

Shaping queer bodies, identities, and communities in queer nightlife spaces

An intersectional study exploring the contribution of participation in queer nightlife to queer identity and community formation



[Inside 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'], n.d., [Photograph], (20+) Facebook

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Abstract

This research explores the contribution of participation in queer nightlife spaces, more specifically 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', to queer identity formation and community building. As all queer individuals potentially face oppression, this research explores in what ways queer nightlife can be safe(r) spaces for queer identity exploration and expression.

Using semi-structured in-depth interviews and participant observations, this study provides insights on the unique characteristics of queer nightlife spaces. Recognizing these spaces as performative stages for both queer and non-queer bodies and identities, it highlights both physical aspects and a variety of social functions of queer nightlife spaces. Moreover, the importance of establishing deeper connections and queer communities for reciprocal understanding, navigation of self-acceptance, and identity expression.

Adding to the field of intersectional research, this study underscores the intersectional nature of the queer community, acknowledging various challenges faced by the individuals within. This research also contributes to the representation of queer individuals, underlining the urgency of recognition of diverse experiences, both within and outside of academia.

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1. Glossary

| Term | Definition |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Carolus Magnus and Ovum Novum | Student associations in Nijmegen. |
| Darkroom | Also called backroom, is in a queer context understood as a space in some queer nightlife spaces where individuals, typically men, engage in same sex sexual activities. |
| Dito | The LGBT+ association in Nijmegen for 18- to 28-year-olds. |
| Drag | Form of entertainment, generally performed by queer artists, that consists of exaggerated, theatrical, and often satirical representation of either feminine or masculine ideas of gender. |
| Grindr | Dating app, primarily used amongst queer men. |
| Slay | Metaphor for “killing it”, as a compliment regarding someone’s appearance, originating from black, Latinx, queer ball culture in the 1970s and 80s. |
| Tiktok | A popular social media app where users share short videos, often including music and/or other sounds. |
| Twee Keer Bellen (TKB) | Non-queer bar in Nijmegen, particularly popular amongst students. |

2. Introduction

When talking about social injustice regarding queerness with others, I've noticed peoples' tendency to rely on arguments based on laws and crime rates. Although equal rights on paper and being able to hold hands in public with your same-sex partner without being physically assaulted is a good start, solely including these aspects dismisses a large part of how being queer or queer-curious shapes an individuals' experience and identity in a cisgendered, heteronormative society. Also, discussions whether pride month, and more specifically the extravagant partying, is still needed or not: what do people mean when they say "needed"? The emergence of these discussions not only showcases a general need for deeper understanding of queer peoples' experiences, but also in what way entertainment, like participation in queer nightlife and partying, has meaning for queer and questioning individuals.

Queer nightlife experiences and spaces, queer bodies and identities, and community creation has been researched throughout the years. Firstly, Butler's (1993) contribution to the development of queer theories and their notion of gender performativity is what lies at the core of the approach of this research. Though their work doesn't address nightlife spaces specifically, these spaces are social and cultural environments where performativity theory can be observed. Exploring the construction of queer bodies and identities within the stage a queer nightlife space provides us with, generates new insights on both applicability and relevance of performativity theory. Reed (1996) provides valuable insights on the connection between queerness and the built environment, emphasizing its transformative nature. Furthermore, extending orientalism, theorized by Said (1979), and combining this with research from Valentine (2002) on the origins of queer spaces as safe spaces, this research also provides new insights on the entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces. Garnets & D'Augelli (1994) emphasize the importance of queer communities, addressing its empowering potential and valuable contribution to the mental health of queer individuals. Exploring interconnected contributions and unique characteristics of queer nightlife to the individual's identity and their life in general, creates new and valuable insights on the importance of accessible queer nightlife spaces in a broader sense. The theories mentioned above are explored within the 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' as research field, based on in-depth interviews with both staff members and visitors, combined with participatory observations. The aim of this research is to build on knowledge about queer communities and identities, through exploration of both differences and commonalities in experiences, amongst different gender identities, sexual orientations, and ages. Additionally, to this day, no academic research on queer nightlife in the geographical context of Nijmegen exists, let alone on 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' specifically. Furthermore, inclusion of both visitors' and staff members' perspectives, as well as focus on a physical space providing a re-occurring intentional community building activity, both underscore the unique contribution of this research to the field of queer academia.

Cisneros & Bracho (2020: 2-4) emphasize the lack of intersectional approaches in academic research on queer spaces. This is problematic, as non-intersectional research potentially leads to incomplete and misleading understandings. Ignoring the complexities of the variety of individual experiences dismisses their subjection to various and intersecting socially constructed dimensions of power and oppression. This can lead to the overshadowing of experiences of marginalized groups, also within a broader marginalized group. Although there are limitations to intersectionality, as it reflects the complex nature of all social interaction and power relationships, attempts to diversify research are important for both scientific and societal reasons. This thesis contributes to the field of

intersectional research that continues to demonstrate how systems of oppression affect experience and identity of individuals. Overall inclusion of queer individuals in academic research leads to a more diverse and representative understanding of human behavior and experience, but the intersectional nature of challenges and inequalities faced by queer people in society are no less important.

Intersectional representation of queer people in academic research is important, to both academia and society as a whole. It contributes to awareness and acknowledgement of their existence and importance. Giving voice to a marginalized population through academic recognition can be used as a source of empowerment. Shedding new light on what queer nightlife spaces contribute to queer peoples' lives raises awareness on the importance of existence of these places. Later in this thesis I will address the transformation of queer nightlife spaces from being predominantly occupied by and catered towards queer people to less exclusive, to more mainstream nightlife leisure locations, by explaining some of the effects entrance of non-queer individuals has on queer peoples' experience in queer nightlife. Findings from this thesis are beneficial for owners and organizers of queer nightlife spaces, as it compels them to reflect on and improve how accessible and safe the nightlife spaces they're providing really are, and for who. As the intersectionality of a nightlife space improves, more participants are equally able to benefit from its potential to offer bodies and groups that do not conform to societal norms a safe(r) space for entertainment and self-expression. Also, potential empowerment: the process of becoming stronger and more confident in the expression of an individual's queerness. Integrating data from different ages, gender identities and sexualities, this research emphasizes the continuous nature of identity and community formation, shedding light on the contribution of participation in queer nightlife spaces in this process. This leads to the following main research question:

How does participation in queer nightlife spaces contribute to both queer identity formation and queer community building?

This main research question consists of the following sub-questions:

1. *What is a queer nightlife space?*
2. *How can participating in queer nightlife spaces contribute to identity formation and expression?*
3. *In what way can a queer nightlife space create queer community?*

This research is structured as follows. Firstly, the methodology, consisting of detailed explanations of the research process. This chapter consists of elaboration on intersectionality, the research design, field selection, access and familiarization with the setting, establishment of the research group, positionality, research ethics, data collection, storage, and analysis, and closing off with reflection on the generalizability and limitations of the methodological approach. Secondly, the theoretical framework and literature review, consisting of all applied theories regarding identity formation, queer spaces, and community building. These are visualized in the third part, the conceptual model. After that follows the results chapter, where all findings are presented, structured according to the sub-questions mentioned above. Then follows the discussion, where interpretations, relevance, and importance of findings are reflected upon. This chapter also critically addresses the limitations of this research and offers suggestions for further research. The next chapter is the conclusion, consisting of a general answer to the main research question, the synthesis of this research.

3. Methodology

The following chapter contains all methodological considerations and choices made during the research process, structured into nine sections. The chapter starts off addressing the intersectional methodological approach taken in this research. As this research contributes to the field of intersectional research, this section contains the academic approach, provided by Misra et al. (2021: 11-14). Secondly, the research design is discussed, including all considerations supporting the choice for qualitative research methods, as well as the specific data collection methods chosen in this study. This section also provides insights on the ontological and epistemological approach taken in this research. Thirdly, all considerations regarding the selection of a research field, a queer nightlife space, are discussed. The fourth section elaborates on how access to the field and familiarization with the setting has taken place, focusing on both the practical approach and how my positionality has affected this process. The fifth section discusses the establishment of the research group, including potential limitations regarding representability, addressing the credibility and dependability of this research. The sixth section explains the methods of data collection, storage, and analyzation. In the seventh section, my positionality as researcher is discussed further, showing insight on the potential ways my body and identity affects access to the field, data collection, contact with participants, and interpretation of results. After that, overall generalizability and limitations of the research methodology is discussed. The last section discusses research ethics. As this research includes queer individuals and data collected in nightlife spaces, it called for a critical evaluation of potential vulnerability during different stages of the research process.

3.1. Intersectionality

Considering the following six key methodological interconnected tenets of intersectionality, as described by Misra et al. (2021: 11-14), I aim to make this research intersectional.

Firstly, recognition of power and **oppression** as core to intersectionality. First theorized by women of color who studied how their experiences were defined by race, class, and gender, explaining that power works in uneven and multiple ways.

Secondly, **relationality**: oppression for some groups is interconnected with opportunity for others. Also recognizing that privilege can make groups within a marginalized group invisible. For example, the idea that queer nightlife spaces are meant for gay men only. Patrick Nijenhuis, who opened gay bar De Regenboog in the city of Nijmegen two years ago, said in an interview with Indebuurt (Everdingen, van, 2021):

“I want to dismiss the old idea that there are solely gay men in gay bars, but you shouldn’t deny who you are. You can see that this is a gay place. There are disco balls everywhere and you hear ABBA all the time. I especially want to keep these clichés and make it possible for everyone to have a good time here.”

Queer people are all potentially facing oppression, as their identities and/or bodies do not comply with the cisgender, heterosexual norm. Although their experiences are linked by this, groups within the queer community experience different forms of oppression, based on other intersections.

Thirdly, **complexity**: social inequality is complex, as it consists of socially constructed dimensions of difference. Each dimension of oppression shapes the identities of the self and others. As they are interconnected, assuming greater privilege or disadvantages based on additive

intersections must be avoided.

Fourth, specifying the **context** in which systems of oppression operate. In this research, specifying which mechanisms play a role in queer nightlife spaces and how this continues to shape identity (formation). As mentioned earlier, queer nightlife spaces are not only spaces for entertainment, but also empowerment of a marginalized group in society. However, who do they empower, for who are these spaces entertaining? And how does this reflect on participants' performance in these spaces, and vice versa? Addressing the power dynamics of oppression from larger to smaller scale: society, queer community, queer nightlife space, participant group, individual.

Fifth, **comparison**: determining which intersections matter most for this research while recognizing that exploring others might lead to different insights. The most important intersections in this research are sexuality, gender identity, and age. Acknowledging the complexity of intersectionality, it would not be feasible to include all socially constructed dimensions in different contexts. Considering this research is conducted in a nightlife space that caters towards a queer public and comparing generations, I'm most interested in how these intersections reflect and shape the individual's identity and experience. While taking class, age, ethnicity, and bodily ability into account, I place emphasis on how participation in queer nightlife spaces continue to shape identities in a cisgender- heteronormative society.

Finally, **deconstruction**: notion of categories must be critically assessed, to avoid unintentional essentializing differences between groups. Recognizing the partiality and fluidity of socially constructed categories, as well as how categories themselves are often created by oppression. In this research I avoid doing this by focusing on what possible differences participants identify themselves openly, allowing them to let their experiences explain in what way they identify with which category, structured by more broad intersections like sexuality, gender, race and class. Setting specific categories to make them choose what complies most with their identity would be not only counterproductive in terms of dependability of collected data, but also go directly against what I intend to contribute to with this research and in general: breaking down the restrictions of normativity through categorization of bodies and identities.

It seems paradoxical to essentialize and categorize when conducting intersectional research, however it is a necessity. With the proviso that it is done intentionally, and categorizations are sufficiently argued, I do this as I intend to say something about how various bodies and identities under different and interconnected oppressive systems experience queer nightlife spaces. To avoid placing people into categories they don't identify with, each participant was asked to fill out the following list without suggestions for answers, allowing them to self-identify:

Sexual orientation:

Gender identity:

Age:

Socio-economic background:

Ethnicity:

Bodily ability:

Consent for quoting:

All answers per participant are findable in a table in section 3 of the appendix, under "Overview of participants".

3.2. Research design

Queer research methodology goes beyond theorization and creation of knowledge, as it promotes social and political transformation of societal normativity. Its commitment to marginalized groups broadens the notion of critical academia. It also goes beyond mere illustration of differences, beyond explorations and descriptions of inequalities of normative truths regarding gender, sexuality, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and other categorizing characteristics. The most important aspect of queer(ing) methodology is to break down hegemonic conceptions of sexuality and gender (Nash, 2010: 131-135). A qualitative approach is the best fit for the data collection of this research, considering it is meant for understanding meanings and interpretations that individuals attribute to their perceptible surroundings, including other peoples' behavior. Attempting to make sense of phenomena, understanding patterns and implications concerning individuals, trying to answer the "how" part of the research question, qualitative data is needed. Furthermore, this perception of what reality is, the ontological perspective, must be supported by qualitative data. Argued vice versa, quantitative data lacks depth, context and understanding, and acknowledgement of individual experience. It is also not a good fit for exploration of new insights and understandings of complex phenomena like identity and sense of community. Therefore, quantitative data is not sufficient, thus not a fit approach to conduct this research. Considering this research focuses on meaning and experience, the epistemological approach builds on the assumption that knowledge consists of interpretations made by individuals. Only identification of shared understandings amongst these individuals forms what can be known about what queer bodies can know differently from non-queer bodies. However, queerness is as much of a common denominator, as it has variety within. Recognizing commonalities, while addressing differences in experiences amongst queer gender identities and sexualities, is therefore a crucial part of the intersectional approach of this research.

An in-depth interview allows for extensive data collection on a subject's personal experience, due to the conversational ambiance of the setting, or as Hennink et al. (2020: 197) call it: "*conversation with a purpose*". Creating knowledge and constructing reality together, as interviewer and interviewee is the best way to collect the data needed to answer this research question, considering it requires in-depth understanding of peoples' emotions, motivations, and process of place-making. The discussed topics are aimed at collecting data answering the sub-questions, while leaving room for conversations brought up by participants. The complete interview guide, in both English and Dutch, is findable in section 1 of the appendix, under "Interview guides".

For this research the methods used to collect data are semi-structured in-depth interviews combined with participant observations as secondary source of data collection. Studying the people in the chosen field allows for better insight into what people consciously say during interviews and how this may reflect or differ during participation in these spaces. As social interactions lie at the core of what happens in queer nightlife spaces, it is a logical extension of data collection combined with the in-depth interviews that identify (possibly shared) norms and values of the participants, more specifically its effects on the practice of participating in queer nightlife spaces. Prior to data collection, I identified four different approaches to conduction of participant observations. Firstly, complete participant, where the researcher is member of the group, without the group knowing they are being researched. Secondly, participant as observer, where the researcher is member of the group, but the group is aware of the research activities. Thirdly, observer as participant, where the researcher is not a member of the group, but the group is aware they are being studied, potentially interested in participation where it is beneficial for the quality of the observations. Lastly, complete observer, where the researcher is not a member of the group and the public that's being observed is

unaware. In this research, I've opted for the third approach, observer as participant, considering this means my observation activities as researcher aren't hidden from the group, yet the emphasis is on collecting data, rather than participating in the observed activity.

