek. The person being hugged is laughing and holding onto the arms hugging [her/them]. They have a pink circle behind them. Placed slightly behind the far-left people, a light-skinned masc-presenting person in an open, short sleeved collared shirt is holding hands with a light-skinned femme-presenting person with blonde hair and a red jacket. They are looking at each other with small smiles. The masc-presenting person has a blue circle behind [him/them], and the blonde has a pink circle; the overlap between the two is a light grey-lavender. Set forward again, a light-skinned masc-presenting person with short brown hair and a green jacket kisses an individual who is mostly cut off in the image. This could suggest that the image itself is bigger than the frame it is presented in. This far-right individual has visible facial hair,

and they both appear content. They are outlined in a white glow. Everyone is dressed simply, while also showing individual personality. The inclusion of all six people in the image, with the variety of dynamics between them, emphasizes the importance of each.

Emma (she/they) is part of a stable, monogamous queer family. She writes:

> "My family is more important to me than anything [else], because they care about me so I consider my family first in everything. I share almost everything with my family" (Diary Entry 1)

Emma's diary entries are short, suggesting that she feels more comfortable with visual expressions than linguistic. This is supported by her statement that "Art is a form of expression without verbal" (Diary Entry 2)

Their art suggests a variety of dynamics between six different individuals, at least one of which is potentially romantic: namely, the masc-presenting person with short brown hair and a green jacket kissing an individual with visible facial hair on the far-right side of the art. This suggests a nuanced kinship organization that does not limit physical affection to romantic or sexual connections. This artistic expression invokes intentionality and conscious personalization of each relationship.

For Emma's family, the weekends are family time because of their busy weekdays. As Emma explains:

> "family time is creating a specific time to discuss or have fun outside the home. In my family when it is family time we make choices on what to talk about and where to go to where majority carries the vote." (Diary Entry 6)

Emma writes that they "cannot hide the true form of my family," and that she simply will not be in spaces where they cannot be open (Diary Entry 10). Thinking about the future,

they write, “we love ourselves so continuing with this love will bring more joy and together in the future without envy” (Diary Entry 12). This statement marks Emma's family as making the active choice to love themselves and each other.

4.4: Sidney

Figure 4: Sidney's' Art

This image depicts three people, one femme-presenting, one masc-presenting, and one person presenting with a female-masculinity. It is interesting to note that each of my supervision committee members had a different understanding of the gender presentation of the person seated on the right and the standing person. This highlights the subjectivity of artistic interpretation.

Each person each has medium-olive toned skin. From left to right, there is a femme-masc person in a sports bra sitting with one leg up on their chair. Their body language is open, with spread legs and relaxed arms. Behind them is a femme-presenting person wearing a silver wide-brimmed hat and matching cross necklace. [she/they] has a hand holding onto the masc-presenting person's shoulder. [he/they] is sitting with legs and arms crossed and is wearing a black hat set back on [his/their] head. [His/Their] body language is closed off; [he/they] are tucking in to [himself/themself]. The mismatched message of the body language between the two seated people -open on left, closed on right- gives the viewer a sense of being evaluated.

Both seated people have gold necklaces with circular pendants. Given the prominence of the cross necklace on the standing person, these gold necklaces with circular pendants may be representations of saints. These medallions are commonly worn among the religious to symbolize their devotion to and love for their faith, as well as to invoke the saint depicted for their strengths such as bravery or protection (Rabiipour, 2012; Rugless, 2024). All three people are looking directly forward with serious expressions. Their gazes reach far beyond the art itself, projecting a united stoicism.

This piece is a complex collage of color and detail. Some notable elements are animals in the background, including a chicken made visible by its solid whiteness, and a

bull over the left shoulder of the seated femme-presenting person. There is a proliferation of stars, and each person has some part of their hands visible. This is notable because hands are typically considered one of the most difficult parts of drawing humans; to intentionally show multiple people's hands in such a complex artwork highlights that the artist sees them as an invaluable aspect to be included.

There are solid-color dots across the piece, three pink on each leg of seated femme-masc person, a cluster of purple on the hat of the standing femme-presenting person, and two gray and one blue dot on the masc-presenting person that blend in more closely than the other dots. The seated femme-masc person has the suggestion of plants above their head, the noticing of which highlights the numerous other places that show the leaves or other suggestions of greenery. This art carries southwestern imagery, such as the cowboy hats worn by two of the individuals, at least 10 visible stars– some with circles on the tips of the stars, suggesting a sheriff's badge, and the images of a chicken and bull.

The complexity of the setting in which the characters are embedded could be a representation of their interrelations with other beings, such as the animals and stars. Glimpses of a gilded frame are visible in the top two corners of the piece. This evokes an image of an artwork, within the artwork, and suggests a conscious choice to identify the portrait as art. However, the individuals are bigger than the frame; Sidney is situating her family in relationship to a complex world of natural beings, as art, and as extending beyond both of those.

This submission struck me hard emotionally. It took several tries for me to even write a description; I kept having to stop because I was crying. There is something in the

subject's gaze that holds onto me. Even in the beautiful wildness of the piece overall, the eyes and faces are so powerful.

Sidney writes that her family is polyamorous and has been for her entire life. She writes that "I cannot stand [to] see something or someone come in between the love I have for my family" (Diary Entry 1). For her, family time is coming together with purpose, typically in the evening on weekends; they discuss "recent wrongs…with amendment, we talk about fun things, we pray, and the head of my family will advise [us]" (Diary Entry 6). The mention of prayer as a part of her family time is notable; the standing femme-presenting person in the art is wearing a clearly visible cross, the two seated people may be wearing saint medallions, and Sidney mentions praying that her art turns out well for public viewing. From this, it can be understood that religion is an important aspect of her life, and a binding force in her family. Statistically, LGBT people are less likely to identify with a religious tradition than cis-straight people, and organized religious spaces are often socially perceived as conservative and unlikely to be accepting of queer believers (Cravens, 2018). By positioning religious imagery clearly within her art, and prayer prominently within her diary entries, Sidney is subverting the expectation that queerness excludes one from finding meaning in organized religious beliefs.

She does hide the true form of her family, stating:

> "especially in my school, I do this because most of my colleagues always make [a] mess of me and that makes me feel bad and also they sideline me too. So I see no need of opening or telling people much about my family" (Diary Entry 10)

Sidney is not hiding her family out of feelings of shame; in Diary Entry 4, she expresses gratitude towards her family, stating:

> “I feel blessed to be in the family because we do not treat others bad and also we don't expect that from others.”

Rather, Sidney keeps her family private because she does not feel obligated to share that information with people who treat her poorly. Thinking about the future, Sidney sees her family as growing, “getting to meet with other queer [people] and becoming one/family” (Diary Entry 12).

4.5: Robyn

Figure 5: Robyn's Art

This piece is one out of two I received that was sent in physically. Painted on a flat, vertical canvas, this art has a background of colorful crosshatched lines in a variety of colors. The colors used in these lines are that of the well-known pride flag: red, orange, yellow, green, blue, and purple.

There are seven people in the piece, five set into the background and two prominently in the lowest section of the canvas. Robyn writes that her queer family

> "includes my monogamous girlfriend of almost 4 years, along with the five friends who live in the same apartment building as us – all of whom are queer." (Diary Entry 4)

Each of the people can be clearly seen in the art piece, with the most detailed balcony being that of Robyn and her girlfriend, and the other balconies holding the five friends that make up the rest of her queer family. The balconies can be understood to represent them in each of their closely located apartments; balconies enable the artist to show separateness and togetherness in the same image. The people are clustered on their balconies; the highest balcony holds three, the one below two. The balconies are blue, and the people are shades of purple. This unity of color suggests that the artist sees each person as part of a cohesive unit. Each person has remarkably distinct hair, some showing the movement of wind. The detail given to the hair is evocative. It suggests engagement with the people depicted, and care to ensure they are accurately depicted without revealing their identities. The five on higher balconies are turned toward the most detailed balcony. No faces are clearly depicted. The inclusion of platonic connections familial connections aligns with queer literature, wherein queer people self-define and

build lives around platonic friendships as well as romantic relationships (Roseneil and Budgeon 2004).

In the most detailed balcony, a person with dark hair sits upright on a couch. A lighter haired person is resting on [their/her] shoulder, and both are covered in a blanket. The person sitting up has [their/her] face tilted down as though looking at the reclining person. Next to them, a hanging planter is blooming with flowers. This is an image of growth, potentially one of reproduction. There is a sense of comfort and contentment in the piece overall. The artist's family is depicted as her world, set apart by the layered rainbows that surround them.

