

The color green in the rainbow

A bachelor's thesis about the connection between
queerness and environmentalism in youth

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Abstract

This bachelor's thesis researched the overlap between queer activism and environmentalism and the intersectionality surrounding it in young, queer people, an under-highlighted part of society.

Researching participants using a case-study approach, their motivations and barriers were taken into account, together with a theoretical background on queer history, queer theory, intersectionality and environmentalism. By building up on Cortese's theory, who researched queer activists in 2015, three more types of activists were added onto the three existing ones to explain activists active in both queer activism and environmentalism. Queer activism was often influenced by personal barriers and motivations, while environmentalism was often motivated and barriered by external elements. The activists' own queer identity gave them a unique positionality in their activism, and often motivated them to be more active overall, mainly motivated by their marginalized position in society.

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1. Introduction

Young people play a vital role in society. They carry the world of tomorrow while facing the problems of today. They are challenging the status quo established by the generations above them. One important issue we face in our world today is climate change. Climate conventions such as the Conference of the Parties (COP), from which the famous Paris Agreement, signed in 2015, stemmed from; climate conventions organized by the United Nations, and others are bringing countries together to tackle one of the biggest challenges facing our world, but the reality shows us that change is slow.

Young people have an interesting role to play here. Movements for climate action are growing thanks to them, and organizations like Extinction Rebellion and Fridays for Future are often in the news. Interestingly, young environmentalists often have something in common. In pictures and reports, Yaxley (2021) shows, many people walk around with pride flags at climate protests. This made me think about the special role queer people seem to play within environmentalism, making me curious to research this topic further.

I myself have been active in environmentalism and queer activism in multiple ways. As a queer person myself, I have many connections within the queer community. People discuss their worries, their hopes and dreams with me, and me vice versa with them as well. One of the topics we often discuss, albeit inside or outside the activism field, is climate change. It is an urgent topic, worrying many around me. Though the topic is heavily discussed with my straight, cisgender friends as well, I see many of my queer friends active in the climate activism field. Just this month, I attended the Fixing the Future festival in Barcelona, on behalf of the ecofeminist organization Women Engage for the Common Future (WECF). Interestingly enough, I am non-binary and not a woman, though this was not a problem for the organizers. Times have changed, they explained, and ecofeminism and feminism is much wider nowadays than just the equality of women and men to them. During the festival I spoke to many other young activists. Queerness happened to be very common, and in my eyes the percentage of queer people seemed higher within this climate activism space as opposed to society in general.

Research conducted by the Harris Initiative (2018) found that 55% of self-identified queer adults in the United States care a great deal about the environment, as opposed to only one-third (33%) of American adults who are straight. Meanwhile, limited research has been done on the impact of environmental disasters on queer people. However, the limited research done strongly shows that queer people will be more affected by climate change as opposed to cisgender and straight (cis het) people (Dominey-Howes et al. 2014).

In this bachelor thesis by using a case-study approach, I have drawn the connection between environmentalism and queerness in youth and see how both factors intersect, and highlight what important role queer youth plays in environmentalism and queer activism. Next to this, I looked at motivations and barriers which influence the activists.

1.1 Research framework

The existing literature on the intersectionality of environmentalism and queerness already highlights some key aspects. In the article by Costanza-Chock (2013), it is highlighted that marginalized youth (e.g., those with a queer identity) play an especially big role in environmentalism and activism in general. The authors found that those from marginalized backgrounds often have a stronger sense of justice and carry important aspects of activism with them. Young people are important agents of change, a strong position to have in terms of justice.

Another very important aspect to consider is how heteronormative our understanding of the world around us is. Being straight and cis (also called cishet by young activists) is the accepted norm in Western society including the Netherlands, though queer activists and modern philosophers like Michel Foucault are challenging this standard. Alaimo (2010) and Russell et al. (2021) have provided some interesting insight into this idea. Alaimo (2010) discusses the oversexualized role our bodies play in day-to-day life, and how queer environmentalists bring back neutrality around bodies. Russell et al. (2021) discuss how heteronormative education seems to be the norm, where abled, white and heterosexual bodies play centralised roles. They suggest stepping away from this idea, and introduce queer theory instead. Queer theory, among other terms, is explained in more detail below in chapter 2.4.