The topics from the interview guide also form the base of what is observed through participant observations. All aspects are elaborated on in terms of description, interaction with other visitors, interpretations regarding emotions, and changes over time. The complete observation guide and protocol are findable in section 2 of the appendix, under "Observation guide" and "Observation protocol".

3.4. Selecting the field

Selecting a queer nightlife space and timespan to observe required multiple considerations regarding intersectionality. Different spaces cater for different publics, which might also change depending on day of the week and time. For example, in the city of Nijmegen, Patrick Nijenhuis' recently opened bar 'De Regenboog' (translates to 'The Rainbow'), markets itself as a hetero-friendly gay bar all year long, while 'Café De Plak' regularly hosts intentionally queer parties in their basement. This leads to questioning whether continuity of intention and branding is what defines a nightlife space as queer. Having lived in Nijmegen as a queer person for over four years, when I am asked which queer nightlife spaces the city, I would immediately name 'Café De Plak', despite never having attended one of their parties. Zooming in on 'De Regenboog', with its continuous queer branding, the composition of visitors differs per week, day, and time. Accessibility is affected by various factors, within all socially constructed dimensions society consists of. Firstly age, connected to stage of life: people working a full-time job during the week might be more inclined to participate in nightlife spaces during the weekend, while students are able to visit during weekdays as well. Bodily ability also plays a role in this, not only influencing time spent in the nightlife space and frequency of visitation, but also physical environment: being able to enter the place, stay comfortably and use all available services. For example, in 'Café De Plak', in order to enter the basement where parties are hosted, you must go down a steep flight of stairs (Landau-Donnelly, personal communication, January 25, 2023). Thirdly, gender and sexual orientation: as the title of Patrick Nijenhuis' earlier mentioned interview captures perfectly: "*not just for gay men*", queer nightlife spaces are traditionally perceived as catered towards gay men. Cisneros & Bracho (2020: 2) add intersections of ethnicity, age, and socio-economic status to this, studying the effects of queer nightlife spaces being pre-dominantly occupied by gay, white, middle-class men, on non-white visitors.

Having explored various considerations regarding selection of a field, the following definition, elaborated on in the literature review chapter "Defining queer space", has been used for definitive selection of a queer nightlife space suitable for this research:

A publicly available space meant for entertainment, available and generally more popular at late evenings and nighttime, that brands itself as queer-oriented, independently from the sexual identity of its visitors.

In the city of Nijmegen, the place that resonates the best with this definition, especially regarding branding, is 'De Regenboog'.

3.5. Access to the field and familiarization with the setting

To start of this section, I will elaborate on my position as an openly queer person living in Nijmegen for over four years that has visited 'De Regenboog' at least ten times before. Additionally, I also knew a staff member back from high school, which also provided a valuable starting point during the process of familiarizing myself with the rather small group of regular visitors present on Wednesdays in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'. I'm also a student, actively participating in nightlife, likely to be around the same age as most visitors. All factors mentioned above most definitely made the process of gaining access to the field and familiarization with the setting easier, as a certain level of familiarity was present prior to the entire research process.

The initial attempt to enter the field was done through contacting the public social media accounts of 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' on Instagram and Facebook. As this nightlife space is public and free to enter at given opening hours, entry into the physical space wasn't an issue. However, establishing trust and conversations about cooperation, to be able to approach potential participants, was necessary and required caution while getting acquainted. Emphasizing the academic and societal relevance, explaining what will happen to the collected data, and how anonymity of visitors is protected, not only increased chances of successful entry to the field, but also protected the integrity of this research and me as researcher. Although the field, De Regenboog, is a public space, I asked for permission by the head of staff to conduct participant observations, to make my presence as researcher known. On Wednesdays, people will know I'm researching, considering I ask people to participate as interviewee while observing. During busier party nights, like Fridays and Saturdays, majority of the visitors won't know I'm observing.

On familiarizing with the setting and culture, as queer-identifying person having visited 'De Regenboog' multiple times, I didn't expect this to be a problem. However, this does call for continuous critical evaluation of how this level of familiarity potentially affects my position as researcher within the space. For example, as expected, I ran into people who recognized me and expected friendly conversation and/or offer to drink alcohol together. To avoid unexpected negative effects on the observation, a few ground rules and potential situations that call for a specific response had to be assessed. Firstly, I chose to not use any state-altering substances like more than two units of alcohol or any kind of drugs. If someone offered me either, which happened more than once, I politely declined, or opted for an alcohol-free drink. Secondly, if the person in question were to ask why I'm declining, considering people who know me might be surprised, I shortly explained I was doing participant observation for research on how participation in queer nightlife spaces contributes to identity formation.

3.6. Defining the research group

For the in-depth interviews I interviewed ten individuals who have participated in queer nightlife activities within De Regenboog Nijmegen, on both Wednesday and busier partying days, like Friday or Saturday. Taking the limited timeframe and combination with participant observation into account, I considered this sample size to be feasible and sufficient, prior to data collection.

The research group, consisting of eight visitors and two staff members, was established as follows. Participant selection was done through an in-person approach in De Regenboog, on three consecutive Wednesday evenings: April 5th, April 12th, and April 19th. Wednesday 5 of April, I met up with Ralph, the head of staff in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', who introduced me to regular visitors he thought might be interested in talking to me. During my visits on Wednesdays, I met around 30

different people. Although I approached all visitors present on the Wednesdays I was there, only sixteen were interested in participating. After sending a follow-up email, eight out of these sixteen confirmed their participation. This e-mail consisted of information about the interview topics, that it would take around 30 minutes per person, that people can participate in duos, that it can take place on the Radboud Campus or online, and before May 7th. Via private connection with a staff member who asked around amongst colleagues, two staff members agreed to participate in this research. I contacted both via text messages, providing the same information as the follow-up e-mail I sent to other participants.

Taking the six aspects of intersectional methodology into account, the selection of the research group consisting of ten participants was aimed to be diverse in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, and class. Also avoiding binary selection criteria on which a 50/50 ratio might be based, like man or woman, white or person of color. Not only would this go directly against my earlier mentioned call for thinking beyond socially constructed binaries, but it also fails to sufficiently acknowledge variety within marginalized groups, for example people of color. Vice versa, it assumes variety within the dominant group in the matrix, reducing marginalized groups to the categorizing aspects of their identity on which their oppressed position is based on. Addressing intersectionality and diversity within the actual sample, I depended on the people who visit on Wednesday 5th, 12th and 19th, as Saturday 22nd and Wednesday 26th (Kings night drag show) were observed as busier partying nights, thus not fit for participant selection. Furthermore, not everyone was responsive to my approach, or decided to not participate after getting more information. This approach-response interaction and possible self-exclusion of individuals is further discussed in the chapter "Discussion".

3.7. Positionality

Queer research approaches do not come without complex difficulties regarding researcher and research objective. The field of study is constructed by hierarchically structured power relations, which are constantly shifting and often non-coherent. The field itself is also strongly connected to societal and political discourse. The lived experience of individuals, researcher and researched, depends on their position in the field. Acknowledgement of situatedness therefore is crucial (Nash, 2010: 134). The interpretative nature of in-depth interviewing and participant observation requires acknowledgement of subjectivity, therefore an extensive elaboration on researcher positionality. As construction of reality depends on personal experience, both applied research methods require reflexivity concerning how social background, assumptions, and behavior affects the entire research process (Hennink et al., 2020: 53-54). As I am a situated human being, I interpret the world around me and my collected data based on my experiences, influenced by existing power dynamics. Acknowledging and understanding my situatedness as a cisgender, queer biracial woman therefore is an important aspect of this research.

Starting by addressing acceptance in the culture, I reflect upon my gender identity and sexual orientation. As an openly queer person doing research on queer and non-queer individuals in relation to their experience in queer nightlife spaces, I consider myself to have a certain level of shared understanding with queer and queer-curious participants. I am likely to be considered an 'insider' in pre-dominantly queer communities. It is important to be aware that this supposed insider status can just as easily be revoked as it is granted. Nash (2016: 137) explains this by stating that queer developments in academic research support the volatile nature of in- versus outsider

relationships between researcher and participants, of which the researcher should be aware of during the entire research process. Adding nuance to this status, I address visibility of queerness. When I choose not to verbally express my queer identity, it's not likely that people will assume I'm queer. This affects my experience in a queer nightlife space, and public space in general, considering others initial behavior towards me is not influenced by the intersection of queerness if my behavior doesn't reveal it. Being so-called "straight-passing", doing research on queer people, I felt the importance of mentioning my queer identity to the head of staff when requesting help with entering the field. I assumed letting them know this about me would provide them with a certain level of recognition, therefore grant me the insider status before entrance. This presumption was confirmed during my time in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'. Almost all people I approached talking about this research asked for my sexual orientation. When I would express to them that I identify as queer, most of them had a reaction like "oh, yes, that makes sense". During my research period a lot of respondents mentioned the shared experience of struggle with sexuality and identity amongst queer people, which caused them to feel more at ease when amongst other queer people, even without talking to them. It is therefore very likely that my queer body and identity as researcher increased my opportunities gaining access to the field, familiarizing myself with the setting, the amount of positive responses I received, and the levels of trust between me and participants during interviews and participant observations.

3.8. Research ethics

There are dangerous situations associated with nightlife in general, like verbal and/or physical intimidation or harm, use of illegal substances, sexual harassment, and more, however queer nightlife comes with additional and different risks. Violence exerted onto and amongst queer nightlife participants can be motivated by hatred towards queer people, interconnected with existing hierarchies regarding ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation. For example, Jackson (2022: 55-56) found that racialized-gendered discrimination within queer nightlife spaces caused black queer women to be subjected to physical and sexual violence, fetishization, and harassment from both white men and women. I therefore considered the occurrence of such situations beforehand, asking the head of staff who within 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' should be approached if needed.

Firstly, I address ethical considerations within the queer nightlife space, during participant observations and approaching of potential interviewees. Using potentially vulnerable social groups like queer, or queer-curious people, and people under the influence of alcohol, marijuana and/or other drugs, as sources of data calls for acknowledgement of ethical complexities regarding data collection. As participant observations do not include personal information about visitors that can be traced back to them as an individual, and are conducted in a public space, I don't expect issues here regarding consent. However, interaction and approaching for potential participation as interviewee, this does require consideration. People under the influence of alcohol, marijuana and/or other drugs might consent to being interviewed, or give certain answers, that they don't agree with sober. To minimize this risk, I take the following principles of *The Mental Capacity Act 2005* into consideration when approaching people participating in queer nightlife for interviewing:

- (1) A person must be assumed to have capacity unless it is established that he lacks capacity.
- (2) A person is not to be treated as unable to make a decision unless all practicable steps to help him to do so have been taken without success.

(3) A person is not to be treated as unable to decide merely because he makes an unwise decision.

(4) An act done, or decision made, under this Act for or on behalf of a person who lacks capacity must be done, or made, in his best interests.

(5) Before the act is done, or the decision is made, regard must be had to whether the purpose for which it is needed can be as effectively achieved in a way that is less restrictive of the person's rights and freedom of action.

Following these principles, I aimed to avoid creating hostile or awkward situations within the nightlife space. I also made sure to ask for the e-mail address of the participant, to send them a follow-up e-mail with further explanation about the research and ask for confirmation of participation. This way I also gave them the opportunity to ask questions themselves, in a sober state.

Secondly, I address ethical considerations regarding the interviews. As these are conducted with sober individuals, potential issues as explained above don't apply. However, sensitivity of the topics that will be researched, gender identity and sexual orientation, also calls for detailed examination of experiences, as well as a certain level of trust and personal connection between researcher and participant. In this research I have taken this into account when approaching potential participants, by acknowledging their possibly vulnerable status and question them to what extent and in what way they consider themselves to be vulnerable, considering consequences of identity revealing might differ between participants. I therefore also choose to **anonymize all data**, in both the Atlas.TI file and final research. There's no mentioning of names or other personal information that can tie answers to an individual, regardless of whether the participant would be okay with being recognized. I do this because I value the viewpoint of the most potentially vulnerable research participants. With this I aim to avoid putting the responsibility to speak up, to defend need for anonymity and safety in their hands. Considering people who participate in public queer nightlife spaces may or may not be comfortable expressing themselves as queer or queer-curious in day-to-day life, due to intolerance of their environment or other personal reasons, participants should be informed on the limits of confidentiality. This does however create an issue when including specific data from the two staff members. When their age, gender identity, sexual orientation, and ethnicity are connected to their status as staff member in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', it would directly lead to them as individual. Therefore, personal information of both staff members and all other participants will not be mentioned in sections where this potentially jeopardizes their anonymity.

3.9. Data collection, storage, and analysis

All data from both interviews and participant observations is stored in Atlas.TI, protected by a password. The in-depth interviews are recorded on my personal phone and transcribed in Atlas.TI, after which they are deleted. There are multiple considerations determining whether to record an interview or not. On one hand an individual might not be entirely comfortable with this, even if they agree to the recording. This might influence their openness and trust in me as interviewer. On the other hand, recording allows the interviewer to focus on the participant during the interview, without being distracted by taking notes. Maintaining eye contact, critical listening and being able to ask probing questions is therefore easier. Recording also gives the researcher the opportunity to pick

up on things they didn't during the interview, as does it allow for precise transcription of the interviews, which both increase dependability of the data analysis. The data gathered through participant observation is collected through hand-written notes based on the observation guide (see appendix 2.1) on my personal phone. I chose this option because this draws the least attention to me as observer. Being in a nightlife space with a laptop is likely considered strange, as is being there with a pen and paper. Although being on your phone could be considered rude, it's the least remarkable. Afterwards, the notes are uploaded and worked out in the Atlas.TI file.

This research explores participant's experiences, opinions, and meanings, aimed at finding shared understandings. The approach to data analysis of transcriptions is therefore thematic. After transcription of the audio files, I started first round open coding, looking for prevalent themes amongst the data retrieved from the interviews. After first round open coding and assessing which themes and codes emerged frequently in the interviews, a continuous process of merging and splitting codes, as well as creation of code groups followed. The complete codebook is findable in section 4 of the appendix, under "Codebook".

Data from participant observations is not coded. As the participant's experiences and perceptions lie at the core of this research, participant observations function as a secondary data source, merely used for potential support, contradiction, or exemplification of data collected from interviews.

3.10. Generalizability and limitations of methodological approach

This research provides valuable insights into the experiences of queer individuals, both within and outside of nightlife spaces. However, it has its limitations and considerations regarding generalizability of the methodological approach, which are discussed in the following section. A more extensive discussion of generalizability and limitations of this research is findable in the chapter "Discussion".

Firstly, I address the research design and chosen data collection and analysis methods. The primary source of data used in this research comes from the semi-structured in-depth interviews. While this allows for thorough exploration of understandings amongst participants, it can't represent experiences of all queer bodies and identities. Furthermore, the generalizability of qualitative research based on participatory observation is arguably limited, as is in this thesis. A substantial part of the universalizability of findings and interpretations lies in its reproducibility in other spaces, queer nightlife spaces in this case. However, using this data collection method as secondary data source, additive to semi-structured in-depth interviews, I attempt to connect what people can consciously verbalize about their experience to their behavior in the space itself. This enlarges the generalizability of the results, by studying the practice itself as well as the participants' motivations to take part in such. To support reproducibility, an extensive codebook including descriptions of code groups has been kept track of during the process of data analysis, findable in section 4 of the appendix, under "Codebook".