Robyn describes her family's physical coalescence:

> "My girlfriend had been living with three of them when we first started dating, and then I lived with them for a few months during lockdown. Later that year, two of them began dating a set of roommates, and we all began hanging out in a group and playing d&d together. Several moves later, now we all have units in the same apartment building." (Diary Entry 4)

Speaking to her family's emotional coalescence:

> "My family are those who I am able to be the most vulnerable around. I am completely comfortable with them in a way I am not with other people." (Diary Entry 1)

For her queer family, quality time and group activities are important, for instance,

> "On a typical weekday, my partner and I go to work, then we eat dinner together while we watch an episode of Bob's Burgers." (Diary Entry 9)

and

> "On weekends we typically spend at least one day doing things with our friends in the building – playing games, going on excursions, or doing other activities together." (Diary Entry 9)

In this discussion of her family, Robyn references two pieces of popular culture media; the tabletop roleplaying game Dungeons and Dragons (D&D), and the animated TV show *Bob's Burgers*.

D&D engages a group of people in an interactive adventure, led by a Game/Dungeon Master who provides information about the setting and plot, and supplements the world with non-player characters. They often put extensive time into creating games for their group. The other members play mapped out characters that may vary from game to game. Creating these characters is an involved process that requires strategic thought. Events in the game are randomized using many-sided dice-rolls to determine the outcome of attempts. For instance, if someone was attempting to sneak past a guard, but rolled a one on the die, they would fail spectacularly. If they rolled a 20, not only would they get past the guard, but they would also do so with great ease and drama. In "Magic Circles: Tabletop role-playing games as queer utopian method," Kawitzky (2020) writes:

> "Having agency over the narrative of the game, navigated via characters created for and by its players, establishes an environment in which queer people don't have to wait for representation or inclusion – we implement it by virtue of the fact of our playing, and the choices we make in-game. Customization is a queer survival skill." (131)

Importantly, players are performing for a small, responsive audience, and D&D can be understood as an ongoing act of collective witnessing. There is space to imagine new worlds, explore dynamics of interaction, and "moment-to-moment choices can have a significant effect on the 'beyond' being gestured to" (135). This aligns well with understandings of queerness as a state of imagination and possibility, interrelatedness, and community.

Bob's Burgers is an animated TV show that began airing in 2011 and is still releasing episodes. It centers around a family-run restaurant, and the adventures of Bob and Linda Belcher and their three kids, Tina, Louise, and Gene. The portrayal of the Belchers is that of a deeply loving family, with generalized care for each other and support for their quirks and individuality (The Equestranauts, S4E17; Loft in Bedslation, S12E7). Tina is the eldest daughter, constantly on the edge of womanhood, learning about herself as a person with sexual desire. She does not have shame about this, and often discusses her interests openly with her family (Sheesh! Cab, Bob?, S1E6; Every Which Way but Goose, S9E14). Louise is the youngest, who often acts chaotically with self-benefiting intent. She shows great sensitivity at times and is fiercely protective (The Fresh Princ-ipal, S9E15; The Amazing Rudy, S14E2). Gene, the middle child, and the only son, shows gender-nonconformity by wearing dresses in performance settings and repeatedly referring to himself as a woman (The Kids Run the Restaurant, S3E20; Bob Fires the Kids, S3E3). The characters do not age, and thus the show is

> "able to construct a landscape of girlhood that allows for endless reversal, contradiction and overlap in the experiences of Tina and Louise, whose existence as animations reveals girlhood as a liminal space in which girls can be one thing

> and the other – gullible and intelligent, vulnerable and strong, sexual and innocent – without negating their multifarious experiences." (Barnett 2019, 3)

By referencing watching *Bob's Burgers* on a regular basis with her family, Robyn is invoking the positive family dynamics and complexities of selves that the show portrays.

Thinking about the future, Robyn sees her family's close living arrangement continuing.

> "We have talked about eventually buying a multi-apartment house together or all buying houses that are beside each other. Regardless of the living arrangements, I would like to continue living close to the members of my queer family for the rest of our lives. I also plan on getting married to my girlfriend and getting dogs when we have the space for it" (Diary Entry 12).

4.6: Rahman

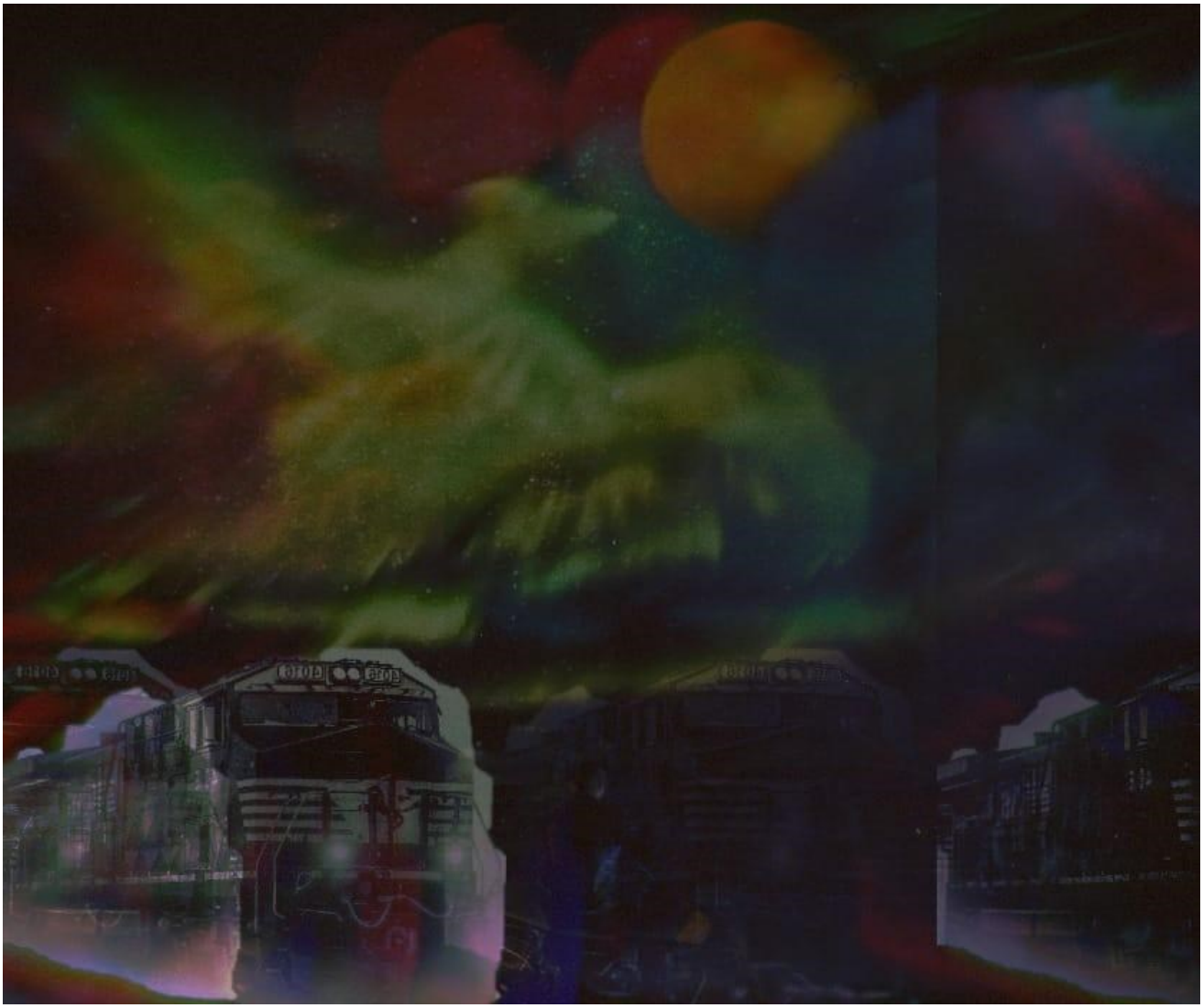

Figure 6: Rahman's Art

This piece shows an old train under a complex night sky. The sky is dark, with a variety of blues and reds overlaid. The dark sky used as a background suggests that this artwork is depicting emotion that the artist feels should be contained under the cover of darkness. Darkness is often used as an allegory for the hidden, and to put something in the light of day is to reveal it to people more broadly. This suggests that this artwork depicts something an emotional journey that the artist considers relatively private. Above

the most visible train on the bottom left, a green spray of light reminiscent of the Aurora Borealis takes the shape of an abstract bird in flight. The shape resembles a phoenix, a mythical bird that is reborn repeatedly from its own ashes. Above the phoenix, a pale orange celestial body is echoed in various opacities of red. This celestial body is reminiscent of the phases of the moon; this aligns with the movement of the train across the bottom of the image to suggest the passage of time. Together, this art shows a private shift over time, one that is difficult but ultimately hopeful.