By studying what impact motivations and barriers have on queer activists, active in both environmentalism and queer activism, different approaches are highlighted and understood through interviews with interviewees. Diving into this research to better understand this connection, it is hypothesized that there is a strong connection between approaches to environmentalism, queerness and the activism surrounding it. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2 as well.

1.2 Social and scientific relevance

The social relevance of this research encapsulates the need to explain and gain insight of the impact young (leftwing) activists have by challenging certain cultural norms that they are not accepting anymore. The goal is to find out the motivation for young people to join environmental movements and queer movements, and whether these motivations overlap for both of these. Next to this, barriers are accounted for. This research is an outreach for different stakeholders to more deeply understand the processes at play. Youth organizations and movements gain insight as to what important motivations and barriers are, where young people learn about different approaches to activism and what feels most impactful to them. Following this, Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) may have more reasons to connect to other organizations and work together to reach common goals, since there may be previously overlooked overlapping points in their respective missions, from both an environmentalist- and queer activist perspective. It will also be a helpful tool for organizations to apply in the field. Once we understand the drive behind young activism, organizations can apply this knowledge to appeal more to young activists.

Current existing literature covers multiple topics on the intersectionality of feminism and social activism with environmentalism, however, the specific topic of queerness and the specific role young, queer people play is still underdeveloped. Existing literature mainly focuses on the intersectional role one's social position plays in activism, explained more in depth in chapter 2.3. It is explained that those in marginalized positions feel more strongly about activism and often depend on the issue that they're tackling (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013). Another explains that activists often find each other and support other causes next to their own areas of focus (Tormos, 2017). Examples that have been explained more in depth below include the queer community standing in solidarity with miner strikers in the UK in the 1980s, and feminists protesting in favor of marginalized people facing adverse effects from climate governance. The scientific aim of this research is to fill in the gap of information on what unique role young, queer people play in environmentalism movements, and to accurately recognize and applaud their impact and efforts. It is important to cover the missing information and scientific evidence regarding this topic.

1.3 Research aim

The aim of this research is to find the drive behind environmentalism and queer activism respectively, and the connection between the two. If this happens to be the case, the aim is to figure out what environmental, specific factors play a significant role. It is important to zoom into the trade-offs and synergies for youth to be involved in both activism movements. The eventual, long-term goal is to conduct further research about the combination of queerness, environmentalism and the activist role young people play and provide more information that future research can be based off on.

By conducting interviews with people that are both queer (part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer Plus community, or simply called by its acronym from here on out: the LGBTQ+ community), interested in climate change, and active in movements around these topics, we gain an insight in personal motivations, can look at common themes mentioned, and understand the connection between the topics. The methodology for this research will be explained more below in chapter 3.

1.4 Research question

The following main research question has been formulated:

What motivations and barriers influence young, queer activists, and how does this differ their approach to queer activism and environmentalism?

The complimentary sub-questions to dive deeper into specific subjects within this research are:

- What are the differences between these types of activists and their approach to activism as a whole?
- What barriers and motivations are queer activism and environmentalism each most influenced by?
- What role does the intersectional position of the queer activists play?

2. Theory

Firstly, the two terms *environmentalism* and *ecocentrism* are both important key terms within this research frame. It is important to establish working definitions for both terms. Environmentalism, according to Sutton (2019) is activism about the reversal of human caused climate change. Those being in the environmentalist movement push for climate action and a change of our habits and norms, together with technological countermeasures. Instead of focusing on other factors, like economic growth, sustainability and climate action should be priority according to environmentalists (Sutton, 2019).

Ecocentrism, according to Gray et al. (2018), is to move away from the idea that humans are central to our world. The idea, instead, is that ecosystems and nature as a whole are central to our world. Nature has an intrinsic value, a value of its own. We humans are not above nature, we are simply part of it. A common misunderstanding is that animals are different from humans. Ecocentrists refocus on the idea that humans are, scientifically speaking, just as much animals as any other animal is (Grey et al. 2018).