Moving onto the population and sample, it's important to emphasize that this research only includes individuals who have participated during both Wednesday activities and busier partying days in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'. As discussed before, this is not the only queer nightlife space in Nijmegen according to this research's definition of what a queer nightlife space is. This definition also causes exclusion of individuals who participate in queer nightlife not tied to a physical space. Also, individuals who visit on Wednesdays are likely regular visitors, as the head of staff explained

during an exploratory phone call. Additionally, participants were self-selected, both visitors and staff members. All considerations mentioned above causes a dependance on a rather small group of potential participants, decreasing chances of a diverse representation of queer bodies and identities.

It is also important to emphasize that I do not feign to be able to make universal statements about peoples' experience, identity or what it means to participate in queer nightlife spaces. Considering the complex nature of queerness and intersectionality as essential parts of this research, I am hesitant to extend interpretations of collected data.

4. Theoretical framework

The establishment of a queer area also imposes the idea of an insider/outsider perspective and experience. Non-queer people as outsiders and queer identifying people as insiders. This perspective of in- and exclusive nature of identity has been supported by various authors over time. Insider-outsider status defines a cultural group and its contribution to shaping the identity formation of the people in it. Clarke (2008: 528) argues identity is a social construction as well as a part of a psychodynamic process. He emphasizes difference and human imagination, recognizing the self and the other, as the basis of identity formation and expression. In *The use of Pleasures*, Foucault speaks of the aesthetics of existence and performance of freedom, to practice liberty from societal power structures. The practice of recognition of the self, while being recognized by others (Barry et al., 1996: 85-86). Queer nightlife culture can be defined by its difference from regular nightlife. Distinction based on sexuality is what can be considered resistance of the prescription of heteronormativity in regular nightlife spaces. Putting Foucauldian discursive theory next to a psychoanalytic perspective, Judith Butler argues that "all individuals operate through exclusion, through the discursive construction of a constitutive outside and the production of abjected and marginalized subjects, apparently outside the field of the symbolic, the representable" (du Gay et al., 2000: 28).

In *Bodies that Matter*, Butler (1993: 120-121) states that identification comes with the cost of losing other identifications, of the existing norm that we don't choose, but reflect on and internalize to the extent that this norm doesn't define our entire identity. They continue with describing how performativity, production and reproduction of behavior creates gender. Performativity is not to be confused with performance, but as a technical term that aims to encompass how acts continuously constitute identity. Gender identity is unstable, as it only exists through repetitively performed acts. Considering the repetitive nature of performativity and continuous changeability of identity, this research focuses on differences between age groups. Connecting this to queer nightlife spaces, the perceptible aspects of a nightlife space that allows it to be recognized and experienced as queer are performative, as they are chosen based on their queer meaning. At the same time, it is also performativity of queer bodies and identities that makes a space queer.

5. Literature review

5.1. Defining queer space

Using the term queer suggests a binary doctrine, through which people, spaces, and the objects in them are categorized as either queer or non-queer. I can't disagree with this statement; however, I argue for the use of this term as the most intersectional approach available at this moment. By acknowledging the limitations of this terminology, emphasizing its abstractness and not assuming this term as being beyond normativity, I attempt to minimize negative discursive impact. The usage of the word queer to categorize everything that is non-heterosexual, must also be interpreted as more than merely visible expressions of gender and sexuality, as the notion of gender as visible aspect of places, therefore individuals, is deemed problematic (Oswin, 2008: 91-92). This research is explorative in nature, aiming to shed light on this distinction based on how queer individuals experience this queer space, focusing on the meaning of what aspects, physical and non-physical, contribute to their identity formation and in what way. By doing this I attempt to avoid a merely descriptive approach and assignment of characteristics to things and individuals.

Nash (2010: 135) argues that the conception of what a queer space is has changed over time and amongst geographers. Reed (1996: 68-69) talks about the generally assumed publicity of queer spaces. The private sphere of sexuality is much less talked about, due to lack of recognition for the less extravagant, domestic nature of the home life. In this study I neglect what could be considered private and/or temporary queer nightlife spaces, like at home parties. As argued in the methodology chapter, under "Selecting the field", a nightlife space must have an intentionally and recognizably queer identity, in order to be considered a queer nightlife space in this research. This leads to the following definition of queer nightlife space, that has been taken in this research:

A publicly available space meant for entertainment, available and generally more popular at late evenings and nighttime, that brands itself as queer-oriented, independently from the sexual identity of its visitors.

Reed (1996: 67) emphasizes the inherent transformative nature of queerness and visualizes this by relating it to the built environment. There are certain cliches about gays and their tendency to renovate their living spaces, as the following quote captures: "I've never met a gay man who hasn't taken down a wall". This can be translated into a metaphor about how being queer tears down barriers, how queerness can break solid structures like hetero- and cisgender normativity. Understanding the process of renovation instead of restoration, conceptualizes an important aspect of distinguishing queer spaces from non-queer spaces. The physical dimension is thus an essential part of exploring the experienced differences between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces.

The "nightlife" part of queer nightlife spaces is defined by its aim to provide a place for leisure and entertainment. This might suggest those places are void of political meaning, however I do not agree with this. Existing power structures apply to every space, including nightlife spaces. Also adding the distinctive characteristic of queerness to those spaces immediately makes it a place that challenges the norm, which signifies it as a place of resistance for the individuals in it. Cisneros & Bracho (2020: 4) support this with the following statement: "Experiencing queer culture and being visibly queer allows individuals to develop a sense of self and belonging in a society replete with oppressive structures, systems, and environments.". This indicates potential differences in meaning and reason for participation between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces, especially for queer individuals.

Exploring intersectionality of queer nightlife spaces, Cisneros & Bracho, (2020) studied the intersection between undocumented Latinx queer identifying immigrants from different parts of the United States. In this research they address the differences in vulnerability and levels of stigmatization and criminalization of participants of queer nightclubs, by asking the question: "How Safe are "Safe" Spaces, and for Whom?". What is considered a safe space has been conceptualized in many ways, from physical bordered places to relational spaces where queer people don't experience fear. Relevant for this research, in the context of queer nightlife spaces, is the assumption of being able to express queer identity freely, without fearing violence or judgement by the heterosexual societal standard. A queer club is not an all-tolerant vacuum, freed from societal power dynamics like racism and classicism. Queer nightlife spaces are pre-dominantly occupied by white, middle-class visitors, who potentially cause non-white visitors to experience different forms of rejection and discrimination. This research therefore takes intersections regarding age, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, and socio-economic background into account. Although not all intersections are equally represented in this research, they aren't dismissed. The focus remains on the first three intersections: age, gender identity, and sexual orientation, which is further argued for in the methodology chapter, under "Intersectionality".

5.2. Non-queer bodies in queer nightlife spaces

The historical context of queer nightlife spaces can tell us something about the change in nature of these places. Starting with a geographically large conception of queer space, based on the work of Gill Valentine (2002: 147-151). Fundamental explanation for the emergence of queer spaces can be traced back to their function as safe spaces, characterized by tolerance and anonymity, considering expression of queer identity was not widely accepted amongst society historically. A potential risk of public queer nightlife spaces, concentrating and attracting queer people, is that it makes it easier to target and control them.

Another issue that arises is heterosexual individuals consuming the services provided by queer nightlife spaces. This has been described as "invasion" and "colonization", potentially taking away the intimate and exclusive queer nature of these spaces (Valentine, 2002: 150). A connection to (Said, 1979) and his concept of orientalism can be made. The lure of the "exotic", in this case the otherness of queerness, as source of entertainment open for consumption. The occident-orient relationship, originally about the global west-east relationship in a colonial context, can be applied to queer and non-queer relationships in this case. The non-queer, the Occident, and the queer, the Orient. Inhabitants of the Orient exceed existing boundaries of what sex is supposed to be, as they follow non-normative sexual desires and are indivisible from the freedom of licentious sex. There's a certain promise of escapism that comes with entering a queer space as heterosexual individual, comparable to how Said describes the novels about western bourgeoisie visiting the Orient. Queer sexuality itself and its appeal is a commodity unable to be obtained in the heterosexual field, however it can be appropriated through entering the field of the Orient, the queer nightlife space.

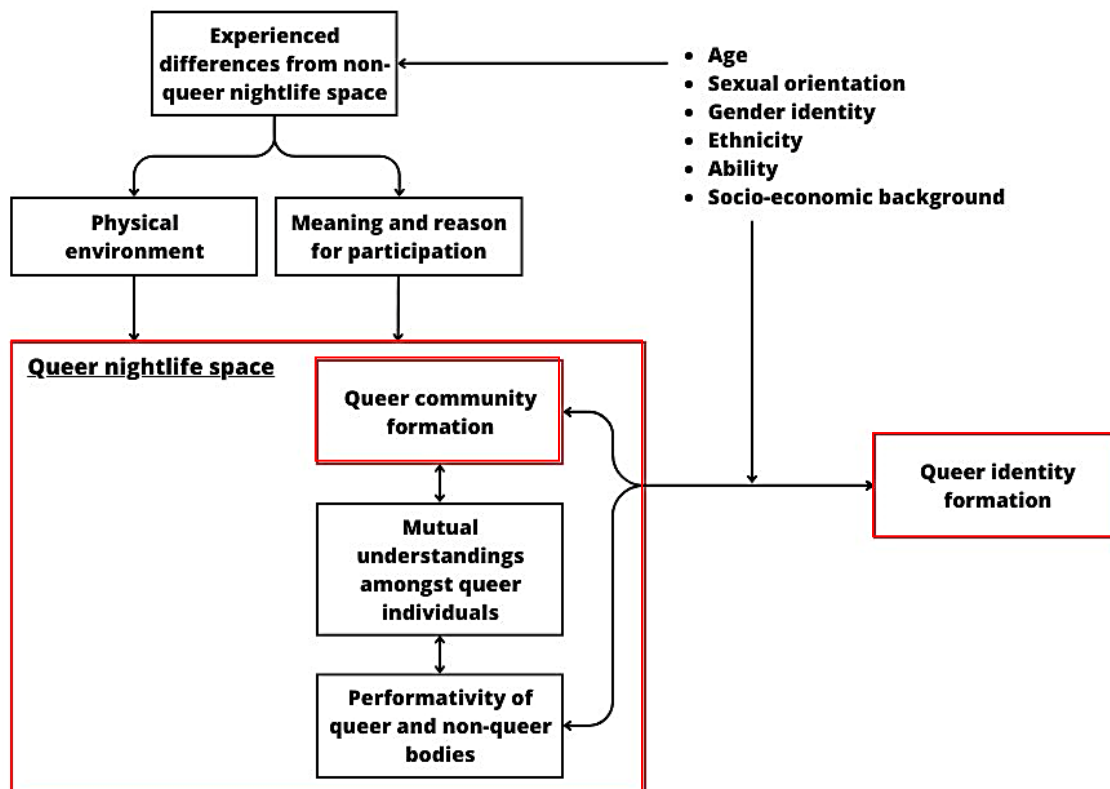
5.3. Queer community building

As acceptance of queer identity is often not self-evident for individuals, boundaries between a queer and non-queer world arise. Beyond acceptance lies empowerment and understanding, leading to socialization and potentially creation of culture: a set of shared understandings and norms, a group

identity. Although having a queer support system has a positive impact on a queer individual in theory, intersections often complicate the process of identifying with a community. As mentioned earlier, socially constructed dimensions of oppression operate within marginalized groups, thus affects experiences in spaces catering towards these groups. Also, because of heteronormativity in the close environment, like at home and in school, queer people often don't automatically identify with their peers as members of the same minority group. The need to "come out of the closet", open self-identification as queer person, forces individuals to put themselves in (sub-)categories of queer identities (Garnets & D'Augelli, 1994: 7-11). Seeking mutual understanding of this oppressed position, regardless of sub-category/intersections, might cause queer people to look for community elsewhere. Queer nightlife seems like a logical option, considering most people know the word "gay-bar" and have access to google to find the most near-by space available. Furthermore, assumed recognition of queer bodies and identities within a queer nightlife space is based on performativity, which as explained in the theoretical framework, requires reproduction of acts, which are then associated with a particular gender identity and/or sexual orientation. In this research I aim to shed new light on in what way this process of identification of others and self-expression shapes the way people relate to queer communities, more specifically in De Regenboog.

6. Conceptual model

In this research I applied the conception of identification, performativity theory, to how acts performed by both queer and non-queer individuals in queer nightlife spaces continue to shape queer identities and communities. The theoretical approach is visualized in the conceptual model as seen below. The red frames indicate the sub-questions, as mentioned in the introduction. Starting at the top, it conceptualizes the queer nightlife space through its experienced differences from non-queer nightlife spaces, regarding the physical environment and meaning. Within the queer nightlife space, it shows queer community formation amongst queer bodies and identities, with mutual understanding regarding queerness and performativity of both queer and non-queer individuals at the core of this formation. On the right side, it shows queer identity formation, conceptualized as a continuous back and forth shaping of both queer communities and performed acts within the nightlife space. On the top right are the six intersections included in this study, acknowledging these as effects on experiences and identity formation, in various ways.



7. Results

This chapter contains all collected data from interviews, supplemented by results from participant observations on both Wednesdays during dinner and karaoke, and busier partying days. All findings aim to answer the main research question, as stated in the beginning:

How does participation in queer nightlife spaces contribute to both queer identity formation and queer community building?

The findings are structured in three sections, according to the sub questions, which are each structured based on the prevalent themes that emerged during data collection and analysis:

1. What is a queer nightlife space?

Defining the queer nightlife experience in the ways in which differs from non-queer nightlife experiences. Important to emphasize here, is that this has not been empirically researched in this study. The following findings are the ways in which queer individuals experience differences in physical environment in De Regenboog Nijmegen, and other queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to non-queer nightlife spaces. Firstly, differences in physical environment will be explored, followed by music, other visitors, and lastly, function.

2. How can participating in queer nightlife spaces contribute to identity formation and expression?

Exploring how participation contributes to **shaping queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces**, the second section of the results chapter contains all findings describing what and how different aspects of queer nightlife have affected participants' feelings and expressions, both within and outside of nightlife. Starting with the main theme of this section, potential sources, and effects regarding increased and decreased feelings of safety within the queer individual are presented. This section specifically addresses differences amongst male, female, and non-binary identifying participants. After that, the importance of establishing deeper connections with other queer individuals is explored. Then follow two sections presenting interesting, notable, findings regarding specific gender identities and/or sexualities: the first focuses on shaping queer male bodies and identities, the second focuses on shaping bisexual and non-binary bodies and identities. Lastly, perspectives and experiences regarding the entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces are presented.

3. In what way can a queer nightlife space create queer community?

The third section of the results chapter focuses on the potential **shaping of queer communities in queer nightlife spaces**. To start off, De Regenboog Nijmegen is identified as a recognizably queer oriented, physical nightlife space. After that, mutual understandings regarding communication amongst queer individuals are explored. Lastly, the organization of intentional community binding activities, presenting experiences and perspectives of participants and staff members on general Wednesdays in De Regenboog Nijmegen.