The train is a picture, cut out slightly jaggedly. Its headlights are on, and the word ‘stop’ is visible two times across the top of it. It is most clearly depicted on the bottom left of the art but is echoed in various opacities across the base of the piece. The visual echoing creates the impression that the train is moving across the image. The presence of the word ‘stop’ visible at the top of the train may reflect Rahman's seeking the stoppage of the out-of-control change in his family. Rahman is not queer himself; he is nonetheless part of a queer family. His father came out as gay and left his mother. In this piece of art, a journey is occurring. A train is moving across the image, under a glowing phoenix. My interpretation of this art is that Rahman is moving away from the initial struggles he faced when his father first came out as gay, with time and love. He is learning constantly, both academically and artistically, and processes emotions via his own artistic expressions.

Rahman currently lives with his father and his father’s boyfriend. This was very difficult for him at first. Rahman writes,

> "I first hated my father. I could not stand him and especially not his lover, who had broken my family apart. My mother cried so much, and my heart was torn." (Diary Entry 1)

This pain was amplified by the fact that his mother

> "went back to Pakistan. She asked me to come back with her but I needed to finish my studies so it was my compulsion to stay with my father. This shattered my heart into a million pieces." (Diary Entry 1)

After a few months, however, Rahman realized his father was still the same person he had always known and loved, and that his father still loved him very much. He writes

> "At first [I] was so depressed but then [I] thought that my father also has feelings and still loves me very much then [I] agreed on recognizing his boyfriend. And I accept the reality." (Diary Entry 10)

Rahman writes that "the line between family and non-family is drawn based on the love and respect we have for each other" (Diary Entry 1). He places high value on family time, writing that

> "We often share our happy moments and show care for each other. We eat good food together, gossip and also make each other laugh. Sometimes we play chess together." (Diary Entry 6)

The importance of quality time is sometimes painful, as Rahman and his siblings greatly miss their mother and spending time with her.

Weekdays are busy, with Rahman and his siblings going to university and school respectively, and his father busy at his office job. On weekends, he writes,

> “we often share a table and gossip with each other. Fathers boyfriend also makes jokes and makes us laugh. He is like a friend to us. We also order pizza at night and enjoy.” (Diary Entry 9)

He is hopeful about the future of his family, writing that

> “We'll keep getting closer and achieving our own goals. We'll face life's challenges together, celebrate successes, and create long lasting memories. I look forward to seeing each family member pursue their dreams and lead fulfilling lives.” (Diary Entry 12)

4.7: Erica

Figure 7: Erica's Art

This artwork is brightly lit, depicting four masc-presenting people, two adults and two children. The children appear to be about the same age, and the adults are smiling broadly. They are all brown-skinned and wearing colorful collared shirts.

From left to right, the artwork shows a masc-presenting person smiling widely. [He/They] have short-cropped hair, are wearing color-blocked shirts with pale white stripes and are hugging the child in front of [him/them]. The child sitting on [his/their] knee is wearing a coordinating shirt. The next adult has a slightly darker skin tone and is wearing a red baseball cap. [He/They] are wearing a green shirt with pale white stripes, and have a blue sweater draped across [his/their] shoulders. The child [he/they] are holding is wearing a blue shirt and has longer hair than the three others in the piece. Based on my experience as a photographer's assistant, the lighting, formal clothing, and posing in this artwork suggest it to be modeled after a professionally taken family

portrait. Having a professionally taken family picture taken suggests that Erica's family places importance on the documentation of their kinship.

Erica describes her family as stable and monogamous. She writes that her family is "the one where parents whose identities become the basis for a family's queerness. [The] family line stop[s] at the queer family" (Diary Entry 1). Day-to-day life is busy, with "getting the children ready for school, going to work everyday and coming back in the evening" (Diary Entry 9). This statement places Erica as a parental figure in her family, and suggests that my initial understanding of both of the adults in the artwork as masculine-leaning may be incorrect. This highlights that perceived gender, pronouns used, and gender itself are three separate aspects of an individual. The GENDER project, a community-sourced illustrated book about the diversity of genders, devotes its pages to information about gender presentation, perception, language, and internal experience. They state: "There are no rules…play as often as you like; sometimes identities change…you can claim many words, or eschew labels altogether…the real answers are within yourself" (Hill & Mays, 2013, 18). If Erica is one of the adults depicted in the artwork above, her use of typically feminine pronouns with a strongly masculine presentation is a powerful example of queerness containing multitudes of possibilities in terms of kinship and individual identity.

For Erica's family, family time is about having fun together, such as "playing games, talking about things that happen at work, and making food together" (Diary Entry 6). This use of family time emphasizes the importance of understanding each other's lives in the world outside themselves, while also creating memories together. In the future, Erica imagines her happy family continuing together.

4.8: Octavia

Figure 8: Octavia's Art

This artwork shows two people with brown skin, reclining together on a cushioned seat. The background is made up of abstract colors that come together into a rainbow. The person sitting on the left side of the image is wearing an off-white baseball hat with a brown visor, a white tank top, and brown pants. [She/They] has [her/their] hands clasped over [her/their] stomach, and shoulder-length braided hair. The tank top is textured to appear as a ribbed material and suggests a masculine lean to their presentation.

On the right is a person with a shaved head reclining on [her/their] elbow, with a visible tattoo on [her/their] inner forearm. [She/They] are wearing a one-shoulder cropped black tank top, and black pants. [She/They] have visible underarm hair on the arm that extends beyond the right side of the piece. There is clear attention to light and shading, particularly noticeable in the pants and arms of each person. They are leaning toward each other, and their closeness suggests a physical intimacy. Both people are looking out of the art; it gives the impression of sitting across from them, being intently listened to. Octavia's writing in the diary entries was minimal. This suggests that she may be more visually than textually expressive. Octavia's family is stable and has been together for three years; in the future, she imagines that "we grow, have money and children" (Diary Entry 12).

4.9: Ziva

Figure 9: Ziva's Art

This art depicts two light skinned femme-presenting people, similar in appearance. They are each dressed in clothing that suggests the French clothing of the 1700s (Lacroix, French Fashions), including elaborately coiffed wigs and hats. The

person on the left of the image holds [her/their] head upright and is smiling kindly. [She/They] are holding a flower in their visible hand. While the flower is not easily identifiable, it is slightly curved toward the person on the left, suggesting that it could be wilting after being picked.

The person on the right has [her/their] head tilted slightly and has a more serious expression. [Her/Their] face has a line across the cheek which suggests cracking, and [her/their] eyebrows are connected across the middle. The art is strongly orange and red in tone, with the figures made visible by black and blue shading.

Ziva's writing in the diary entries was austere, suggesting that she may be less comfortable with textual expression. She defines her family as those that "share things in common" with her, and states that "you are not part of my family when you hate or hurt me" (Diary Entry 1). Her family is polyamorous, has been together for six years, and is consistently shifting. Life is busy, and "everybody [has] their own responsibilities. Go out in the morning and return in the evening" (Diary Entry 9). Nonetheless, family time is very important, and is used "to rest and talk to each other about anything that is [bothering] us" (Diary Entry 6). Thinking of the future, Ziva imagines a future that is "a lovely bright and better family with kids" (Diary Entry 12). Ziva's writing about her family suggests that it may be in a moment of hardship; she defines family time in terms of talking about issues and hopes for a better future. Based on this information, perhaps the art above does not depict two people, but rather Ziva's own shifting over time within her family.

4.10: Daisy

Figure 10: Daisy's Art

This art depicts two figures, set against a rippling multicolor background. They are both light-skinned, have short brown hair, and rosy cheeks. Their expressions are serious. Aligning with the abstract style of the background and bodies, the faces depicted are not detailed, showing the suggestion of makeup on their eyes, lips, and cheeks. The figure on the left has [her/their] gaze slightly down, is wearing a white

sleeveless top, and leans toward the other. The figure on the right is wearing a pink sleeveless dress and is sitting upright. [She/They] are looking slightly to the left of the art. The lack of sleeves on their clothes suggests warmth in their environment, and the prominence of pink suggests an association with femininity. Despite the abstractness, there is a great deal of complexity in this piece, suggesting that Daisy desires anonymity in the work while maintaining that her family is layered, colorful and set apart.

Daisy's writing in diary entries was minimal, suggesting that she is more visually than linguistically expressive. Daisy's family is stable, monogamous, and has been together for two years. Thinking about the future, she writes that "with God I believe things will get better and great" (Diary Entry 12). In this statement, Daisy is subverting the expectation that queerness excludes one from finding meaning in organized religious beliefs. She writes that "I always have time for my family," and that she cannot hide the true form of it from others (Diary Entry 9, 10).

4.11: Steph

Figure 11: Steph's Art

Steph's family consists of their partner, child, and two cats. Their partnership has existed for 12 years, and their child is 2 years old. Steph owns their own business, and determines their own hours, choosing to work on weekends and evenings, while their partner works a more typical 8am-4pm schedule.

This art is a piece of a larger finger-painting; the edges of the artwork reveal slightly frayed white indicative of being cut or torn from a large piece of paper. There are many colors in use, including but not limited to green, pink, black and purple. This artwork is dynamic and layered. In the bottom right corner in black, a child's handprint is repeated and overlapping. On the bottom left, some of the darker top layer has been scraped off. In the top left corner, there are three rows of purple dashes that are deliberately brush-painted, showing an adult contribution to the work.