Then, to understand how queer activism and environmentalism overlaps, we first need to look at a working definition of activism. Activism refers to the effort of people, usually a group with the same ideologies, that promote change, restructuring the status quo. The Council of Europe (2020) explains it as follows on their website: "An activist is someone who is active in campaigning for change, normally on political or social issues. Activism is what activists do, that is, the methods they use in order to bring about change" (Council of Europe, 2020, para. 1).

In this case, queer activism and environmentalism, both types of activism, are movements where people strive to make the world a safer space for queer people, and to fight for protection of our environment. These two concepts also come together and overlap in certain ways. According to Dominey-Howes et al. (2014), queer people are likely to be more affected by climate change during environmental disasters. Not only did they receive less care, they found, but instances of hate crimes, rape and discrimination happened more often to queer people in disaster shelters.

The overlap, explained earlier, falls under intersectionality, an analytical framework within Critical Race Theory, developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw starting in 1989. Intersectionality explains the complexity of overlapping factors of marginalization, in this case about queer people facing climate change issues. Next to an in-depth explanation on this, a brief history overview on both queer topics and climate action is given below, along with several theories explaining topics like levels and types of activism, barriers and motivations and the state of queer activism and environmentalism in the current world.

2.1 Levels of activism

Not only is activism a broad concept, but there are also certain levels within it as well. One person demonstrates by donating to good causes and reposts information on social media, while another actively walks protest marches and takes part in strikes. Firstly, Moyer et al. (2001) have developed a typology to divide social activism in four different roles: the citizen, the rebel, the reformer and the change agent. Moyer and colleagues argue that individuals and/or groups should fill in these roles in an overlapping manner, as social movements need all four roles to effectively reduce antagonism and promote cooperation.

As explained in the theory, activists should firstly be seen as proper citizens by non-activists around them. Respect and acceptance are important factors here. Activists, when having earned respect, should rebel, too. They show their discontent and protest current conditions. The change agent role should educate, make others aware and involve the general public to get active and demand change. Lastly, activists should take up the role of reformers to work together with politicians and judicial structures and invoke change. Done incorrectly, these roles will prove to be ineffective, Moyer et al. explain in their theory.

Cortese (2015) categorized activists, specifically in the light of queer activism, into three categories: emphatics, demarcators, and reconcilers.

Emphatics are categorized as overly positive and idealistic activists. They are deeply connected to their respective movements and fill prominent roles. They are seen as the cliché understanding of activists. Examples of their activism are taking part in protests, being active members or leaders of (political) organizations, and integrating activism as an activity in their lives.

Demarcators view activism differently than emphatics. Even though they prioritize activism in their lives, they view people of the first category as too radical, thinking their methods are too extreme to get the important point across. Instead of 'classic activism', demarcators focus on activism in day-to-day life and try to change people's worldviews on an individual level rather than work on bigger scales. Using an us-versus-them rhetoric, demarcators see themselves as 'better' activists compared to other categories, because they try to approach clashing subjects more gently.

The last category, reconcilers, seeks out more casual ways of filling in their understanding of activism. They don't fit the norm of perfect activism', a concept further explored by Bobel (2007). By taking a position on the backseat, they still want to make a difference, but in a less invasive or extreme way as the former two categories. Their own relaxed definition of activism sets the standards way lower and credits a lot of their actions as activism, while not always true. Examples of this type of activism are reposting petition links on social media, donating to good causes, or using hashtags on social media platforms to spread awareness.

The theory by Cortese (2015) will be applied and extended in this research. Cortese focused on queer activism alone, while this research extends toward queer people who are also environmentalists. Due to this extension, I introduce three more activism types to elaborate on differing categories. Some activists approach queer activism and environmentalism the same way (being called 'pure emphatics', 'pure demarcators' or 'pure reconcilers'), while other activists differ in their approach. These combining types are called 'emphatic-reconcilers', 'reconciler-demarcators' and 'emphatic-demarcators'. The combining types approach queer activism or environmentalism in differing ways, where the order of types in the combined category type doesn't matter, meaning that 'emphatic-reconcilers' would be the same as 'reconciling-emphatics' for the sake of clarity.

Moyer et al. (2001) will be not further elaborated upon, as this research focuses on activists alone, while the 4 activist types from Moyer et al. interact with both activists and non-activists. As this framework focuses on activists alone, Cortese's theory (2015), who focused on types of activists themselves is a better fit.