7.1. Defining the queer nightlife experience

The following section contains the results of this research focused on what a queer nightlife space is, answering the first sub-question. As discussed in the theoretical framework, identity is rooted in

distinction. Using this as starting point, queer nightlife spaces are defined by the way queer individuals experience them differently from non-queer nightlife spaces. Shedding light on the unique characteristics of queer nightlife experiences, this chapter forms the grounds to further understand the construction of queer bodies and identities inside these spaces. Taking an open approach while interviewing, various factors creating these differences were introduced and discussed amongst participants. These factors are categorized in the following groups: physical environment, music, other visitors, and function.

7.1.1. Physical environment

Firstly, physical environment. The following section contains all findings describing differences in physical environments between both queer and non-queer nightlife spaces in general, but also between 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' and other queer or non-queer nightlife spaces in Nijmegen.

Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) described the space as one big open space. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) mentions this openness as well, explaining how the mirrored walls inside the venue contribute to this open feeling. During participant observations on busier partying nights, I noticed a lot of interaction with the mirrors amongst visitors. People fixing clothing, hair, and make-up, as well as taking mirrored pictures and videos. However, the rather heavy use of a smoke machine tends to create a feeling of closeness within the open space. He also explains how intentional use of smoke might enforce social interaction within the space, because you must search for others inside. However, not seeing others due to the smoke might also increase feelings of unease, considering the presence of people attracts other people within nightlife. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) supports this by explaining how he feels uncomfortable when there aren't enough visitors to fill up the open space. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) also recognizes the smoke as a specific characteristic of De Regenboog Nijmegen. Similarly, participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) not only mentions the mirrored walls, but also disco balls and rotating lighting: *"there's just a lot more to look at"*. Both participant 4 and 5 emphasize vibrant colors are an important difference.

The inability to see inside and/or darkness was mentioned amongst three out of ten participants as a potential concern for new visitors of De Regenboog Nijmegen. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) describes the space as dark and emphasizes how you can't see what's happening inside from the outside, creating a sense of mystery, which might cause reluctance amongst potential visitors to enter the space. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) supports this, also suggesting reluctance could be caused by people thinking there's a darkroom inside. Elaborating on this, participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) exemplifies this by sharing his experience meeting people on Grindr who have never visited De Regenboog Nijmegen:

"On Grindr I meet people who've never been to De Regenboog, and don't really know why not, but they find it scary. The idea that they don't know what's there, the idea that... The things you hear about gay clubs. In Enschede for example, quite a normal gay club, but it does have darkrooms upstairs. Those things don't help giving younger guys the idea they can just go out there. It always gives a certain intention of "what's exactly the idea?" and "what if it's all older men who will drag me upstairs?", I mean, that doesn't happen, also not there, but..."

These findings suggest that exploration of queer nightlife can be affected by mutual understandings regarding assumptions surrounding queer nightlife, like potential presence of darkrooms.

Remarkable was the amount of times experiences regarding bathrooms emerged during the interviews. Four out of ten participants mentioned this topic, without prompting. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) relates to this subject regarding the often binary gendered nature of these spaces, describing their experience in non-queer nightlife bathrooms as following:

“It doesn’t matter to which bathroom I go. I’m always looked at weirdly, by whoever is present.”

They consider the absence of stares and comments whether they’re in the “right” bathroom as the biggest difference in their experience in queer nightlife as opposed to non-queer nightlife, regarding the physical environment. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) and 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) also mention bathrooms in this context, mentioning past discussions regarding gender neutral toilets in De Regenboog. They explain that although they’ve never witnessed gender-based discrimination within the gendered bathrooms, they can imagine trans- or non-binary individuals probably could. Both also emphasize how the presence of women, both queer and non-queer, in queer nightlife in general, but also in bathrooms has never been looked weird upon. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) elaborated on physical differences between bathrooms in queer and non-queer nightlife, specific alterations that allow for checking inside the stalls from outside, in Amsterdam’s queer nightlife. He identifies (potential) sexual interaction in bathroom stalls as an characteristic of queer nightlife:

“It’s still a gay club, sometimes things happen in those stalls that you’d rather not think about.”

These findings suggest that bathrooms are a space within both queer and non-queer nightlife spaces where queer individuals have specific experiences and feelings regarding their queer body and identity.

7.1.2. Music

Secondly, music. Music emerged as an important factor when defining the differences between queer and non-queer nightlife. Eight out of ten participants, everyone except participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) and 3 (41yo gay cisgender man), emphasized this. For six out of these eight participants differences in music are considered a reason to prefer participating in queer nightlife as opposed to non-queer nightlife. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) and 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) both mentioned prevalence of English music in De Regenboog, as opposed to more Dutch music in non-queer nightlife in Nijmegen. Also, when asked which artists participants think of when describing the musical differences, none mentioned a non-English producing artist. Not only language, but also genre plays an important role. Seven participants explicitly mentioned pop music, out of which three also mentioned classics and disco. Participant 8 (20yo bisexual trans man) specifies this by mentioning eras:

“2000s, 2010s, the throwback bangers.”

Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) supports this, describing the music in De Regenboog as “*throwback pop hits*”, as opposed to more Dutch music and rap in other nightlife spaces in Nijmegen. She elaborates on this by explaining why she thinks these differences emerge from:

“Because it’s for the girls and the gays over there. Lady Gaga and such are just more popular amongst queer people I think, more than in general. And it’s just a lot more fun to dance to and sing along than for example that Dutch rap music.”

Further explaining the saying “for the girls, the gays, and the theys”, she mentions it being a thing she picked up from TikTok. Several artists strongly associated with queer nightlife were mentioned: Lady Gaga (four times), ABBA (four times), Katy Perry (three times), Ariana Grande (three times), and Charli XCX (one time). Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) and 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) both used the term “*queer icons*” when describing these artists, even though only Lady Gaga openly identifies as queer. Both participants explain this term as artists whose fanbase supposedly primarily consists of queer people. During all participant observations, both Wednesdays and busier party days, I recognized all queer musical characteristics mentioned by the participants. The eras, genres, language, and specific artists. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) adds experiencing improved sound quality and music being less loud in De Regenboog, as opposed to other nightlife in Nijmegen. He explains that this allows for more social interaction and being able to enjoy nightlife without hearing protection.

Findings show that differences in music play an important role in defining queer nightlife spaces. There are mutual understandings about which genres and artists are considered queer, regardless of the gender identity or sexual orientation of the artist.

7.1.3. Other visitors

Thirdly, other visitors, in a broader sense, in terms of behavior, composition, and appearance. This chapter shows which factors contribute to differences in experiences within queer nightlife as opposed to non-queer nightlife amongst queer individuals. More precise effects on the individual will be explored further in the chapter “shaping queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces”.

All ten participants noticed differences in the **behavior of visitors** between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces. All mention experiencing less pushing around and other aggressive interaction both amongst visitors and with themselves. Five out of ten participants noticed differences in the **composition of visitors** between queer and non-queer nightlife. Participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian) and 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) both describe non-queer nightlife and other parties as mainly consisting of men, while queer nightlife consists more of equal parts men and women. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) and 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) both mention the public being younger in non-queer nightlife in Nijmegen. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) notices more underage girls in non-queer nightlife. Four out of ten participants noticed differences in **appearance of visitors** between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person), 5 (19yo gay cisgender man), 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman), and 10 (25yo gay cisgender man), all describe these differences, in various ways: as more extreme, not following norms, more according to personal preferences, more alternative. Participant 10 elaborates on this, relating this factor to increased feelings of safety:

“More colourful and exuberant. A more colourful type of person in general. Probably because they feel safer there to do so.”

These findings show that queer individuals perceive differences in the overall public between queer and non-queer nightlife.

7.1.4. Social function

Lastly, differences in social function. This chapter explains the ways in which queer nightlife spaces and non-queer nightlife spaces both function as social environments for queer individuals, however in different ways.

Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) acknowledges that chasing sexual encounters is prevalent in both queer and non-queer nightlife, however, he emphasises that participation within queer nightlife spaces has a more diverse range of social interactions, not all focused on so-called “*hunting*”, which he considers to be the case in non-queer nightlife. He explains this by describing queer nightlife spaces as places that people attend to have fun, also to flirt, but first and foremost just socializing in general, regardless of sexual orientation. Similarly, participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman) and 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) both support this difference, which lead to the tendency to stay within their own social bubble when attending non-queer nightlife venues. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) further supports this distinction, also describing how he remains within his own social bubble in non-queer nightlife. In contrast, queerness of others within nightlife is what causes him to feel comfortable enough to interact with strangers. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) adds nuance, stating he can feel just as free and safe, and have as much fun, in non-queer nightlife spaces as within queer nightlife spaces, as long as he’s with a large enough group of his own.

Findings suggest queer individuals experience differences in the social function of participating in queer and non-queer nightlife. Queer individuals perceive queer nightlife as having both a larger variety of meanings and intentions to participate, and a more tolerant approach to social interactions. Where non-queer nightlife is perceived as mostly focused on potential sexual encounters, queer nightlife is characterized by having a broader sense of social interaction. Assurance of being amongst other queer people causes queer individuals to socialize more with strangers within queer nightlife. This deeper understanding of the distinctive social function of queer nightlife spaces emphasizes its contribution to queer community shaping, further explored in the chapter “shaping queer communities in queer nightlife spaces”.

7.2. Shaping queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces

The following section contains the results of this research focused on how participation in queer nightlife spaces contributes to the shaping of queer bodies and identities, thus answering the second sub-question. As mentioned before, and in the theoretical framework, identity is shaped through experiencing differences. Having established that queer nightlife experiences differ from non-queer nightlife experiences amongst queer individuals, this chapter contains all findings related to the ways earlier described differences contribute to the process of distinction, identification, and expression. This section contains insights on the transformative impact these spaces can have on the queer individual, focusing on its effects both within and outside of the queer nightlife space itself. It starts of by presenting the effects of perceived sense of safety on the queer individual, exploring a variety of potential reasons queer individuals might feel unsafe within nightlife spaces, as well as why they might feel safer within queer nightlife. After that, findings emphasizing the importance of establishing deeper connections with other queer bodies and identities is presented. Then follows a section focusing on the shaping of queer male bodies and identities, as this emerged as a prevalent theme amongst male identifying participants. After that, a section focusing on the shaping of bisexual and non-binary bodies and identities is presented. Closing of the chapter, findings regarding

the entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces are presented, focusing on exploration of queer individuals' thoughts and perceptions on this subject.

7.2.1. Increased feelings of safety

The following section contains all findings related to overall increased feelings of safety within queer nightlife, as opposed to non-queer nightlife. Despite all having negative experiences within queer nightlife spaces, all ten participants described the overall ambiance in queer nightlife spaces as more friendly than within non-queer nightlife spaces. Seven out of ten participants mentioned increased feelings of safety when going out in a queer nightlife space. The three participants who didn't mention experiencing increased feelings of safety are all men, indicating that safety is a more prevalent theme amongst non-male identifying individuals. Sources and types of potential violence mentioned by participants were general physical and verbal violence, being looked at, and sexual violence, both physical and verbal.

All ten participants reported negative experiences within queer and/or non-queer nightlife, but also outside of nightlife, involving heterosexual men as perpetrator. Other gender identities were not explicitly mentioned. Regarding sexual orientation however, five out of six male identifying participants also mentioned negative experiences with other queer men. All female and non-binary identifying participants mentioned only heterosexual men as cause of negative experiences within and outside of nightlife. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) and 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) also mentioned sexual violence from older queer men towards younger men, further explained later in this chapter. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) shares how he was physically harassed by a group of men while kissing his male partner while partying. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) shares how twenty years ago, he thought he was going on a date with a man, but it turned out to be three men who beat him up. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) expresses how past experiences with anti-queer violence and constant exposure to stories from others and media outlets creates a heightened awareness of the risks involved with being gay in a heterosexual society. This feeds into the lingering feeling of being unsafe in public spaces. Participant 8 (20yo bisexual trans man) shared experiences with being bullied for being and looking different, during his childhood:

"I've had to learn to live with the hard reality of having to be yourself while you can't be yourself. Being bullied in the neighborhood very badly in the past, having no one, but feeling the need to not just be inside all the time, needing the outside world and nature and an outlet in general, because of my ADHD and autism. But the moment I would go outside, I would be confronted with those things. I lived in a neighborhood where I was just different from the others, which they couldn't process very well. Sometimes quite brutal, sometimes... Never physical, but with words and groups of people, I felt like I was being stomped into the ground. I thought "I'm staying where I am", because I wanted to be strong, but really, I ran home crying."

Additionally, four out of ten participants mentioned hearing people who didn't enter the place yelling slurs, or being judgemental in general, when they passed 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'.

The experience of **being looked at** also emerged as an important theme in this research. This section shows its impact on the self-confidence and -acceptance of queer individuals, both within and outside of nightlife spaces. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) expressed feeling

judged based on their visible queerness when being looked at. They also experienced comments like “what are they doing here?” when participating in non-queer nightlife with other visibly queer individuals. Similarly, participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) shares how when he kissed another man in a non-queer nightlife space, a group of men gathered around them and kept watching. He emphasizes the sense of negativity such looks are tied to:

“Apart from physical or verbal violence you might experience, looks feel like negative looks.”

Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) supports this notion of feeling judged, more specifically people perceiving him to have a specific sexual orientation:

“Going out I had too much of a feeling people were looking at me to dance, so it wasn’t really my thing, although I do like dancing. I find it difficult when people are looking at me, especially in a heterosexual place. What people are going to say, what they’re thinking. I did ballroom dancing back then, so the only thing I could do was moving my hips, which is easily perceived as gay, so it was hard for me to dance there. Also, I was still in the closet for a bit, not sure about my sexual orientation, so for me still had to discover what I am. In the end, it turned out to be bisexual, but back then I thought people are going to identify me before I can identify myself, or they immediately have a certain impression of me.”

Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) shares her experience on both the ‘looking’ and ‘being looked at’ side of the interaction. She explains how being amongst bodies and identities visibly deviating from societal norms has affected her perception of what she considers weird, regardless of whether she has always consciously accepted/tolerated this weirdness. She continues to explain how previously she would notice weirdness and think “you do you”, but now notices less of it in the first place. This has not only shifted her perception of others, but also caused her to feel more comfortable with her own body and identity.

Sexual violence, both verbal and physical, but also being looked at, emerged as a specific issue affecting queer individuals in both queer and non-queer nightlife spaces. As mentioned earlier, nightlife, amongst other things, functions as an environment for potential sexual encounters. The following findings describe experiences regarding sexual violence, highlighting the differences between gender identities and sexualities. Eight out of ten participants reported experiences with sexual violence from men towards women in nightlife spaces in general. The two participants who didn’t both identify as male. Four out of these eight also reported similar experiences within queer nightlife, however, much less. For this group, not absence, but a noticeable decrease of sexual violence from men towards women was given as an important reason for feeling more safe, therefore preferring participation, in queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to non-queer nightlife spaces. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) shares her experience kissing other women in non-queer nightlife:

“Sometimes you still get harassed or get weird comments while kissing a girl, also in De Regenboog, but it’s ten times worse in other bars. Over there, men start cheering or even start videotaping. As a woman, being with another woman, as mentioned before, guys sometimes look and say things like “oh, can I have a turn?” or “can I

join?”, those kinds of comments. I think women experience that way more than men, I’m quite sure of it.”

Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) describes how his function as visitor amongst female friends changes when he participates in queer nightlife:

“Queer nightlife is different, there’s a different ambiance. More friendly, less aggressive. In regular nightlife I often went as an older brother or boyfriend. I’d be there with female friends, and if they would come up to me and gave me a hug, then I knew “oh, someone is messing around”. It sometimes happened multiple times a night, that a female friend of mine would come stand against me and grabbed my hand or arm. Then I know “oh, there’s an annoying guy” and I must act very grumpy and angry.”

Although he doesn’t experience the act as protective male friend itself as bothersome, he does mention his female friends feel freer in queer nightlife, without needing him as ‘bogeyman’. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) supports this by mentioning his female friends once told him they prefer queer nightlife, because they *“also want to go out without being harassed for once”*. Exploring sexual violence further, three out of six male identifying participants mention an increase of potential sexual harassment from other men within queer nightlife. However, two out of these three still considered increased feelings of safety as an important reason to prefer participation in queer nightlife, as opposed to non-queer nightlife. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) and 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) both directly compared the male experience in queer nightlife to the female experience in non-queer nightlife, in terms of experiencing sexual harassment. Both also reported negative experiences regarding sexual harassment from older queer men towards young men specifically, due to sexualization of age differences.

Having identified a variety of potential sources of violence queer individuals experience, the following section sheds light on the specific factors inside queer nightlife spaces contributing to the increased feelings of safety. All ten participants identified visitors being predominantly queer as a main reason why they perceive the atmosphere within queer nightlife spaces as more friendly than within non-queer nightlife spaces. All seven participants who expressed feeling safer within queer nightlife spaces than within non-queer nightlife spaces, identified being surrounded by other queer people as an important cause. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person), 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman), 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman), 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman), and 10 (25yo gay cisgender man), all emphasized absence or less presence of heterosexual men specifically. Building forward on this, perceptions of social control increase. Participant 9 says *“people know you can’t do things like that here”*, supported by participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) and 3 (41yo gay cisgender man), who emphasize how they, and others there, stand up for each other. Additionally, six out of ten participants mention that staff and security focus on keeping visitors outside the space that make queer individuals feel unsafe.

Having established the queer nightlife space as an environment where queer individuals potentially feel safer to explore and express their queer identity, the following section explains its effects within and outside of the nightlife space further. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) expressed less need for alcohol consumption within queer nightlife spaces:

“When we go out there, I notice I’m at ease faster and dare to dance more extravagant, not be as scared to be looked at. It just doesn’t bother me as much over

there. As a side-effect, I think I need less alcohol. I think that when I'm in the TKB, I need eight beers before I start dancing. That's a little bit exaggerated maybe, but it is true, kind of. I do really notice I'm less uncomfortable, for sure."

Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) mentioned feeling more comfortable dancing and wearing more revealing clothes in queer nightlife spaces, because others do the same and she is less afraid of men harassing her. She also shares her first kiss with another woman was in De Regenboog Nijmegen. Five out of ten participants reported feeling safer to publicly display queer affection within queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to non-queer nightlife spaces. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) says they feel like they can do their own thing there, like being close with their partner. Participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman), 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman), 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman), and 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) all emphasized not feeling comfortable kissing members of the same gender identity within non-queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to within queer nightlife spaces. Interestingly, participant 9 also expressed feeling less comfortable kissing men within queer nightlife, relating this feeling to her experience with heterosexual men there:

"Heterosexual guys also sometimes behave bothersome in De Regenboog, by the way, harassing women or approaching them in a pushy way. When that happens, I think to myself "what are you thinking?", just know your place there. I wouldn't extensively kiss a guy over there myself. I don't know how to explain, but it feels uncomfortable. Although I wouldn't extensively make out in a regular bar either, in De Regenboog it's also because it's more for queer interaction, in my perception. And I know you can't tell whether someone is queer, or man or woman, when people look at me, they can probably tell I'm a woman. It just doesn't feel entirely okay, although it is allowed, of course."

Participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman) shares how participating in queer nightlife has affected the exploration of her queer identity:

"I used to be in a relationship with a guy, who kind of acted like... I identified as bisexual then, and he acted like I wasn't. Back then, I thought "well, maybe it's not that serious". Then that relationship ended, and I went to De Regenboog, where I thought "it is serious, that's nonsense". That contributed to it, yes."

Participant 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) mentions that even before entering a nightlife space, the assurance queer nightlife spaces will provide a safer environment for her, affects her overall nightlife experience positively. She also shares how De Regenboog Nijmegen has had great impact on her levels of self-confidence regarding her gender identity, exemplifying how participating in queer nightlife can function as a space of empowerment:

"For me personally, it mainly caused me to be brave enough to express my gender identity, also in other places. That really started within De Regenboog. At first, I went through day-to-day life as a guy, while not feeling like one, but going out like that, because that was safer, better. I didn't have to be afraid. In De Regenboog I dared to be myself, expressing myself like I felt, introducing myself according to who I really am. That caused me to feel comfortable doing so everywhere, but that really started in De Regenboog, a safe environment to try that out. It makes me happier. I can be

who I am. I don't have to be afraid, which reduces negative feelings, so also just a better life, so to say."

Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) emphasizes how participating in queer nightlife, specifically De Regenboog Nijmegen, has affected him in various positive ways:

"How I'm feeling for sure, absolutely. As I said before, I had been isolated for quite a long time. I had quite a negative experience, which made me not want to do anything with that, for a while. Around a year ago, he mentioned wanting to date again, and we decided to go out again. For me, that evoked a lot of feelings, of hope and wanting. I didn't want a relationship for quite some time, but that has changed, for which I thank going out there."

These findings suggest that all queer individuals have experienced distress as a result of reactions from others, regarding their queer identity. Such experiences consist of being looked at, physical violence, and verbal violence. Findings also show that sexual violence remains an important source of negative experiences within both queer and non-queer nightlife spaces. A notable decrease in experiences with sexual violence from men towards women is an important reason individuals prefer queer nightlife spaces over non-queer nightlife spaces. Although potential sexual violence towards men increases, the overall perception of increased feelings of safety remained prevalent. Findings also show that queer individuals of all gender identities experience men as the main cause of negative experiences regarding their queer identity. While female and non-binary individuals potentially only identify heterosexual men as cause, male identifying queer individuals also perceive other queer men as important cause of negative experiences as well. Overall, visibility of queerness affects the susceptibility of the individual for experiencing various forms of anti-queer violence. Being amongst predominantly other queer individuals in nightlife spaces, whether safely assumed or perceived, positively impacts the nightlife experience of queer individuals. Recognizing queerness in others fosters a sense of sameness, therefore queer individuals feel safer to assume they won't judge their queer identity. Additionally, perception of increased social control and trust in staff and security handling visitors expressing anti-queer behavior, both contribute to this increased sense of safety.

7.2.2. The importance of establishing deeper connections with other queer bodies and identities

The following section contains all findings explaining why deeper connections with other queer people is considered important by queer individuals. Eight out of ten participants emphasize their need for connecting with other queer people. For five out of these eight, knowing others are going through similar struggles regarding queerness, is the main reason they consider connecting with other queer people important. The process of coming out, open self-identification with queerness, was specifically mentioned by six out of 10 participants. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) shares being part of a large group of friends, with all kinds of gender identities and sexualities, that regularly meets up to drink, smoke, talk, and listen to music together. This was the most important support in finding themselves, through navigation of other queer people's feelings and exploring possibilities, relating these to their own. Similarly, participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) mentions having a predominantly queer friend group both consciously and unconsciously fostered a sense of safety to explore her potentially queer identity. Supporting

these findings further, participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman) and 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) both experience increased feelings of trust and safety, being amongst queer friends. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) expresses participating in queer nightlife spaces itself doesn't change his life, however, being able to meet other queer people does. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) shares how during the interview, he realized queerness might be more of a part of identity than he initially thought, emphasizing he feels a certain distance towards non-queer individuals, as opposed to queer individuals. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) highlights support regarding similar struggles amongst queer individuals. Similarly, participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) experiences an increased sense of understanding amongst queer individuals. He also emphasized the role of talking to other queer people for processing negative experiences:

"It's just that you have negative experiences while participating in nightlife, or as a queer person in public in general. For example, I was walking and holding hands with my boyfriend when a group of guys yelled curse words at us. Those things happen more often, and if you can talk about them with people who experience the same things it feels like you get more understanding that also feels more authentic."

These findings suggest that both assuming and talking about similar experiences regarding queerness contributes to identity formation and expression in various ways. The shared experiences themselves foster a sense of deeper understanding amongst queer individuals. It also creates an environment where the queer individual feels safe assume a potentially queer identity can be explored and expressed. These deeper connections help the individual deal with similar struggles shaping their queer identity, as well as processing of experiencing anti-queer violence.

7.2.3. Shaping queer male bodies and identities

Although queerness is unanimously recognized by participants as a ground for mutual understandings and connection, existence of differences became just as clear. Although differences amongst gender identities, sexual orientations, and ages have been distinguished throughout the entire results section, this chapter zooms in on participants within the male identifying queer community, focusing on themes like physical appearance, competitiveness, and discrimination.

An interesting aspect that emerged amongst male queer participants was the extra layer of complexity to social interactions amongst gay male individuals. This layer consists of an overlapping desire: wanting to be like someone and wanting to be with them at the same time. These two sides of queer male desire seem to foster a sense of competitiveness and comparison, especially regarding physical fitness and muscularity. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) feels like within queer nightlife, people are very appearance oriented, in a toxic manner. A specific focus on the body, being skinny, is perceived to be desirable, therefore receives more attention and romantic advances within queer nightlife spaces, like being offered free drinks. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) supports this notion, highlighting that he feels like individuals perceived as less attractive have a very different experience than individuals who are. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) underlines and exemplifies this, sharing his experiences within nightlife and dating, having a bigger body in the past:

"That's very true, I can tell from my own experience that's true, it's really different. When I weighed 139 kilos, or right now, that really matters. I received no attention;

it just wasn't there. No flirting, never kissing anyone. It was just sad and lonely. It sounds very sad, but that is how it was."

Both participant 2 and 3 explain how being skinnier and/or more muscular has increased their confidence, mainly because this has increased their experiences of external validation regarding their appearance. Participant 2 also mentions age, how both him and participant 3 are a lot older than the average visitor in De Regenboog Nijmegen. Although they don't mind, both agree that it decreases their opportunities for both casual flirting and romantic partnerships. Both participants expressed experiencing more verbal violence amongst queer individuals, as opposed to physical violence, describing this as *"bitching and throwing shade"*. However, they also emphasized enjoying this type of social interaction, as long as there's assurance of no harmful intentions. Participant 2 adds noticing the tendency within the gay community to be quite harsh and rejecting towards each other. Participant 3 supports this notion, although he still perceives the queer community as softer and less of a macho culture. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) also experiences pressure to look a certain way, mentioning that gay men tend to filter each other based on aspects like having a sixpack, not being fat, being tall, and penis size. This fosters dissatisfaction with their own bodies, especially being exposed to this at a young age. He also emphasizes how he notices certain groups of men cluster together within queer nightlife, for example muscular men being surrounded by other muscular men. He feels like this is a result of a lot of gay men trying to obtain an ideal of beauty themselves, as well as trying to find a sexual partner who fits that ideal. He exemplifies this by sharing his experience with discrimination on dating app profiles, suggesting societal patterns of oppression echo within the gay male community:

"I feel like within the gay community, there's a tendency to divide others into boxes and subcategories. For example, "no fats, no femmes, no Asians", that's a big problem in my opinion. There's a lot of discrimination within the gay community, based on who you consider attractive. I find that a bit shortsighted. It is also very ironic, of course. As a gay man, you're already marginalized, and then you start to do that within your own group again, which I find ironic. I think that a lot of men are just a bit racist, or have internalized homophobia, or are misogynistic, avoiding feminine things, that's how I feel. I think the pattern of bigger society repeats itself within a smaller group."

Both participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) and 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) recognize these blatant expressions of preferences on dating apps, while also emphasizing seeing *"sixpack after sixpack"* here. However, participant 2 also highlights a positive aspect:

"Nowadays, when you don't have the perfect body, it's easier to find someone who's interested in that, because of Grindr and such. Talking about fat because that's my personal experience. Now, that's a possibility. On dating apps, it just says "this is what I'm looking for"."

He also adds that, to his surprise, men sometimes specifically desired his body for being bigger, and looking different from their own. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) also supports the importance of appearance within the male queer community, and the negative effects this has on individuals within, summed up with the following quote:

"The biggest enemy of the gay man is the gay man himself."

These findings show that queer male identifying individuals experience a lot of pressure and competition from each other regarding their appearance. Body size, muscularity, and masculinity in general form the most important sources of this pressure, which can lead to dissatisfaction with their own bodies, affecting the self-esteem of the individual. Additionally, age and ethnicity also potentially contribute. The duality of wanting to look like someone and be with someone at the same time affects both online and offline dating experiences. Within queer nightlife, being considered attractive leads to notably more attention and potential clustering of queer male bodies that fit this bodily ideal of beauty.

7.2.4. Shaping bisexual and non-binary bodies and identities

The following section explores experiences of participants who either identify as bisexual, or potentially identify as bisexual, while also highlighting differences between male and female identifying participant. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) shares the following experience with people assuming his queer identity:

“Within queer nightlife people often ask about my sexual orientation. I’m always happy with that question, because that means it’s not entirely clear whether I’m gay or straight, so that’s an opportunity for doubt. As a bisexual, I like that, because there’s often the stereotype of “it’s just a phase, you’re just gay, you just don’t know it yet”, or things like that.”

Additionally, when trying to describe differences between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces, he expressed being unsure whether he would be able to see the difference, because of his bisexuality. Participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman), as mentioned before, was previously in a relationship with a man who actively denied her, at the time, bisexual identity. Participating in queer nightlife spaces has made her realize her attraction towards women was very real. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) had been sure about her attraction towards men, however started to question whether she might be attracted to women as well. Participating in queer nightlife, talking and being with queer friends, and Tiktok has led her towards this process of questioning her sexual orientation. As mentioned before, she has experienced sexual harassment from men, while kissing other women in nightlife spaces. She also emphasizes kissing other women is considered quite normal, also amongst her heterosexual female friends.

Adding a **non-binary identifying perspective**, participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) supports participant 4’s notion, similarly, explaining that people questioning their gender identity can feel like a compliment, because that means others can’t categorize them. However, they realize such comments are not intended as such.

These findings suggest that individuals who explore attraction towards multiple gender identities might experience reactions from others that assume their sexual attraction as singular, either heterosexual or homosexual. Findings also show that people identifying as bisexual or non-binary might perceive others openly questioning their gender identity and/or sexual orientation as positive, as it acknowledges the plurality of their queer identity.

7.2.5. Entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces

As being amongst predominantly queer people has been identified as important aspect of queer nightlife spaces, as well as an important reason to prefer these over non-queer nightlife spaces, this

chapter explores participant's thoughts and experiences regarding entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces.

Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) emphasizes it doesn't affect their experience in queer nightlife negatively, as long as they're accepting and non-judgmental towards queer bodies and identities. However, they mention it might be a problem for queer people looking for relationships or casual sexual encounters. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) experiences a difference being amongst non-queer people, compared to being amongst queer people:

"There's a difference between standing in between people who accept you, and people who are the same as you. I think some of the vibe would change. I always feel a certain distance."