As part of their participation in this research, not only did Steph complete the daily diary entries and an artwork for display, they also endeavored to create art with their family every day. They found a great deal of enjoyment in this, writing that their child

> "wants to paint every single day…It's endearing and so special to see how much joy making art brings her and therefore my partner and I" (Diary Entry 10).

Based on the overall haphazard placement and color-choices of paint, the handprints on the bottom right, and the context of Steph having a small child, this art piece is a painting created with their child. It is a visual representation of quality time with their queer family, as well as the embracing of their child's interests. This artwork invokes the joy of untethered childhood creativity. The use of many colors and

thicknesses of paint, can be interpreted as emblematic of the many choices made available within Steph's family.

Steph writes that family is a complicated idea, as they still carry a lot of shame "from old homophobic messages I'd hear as early as childhood for example. Yet there is also a yearning to fit in and see some form of a 'normal' family" (Diary Entry 1). They have very limited contact with their extended and biological family due to the trans- and homo- phobic views that family holds. As previously noted in this text, biolegal rejection is an aspect of queer experience that is often quite painful, as coming out to one's biolegal family can result in increased household conflict, heterosexist and transphobic rhetoric, abuse, and even the loss of housing altogether. This rejection can cause serious repercussions, including difficulty moving forward emotionally due to painful familial connections, and physically or financially moving forward due to housing instability (DeChants et al., 2022). Steph exhibits strong agency in removing themselves from homophobic spaces, for instance by limiting contact with negative relatives and going into business for themselves.

Writing around the holidays, they write that they feel some sadness because

> "I reflect on my biological family and the disconnect and engrained queerphobia within it. It challenges my thoughts and happiness a lot because of hard choices I've had to make in how much I can or cannot have certain people in my life or my family's life. But I feel forever grateful for my family of my partner and child" (Diary Entry 11).

Since having a child, Steph's marriage with their partner has evolved in ways both expected and novel. Throughout, they have worked together to be a strong, loving family.

For instance, they recently started going to counseling together. Steph's family is deeply committed; they write that "I love them very much and they love me too…I know for sure I am supported and I will support them through anything" (Diary Entry 1).

Steph reports hiding the form of their family, in part to protect them and in part due to engrained societal stigmas. For instance, before going into business for themselves, they used to omit their partner's gender or even existence to avoid homophobia at work. They write:

> "I have definitely morphed myself to be more in line with societal norms or and careful about what I share with people. Sometimes out of uncertainty of how safe I am in facing a situation and sometimes just intuitively feeling my way throughout life and experiences. And partly from having grown up within a social construct of its time and the evolution of language for people who have existed all along. Over the years and more recently I think I've been able to let some of those walls down." (Diary Entry 10)

Steph defines family time as "just us together….It usually means that we are setting time aside for us as a family" (Diary Entry 6). All three spend set time together on weekend mornings. Activities with their child include making art, music class, swimming lessons, visiting a friend, watching a show, having a slow morning, and going to a farm, beach, pool, or other adventures. Their child is also included in practical activities, such as errands, shopping, and cooking. Notably, quality time for Steph is not about being productive, or being a consumer. Their family time is centered around social experiences. They are not mindlessly consuming goods and services; rather, their quality time is about the experiences of swimming, cooking together, or their time with friends.

Reflecting on their experience in this project, they report it has been fun, engaging, and joyful to

> "see my family make art together and helps give myself a reason or a reminder to just make art. It is easy to get caught up in day to day hussle and not take time for art and creativity. But this really helped me see how much [child] LOVES to paint literally everyday or make some kind of craft. It reminds me that it's ok to get messy and not worry so much about it getting everywhere (or to designate a space for on purpose messes)" (Diary Entry 14)

Thinking about the future, Steph envisions the three– or maybe four– of them growing together. They hope to continue their at home family time as well as adventures together, and

> "We will be close and loving. I hope that we will continue to enjoy the interests we have and to develop new interests and be able to share them with each other with excitement and encouragement to be our authentic selves" (Diary Entry 12).

Their participation promoted conversation within their family, as well as showing them that their child deeply loves making art, and that they still have complicated feelings about their own queerness.

Chapter 5: Analysis

Before getting into the themes of the data, I will discuss how participants interacted with the study instructions. Each entry had three questions; the first was required and changed daily, and the optional second question alternated between 'How are you feeling about your family at this moment? For instance, are you feeling connected, disengaged, comfortable?' and 'How are you feeling about your artwork for this project at this moment? For instance, are you engaged, frustrated, excited?' In response to these, most participants became attached to the examples I suggested at the end of each. This made it difficult to use their responses to this question in distinct and contextualizing ways. In future research, I will endeavor to be more aware of the power of suggestion within questions asked, especially those that are repeated.

On each diary entry, question three read as such: Is there anything else you would like to write about? (Optional, suggested). My expectation was that if they had nothing else to add, participants would leave this question blank. While Robyn and Rahman conformed to this, Charlie, Emma, Sidney, Octavia, Ziva, and Daisy consistently chose to write in 'no.' Wendy was verbose in this section, and Steph occasionally filled it out in detail while mostly leaving it blank. These differences also partially account for differences in the length of the individual accounts in the previous section; for instance, Wendy added many contextualizing details to the submitted artwork. Daisy, Ziva, Octavia, and Erica each have relatively short individual discussions. This could be partially attributed to the project design; recruitment focused on the art-creation aspect, which may have attracted some participants who are more visually than textually expressive.

Another notable point of interaction with instructions was regarding the art. I gave the options of physical or digital submission, with the expectation that most people would choose a physical creation. In fact, only two of the eleven participants submitted physical artworks, and the remaining nine sent in their art digitally. A potential explanation of this could be that digital art is a form of art which provides more flexibility in making changes and is easier to access than artistic methods such as that require numerous materials and skills.

Themes present in the art collected for this project include the presence of the natural world, a full spectrum of rainbow colors, and a high inclusion of faces. Each of the artworks was created with the public viewing of queer kinship in mind, and participants likely engaged in artistic determining that included asking themselves why something felt important to include (Blumenfeld-Jones 2015). These themes represent repeatedly present aspects of the artworks that contributed to participant's artworks genuine representation to their internal understandings.

Work by Wendy and Charlie both strongly invoke the natural world; Wendy's concrete poem and the image accompanying it both carry the image of growth from a seed, and Charlie's image is bordered on two sides by flowers. Sidney's artwork contains animals and plants, Robyn's piece has a flowerbox blooming on a balcony, and Rahman uses the night sky as a background. By situating queer kinships within recognizably natural contexts these artworks emphasize the naturalness of the relationships themselves.

Queerphobic narratives tend to paint queer kinships as unnatural. For instance, in "Why Homosexuality Is Abnormal" (1984) Michael Levin writes that gay sex is a "misuse of body parts with high probability to be connected to unhappiness" (1). Levin claims that giving gay people the right to be openly themselves promotes unhappiness in

the general population and immorally encourages homosexual behaviors. This mentality is carried into present-day, with Alan Shlemon writing on the Stand to Reason website that the Bible, which he considers to be the highest truth, is "anti-homosexual behavior." On the forum website Reddit, a deleted user posted "Being attracted to the same sex is artificial. You are not born gay, you are indoctrinated" (Deleted User, Reddit 2019). By emphasizing the naturalness of their relationships via the presence of the natural world such as flowers, animals, and the night sky, the participants in this research are standing in direct opposition to those who would mischaracterize their kinships as unnatural.

Ten of the eleven artworks are easily described as bright, while Rahman's art is a darker palette. Three pieces, those of Wendy, Robyn, and Octavia, use the rainbow colors of the pride flag. Wendy has rainbow light falling on a seedling, and Robyn and Octavia chose a pattern including all the flag's colors in the abstract backgrounds of their art. Daisy made a similar choice, in a more muted tone, and the flowers in Charlie's artwork loosely follow the rainbow color order. These invocations of a well-known queer touchpoint create a visible connection to a broader queer community.

A third point worthy of note is the high number of art pieces that include faces. While this project is regarding queer visibility, and thus it is not surprising that bodily representations of individuals are present, the explicit inclusion of faces is notable because, as Steph puts it,

> "there is still risk that comes with being queer. Often people who aren't queer will ask 'what's the risk? Or, Really? Still?' Because they don't experience it. But it's one of those things, if you know, you know. You know?" (Diary Entry 11).

Seven of eleven participants chose to include faces, with each work that contains faces featuring a minimum of two and a maximum of six (Charlie, Emma, Ziva, Octavia

Sidney, Daisy, Erica). While many of the faces are indistinct or ambiguous (Daisy, Ziva), some, such as Erica's and Sidney's, would likely be recognizable to those who know them in real life. To include faces in artwork to be displayed to the public is a powerful act, and I am grateful to have a facilitating role in that bravery for those who felt comfortable.