For each of the activist categories above, we can link types of actions. Scheidel et al. (2020) have a nice overview on this in their article, in which they wrote about environmental conflicts and defenders. The categories can be split into two subsections: violent and non-violent actions. Most actions fall under non-violent actions, as seen in the table below:

Characteristics		Actions	Frequency	
			Cases	Percentage
Non-violent actions	non-violent protest and persuasion	Formal petitions	1,595	158%
		Public campaigns	1,566	157%
		Street protests	1,541	156%
		Development of collective action networks	1,354	149%
		Involvement of NGOs	1,342	149%
		Media-based activism	1,289	147%
		Rights of nature argument	419	15%
		Appeals to economic valuation	380	14%
		Artistic actions	255	9%
	non-cooperation	Strikes	280	10%
		Boycotts of official processes	169	6%
		Refusal of compensation	137	5%
		Boycotts of companies and products	77	3%
	non-violent intervention	Lawsuits	1,220	44%
		Alternative knowledge creation	1,001	36%
		Blockades	757	28%
		EIA objections	719	26%
		Alternative proposals	627	23%
		Participative research	467	17%
		Occupation of public spaces	369	13%
Land occupation		330	12%	
Referenda		178	6%	
Hunger strikes, self-immolation		108	4%	
Financial activism		72	3%	
Potentially violent actions	Property damage	182	7%	
	Sabotage	88	3%	
	Threats to use arms	81	3%	

Figure 1: Activism characteristics by Scheidel et al. (2020)

The subcategory characteristics are as follows:

- Non-violent protest and persuasion
- Non-cooperation
- Non-violent intervention
- Potentially violent actions

The actions themselves frequently involve non-violent protests and persuasion, like petitions and protests, followed by non-violent intervention, like lawsuits and alternative knowledge creation. The researches highlight the personal dependency protestors often experience and will often argue this as their key reason to protest. As Scheidel et al. (2020) put it:

[A]mong the key actors in environmental conflicts are those that defend the environment against negative social or ecological impacts, because their lives and livelihoods depend on healthy ecosystems, or because of other directly related social or environmental reasons. Such actors have been termed environmental defenders in media [...]. (p. 3)

The authors also point out that environmental defenders share the common goal of cancelling conflictive projects with adverse socio-environmental impacts. Their research points out that the most successful way to mobilize seems not to be a single strategy like listed above, but to combine multiple actions at once.

Concluding their research, Scheidel et al. (2020) point out that non-violent bottom-up mobilizations in response to adverse environmental and social impacts seems to work well and brings us hope to the future of these mobilizations. However, this often comes with the cost of violence and repression by counter-forces like counter-protestors or governmental bodies such as police.

Linking the theory of (non)-violent actions together with Cortese's theory (2015), we can say that emphatics, demarcators and reconcilers all fall under non-violent actions in their own ways. Like Moyer et al. (2001) explained earlier, aggressive or violent forms of activism prove to be counter-productive and sheds both the movement and the activists part of it in a bad light, no matter if they were part of the same group or not. Emphatics cover the widest range of protesting types and most commonly engage in more visible forms of protesting, like non-cooperation, in the Netherlands falling under civil disobedience ('burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheid'). Demarcators disengage with civil disobedience, though engage in more persuasive types of activism, like campaigning, involving non-governmental organizations and more. Lastly, the reconcilers are often active in more passive ways, like being active on social media platforms, sharing petitions and information, or educate themselves and others about the topic, falling between categories.

Another study by Roser-Renouf et al. (2014) discusses the most effective ways on how to mobilize more people to get active in environmentalism. Several key factors have been identified to be the more important precursors for environmentalists. The outcomes were as follows:

The threat of incoming climate change has been proven and proven again to be the most important precursor, however the threat alone is not enough for people to get into action. The pessimistic world view over our shared future demotivates people and many are unsure on where to start. The authors argue that the threat should be accompanied, or even preceded by information on effective actions individuals can take. Next to this, their results suggest that supporting public beliefs about the effectiveness and feasibility of activism should also be central. In short, people should believe that they have the power to fight adverse changes.