He also emphasizes that an important reason to participate in queer nightlife is to meet potential romantic partners, which would be more difficult when the share of non-queer visitors increases. Although he supports "*integration of the sexualities*", which would mean absence of specific queer nightlife spaces, he recognizes increasing difficulties finding a partner as an important reason to keep queer and non-queer nightlife separated. Participant 2 (38yo gay cisgender man) supports the quote mentioned above with the following reaction:

"Well said. I think that could be an issue. Will it become horrible to go out there, I don't think so, but... You feel involved with other people, and if we're with a big group of heterosexuals, I might me comfortable and have fun, but there's no sense of involvement."

He sees separation of queer and non-queer nightlife only as an advantage, for finding a potential partner specifically, but also for conservation of the current pleasant atmosphere. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) doesn't perceive entrance of non-queer individuals a problem, mentioning that he prefers a diverse composition of gender identities and sexualities. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) supports this preference, also describing De Regenboog Nijmegen as a normal club, as opposed to exclusively queer oriented parties, like Milk, organized by Dito. He mentions others might feel more at ease when being amongst predominantly queer people within nightlife, as well as increased opportunity for meeting sexual partners. However, he himself doesn't experience a bigger share of non-queer visitors as negative. He also adds an interesting example of student associations to the discussion, as he is part of one himself. He explains how these associations sometimes send groups of students there, as a task during hazing periods. He doesn't mind this, but explains why other queer visitors might:

"I've been to De Regenboog in my association suit jacket and tie, which attracted very weird looks. In that case it doesn't hurt, because it comes together, but most queer people are less enthusiastic about the corporal aspect, the student association life. It scares them, they're against it, because it's a very heteronormative environment. Within student associations you're less perceived as an individual, more as a collective. A notable part of the queer community feels attacked by their presence, sometimes justified, sometimes unjustified. Although I don't feel attacked, some perceive it as a heteronormative environment breaking into their space."

He also adds nuance, emphasizing that there are queer individuals within student associations:

“There are a few at Ovum Novum, Carolus Magnus, who are queer. Those are often people who stand very strong, because it’s quite intense to be queer at for example Carolus Magnus, because you get shit for that. But they are there.”

Participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman) and 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) both explain that entrance of non-queer people doesn’t necessarily negatively affect their experience, if they’re openminded and friendly, but emphasize that the ratio of queer to non-queer visitors is important:

“It’s the ratio, mostly. The more heterosexual people present, so maybe half, or the majority, might induce a suffocating feeling while being there. Bringing back thought like “can I do this here? Can I kiss a woman here?”, because then it becomes more of a regular club. Some nights you see a group entering, for example from a company party, which makes me question what their intentions are. That causes thoughts like “can I express as freely as I normally would?”. The ratio indeed matters the most.”

Participant 8 (20yo bisexual trans man) doesn’t perceive entrance of non-queer people in queer nightlife spaces as negative. However, he noticed how during the past one and a half years, more people who haven’t been in contact with queer people before, have entered De Regenboog Nijmegen. He suggests that this, and the place being more crowded overall, is the reason why there are occasional physical fights nowadays. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) doesn’t specify whether the ratio of queer to non-queer visitors matter, although she mentions that her negative experiences within queer nightlife are with heterosexual men. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) supports this, while sharing how entrance of non-queer people affects his experience within queer nightlife spaces:

“I sometimes feel like heterosexual people come to De Regenboog as if it’s a circus show, which I find annoying. It takes something away. I feel like they’re not just there to have a good time while being part of the bigger picture, they’re just there to see what’s going on, to see you. You feel watched, like some freakshow. I don’t perceive myself as one, but it’s a bit like “let’s go to the gay bar, look at what they do there, what kind of craziness is happening there”, while in reality, nothing really is happening. For example, a bachelor’s party going to the gay bar as a joke, I find that bothersome, unless it’s a lesbians’ or gays’ party, than it’s different. When a heterosexual group enters as some sort of joke, I find that annoying, because I’m not there as a joke. I’m there because I feel at ease, and because it’s a nice bar to be. When a group is peeking around, that’s unpleasant. That connected to why it’s unpleasant to kiss another man, as a gay man: you’re immediately being looked at. That’s the reason you go to a gay bar, because you’re amongst the community where that’s normal, and doesn’t matter.”

He also adds that he once visited with a non-queer male identifying friend, who was visibly uncomfortable seeing a drag performer on stage in De Regenboog Nijmegen. He explains that made him feel like he had to put his guard up again, questioning whether his friend accepted his queer identity.

Findings show varied perspectives on presence of non-queer visitors in queer nightlife spaces, both positive and negative. An important theme that emerged was the significance of the environment’s acceptance, tolerance, and understanding. Participants generally perceive these

aspects as conditions under which presence of non-queer individuals is acceptable, although some participants expressed concerns about being used for entertainment. Overall, queer nightlife spaces are recognized as places to find potential romantic partners and where individuals feel safe and free enough to express their queer identity. Presence of non-queer individuals potentially disrupts these important aspects of queer nightlife spaces, especially if the share of non-queer visitors increases too much. Different perspectives on diversity and integration of sexualities within these spaces showcase the complexity of this theme. While some perceive entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife as a positive increase of diversity, others emphasized increased feelings of discomfort.

7.3. Shaping queer communities in queer nightlife spaces

Having recognized queerness as a base for identification and connection with one another, and De Regenboog Nijmegen as a recognizably queer, physical space, this chapter further explores in what way this space contributes to the formation of queer communities. In this chapter, the experiences of two staff members of De Regenboog Nijmegen will be addressed specifically. However, personal data of both staff members and all other participants will not be mentioned in sections where this potentially jeopardizes their anonymity.

7.3.1. A physical meeting point

To start off this section, the following findings identify De Regenboog Nijmegen as a **recognizably queer oriented, physical nightlife space**. It is a public nightlife venue, consistently marketing itself as a queer oriented nightlife space. Both interviews and participant observations underscore the continuous visibility of rainbow colors, both inside and outside of the venue. Additionally, searching “gay bar Nijmegen” on the internet shows De Regenboog Nijmegen as first result. Adding experiences underscoring the positive effects this potentially has, participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) explains how being able to visit frequently, meeting the same people regularly, and connecting with staff-members has made De Regenboog Nijmegen an established venue he feels very much connected to. Being on the Autism Spectrum, this has increased his sense of comfort, positively affecting his overall experience there. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) emphasizes that younger queer people, coming to Nijmegen to study, might not know where to begin when trying to find connection with other queer individuals. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) adds a nuanced perspective, suggesting that as just a nightlife space, De Regenboog Nijmegen contributes to passive queer community building, as opposed to organizations like Dito, who contribute to active queer community building. Additionally, four out of ten participants mention that generally, there are two ways queer individuals can meet each other: queer nightlife/parties or online.

These findings show that recognizably queer nightlife spaces offer queer individuals the assurance that they are amongst queer people there. Additionally, it can be visited frequently and provides a potential regular meeting spot for visitors.

7.3.2 Queer communication

The following section dives into lingual interactions amongst queer individuals, and how they might differ from non-queer individuals. As mentioned before, recognition of so-called queer music plays an important role connecting queer individuals within queer nightlife spaces, as well as attracting them in the first place. Commonly understood concepts and sayings also seem to play a part in this, as participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) uses the phrase “*for the girls, the gays,*

and the theys". Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) mentions altering his style of communication in queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to non-queer nightlife spaces, introducing the term "gaylingo", connecting the concepts of queerness and language:

"If I were to talk to someone there, I would be able to use the gaylingo, so to speak. The gay slang: the "slays" and the "works", you can say that to people there, without them looking at you like "what do you mean?". I wouldn't do that in non-queer nightlife spaces. It's kind of a sub-culture, which, of course, includes words. When you're in a space with queer people, you tend to use those words, I think. Not consciously, but it just happens."

During participant observation in De Regenboog Nijmegen, on Saturday April 22, I observed a striking example supporting this. While the song "Hot in it", by Charli XCX, was playing, I noticed a visitor (assumed male, around 20 years old) wearing a black shirt with the words "I slay" in white. They started voguing and doing the splits on the stage in the back of the bar. The friend I was with (25yo queer cisgender woman) said to me: "try explaining this to a straight person", to which I replied: "you can't".

Findings show that there are mutual understanding regarding music and language amongst queer individuals. Recognizably queer expressions potentially affect the way a queer individual communicates with other queer individuals, as opposed to non-queer individuals.

Intentional community binding activities

On Wednesdays, De Regenboog Nijmegen offers a free dinner, cooked in the on-site kitchen behind the bar, if visitors buy a drink. All participants have attended both Wednesday and busier partying days, like Fridays or Saturdays. The following chapter explores their experiences, comparing Wednesdays to other days, focusing on differences in activity, reasons for visiting, and the function of staff members. After that, experiences regarding the accessibility will be explored.

All ten participants mentioned **differences in activity on Wednesday, which also alters the reason for visiting**. All participants mention karaoke and eating together as the main difference in activity offered by De Regenboog. All ten also emphasize socializing and meeting other queer people, both known and unknown, as an important reason to visit on Wednesday. Participant 1 (20yo queer non-binary person) specifically mentions the absence of people potentially causing trouble on Fridays or Saturdays, emphasizing they feel like it's almost all queer people on Wednesdays. Participant 2 (38yo cisgender man) especially likes getting to know the staff of De Regenboog on Wednesdays, as he mentions other days are simply too crowded to do so. Participant 3 (41yo gay cisgender man) especially likes karaoke and eating together with regular visitors and staff, which has contributed to his sense of feeling at home there. He experiences an increased sense of community binding on Wednesdays. Participant 4 (24yo bisexual cisgender man) thinks it's unfortunate that Wednesdays are much less crowded. He thinks that's because its existence isn't well known amongst people. Participant 5 (19yo gay cisgender man) emphasizes that Wednesdays are mostly visited by groups of two or three people, consisting of at least one queer person, and staff members. Participant 7 (23yo lesbian trans woman) emphasizes being able to eat together like that, for free, makes her feel particularly welcome in De Regenboog Nijmegen, as that's not a common occurrence. Both her and participant 6 (21yo probably lesbian cisgender woman) add that on Wednesdays, they often talk to other regular visitors about which other days of the week they'll

be there. Participant 8 (20yo bisexual trans man) emphasizes he likes being able to eat and socialize there during the week, also mentioning that Wednesdays are simply the first night of the week that De Regenboog Nijmegen is open. Participant 9 (23yo hetero- or bisexual cisgender woman) also emphasizes enjoying socializing with staff and others on Wednesdays, although she doesn't visit as often anymore, because of her internship during the week. Participant 10 (25yo gay cisgender man) emphasizes his main reason for going there on Wednesday was getting to know more people from the queer community in Nijmegen.

Both interviewed staff members emphasize socializing with colleagues, both working and being there as visitor, is an important part of the Wednesdays. Participant observations on Wednesdays support this, as on both evenings groups of visiting staff were present, mostly socializing with each other. Three other participants also support both observations, noticing clustering amongst groups of staff members during the evening. However, two of them emphasize that working staff does focus on socializing with all visitors present. They also agree that the function of staff is different on Wednesdays, compared to other days, as a result of differences in crowdedness and intention. On Wednesdays working staff members focus on socializing with visitors, including all, and making them feel welcome. One staff member specifically emphasizes this, shedding light on both the function of this particular evening, as well as the role staff members play in this:

“As a staff member, we specifically use Wednesdays to create connections with visitors. The free food mainly comes from the idea that some people who come out as trans, gay, bi, aren't accepted by their parents, leaving them without a sense of home. That's what we aim to create in De Regenboog. They'll have a place to go, eat, and meet people struggling with similar things. A bit of an older brother or sister vibe, like, we can't protect you against the world, but we can offer you the tools to survive it.”

The following section shows findings regarding the **accessibility** of the Wednesdays in De Regenboog Nijmegen, focusing on ambiance and crowdedness specifically. Eight out of ten participants specifically mentioned regular Wednesdays to be a lot less crowded, which is supported by comparing participant observations executed on Wednesdays to busier partying days. Four out of ten participants talked about the limitations regarding the accessibility of visiting on Wednesdays. All four describe the ambiance as quite secluded, which causes reluctance to enter the space. One participant even mentions walking in and leaving because of this, the first time he went there on a Wednesday. Another participant mentions repeatedly asking the head of staff if it was okay to visit, looking for assurance that he wouldn't be intruding. Five out of ten participants mention that the availability of a free dinner is both unknown and uncommon. Two out of these five suggested this might be a specific reason for people not entering on Wednesdays. They also emphasize that although not defined, there are limits to the number of people that would be able to participate on Wednesdays, considering the offer of free food.

Findings suggest that Wednesdays in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' specifically offer an environment that allows for more intense social interaction both amongst staff and visitors and between them. During Wednesday evenings, focus lies on conversations, karaoke, and eating together, as opposed to more partying on other days. Participants specifically enjoy connecting with staff members and other queer individuals. This creates stronger sense of community binding and personal connection to the nightlife space. Additionally, findings suggest that primarily the rather

private atmosphere, but also the implausible idea of getting a free dinner, might cause reluctance to participate in Wednesday activities amongst potential visitors.

8. Discussion

This chapter provides a deeper analysis of the results from this research on how participation in queer nightlife spaces contributes to the shaping of queer bodies, identities, and communities, by integrating findings on the three sub-questions, and including interpretations and implications. Connection to the earlier mentioned literature and theoretical frameworks, this chapter aims to integrate this research into a broader academic and societal context. Furthermore, critical reflection on generalizability and limitations is presented, discussing both to what extent this research answers the main research question, providing a deeper understanding of how the methodological approach has shaped the research process and findings. This part also reflects on the intersectionality of this research and provides opportunities for future research.

8.1. Findings

Starting off by connecting the **physical space** to Butler's (1993) theory of gender performativity, nightlife spaces form the stage upon which queer and non-queer visitors embody and enact their identities. Performativity of queer bodies create queer spaces, which is supported by the finding that the ratio of queer to non-queer visitors potentially takes away from the function and meaning of queer nightlife to queer individuals. However, the physical environment also plays a part in defining queer nightlife experiences. Thus, the transformative nature of queerness, as described by Reed (1996), is recognized by visitors. Participants described queer nightlife experiences as different from non-queer nightlife experiences, influenced by both physical and social elements. Characteristics of the physical environment consist of vibrant colors, more decoration and heavy use of a smoke machine. However, it remains unclear to what extent these aspects characterize queer nightlife spaces in general, or just distinguishes 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' from other nightlife spaces in Nijmegen. Furthermore, the use of vibrant colors isn't surprising, as the bar is called 'De Regenboog', which translates to "the rainbow", the broadly recognized colorful symbol of queerness. Findings also show that bathrooms are spaces where individuals experience increased awareness of their gender identity and sexual orientation, as not only a self-categorization is expected here, but also visible physical alterations based on the queerness of visitors. As bathroom use is unlikely able to be avoided while participating in nightlife, they create a stage upon which individuals are forced to continuously assess the embodiment and enactment of their gender identity. These findings show how not only people, but also physical spaces can perform a queer identity. Building forward on 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' as a recognizably queer oriented, physical nightlife space, this offers individuals a meeting spot where they have assurance of presence of queer people. It therefore more or less guarantees a safer space for queer identity exploration and expression. It also provides a ground for frequent visiting, which fosters community creation. Findings show that queer individuals perceive differences in the overall group of visitors between queer and non-queer nightlife. Generally, queer individuals experience the public within queer nightlife as showing less aggressive behavior, consisting of more women, and having a more eccentric appearance. This connects to the differences in social function between queer and non-queer nightlife spaces that were described. Findings on these two themes show how the presence of other visibly queer people fosters a sense of community and safety for queer individuals. Findings also show that music plays an important role contributing to the queer identity of the nightlife space, shaping community feeling and self-expression of the individuals within them, especially amongst younger queer individuals. Recognizing certain music and artists as queer, regardless of their own gender identity and/or sexual orientation, further showcases the performative nature of queer nightlife spaces and queer pop culture in

general. Additionally, mutual linguistic understandings amongst queer individuals, affect communication styles and forms a ground for visibility of queerness. A shared language, queer sayings, connects and identifies queer individuals within and outside of queer nightlife spaces. The process of recognizing other queer bodies creates a sense of sameness, which enforces queer individuals to experience a more tolerant and open atmosphere within queer nightlife spaces, providing much appreciated increased **feelings of safety**.