In this final section, I look at how participants defined family and art, and how they understood the public nature of the art display. In the very first diary entry, I asked participants to describe how they define family. As could be expected, no two people had the exact same answer. Some, such as Octavia and Daisy, focused on blood relation. By contrast, Wendy writes that "The boundaries of family are in the mind, really…Family is defined, to me, by spirit" (Diary Entry 1), and Robyn emphasizes feelings of comfort. Somewhere between these perspectives, Erica does not mention blood relation when defining family but draws on the legally codified heterocentric norms associated with such a family structure, writing that her family is "the one [wherein] parents…identities become the basis for a family's queerness" (Diary Entry 1). The wide-ranging variety of understandings of family are a strong reminder that queer kinships have the burden and opportunity to create new roles and kinship meanings (Oswald 2002, Vaccaro 2010, Yv Nay 2015).

Steph writes about the family into which they were born, noting complicated issues in those relationships, and about their present family of their wife and child, focusing on the love and positive work of these relationships. Of the latter, Steph writes that "I know for sure I am supported and I will support them through anything" (Diary Entry 1). This statement echoes themes found by Willes and colleagues (2019), whose

queer kinship research found themes of *love, acceptance*, and *support*, encompassed under the larger theme of *no matter what*.

Interestingly, Steph distinguishes between the queer family of their partner and child, and the label of chosen family, defining chosen family as "other queer folks who have become supportive people in my life…folks who have been chosen to love and care for and we understand some of the complicated feelings or situations in being queer" (Diary Entry 1). Steph is the only participant to explicitly distinguish between their queer family and their chosen family, which brings many questions to mind. Are those terms as analogous as they are commonly used, or are there functional differences between them? If so, what intricacies in our understanding of queer kinship are being lost due to the lack of attention to potential distinctions between queer and chosen family? The friendship ethic provides a possible avenue for the exploration of the functional differences between queer family and chosen family, even as both fall within theories of queer kinship (Roseneil and Budgeon 2004). The friendship ethic tasks each person with making their own choices about each relationship in their lives, with conscious attention and respect to those that are already present, often creating individualized dynamics that do not conform to hetero- and mono- normative expectations. This leaves space for one's queer family and broader idea of chosen family to coexist without being identical.

Ziva writes that she cannot consider those who would hurt her to be family; this aligns with Rahman, who says that "the line between family and non-family is drawn based on the love and respect we have for each other" (Diary Entry 1). Daisy notes that she always has time for her family (Diary Entry 9, 10), Emma says that she considers her family first in everything (Diary Entry 1), and Sidney writes that "I cannot stand and see something or someone come in between the love I have for my family" (Diary Entry 1).

Together, this data suggests a definition of kinship centered around shared affection, openness in communication, and priority in decision-making. Biogenetic and smaller family units are present (Wendy, Erica, Octavia, Daisy, Steph) as are polyamorous (Sidney, Ziva) and important non-romantic kinships (Charlie, Emma, Robyn, Rahman). This collective understanding aligns with queer literature that has found themes of active negotiation, ritual performance, and legal recognition (Bermea et. al. 2019, Oswald 2002, Vaccaro 2010). Openness in communication and precedence in decision-making bring in the themes of active negotiation. Shared affection evokes ritual performance such as Wendy making pancakes (Diary Entry 8, 10). While participants did not explicitly address legal recognition, some implicitly drew on the norms of legally sanctioned connections, with Octavia and Daisy focused on blood relation, and Erica drawing on the legally codified heterocentric norms associated with such a family structure (Diary Entry 1). This research affirms the themes of queer kinship noted in the literature such as active negotiation, support through difficulty, and a priority in decision-making. There is distinct variation within each kinship group; rather than distancing queer kinships from these themes, the variations within them emphasize them. Each participant in this research uses active caring and negotiation in their decision-making. Thus, each queer kinship unit is creating their own unique form.

When asked to define art, participants expressed a variety of perspectives. Some, such as Daisy, Octavia, Ziva, and Emily focused on artistic mediums such as drawing and painting. While both Rahman and Emma exclude verbal and linguistic expression from their definitions of art, Rahman takes a more abstract approach than Emma, focusing on art as the expression of internal thoughts and visions. Rahman writes that

> "Art, to me, is…to express your thoughts and visions. Art is about bringing your creativity into real life and convey messages in the way that words cannot alone." (Rahman, Diary Entry 2)

Sidney, Robyn, Steph, and Wendy took an abstract perspective that includes linguistic expression, but otherwise align with Rahman's understanding, defining art as an expression of internal states in external form. Two definitions that stand out as particularly important come from Sidney and Wendy:

> "the expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power" (Sidney, Diary Entry 2).
>
> "It is about our vision of the world, no matter what medium we use. This allows us to give a bit of our soul to others, if they take the time to glimpse it" (Wendy, Diary Entry 13).

Sidney's definition connects the artist with a universal human endeavor that is about evoking affect in others, and Wendy's approach frames art as a communication of a spiritual essence or state, with perspective as the media. In these quotations, Sidney and Wendy are engaging with art as gateways into personal experience, allowing emotional and embodied knowledge to come to the forefront (Scott-Hoy 2003, Dissanayake 2015).

As could be expected from those who chose to participate in arts-based research, the participants in my study found meaning in the creative process. Robyn expressed her drive to create art in physical terms, writing that creating art is like scratching an itch (Diary Entry 13). Rahman engages with art for emotional processing; his art gives him space to express his truest feelings and work through them so that they do not hurt

others (Diary Entry 2). Steph engages with art as a way of breaking up the overwhelming flow of the world, writing that art "exploring art teaches us or shows us what we can do. It focuses us but allows ourselves to seemingly unfocus (from the world) but to focus on exploration" (Diary Entry 7). Rahman, Daisy, and Ziva find artwork to relieve stress, and Sidney notes that "creating art is another unique and special way of communicating" (Diary Entry 13). Robyn, Rahman, Steph, Daisy, and Ziva are each engaging with art as an act of 'making special' their self-understanding and occupied space within the larger world (Dissanayake 2015).

The finding that Rahman, Daisy, and Ziva find artwork to relieve stress and create safe space for difficult emotions highlights the possibility of art for queer wellbeing work. Minority stress theory argues that marginalized groups experience stressors such as discrimination, rejection, and identity concealment that place them at risk for negative physical and mental health outcomes (McConnell et al., 2018). The fact that participants found art creation to relieve stress suggests art as a potential tool with which negative physical and mental health outcomes could be managed. For instance, if an organization focuses on getting people access to resources such as therapy, they could consider referring people to arts-based therapies.

In this research, art proved to be an effective tool. Anthropological research is a process of co-constructing knowledge and creates space for potentially paradoxical types of knowledge (Elliott and Culhane 2017). The artworks collected in this research tapped into emotional aspects of queer kinship and allowed me access to nuances of each participants queer kinships. Charlie, Emma, Ziva, Octavia Sidney, Daisy, and Erica each created artworks that drew on the physical characteristics of their kin, while Steph,

Rahman, Robyn, and Wendy took more a more abstract approach to their representations; this does not mean that any one form of expression contains more emotional truth than another. In Sidney's art, the subjects are powerfully staring from the piece. This has the potential to create an emotional connection between the depicted queer kinship and viewer via the magnetic eye contact. In Rahman's, there is a journey of learning and growth as represented by the movement of a train. This emotional experience reflects the journeys and growth each person is consistently engaged in, while also being deeply specific to himself. Similarly, Wendy defines esses family in terms of connection in spirit (Diary Entry 1), and Erica finds more value in defining her kinships based on cultural norms of parent's queer identities (Diary Entry 1). The difference between these different understandings and representations does not negate either of them. Each one can be true, and the process of creating art about their queer kinships allowed these verbal definitions to surface. The variation between these expressions is powerful for the co-construction of knowledge; the noticing of places of difference and connection are essential for co-creating meaning between people.

In my early discussion of Machado (2019), I draw on my own personal response to the poem he presents. I will continue that methodology here, discussing my own emotional response to these artworks, and why that matters in this research. Some of this is engaged in the individual discussions of the artworks, particularly with the note that Sidney's submission struck me hard emotionally, causing me to cry repeatedly. I am a queer nonbinary person, and this research was a labor of love. Receiving and discussing these artworks often created tears of mixed emotion. There was happiness that I get to be party to such expression, and melancholy that I had not been so before. There was

excitement at getting to participate in knowledge co-construction with these submissions, and nervousness that I could not do the artworks justice in my part of the construction. Queer art embodies queer experience, and in theory, this makes it possible for viewers to experience the emotional valence of the queer kinship depicted. My experience in completing this research supports this theory. I felt a connection to each participant; for instance, looking at Steph's submission evokes the sensation of being a child with paint-covered fingers, perhaps an accidental splash of paint on a surface not meant for it (it could stay there for years). The messy choice to cover tiny hands fully in black paint, perhaps looking up at a parent for approval of a particularly proud handprint or mark. Steph's submission embodies their kinship queer experience. It brings me into a potential experience, an imagined togetherness, co-constructed between myself and Steph's art. In this way, I can encounter the emotional experience of Steph's kinships.