A hot topic within activism is so-called performative activism. The definition of performative activism is to support a marginalized group as a non-marginalized person or institute, but in a way that is not helpful or sometimes even harmful. A study by Kalina (2020) found that this is done by so-called 'allies' in the hopes of getting rewarded, like a "virtual pat on the back" by openly being activist on social media. Not only can this be seen as irritating to activists or marginalized groups, but it can also be harmful in the sense that narrative is taken away by marginalized people and spaces are dominated by performative activists instead. An infamous example of this are the protests around Black Lives Matter (BLM) in the summer of 2020. Black-out Tuesday quickly spread as a trend on social media. The idea behind it was that 'allies' reposted black squares on their feed with the hashtags #BlackOutTuesday and #BLM to show support. Much backlash came from the Black community instead. The trend caused the hashtags to get flooded by black squares and important information posts were drowned out, reversing the intended effects and ultimately being counter-productive (Vincent, 2020).

2.2 Barriers and motivations

Diving into the theoretical aspect of barriers and motivations, multiple studies have been looked at. A study by Wallis and Loy (2021) investigated motivations and surveyed the members of the environmentalist movement Fridays for Future in Germany. Members expressed to anticipate strong consequences of climate change later in their lives. Out of a sense of concern and feelings of responsibility, they wanted to express their thoughts and protest. Besides this, however, people also mentioned they joined Fridays for Future because their friends were already active, and because they identified themselves with other members, causing a stronger sense of belonging. Marris (2019) also mentions the rise of social media and peers inspiring each other by actions to act in similar ways. On a worldwide scale, activism has never been as coordinated as it is now, according to Marris.

Interestingly, queer activists have multiple connections to activism in a broader sense. Montagno et al. (2021) found that while not only queer people were activist for their own rights, a wider scale of reasons were at play as well. Queer people are not only activist in queer movements, but also tend to be more activist overall. Anti-racism-, pro Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC)-, anti-sexism-, and socio-political activism are a few named examples. Reasons for this are that queer people find it important to promote human justice on a wider scale, according to Montagno et al.. A reason many queer people gave was to make sure the world around us gets safer for all of us. Additionally, first-hand experience with discrimination from queerness makes queer people more understanding and empathetic with (other) marginalized groups. On the other hand, some (young) people make the conscious choice to not become involved in activism and protests. Research by Porosoff (2014) sought out reasons why people did not engage in activism and categorized them in the four following brackets:

- Getting stuck in self-limiting beliefs
- Avoiding unpleasant emotions
- Lacking awareness
- Facing external barriers

Porosoff's students seemed to struggle with vulnerability. It was hard for them to open up and be sympathetic towards the marginalized problems or groups, demanding energy to step out of their safe bubble. Lack of education, confidence and external factors like transport and accessibility also played a role. Another study by Kutlaca et al. (2020) found that non-activists tended to focus more on the individual rather than the collective.

Rationale was also deemed as more important by non-activists as opposed to their activist peers, while the latter group often saw ideals and morals as more important instead. The study found the non-activists often weren't against the ideals at all, on the contrary, but found little time or didn't think the collective issues were important enough to take action.

Next to this, there are also consequences of taking part within activism. Not only can this have positive aspects, but negative aspects are also prevalent as well. A study by Cox (2014) researched the effects of being an activist and found that next to positive effects like a sense of purpose and networking, it can have heavy effects on one's health, like exhaustion, increased levels of stress and sometimes even causes burnouts.

Practical application of barriers and motivations within this research is explained more in depth below, in chapter 2.8 operationalization.

2.3 Intersectionality

In the case of this research, the theory of intersectionality will be used to draw an image of overlapping motivations and barriers for queer activists taking part in queer activism and environmentalism. By noting which motivations and barriers are prevalent in each activism type, the overlap is studied and further conclusions are drawn from there on out.

Intersectionality is an analytical framework designed and coined by American jurist, civil rights advocate and philosopher Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. She directly challenged the popular theory that discrimination stemmed from lack of information, which she called too rational and nuanced. In reality, she argued, discrimination and privilege made up of multiple layers of factors, like race, class, sex, ethnicity, physical appearance and ableness. In the theory of intersectionality, it is explained that discrimination or privilege isn't as simple as falling within (multiple of) these demographics but that it is more complicated than that. Intersectionality stands separate from white feminism by trying to acknowledge people's differing experiences and identities and the different world views people have when compared to one another on an individual level. Little good-quality qualitative research has been done to support the theory of intersectionality and more should be done to further work the theory out (Bauer et al., 2021).