This leads to a discussion about what causes queer individuals to feel unsafe, both within and outside of nightlife. Findings support that all queer individuals potentially face oppression, often leading to experiencing violence regarding their queer identity. Being amongst predominantly other queer individuals in nightlife spaces, whether safely assumed or perceived, positively impacts the nightlife experience of queer individuals. Recognizing queerness in others fosters a sense of sameness, therefore queer individuals feel safer to assume they won't judge their queer identity. This also strengthens a sense of social control and trust in staff and security handling visitors expressing anti-queer behavior. Perceiving and being perceived inside nightlife spaces with queerness as deviating ground evokes a variety of perceptions and emotions within the queer individual, ranging from feeling judged, threatened, or contribution to self-acceptance and personal development. Findings emphasize the complexity and impact of being looked at, a rather elusive source of violence. It fosters a sense of being abnormal, as it recognizes and enforces queer bodies and identities in the way they're not following the cisgendered heterosexual norm. Not knowing when looks might turn into more graspable forms of violence, like verbal or physical, having such experiences, turns a look into a potential threat. Findings also show that sexual violence remains an important issue within both queer and non-queer nightlife spaces, which isn't surprising. A notable decrease in experiences with sexual violence from men towards women is an important reason individuals prefer queer nightlife spaces over non-queer nightlife spaces. Although potential sexual violence towards men increases, the overall perception of increased feelings of safety remained prevalent. Addressing perpetrators of violence, findings suggest that queer individuals of all gender identities experience men as the main cause of negative experiences regarding their queer identity. Zooming in further, female, and non-binary individuals mainly perceive heterosexual men as cause, while male identifying queer individuals also perceive other queer men as important cause of negative experiences as well.

This leads to a discussion whether **entrance of non-queer bodies and identities** in queer nightlife spaces changes the experience of queer individuals. If so, are these changes negative? Gill Valentine (2002) addresses public queer spaces as places where queer individuals can be targeted. Although experiences with people coming to a queer nightlife space to target queer individuals weren't reported in this research, the majority of participants experienced some form of anti-queer violence within queer nightlife, including people yelling anti-queer slurs from outside the street. Furthermore, she explains how entrance of non-queer people in queer spaces can take away the exclusive and intimate nature of these spaces. Findings show varied perspectives, both positive and negative. Acceptance, tolerance, and understanding are conditions under which entrance of non-queer people isn't considered problematic. However, the ratio queer to non-queer people matters, too many non-queer people might turn queer nightlife into regular nightlife, which takes away the earlier mentioned meaning of queer nightlife to queer individuals. Different perspectives on diversity and integration of sexualities within these spaces showcase the complexity of this theme. While some perceive entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife as a positive increase of diversity, others emphasized increased feelings of discomfort. Said's (1979) concept of

orientalism turned out to be very relevant discussing this topic, as the feeling of queer nightlife being used for entertainment by non-queer individuals emerged amongst interviews. However, not all participants perceived this as self-evident negative aspect, provided that these non-queer individuals fulfill the earlier mentioned conditions of being accepting, tolerant, and understanding.

Overall, **visibility of queerness** affects the susceptibility of the individual for experiencing various forms of anti-queer violence, which affects their behavior. Supposed feminine dance moves performed by men, public displays of queer affection, or looking neither typically male nor female causes an individual to be recognized as queer, therefore becoming a potential target. As behavior perceived as sexual, like general physical closeness and kissing, is likely to reveal an individual's queer identity, queer individuals tend to be cautious where to perform such acts. This also occurs with expressions of gender identity that don't conform to cisgendered and binary societal standards. Queer nightlife offers an environment where individuals feel safe enough to be visibly queer.

Zooming in on **specific queer bodies and identities**, performativity is perceived differently, evoking a variety of potential reactions. Physical closeness and kissing are judged differently amongst gender identities. For women it might be more acceptable, perceived as less defining for their sexuality. Amongst men it might be judged as a direct sign of queerness, more specifically homosexuality. Furthermore, findings highlight the complexities that come with exploration of attraction towards multiple gender identities. They also suggest a perceived decisive power regarding sexuality in the attraction towards men. Being assumed to be gay as a man attracted to other men, expressions of doubt from others might feel like a compliment, while attraction towards other women, as a woman, it can be dismissed. Findings also show that for people identifying as bisexual or non-binary might perceive others openly questioning their gender identity and/or sexual orientation as positive, as it acknowledges the plurality of their queer identity. Particularly interesting about this, is that the participants who expressed this, are not confused about their queer identities. This can be connected to the pressure that some individuals experience to categorize themselves within the realm of queer identities. The need to "come out of the closet", having to explain in what ways you're queer, puts the queer individual into a position where the process of shaping their identity requires continuous assessment of ways in which they're not non-queer. Findings also reveal the complex dynamics regarding physical appearance, competition, and discrimination amongst male identifying queer individuals. Societal systems of oppression, like racism, fatphobia, and misogyny, seem to resound loudly within the male gay community. A strong emphasis on specific body ideals, both within and outside of nightlife spaces, potentially leads to dissatisfaction with their own bodies, negatively affecting the self-esteem of the individual. This supports the notion that queer communities are not all-tolerant vacuums, free from the damage of socially constructed systems of oppression.

Having addressed important differences amongst queer bodies and identities, as well as the reasons they might feel unsafe, and why queer nightlife provides a safer space, following section of the discussion focuses on the shaping of **queer communities**. To start off, these increased feelings of safety establish queer nightlife spaces as environments where queer individuals step outside of their social bubbles and are more inclined to interact with strangers, which then again, supports its contribution to queer community creation. Queer individuals experience queer nightlife spaces as a place more focused on meaningful and much desired connections and social interaction free from obligations, as opposed to a space solely for chasing sexual encounters between men and women. Additionally, queer nightlife spaces can offer intentional activities for community building, like the Wednesday evenings in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen'. Being able to eat together and talk with staff

members and other visitors within the nightlife space, intensifies both queer community creation and personal connection to the space. This may then again, cause these visitors to return, reinforcing community building. This leads to the question why queer community building, creating deeper connections with other queer people, matters to queer individuals. Supportive of the research of Garnets & D'Augelli (1994), findings show that both assuming and talking about similar experiences regarding queerness contributes to identity formation in various interlinked ways. Queer friend groups form established support systems for each other, where they feel safe to assume a potentially queer identity can be explored and expressed. These deeper connections also help the individual deal with similar struggles shaping their queer identity, as well as processing of experiencing anti-queer violence. This creates a much-desired sense of true, reciprocal understanding amongst queer individuals. This research therefore fully supports the following statement from Cisneros & Bracho (2020: 4):

“Experiencing queer culture and being visibly queer allows individuals to develop a sense of self and belonging in a society replete with oppressive structures, systems, and environments.”

Establishing the community building potential, as well as its importance to queer individuals, this leads to reassessment of the **accessibility** of queer nightlife spaces. Cisneros & Bracho (2020) address the question to whom a queer nightlife space offers a safe space. Addressing the Wednesday specifically, findings suggest that primarily the rather private atmosphere, but also the implausible idea of getting a free dinner, decreases the accessibility of participating in Wednesday activities in De Regenboog Nijmegen. What also needs to be added to this discussion are the limits to the number of people participating in this activity. As the free, home cooked, dinner is an essential part of the unique experience, it raises the question to what extent increased accessibility leads to increased numbers of participants, which then potentially surpasses financial boundaries. Addressing accessibility of queer nightlife spaces as safe(r) spaces in a broader context, various factors play a role in this discussion. Self-identification with others and building connections is affected by differences. Firstly, differences in age creating distance. As the overall public in queer nightlife spaces is relatively young, older visitors might not experience an equal sense of sameness. However, offering a less crowded evening with activities focused on socializing, like Wednesdays in ‘De Regenboog Nijmegen’ might include this group more. Secondly, differences in gender identity and sexual orientation. Experiences regarding identity formation vary widely amongst queer identities, logically. Within nightlife spaces, this potentially leads to clashing of functions. As for queer men, there’s a strong focus on sexual encounters and bodily ideals of muscularity, while a reduction of sexual violence from men remains one of the most important reasons for women to prefer queer nightlife over non-queer nightlife. The function of queer nightlife spaces as safe space for exploration of queerness both isn’t the same for everyone, and is vulnerable in general. This research therefore underscores the complexity of defining safe spaces, as well as having a queer body and identity in general.

8.2. Limitations and further research

This section discusses the generalizability and limitations of the findings, by addressing the representability of the sample, memory bias, and research methodology, while reflecting on the intersectionality of this research. Potential approaches and topics for further research are also presented.

Firstly, representability of the sample. The research group consists of ten participants, out of which two pairs of friends, who were interviewed together. Having similar experiences within nightlife and potentially having contributed to each other's identity formation for quite some time, this may skew the findings. However, it also can make people feel more comfortable during the interviewing, allowing for both deeper understanding and inclusion of individuals less inclined to let their voice be heard. Moreover, the sample doesn't equally represent all queer bodies and identities and ages, which limits the overall generalizability. The most important limitation is ethnicity, as nine out of ten participants are white, and one white/Chinese individual. Therefore, the findings of this study don't include experiences with forms of oppression and violence within nightlife spaces faced by for example, black or Latinx individuals. Important to emphasize is that I've approached visitors present on the three Wednesdays I was there, and have included every individual that wanted to participate in the sample. Therefore, chances that discriminatory biases from me as researcher have influenced the composition of participants are minimal. Furthermore, the public on both Wednesdays and busier partying days predominantly consisted of white visitors. This also opens discussions on what withholds individuals from participating in queer nightlife, but also from participating in studies like this. These questions form interesting grounds for further research on both the accessibility and intersectionality of queer nightlife spaces and academic research in general.

Secondly, potential influence of memory bias. This research uses interviews with participants outside of nightlife as primary data source, which means it depends on their perceptions and memories. Additionally, some of these experiences are influenced by alcohol and/or other drugs. Although it could be argued that these factors distort results, I disagree. Alcohol and drugs are inseparable from most nightlife experiences, whether used by participants themselves or other visitors. Also, the epistemological approach builds on the assumption that knowledge consists of interpretations made by individuals, as mentioned in the methodology chapter. In the end, acknowledgement of perceptions and experiences of one person don't invalidate those of others. Discussing the methodology further, the following section assesses semi-structured in-depth interviews as primary data source. Interviewing allowed for in-depth exploration of personal experiences of the participants, but as mentioned before, this data isn't fit to be generalized to a larger population. It is important to emphasize that establishment of universal statements about queer bodies and identities was and is never the aim of this research. These findings aim to provide new and valuable insights on the experiences of queer individuals and their relation to queer nightlife.

While acknowledging its limitations, this research forms a valuable contribution to the field of intersectional research and queer studies. Future research can aim to consist of a more diverse representation of queer bodies and identities, especially including participants of a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Also, broadening the concept of queer nightlife spaces, as the definition of these spaces in this research excludes a large variety of queer oriented partying experiences. Comparing contributions of experiences within different kinds of queer nightlife spaces to the identity formation of queer individuals allows for deeper insights on the intersectionality and accessibility of these spaces.

9. Conclusion

By analyzing visitors' experiences of both Wednesday evenings and busier partying days of 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', this research explains how participation in queer nightlife spaces contributes to both queer identity formation and queer community building. Combining semi-structured in-depth interviews with participant observations on both days, this research provides new insights on the unique characteristics of queer nightlife spaces, while underscoring their valuable contribution to the exploration and expression of queer individuals, as these spaces function as stages for performance of both queer and non-queer bodies and identities. During this rather free and explorative approach to researching, both celebrated and grieved parts of being queer within a cisgendered, heteronormative society emerged. Although differences were acknowledged, unique and unifying qualities of queerness were unanimously recognized.

Physical aspects, like vibrant colors, heavy smoke machine use, and decorations, but especially the variety of social functions of queer nightlife contributes to the identity of queer nightlife spaces. These spaces form grounds for classic nightlife aspects, like dancing and flirting, while adding a more platonic dimension of friendly interaction between individuals. This social function emphasizes its potential for queer community building, as individuals are more inclined to step outside their own social bubble within queer nightlife, as opposed to non-queer nightlife. The important role of music, language, and sharing mutual experiences regarding queerness form the building blocks for the shaping of queer communities within queer nightlife spaces. This research also identifies bathrooms as spaces within both queer and non-queer nightlife where individuals experience heightened awareness of their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, showcasing how a physical space can enact a queer identity. The duality regarding visibility of queerness also emerged in this research. It fosters the sense of sameness and community amongst queer individuals, but also increases their chances of being subjected to threats and violence, which then causes reluctance to be visibly queer. Overall, queer nightlife spaces offer a safe(r) space for queer individuals to explore and express their queer identities, to be visibly queer.

A recognizably queer oriented, physical nightlife space offers assurance of presence of queer people and a more tolerant environment, which provides queer individuals with a more pleasant nightlife experience overall. Furthermore, the importance of being amongst, but especially building deeper connections with other queer individuals emerged in this research. Not only true reciprocal understanding and processing experiences regarding queer identity, but also exploration of identity and expressions, form valuable contributions to the queer individual's identity formation and self-acceptance. Additionally, intentional community building activities, like Wednesdays in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', offer grounds for tying individuals to the physical space, therefore establishing, and maintaining these connections, which contributes to the shaping of queer communities.

This research also emphasizes the complex challenges individuals face within queer nightlife spaces. All queer individuals in this research reported experiences with anti-queer violence, which underlines the need for safe spaces further. However, safety within queer nightlife spaces isn't guaranteed, and varies amongst queer bodies and identities. Discussions about potential threats to the safe space show varied perspectives on the entrance of non-queer individuals and groups in queer nightlife spaces. Although all agree that it can be positive, under the condition that these people are tolerant and understanding, reluctance showed just as much. As performance of queer bodies and identities creates the meaning of queer nightlife spaces, to be outperformed by non-

queer bodies potentially takes some of this away.