A key part of my research was the art display in the Halifax Central Public Library. While making the display a site of data collection was not possible within the timeline for this Master's thesis, the display itself serves as a powerful output for queer community. Participants were asked to create art for public display, and this undoubtedly influenced the information collected in diaries, as well as the art itself. Writing about the concept of their art being public, most participants defined 'public' broadly, writing about an amorphous "anyone" (Daisy, Ziva, Charlie). Robyn focused on the volume of human traffic present in particular places, and Rahman focused on defining living space as private. Sidney had a high level of consideration for the audience as seen in Diary Entry 6, where she states that "I pray I should bring up something better for public view." This broad understanding of public space aligns with the expansion of preservation and visibility work. For instance, Candlin and Larkin

(2020) redefine the modern museum broadly, and Hayden (1994) draws on a wide view of public and potentially educational spaces by placing information about Biddy Mason, an entrepreneurial Black woman, in buildings related to her life. The broad understanding of public highlights the perceived scrutiny that comes with being visibly queer; outside of living space, one is constantly on display and opened to judgement. Thus, it is important to have representation in a variety of spaces, because one does not stop being part of queer kinships when they leave their home.

A diary question which turned out to be particularly evocative was "What would seeing an art exhibition about queer families and relationships have been like for you as a younger person?" Here, I return to longer quotations, because this is a place where my words cannot do theirs justice.

> "realizing [difference] did not mean I was wrong or unhealthy. I am just different, and no one should make fun or judge me because of this, because I am HUMAN" (Wendy, Diary Entry 8).
>
> "[it] would have helped me dismantle my internalized homophobia at a much younger age, and would have made me feel less hopeless about my future ability to find love and acceptance as an adult" (Robyn, Diary Entry 8).
>
> "Art makes me feel like I belong" (Ziva, Diary Entry 8).

Each of these statements potentially speaks to biolegal rejection as an aspect of queer experience that is often quite painful, including but not limited to increased household conflict, heterosexist and transphobic rhetoric, and abuse (DeChants et al. 2022). They also tie back to the possibility of art within queer wellbeing work as noted above (McConnell et al., 2018).

Rahman is part of a queer family but does not identify as queer himself. Nonetheless, his writing echoes the other participants. Here, it is visible that queer art, and representations of families outside of heterosexual norms, benefit more than just queer people. If Rahman had seen a display of queer families and relationships before his father came out as gay, for instance, the change– while still painful to be losing a set family structure– may have been slightly eased. As he states:

> "As a younger person, seeing an art exhibition about queer families and relationships would have been a lot more comforting, helping me feel more seen and accepted. It could have positively influenced my self identity and outlook on the world" (Rahman, Diary Entry 8).

Rahman is an example of the driving force of this project: art creating connections, bringing up emotion, and facilitating a deeper understanding of human experiences.

Participants' hopes for the display at the Halifax Public Library are along similar lines as the reflections above, with Wendy hoping those who see it will understand that queer family is about love, and that "Our humanity is what makes us the same, and if more people accepted that instead of wanting to target differences, the world would be a better place" (Wendy, Diary Entry 8).

Steph hopes that:

> "having an art installation as an outcome of this project will achieve queer families being represented and more commonly within public space. That we can live without question and go about our daily lives with peace, respect, respectfully" (Steph, Diary Entry 8).

Participants acknowledged the discomfort some may feel when looking at their art. Steph elaborates on their understanding of being queer in public in 2024 as:

> "maybe less risky than before but there is still risk that comes with being queer. Often people who aren't queer will ask 'what's the risk? Or, Really? Still?' Because they don't experience it. But it's one of those things, if you know, you know. You know?" (Diary Entry 11).

Queer experience being described as a feeling of 'if you know, you know," highlights the complexities noted in Weiss (2016), who emphasizes queerness as part of a different way of thinking, identification with a particular institution or community, and a shared project of an imagined future. Steph is drawing on their queerness as a point of connection to others who identify within the queer community and have the potential to share their imagined future. This connection is inherently tied to experiences and understandings that are difficult to verbalize, which supports artistic expression of queerness by demonstrating the difficulty that can come with attempting to use linguistic descriptions. It also highlights the complexities of human experience and storytelling around which literature such as Allen & Anson (2005) center. The complexity within this short statement shows the importance of looking at queer experience in-depth, qualitative way. Doing so creates space for nuance and embraces potentially contradictory or paradoxical types of knowledge, such as having knowledge that you must know to begin to know where to begin understanding (Elliott & Culhane 2017).

In general, concerns about risk are overridden by the hope participants express for queer folks to feel seen in public. This hope was validated on by an observation made on Saturday, March 19th. The scope of this project did not include a full-scale analysis of the impact of the display. Nonetheless, on Saturday, March 19th, I had a small opening for

participants, and there was valuable moment of participant interaction with the display which supports the idea that seeing queer kinships in public is impactful on people in such kinships. Steph and their family came by, and they were all quite excited to have art created by their family in such an open, public space; they were all smiling the whole time and demonstrated a strong desire to document the occasion. They took a few pictures with the art on the wall, some with the art and their child, and one with Steph, the art, and the child. I considered asking if they wanted a picture altogether, but I did not want to step into their moment. When the child was picked up to look at the art, they reached their hand to echo where their handprints are on the art. This small motion spoke volumes; this child of a queer kinship felt connected the artwork they contributed to and got to see themselves in public space. Unlike many of the people who participated in this research, Steph's child got to see their queer family positively in public at a young age, and to have that experienced preserved for the future.

The organized and visible presence of a few queer people in the 1970's and 80's via organizations such as GAE in Halifax empowered a wider group of people to accept themselves and develop queer kinships of their own. For instance, drag self-expression and community, is a highly visible queer art form (Rose 2019, Farrier 2017). In the 1980s, Jim McSwain and Robin Metcalfe co-curated an art show entitled 'Art by Gay Men,' which included pottery, paintings, videos, and stained glass. 'Art by Gay Men,' had multiple iterations, and each contributed to a visible and shared imagined future (Dyer et al. 2020, The Dalhousie Gazette 1983). Aligning with this history, participants in my research want to share their love and show that "queers are happy in their house" (Erica, Diary Entry 8) because doing so has the power to positively impact others and increase their own respectful inclusion in public spaces (Steph, Rahman, Diary Entry 8).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

In this thesis, I have used the artworks and writings of people embedded in queer kinships to highlight the individualities and commonalities between such kinships, and to investigate how LGBTQ+ and polyamorous individuals experience creating art for public display about their self-defined queer kinships. Participants in my study report that completing this project was engaging and created deeper understandings of their families and artistic selves. Participants expressed gratitude for the process and the insights their engagement brought. Emma wrote that they were not expecting to complete the project all the way through, but "I have learnt so much from this study on art work, I have come to understand more hidden things about art creation, I really appreciate this opportunity" (Diary Entry 14). As recorded in their daily diary entries, this process placed participants in touch with their deeper feelings about their queer kinships. For instance:

> "it was fun to dive into my thoughts and feelings about my family and bring them out to the surface" (Robyn, Diary Entry 14).
>
> "Oh I can't believe it's already over!...I learned to express myself about things that aren't always told out loud, and for that, I am very grateful" (Wendy, Diary Entry 14).
>
> "I have learned and discovered new things about my family. Thank you for this opportunity" (Daisy, Diary Entry 14).
>
> "I learned more about myself and how I still have deep complicated feelings about being queer and being a queer family. But I am so very proud to be queer and to be a queer family. I learned that I still have healing to do so that I can

> continue to provide a healthy and happy home for our family." (Steph, Diary Entry 14)

These quotes demonstrate a common theme of learning to engage and express the emotions surrounding their queer families; Sidney stated that "I feel good about this study because I've learnt much about my family" (Diary Entry 14), and Steph reports that digging into their feelings about their queer family showed them places they want to grow and heal (Diary Entry 14). Rahman, notable in this research for being in a queer family without self-identifying as queer, described creating art about his family for display to be healing, writing that he learned "what I really feel about my family and how can I express that, it was more like a healing for me…[I have] taken even more interest in my art which is wonderful for me" (Diary Entry 14).

This arts-based research process connected participants to their internal experience of queer kinship and enhanced or relit connections to their artistic practices. This is demonstrated in Emma and Rahman's entries quoted above, as well as in the fact that Erica, Daisy, Octavia and Sidney each reported their general level of engagement with art making to be low yet created beautiful pieces about their queer kinships. Steph allowed their participation to help them slow down in the day-to-day by taking time for creativity, which in turn showed Steph how much their child loves making art, particularly painting. They write that "making lots of different kinds of art and different size art and exploring art teaches us or shows us what we can do" (Diary Entry 7).