Intersectionality originated from critical race studies (CRT), which is an academic field analysing how race and ethnicity shape media, social and political movements and vice versa. CRT considers racism to be systematic, meaning that racism comes from within the core of institutions and people of colour are getting structurally and systematically excluded, for example in academic or scientific fields, healthcare, and societal opportunities.

The Center for Intersectional Justice (n.d.) explains intersectionality as the concept where systems of inequality like discrimination, sexism, racism, gender- and disability injustice 'intersect' and overlap. Some key parts of an individual, like their assigned gender at birth or race can't and should not be ignored when recognizing their struggles. Intersecting inequalities often reinforces struggles that certain people face. The idea behind an intersectional approach is to be as inclusive as possible, while recognizing people's personal struggles that take place on a more complex scale than those facing less or a single type of injustice. One of the main developers of intersectional theory, as mentioned earlier, is Kimberlé Crenshaw, who is a leading scholar on Critical Race Theory. She coined the term intersectionality and conducted much research on the role of overlapping marginalized factors that play a role in marginalized people's lives. In practice, lawmakers and institutions, for example, are more aware of intersectionality and work towards a better situation of equality overall, such as the gender pay-gap which should not only be solved in the manner that women and men get paid more equally, but the gap between women as a group should be brought down as well. In this specific case, the overlap of environmental justice and queer identities and -justice is studied. Not only does this particular youth group struggle with the threat of climate change and the threat of extreme weather, but they struggle with marginalization and discrimination because of their identity as well.

Not everyone experiences climate change the same way (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013). Intersectionality paves the way to help us understand the differences between the experiences and challenges people face. Personal experiences are hard to compare, but some people are easier off than their less-privileged counterparts. Those facing hardships due to the power structure that they're situated in, may have much less opportunity as those benefiting from the same power structure. Some people can adapt more effectively than others, based on their personal factors, like wealth, reputation, or skin colour. Personal factors shape the way people experience climate change (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2013).

2.3.1 Intersectionality on climate change

A study by Islam and Winkel (2017) showcases that groups suffering from social inequality face disadvantages with disproportionate suffrage as a result. For example, disadvantaged groups own homes in bad states, due to lack of resources or lack of financial aid. When extreme weather caused by climate change strikes, it leaves them disproportionately disadvantaged with damaged personal loss, like income and assets (physical, financial, human, and social), eventually collectively resulting in greater subsequent inequality. The authors recognize three forms of disadvantages that materialize in the inequality-aggravating effect:

- Increase of exposure to the adverse effects of climate change;
- Increase in susceptibility due to climate change;
- Decrease in their ability to recover from climate change caused damages.

An increase of exposure is often explained by the location of dwelling and work, and the nature of work. In the United States, where this study was conducted, many low-income people live in so-called low-elevation coastal zones: zones that are increasingly susceptible to floods, erosion, and mudslides, especially during the Atlantic hurricane season. Braun and Aßheuer (2011) and Painter (2007) found similar results in Bangladesh and Latin America respectively, suggesting that the vulnerable location of dwellings and work for disadvantaged people is not limited to the United States only, but occurs in other countries as well.

The increase in susceptibility due to climate change is due to the fact that the disadvantaged groups lack resources to be better prepared against damages. Think of houses made from flimsy materials, no air conditioning in hot climates or lack of healthcare insurance. These factors mean that those that are disadvantaged face even more to struggle with and work with a poorer baseline. Some of the urban poor invest most their savings in housing stock, meaning they lose a significant amount when hit by floods. Some of the rural poor invest their savings in livestock, which is susceptible to extreme droughts, and the same problem occurs. An increase in health and financial problems puts them further behind compared to those privileged enough to invest in better materials, care, and health options (Islam & Winkel, 2017).