Queerness is as much of a common denominator, as it has differences within. It is therefore crucial to understand the necessity of intersectional research in understanding queer communities and nightlife spaces. Findings reveal the echoing of socially constructed systems of oppression, like racism, fatphobia, and misogyny, within the queer community. While representation of queer individuals in academic research contributes to queer empowerment and recognition, further research is needed to identify challenges faced by specific groups within the queer community. This underlines the need for continuous intersectional exploration and discussion on the meaning and importance of queer nightlife spaces, while addressing the challenges faced by queer individuals, both within and outside of nightlife.

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11. Appendix

11.1. Interview guide

English and Dutch interview guide.

11.1.1. English guide

Introduction

Thank you for having this conversation with me. As mentioned before, I will ask you questions about participation in queer nightlife spaces, focusing on your individual experience. If at any point you feel uncomfortable answering certain questions, know you are free to not answer the question or stop the interview and recording. Do you have any questions? I will now start the recording.

Personal experience in general

1. So, you have visited De Regenboog Nijmegen, have you been there more often?
 - a. What is your overall impression of being there?
 - b. More specifically, Wednesday?
2. *Staff: how did you get there (to function x)?*
 - a. *Why there and not in a non-queer bar?*
 - b. *What is your experience as a staff member versus visitor?*
3. What does queer nightlife in general mean to you?
4. And compared to non-queer nightlife?
 - a. Do you experience this differently, if yes, how?
 - b. Do you behave and/or express yourself differently?
 - c. Which do you prefer? Do other factors matter, like time, day, company, etc.?
5. How does the physical environment affect your experience?

On intersectionality: other factors, outside of gender and sexual orientation, affect an individuals' experiences:

6. Have you experienced any differences in your personal experience in queer nightlife based on certain aspects of your body and identity, like gender, sexual orientation, age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, bodily ability, or anything else?
 - a. If so, what differences did you experience?
 - i. What do you think causes these differences?
 - ii. How does this affect how you feel about participating in queer nightlife?
 - iii. Does this affect your behavior in queer nightlife?
 - iv. Has it changed how you perceive (other) people in the queer community?
7. Do you think 'De Regenboog Nijmegen' is accessible for all people (queer identities)?
8. Has your relation to queer nightlife changed over the years?

Community building (Wednesdays in 'De Regenboog Nijmegen', as opposed to other days)

1. We met on a Wednesday; do you visit other days?
 - a. If yes, how do you experience Wednesdays, as opposed to other days?
2. What kind of people have you met here?
 - a. What is your most remarkable experience
 - b. Have you had negative experiences?
3. How did you first go on a Wednesday?

- a. Do you go more often? If yes, why?
4. Do non-queer nightlife spaces offer something similar for you?

Entrance of non-queer bodies and identities in queer nightlife spaces

Staff: does the presence of non-queer people change your experience as a staff member?

1. *In what way?*
2. *Does the ratio matter?*
3. *And for you as visitor?*

Visitor:

1. Does the presence of non-queer people in general change your experience in a queer nightlife space?
 - a. In what way?
 - b. Does the ratio matter?
 - c. How do you think non-queer people's experience differs from yours?

Influence outside of nightlife

2. Does participating in queer nightlife affect you outside of nightlife?
3. Do you think it has contributed to how you feel about your own gender and/or sexuality?

Rounding up

I asked you everything I wanted to talk with you about, do you have any questions or remarks yourself? Thank you for participating in my research. If anything comes up, you can always contact me via e-mail or phone. I will now stop the recording.

11.1.2. Dutch guide

Introductie

Dankjewel dat je dit gesprek met mij wil voeren. Zoals eerder besproken, zal ik vragen stellen over het bezoeken van queer uitgaansplekken, gefocust op jouw persoonlijke ervaring. Als je je op een punt oncomfortabel voelt met het beantwoorden van bepaalde vragen, weet dat je nooit verplicht bent te antwoorden en op elk moment het interview en de opname kunt stoppen. Heb je nog vragen? Ik ga nu de opname starten.

Persoonlijke ervaring in het algemeen

1. Je bent dus in De Regenboog Nijmegen geweest, ga je hier vaker heen?
 - a. Wat je algemene indruk van daar uitgaan?
 - b. Specifiek de woensdag?
2. *Personeel: hoe ben je daar gekomen (tot functie x)?*
 - a. *Waarom daar en niet in een non-queer bar?*
 - b. *Wat is je ervaring als werknemer versus bezoeker?*
3. Wat betekent queer nachtleven over het algemeen voor jou?
4. En in vergelijking tot non-queer nachtleven?
 - a. Ervaar je dit anders, zo ja, hoe?
 - b. Gedraag en uit je je anders?

- c. Wat heeft je voorkeur en waarom? Is dit van andere factoren afhankelijk, zoals tijd, dag, gezelschap etc.?
5. Hoe speelt de fysieke omgeving mee in jouw ervaring?

Over intersectionaliteit: andere factoren, buiten gender en geaardheid, beïnvloeden iemands ervaringen:

6. Ervaar je weleens verschillen in jouw persoonlijke ervaringen in queer nachtleven, gebaseerd op aspecten van jouw lichaam en identiteit, zoals gender, geaardheid, leeftijd, ethniciteit, sociaal-economische achtergrond, gezondheid, of iets anders?
- a. Zo ja, welke verschillen ervaarde je?
 - i. Wat denk je dat deze verschillen veroorzaakte?
 - ii. Hoe beïnvloedt dit de manier waarop jij deelnemen in queer nachtleven beschouwt en ervaart?
 - iii. Beïnvloedt het hoe je je gedraagt?
 - iv. Heeft het de manier waarop je (anderen in) de queer community ziet veranderd?
7. Denk je dat De Regenboog "accessible"/bereikbaar is voor alle mensen (queer identiteiten)
8. Is jouw verhouding tot queer nachtleven veranderd door de jaren heen?

Community building (woensdagen in De Regenboog t.o.v. andere dagen)

9. We hebben elkaar op een woensdag ontmoet, ben je er ook op andere dagen?
- a. Zo ja, hoe ervaar je de woensdagen vergeleken bij andere dagen?
10. Wat voor mensen heb je hier ontmoet?
- a. Wat is je meest opmerkelijke ervaring?
11. Heb je negatieve ervaringen gehad?
12. Hoe ben je bij de woensdagen gekomen?
- a. Ga je vaker? Ben je teruggekomen, zo ja, waarom?
 - b. Wat zijn voor jou de belangrijkste redenen om op woensdagen aanwezig te zijn?
13. Bieden non-queer uitgaansgelegenheden iets vergelijkbaars voor jou?
- a. Waarom wel/niet?
 - b. Vergeleken bij andere plekken?

Toetreding van non-queer lichamen en identiteiten in queer uitgaansgelegenheden

Personeel: verandert de aanwezigheid van non-queer mensen jouw ervaring als medewerker?

1. *Op wat voor manier?*
2. *Maakt de verhouding uit?*
3. *En voor jou als bezoeker?*

Gast:

1. Verandert de aanwezigheid van non-queer mensen jouw ervaring op queer uitgaansplekken?
 - a. Op wat voor manier?
 - b. Maakt de verhouding uit?
 - c. Hoe denk je dat de ervaring van een non-queer persoon verschilt van de jouwe?

Invloed buiten nachtleven om

1. Heeft deelnemen aan queer nachtleven invloed op jou buiten het uitgaan om?
2. Heeft het bijgedragen aan de manier waarop jij je voelt over je eigen gender identiteit en/of geaardheid?

Afsluiting

Ik heb alles gevraagd wat ik graag met je wilde bespreken, heb je zelf nog vragen of opmerkingen? Dankjewel voor het meewerken aan mijn onderzoek. Als je toch nog vragen of andere dingen te binnen schieten kun je me altijd bereiken via e-mail of telefoon. Ik ga nu de opname stoppen.

11.2. Observation guide

Guide and protocol for participant observations.

11.2.1 Guide

Site location:

Date:

Start time:

Stop time:

| Area of observation | Description | Interaction with (other) visitors | Interpretation | Changes overtime | Comments |
|---|-------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|------------------|----------|
| Physical environment | | | | | |
| Music | | | | | |
| Visitors | | | | | |
| Visitors' behavior | | | | | |
| Groups: size, composition (intersectionality) | | | | | |

Overall remarks:

11.2.2. Observation protocol

Time of arrival on Wednesdays is around 6 pm, because people gather after work or other daytime activities to eat together. The head of staff also mentioned 6 pm to be the time when most people would be there. Stop time is not specified, considering it varies per day until what time people stick around. I also don't want my presence to disturb the small groups of friends just relaxing and having dinner there. On Saturdays it's more of a clubbing night, so the time of arrival had to be different. I

asked the staff at what time De Regenboog usually starts getting crowded on Saturdays. They said it differs, but usually at around 12 pm. Considering I want to observe the flow of visitors during the evening, the time of arrival is around 11 pm. Stop time is when leaving the bar, at least three hours after arrival.

On arrival the first thing observed is the physical environment: décor, lighting, etc. Then the total number of people, the groups they're with, where they are in the space and what they're doing. Interactions with the physical environment, staff and each other are also observed.

During the evening I keep track of changes in the aspects mentioned above. Considering it's a nightlife venue, people consume alcohol or other mind-altering substances during the evening, especially on busier partying days. This potentially influences peoples' behavior; people often behave differently when they're under the influence of alcohol or other substances than when they're sober. Taking this into account, I put interpretations of observations into perspective. For example, people might interact with strangers more later at night, because alcohol makes them more confident to do so.

11.3. Overview of participants

| | Age | Gender identity | Sexual orientation | Ethnicity | Bodily ability | Socio-economic background | Permission for quoting |
|------------------------|-----|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|---------------------------|------------------------|
| Participant 1 | 20 | Non-binary | Queer | Chinese-Dutch (white) | Body dysmorphia | Middle-class | Yes |
| Participant 2* | 38 | Cisgender man | Gay | White | Weight related issues | University | Yes |
| Participant 3* | 41 | Cisgender man | Gay | White | Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD | University | Yes |
| Participant 4 | 24 | Cisgender man | Bisexual | White | N.A. | Middle-class | Yes |
| Participant 5 | 19 | Cisgender man | Gay | White | Autism Spectrum Disorder (not considered relevant) | Upper-class, university | Yes |
| Participant 6** | 21 | Cisgender woman | Probably lesbian | White | N.A. | MBO | Yes |
| Participant 7** | 23 | Trans woman | Lesbian | White | N.A. | Middle-class, HAVO | Yes |
| Participant 8 | 20 | Trans man | Bisexual | White | Body dysmorphia regarding breasts | Middle-class | Yes |

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|-----------------|-----------------------------------|-------|------|--------------------|-----|
| Participant 9 | 23 | Cisgender woman | Hetero- or bisexual (questioning) | White | N.A. | Middle-class | Yes |
| Participant 10 | 25 | Cisgender man | Gay | White | N.A. | Upper middle-class | Yes |

* These participants have been friends for thirteen years and have been interviewed together. Met each other via other friends.

** These participants have been friends for a couple of years and have been interviewed together. Met each other in De Regenboog Nijmegen.

11.4. Codebook

| Code group | Description | Codes |
|--|---|--|
| Accessibility of De Regenboog Nijmegen | Factors that might affect the tendency to visit De Regenboog Nijmegen in general. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being afraid to go to De Regenboog • Knowing De Regenboog via friends |
| Being queer amongst non-queer people | All experiences, perceptions, attitudes, and feelings from queer individuals regarding being amongst non-queer individuals. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards non-queer bars: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - negative - neutral - positive • Connection with non-queer people • Experience in non-queer bar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - hostile looks from others - verbal hostility • Fading of gay-hetero borders • Integration of sexualities • Non-queer visitors in queer nightlife: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experiences, attitudes, and conditions - potential reason of entrance |
| Community formation in queer nightlife | All factors indicating queer nightlife spaces are a place where queer community formation potentially take place. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changes within frequent visitors • De Regenboog as community • Frequent visitor of De Regenboog • Importance of queer establishments/organizations • Recognizing queer as community • Wednesday specific data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - accessibility - ambiance - can a non-queer bar offer a similar experience - clustering of groups |

| | | |
|---|---|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - difference in composition/amount of visitors - first entrance - frequency of visiting - meaning/intention - potential problems - social interaction between visitors - staff – visitor connection |
| Contribution of queer nightlife to the individual | All ways participation in queer nightlife potentially contributes to the individual, both within and outside of nightlife spaces, also including reasons to visit queer nightlife, as opposed to non-queer nightlife. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Queer nightlife affecting individual outside of nightlife • Reason to go to queer nightlife space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being able to be yourself - dancing - dating, flirting, sexual encounters - exploration of queer identity and expression - meeting other queer people in general - queer character itself - queer community feeling - safety |
| De Regenboog experiences in general | All experiences in De Regenboog Nijmegen, in a broader sense: not Wednesday specific. Includes both negative experiences and more “neutral” descriptions of the overall environment. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards staff as visitor • Negative experiences in De Regenboog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - violence from visitors - with staff • Other visiting days than Wednesday • Physical environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - being unable to see inside and darkness - colors - decoration - open space - smoke machine - toilet • Staff handling unwanted behavior/visitors |
| Defining queer nightlife spaces | All differences in queer individuals’ experiences within queer nightlife spaces, as opposed to non-queer nightlife spaces. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difference from non-queer bar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - behavioral norms - friendlier ambiance - function as visitor - function of staff - handling rejection - fewer underage girls - looks of visitors - male to female ratio - music |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - own behavior - physical environment - younger overall public |
| Differences amongst queer individuals | Prevalent themes amongst specific groups within the queer community. Addresses intersectionality and dismisses queer individuals as homogenous group. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age differences affecting social connection • Autism Spectrum Disorder affecting nightlife experiences • Being perceived gay while questioning • Potential friction within queer community • Difference in gender identity creating distance • Ex-boyfriend dismissing queer identity • Experiencing confusion as compliment • Gay male bodies: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - age - appearance - categorization and discrimination - competing and dating the same bodies - desiring certain bodies • Gender based differences regarding sexual violence |
| Importance of connecting with other queer people | All explanations given by participants specifically addressing why deeper connections with other queer individuals is important for them. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of being with other queer people |
| Nightlife experiences in general | All nightlife experiences in a broader sense, not specific for queer nightlife, or Nijmegen. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol • Nightlife in Nijmegen then and now • Nightlife in other city • Other queer nightlife in Nijmegen • Reason to participate in nightlife in general: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dancing - primary source of social life • Segregation of queer and non-queer nightlife |
| Potential shared experiences regarding queerness | All findings indicating potential shared experiences, understandings, or other similarities regarding being queer. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of risks involved with being queer • Being bullied during childhood • Characteristics of queer community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appearance oriented - bitching and throwing shade - less violent - then and now |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coming out • Gaybashing • Acknowledgement of similar experiences • Meeting other queer people online • Queer communication • Queer identity creating connection • Queerness potentially causing loneliness • Self-identification with queerness |
| Staff member experiences | All findings specifically coming from a staff member perspective, that wouldn't be able to be experienced solely as visitor. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working in De Regenboog: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - beginning - being there as staff versus visitor - compared to other workplace - function - personal development |
| Visibility of queerness in others | All findings directly indicating queer bodies and identities can be recognized without them explicitly telling. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assuming gender identity of others • Assuming sexual orientation of others • Recognizing others as queer in general |