My research engaged with and benefited from preceding research by LGBTQ+ and polyamorous activists, and anthropological research into queer kinships. Research that was particularly useful to me were works by Roseneil & Budgeon (2004), who write

about participants who actively distanced themselves from romantic entanglement, choosing instead to build lives around platonic friendships; Oswald (2002), focused on queer kinships rituals that create group cohesion and collective identity; Rose (2019), for her detailed history of Halifax pride; and Willes and colleagues (2019), whose arts-based research provided an invaluable reference point for academic arts analysis.

Additionally, without the past work of activist organizations such as GAE, and the organizers of the 'Art by Gay Men' exhibitions, I would not have the freedom to place queerness in public space (Rose 2019, The Dalhousie Gazette). By placing art made by and about queer families in the Halifax Central Public Library, this study created space for and fostered connection to queer kinships. Art is an appropriate and important medium through which to examine an experience as ineffable and subjective as queer kinship because art provides individualized windows through which to understand the experience of being inside these complex relationships.

This research contributes to and combines the literatures of arts-based research, queer kinship, and museum theory. On an individual level, participants gained a deeper understanding of their families through this exploration, and the final art hopefully created emotional connections to those who saw it. My results provided a snapshot of queer kinship in Halifax and brought queer family visibly and positively into public space. My participants developed their art skills and/or explored a new form of expression. This work advances self-expression, queer visibility, and greater understanding of the role that arts and museum space can play in queer kinship studies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Agreement with HPL

10 January 2023

I, Zso, agree on behalf of the Halifax Central Public Library to

a) Allow Matt Cottrell access to the circular, 2D display area located in the back left corner of the First Floor for display of their Masters' thesis on the topic of queer family. This shall begin in early March of 2024, and continue for 6-8 weeks.

b) With prior communication of specific days, allow Matt Cottrell access to the Halifax Central Public Library on Sunday mornings between 10am and noon (staff hours) in order to install and edit the display.

I, Matt Cottrell, agree to

a) Provide exact date of intended installation and removal, as well as size and number of art pieces to be displayed, at the earliest possible date.

b) Protect the safety and wellbeing of all people involved in my work.

c) Seek inclusion and engage in practices which allow for reflexivity and growth.

The dates in this document may be subject to change; any changes will be discussed and agreed upon by both parties.

Signed,

Matt Cottrell

Halifax Public Libraries
60 Alderney Drive
Dartmouth, NS B2Y 4P8

t. 902-490-5744
f. 902-490-5762
halifaxpubliclibraries.ca

Appendix 2: Recruitment Poster

Are you in a Queer family? Your art is needed!

In this research, you will be asked to:

- **Create a piece of art about your queer family.**
- **Through the process of creation, complete a 14-day Daily Diary about your art and family.**

Benefits:

- Increased awareness of specific family dynamics and connections
- Validation of having art placed on public display

Compensation:

- Participants will receive $40.

Potential Risks:

The risks associated with this study are minimal.

- Community mental health resources will be provided for all participants.
- Being queer in public carries risks such as unwanted negative attention and bio-legal family rejection.
- Given the nature of this research, even using a pseudonym, there will likely be identifying details in the artwork and Daily Diary entries. If you are concerned about safety and/or being identifiable, please take care in your artwork. Feel free to contact Matt Cottrell if you have any specific questions, concerns or requests.

The art will be placed on display at the Halifax Public Library Central Branch, in March and April 2024!

About the researcher:
I am queer, nonbinary, autistic, polyamorous, and passionate about queer rights!

REB Approval: 2023-6774

DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY

Halifax Public Libraries

Contact Matt Cottrell at matt.cottrell@dal.ca

Appendix 3: Screening Questions

- Pronouns:
- Why are you interested in participating in this project?
- Please describe your family.
- Are any other members of your family interested in participating in this project?
- How did you find out about this project?
- Please describe your typical form of artistic expression/interests.
- Would you need financial assistance for art supplies in order to participate in this project?
- Do you know any other people/families that may be interested in participating in this research? Please pass along information about this project and my contact information!
- Do you have any questions regarding the project?

Appendix 4: Consent Form

Project title: Queer Family: An [Art]iculation

Lead researcher: Matt Cottrell, Dalhousie University MA, matt.cottrell@dal.ca

Other researchers
Supervisor: Margaret Robinson, Dalhousie University, mr879620@dal.ca

Funding provided by: Graduate Student Research And Travel Fund

[Versioning: After receiving ethics approval, add the date of approval and the consent form version number in the footer. The first approved version is v1.0. If subsequent amendments to the consent form are requested and approved, the date of approval and version number (e.g., v2.0) must be updated.]

Introduction
We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Matt Cottrell, who is a Masters' Student at Dalhousie University. Choosing whether to take part in this research is entirely your choice. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience, or discomfort that you might experience.
You should discuss any questions you have about this study with Matt Cottrell. Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have questions later, please contact Matt Cottrell at matt.cottrell@dal.ca.

To be taken through this form by a recording of the researcher, follow the link provided here (https://youtu.be/2Fndp564Xkk) or the link in the email this was sent in.

Purpose and Outline of the Research Study
This research will study queer family life through artistic expression, placing that expression in public contexts. Art is particularly powerful for creating connection and fostering empathy, and the display of art in public spaces aims to create visibility and increase acceptance of queer families.
Should you choose to participate in this research, you will be asked to make art about your queer family and for display in the Halifax Public Library, as well as complete a 14-day Daily Diary answering questions about both your art and your family. The submitted art must weigh no more than 2.3 kilograms, or five pounds, and be a maximum of 30.5 by 40.5 centimeters, or 12 by 16 inches.

Who Can Take Part in the Research
You may participate in this study if you are a member of a queer family. This includes but is not limited to monogamous gay and lesbian partnerships, polyamorous families with some combination of hetero- and homo- erotic, romantic, or platonic commitments, and families wherein one or multiple people are transgender and/or nonbinary. You must

be able to communicate in English and have consistent access to the internet in order to fill out Daily Diary entries.

What You Will Be Asked to Do
If you decide to participate in this research, you will be asked to complete a 14-day Daily Diary entry and complete a piece of art about/relating to your queer family. The diary entries will take approximately 2.5 hours. Time spent creating the art will be variable depending on the form and method of creation. The art will be displayed at the Halifax Central Public Library in March and April 2024 for a period of 6-8 weeks. Daily Diary questions will address topics such as your family, your engagement with art, and the ways in which they connect. If you come upon a particular question that you need clarification on or don't feel comfortable answering, please email matt.cottrell@dal.ca.

Possible Benefits, Risks and Discomforts
There are no direct benefits of participating in this research. Secondary effects may include an increased clarity regarding familial dynamics and roles, and the validation that comes with your art being placed on public display. Participants will also be contributing to the expansion of awareness about and connection to queer families.

Risks:
The risks associated with this study are minimal.

You will be automatically given a pseudonym once the consent form has been signed; if you would like to use your true name, please mark the appropriate box on the signature page. If at some point in your participation you would like to change your choice, email Matt Cottrell at matt.cottrell@dal.ca.

Given the nature of this research, even using a pseudonym, there will likely be identifying details in the artwork and Daily Diary entries. If you are concerned about safety and/or being identifiable, please take care in your artwork. Feel free to contact Matt Cottrell if you have any specific questions, concerns or requests.

The public display of queerness which has the potential to identify you could risk job loss, bio-legal familial rejection, and targeted queerphobia. If these issues are of particular concern to you, please email matt.cottrell@dal.ca with questions, or to schedule a meeting. We can discuss individualized mitigation of risks.

Please keep in mind that your artwork and diaries will likely contain information about other members of your family. By signing the consent form, you are allowing any information given about them to be used in this research; it is advised that you consult with the family members you anticipate being included and make sure that they are comfortable with your participation in this work.

If you require the delivery of art supplies or pickup of their completed art from your home, Matt Cottrell may know your place of residence, but less—identifying alternatives

are available. For instance, you may drop-off and pickup at the Sociology and Social Anthropology office at Dalhousie. If you choose this option, please make sure that the artwork is fully covered/wrapped. This option would reveal your face to the staff of the SOSA office, but would not allow them to connect a specific artwork to you.

Compensation / Reimbursement
Participants will receive $40 for participating. In order to receive compensation, you must complete this form and at least 5 diary entries. If you received art supplies as part of your participation, those are yours to keep as well.

How your information will be protected:
Until the display of the art at the Central Branch of the Halifax Public Library, your participation in this research will be known only to Matt Cottrell and their committee (Dr. Margaret Robinson and Dr. Martha Radice). Drafts of the work will be reviewed by Dr. Margaret Robinson and Dr. Martha Radice.