Lastly, the decrease in ability to cope and/or recover from extreme weather due to climate change means that disadvantaged people will suffer the consequences for much longer and won't be able to get back up as well as other people, if at all. Islam and Winkel recognize four key resources: a household's own (private) resources, community resources, resources provided by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and lastly, public resources. Disadvantaged groups are more likely to lack in some, if not all of these resources. As a result, Islam and Winkel (2017) argue, their relative situation worsens even further.

Islam and Winkel's (2017) paper discusses a so-called vicious cycle that disadvantaged people fall in. The intersection of their personal traits and climate change aggravates their unequal position in society. In the meantime, those in power will do much to keep their access to that power intact, meaning that the power structures are designed to work against disadvantaged, underprivileged people. The situatedness of queer people's positions means that they lack in survivability and adaptability, especially when compared to non-queer people.

2.4 Queer theory

Covering queer perspective on queer activism and environmentalism, it is important to understand queerness itself, approached from an academic and theoretical perspective. Queer theory is used as the main theoretical framework to guide as an introduction and support to stack further theories later on.

Queer theory is a relatively new concept, mainly developed in the 1990s. It criticizes the ideas around heteronormativity and challenges the norms around it, showing these are, in fact, norms and not true nature at play. Queer theory is a concept first developed by Gloria Evangelina Anzaldua, who based her ideas off Foucault's ideas around structuralism. The goal is to deconstruct the assumed facts and performances around gender. The essential idea is that sex and gender should be viewed as unconnected, and while sex can visually determine what someone looks like, it does not determine someone's psyche (Chandler & Munday, 2011).

The first signs of queer rights history in Western society can be traced back to the Enlightenment period in France (Ferguson, 2020). Homosexuality has been viewed as a sin by the Christian church and forbidden by the state. During the period of the Enlightenment, philosophers challenged the ban on same sex intercourse and by 1791, the French state lifted the ban and legalized it, something unprecedented at the time in Western society according to Ferguson. Due to France's influences at that time, some states followed suit, but others did not. At the end of the 19th century, Berlin had its first homosexual rights movement established, consequently also being the first in the world, ever (Dose, 2014). Due to the views at the time that penises and penetration were key parts of sexuality, sapphic relationships (female same sex relationships) interestingly were mostly hidden and overlooked until the 1960s, when new LGBTQ+ movements emerged (Bennett & Froide, 1999). This is not to say lesbians or sapphics did not face hardships, rather that they were more commonly ignored by society, lawmakers and the like.

In Foucault's book *the History of Sexuality* (1990), he criticizes the "repressive hypothesis", which contemplated that Western society repressed sexuality during the 17th until the 20th century due to the rise of capitalism and bourgeois society. Instead, Foucault argues, sexuality has been viewed from a scientific perspective, instead of through the lens of art or pleasure. He distinguishes between *ars erotica* (the art of sexual intercourse), only being prevalent in Eastern and ancient societies according to Foucault. As opposed to this, *scientia sexualis* has repeatedly been used in the West for political purposes, used in the name of 'public hygiene', seemingly wanting to support the idea homosexuality (categorized under sodomy) is wrong and unlawful.

In the fourth part of his book *Confessions of the Flesh* (2021), which was published posthumously, he discusses why western society tries to seek out the 'truth' about sex. According to him, the attempt of understanding sex in an analytical way is rooted in searches of power, where intercourse is seen as a powerful tool (with domination, submission, ruling and following and more) when it is actually not based upon this. Foucault famously argues that "power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (Foucault, 1990, p. 93). Meaning power does not only originate from within institutions or bodies of power, but also from powerful individuals. Male power has been dominant in Western history, and it can be argued that (male) homosexuality was viewed as an undermining of male power. Foucault's work is an important piece in queer history, where the shift of homosexuality as an act towards homosexuality as an identity is one of the most important key parts. Nowadays, many people, especially in Western society use homosexuality to describe a part of their identity: to be homosexual. As a homosexual man himself, Foucault's work is an important part of queer theory.

2.4.1 Queer history

To bring further nuance and understanding of queerness and queer theory, it is important to discuss queer history, providing background motivations and core events which helped shape the queer community in what it envelops today.