For everyone's safety, all names given in Daily Diaries will be changed to pseudonyms, and specific locations will be replaced with less identifiable descriptors. For example, if a diary entry states: “I met my partner Charlie at Glitter Bean Cafe” that would be adjusted to say “I met my partner Billie in a cafe.” Any adjustments made for safety purposes will maintain the original meaning of the entry, and no edits will be to expressions of emotion, or internal experiences.

Throughout your creative process, you may opt to include fewer identifying details if you want your participation to remain confidential. For example, you may avoid the depiction of faces, and instead focus on more abstract representations of emotion. The level to which you use or omit potentially identifiable details in your art is entirely up to you and the comfort of your family.

Confidentiality:
Daily Diary entries, electronic art submissions, and other participant data will be stored in a locked residential space, on an encrypted OneDrive accessed only via a password protected computer. The password for this computer is known only to Matt Cottrell and requires a fingerprint from them to access. Physical art submissions will be kept in the same locked residential space, in a locked desk drawer.

You will be automatically given a pseudonym once the consent form has been signed; if you would like to use your true name, please mark the appropriate box on the signature page. If at some point in your participation you would like to change your choice, email Matt Cottrell at matt.cottrell@dal.ca.

Given the nature of this research, even using a pseudonym, there will likely be identifying details in the artwork and Daily Diary entries. If you are concerned about safety and/or being identifiable, please take care in your artwork. Feel free to contact Matt Cottrell if you have any specific questions, concerns or requests.

It will be up to you to make sure that your family members consent to your participation and the display of the final artwork. This research is about your individual experience of queer kinship; it does not inherently have to include details that could identify particular family members, and it is your responsibility to communicate with their family about their participation. It is your responsibility to establish within their own family if their participation will be made known to individuals outside the family. If the final art piece includes potentially identifying details about a child, you will be sent an additional consent form to certify that the art may be displayed.

Limits to confidentiality:
We will not disclose any information about your participation except as required by law or our professional obligations. If you inform us about abuse or neglect of a child or an adult in need of protection, we are required by law to contact authorities.

Duty to Report
Please note that under the laws of Nova Scotia, Matt Cottrell and the Research Coordinator have a duty to report suspected cases of neglect and/or abuse against a child to the provincial Department of Community Services, and suspected cases of neglect against an adult to the Department of Health and Wellness.

Data retention:
Once the study is over your data will be stored on an encrypted OneDrive document. Matt Cottrell will retain submissions for future publications, teaching, and research contexts. If you choose to use your real name, after the conclusion of the display, all data connected to you will be shifted to connect to your initials only in future reference. This could connect your true name to a future reference made to this research; it does not inherently do so. If you are uncomfortable with this, please opt to use a pseudonym.

After you have completed and delivered their art and completed all Daily Diary entries, you will be sent the 'Finished Art Release Form.' This additional step is because it is hard to know how an art piece will turn out until it is complete; it may contain accidentally identifiable details that you may not want available to public viewing, for example. This form is a reminder to make sure you are comfortable with the display of the work, and an opportunity to make any edits you see fit.

Finally, this document asks if you would like to have the art created for this research to be returned after the display ends. If you choose this option, the researcher will retain a picture of the art for future reference. If they do not wish to have the art returned, the art will be stored by Matt Cottrell in a locked residential space for four years, then donated to The ArQuives, a Canadian archive that focuses on LGBTQ2+ information and materials in any medium, by and about community members.

If You Decide to Stop Participating

You are free to leave the study at any time. To end participation, email Matt Cottrell at matt.cottrell@dal.ca. If you decide to stop participating during the study, you can decide whether you want any of the information that you have provided up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. You may choose to withdraw your art from display without withdrawing your Daily Diaries; you cannot remove your Diary entries without also withdrawing your art. After participating in the study, you can decide for up to two weeks if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be integrated into the research.

How to Obtain Results

If you so choose (as indicated on the signature page of this document), you will be sent a short write-up of the researcher's understanding of your submissions to give comments on. Once a draft is complete, the draft will be reviewed by Dr. Margaret Robinson and Dr. Martha Radice, and eventually a draft will be circulated to you and participants to review and once again make comments. This draft will be complete by mid-January, 2023. As has been mentioned throughout this documentation, the final form of this work (along with the written thesis) is a display at the Halifax Central Public Library. You will, of course, be invited to view the display at the earliest possible time.

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Matt Cottrell (matt.cottrell@dal.ca) or Margaret Robinson (mr879620@dal.ca) at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at (902) 494-3423, or email: ethics@dal.ca (and reference REB file #2023-6774).

Signature Page

Project title: Queer Family: An [Art]iculation

Lead researcher: Matt Cottrell, Dalhousie University MA, matt.cottrell@dal.ca

I have read the explanation about this study. I have been given the opportunity to discuss it and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I have been asked to create a piece of art about my family and write a 14-day Daily Diary in response to questions provided by the researcher each day. I agree to take part in this study. My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, up until January 2024, at which point the data will be integrated into the whole.

Compensation:
As an honorarium for participating in this research, you will receive $40. To receive this compensation, you must complete at least 5 Daily Diary entries. Please select the form in which you would like receive this payment:
☐E-Transfer
Email:_____
☐Gift Card
Business:_____
Email:_____

Name:
Would you like to use your real name? ___Yes ___No
If no, would you prefer a pseudonym that leans feminine, masculine, or neutral?
_Feminine _Masculine _Neutral

Results:
Would you like to be sent a summary of the preliminary analysis of your submissions soon after completion and draft in mid-January 2024 for review? ___Yes ___No

I agree that my Daily Diary entries may be used in this research.
I agree that my art may be put on display at the Halifax Public Library
I agree that data collected in this research may be utilized by Matt Cottrell in future publications, teaching, and research contexts.

_____ _____
Signature Date

Appendix 5: Daily Diary Questions

Primary Questions List (New each day):

- How do you define your family? Where do you draw a line between family and non-family?
- What does the term art mean to you? How do you define/describe your art?
- How do you define public? For instance, this project culminates with a display in a library; in what ways would you consider that space more or less public than a cafe, living space, or on the sidewalk?
- Tell me about your primary queer family. For instance, how long have you been together? Are you polyamorous or monogamous? Does it shift often, or is it relatively stable in form?
- How frequently do you create art?
- What does family time mean to you? What kind of things do you do with your family in 'family time'?
- How frequently do you purposefully experience art made by others?
- What do you hope having an art installation as an outcome of this project could achieve? Or what would seeing an art exhibition about queer families and relationships have been like for you as a young person?
- What does a typical weekday look like for your family? A typical weekend?
- Do you ever hide the true form of your family due to lack of acceptance? Please elaborate only as much as you feel comfortable.
- When people see your art, what do you hope that they feel?
- How do you envision your family in the future?
- What does making art mean to you?
- What does making art do for you?
- What has the experience of participating in this research felt like for you? Have you learned anything new about your art or your family?

On even-numbered days:

- How are you feeling about your artwork for this project at this moment? For instance, are you engaged, frustrated, excited?

On odd-numbered days:

- How are you feeling about your family at this moment? For instance, are you feeling connected, disengaged, comfortable?

Every day:

- Is there anything else you want me to know about your family, your artwork, or this experience?

Appendix 7: Finished Art Release Form

Project title: Queer Family: An [Art]iculation

Lead researcher: Matt Cottrell, Dalhousie University MA, matt.cottrell@dal.ca

Other researchers:
Supervisor: Margaret Robinson, Dalhousie University, mr879620@dal.ca

Funding provided by: Graduate Student Research And Travel Fund

Consent to Display:
By signing this document, you confirm your consent to having your art placed on display at the Halifax Central Public Library between March and April 2024.

Have you discussed this art with your family? Are they okay with it being displayed?
☐Yes

Return of Art:
After the display is complete, you may choose to have it returned to you. If you choose this option, the researcher will retain a picture of the art for future reference. If you do not wish to have the art returned to you, it will be securely stored by the researcher for four years, then donated to The ArQuives, a Canadian archive that focuses on LGBTQ2+ information and materials in any medium, by and about community members.
Would you like to have the art returned?
☐Yes ☐No
If you select yes, you will be contacted after the display ends to arrange the specifics.

_____ _____
Signature Date

Appendix 8: Depiction of a Child Release Form

If you are receiving this form, it is because the art you created for the research project ‘Queer Family: an [Art]iculation’ contains potentially identifying information about a person younger than 18. This could include but is not limited to: distinct/distinguishing characteristics such as a recognizable face or other physical attribute, the clear depiction of an address at which a minor lives, and/or the use of a recognizable nickname.

Signing this form gives the researcher permission to display and use this art in their research; if you would like to make edits that remove the identifying information, you are welcome to do so. Please email matt.cottrell@dal.ca to make this known, and proper arrangements will be made.

By signing this form, you consent to the art being displayed as is.

_____ Signature _____ Date