When covering the history of the LGBTQ+-community, the impact of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) pandemic cannot be unmentioned when discussing the history of queer activism. As summarized by Joyal (2022) and Rosenfeld et al. (2012), HIV originated in West-Africa and travelled through Haiti to land in New York City in the 1970s. Due to the long incubation period from HIV to AIDS, sometimes taking decades before symptoms show, many cases went by unnoticed at first and exact traces of the disease are hard to trace back. The first AIDS-case in America was identified in 1981 by the Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and later on linked to HIV. Before the name AIDS the abbreviation GRID was used, standing for Gay Related Immune Disease. The first five cases in the USA were all homosexual men, leading scientists to the wrong conclusion that homosexuality had something to do with this disease. Quickly after the introduction of GRID, the prejudice was corrected and the abbreviation and name of the syndrome was changed to AIDS (Joyal, 2022; Rosenfeld et al., 2012).

Between 1987 and 1998, almost 325.000 people died of HIV/AIDS in the United States of America alone (Rosenfeld et al., 1992). Of these deaths, 84% were men. As illustrated in figure 2 below, after 1996, deaths fell, mostly explained by preventative measures and introduced antiretroviral treatments. Most of the fatalities fell in the baby boom generation around ages 30 to 40. Most of these men were queer, according to Rosenfeld et al.. Postwar culture saw heightened homophobia and hostility against openly queer men. At this time, many governmental bodies around the world took a swing to the right (Joyal, 2022).

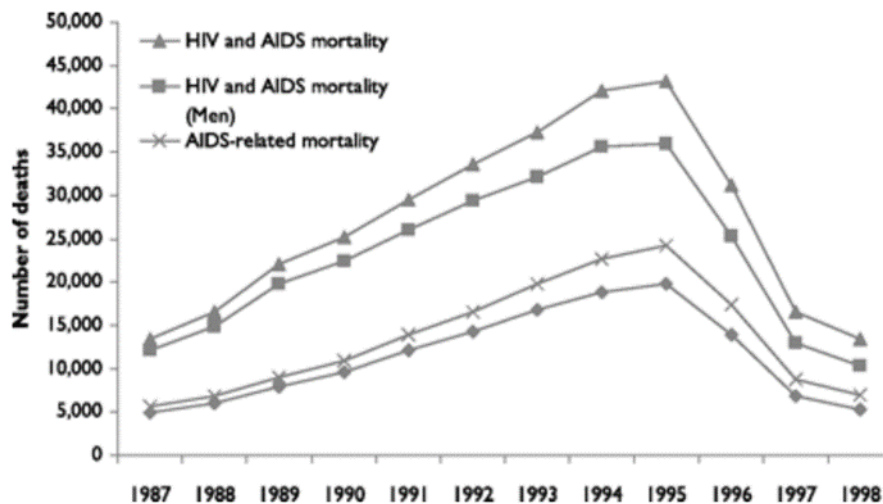


Figure 2: HIV/AIDS mortality numbers in the USA by Rosenfeld et al. (2012)

As being gay was taboo and unspoken about in Western society, many homosexuals suffered from the disease in silence and many lives were lost. Religion and politics played a huge role in the lack of treatment. With HIV hitting marginalized communities like interveinal drug users and homosexuals the most in the 1980s, a sense of urgency from the public was lacking. Many people suffering from the disease felt left behind or shunned, some even experiencing being blamed for the disease and being told that they ‘deserved’ to be sick. First healthcare responses for HIV/AIDS came from within the queer community, like organizing telephone information lines where concerned people could call to. It was common to believe only gay men and drug users could catch HIV and the ‘general population’ would be safe from the disease. This led to further stigmatization of an already stigmatized group (Joyal, 2022).

The right-wing political administrations of both Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom and Ronald Reagan in the USA set the tone for world politics (Booth, 2017). Reagan’s political response on the AIDS-epidemic was lacking in care and empathy, with him blaming the queer community for lack of carefulness, and ‘people needing to take responsibility’ to halt further spread of the disease. Later, it was also found as explained by Booth (2017), Reagan’s financial response to fund research on the cure for AIDS was lacking and the Republican party was disinclined to step in, further suggesting the homophobic attitude of the political parties in power at the time.

Only once AIDS was found in haemophiliacs, surgical patients and babies of infected mothers, it became clear that the disease was not only limited to stigmatized members of society and forcing governmental bodies to take action to protect ‘innocent lives’ against HIV/AIDS (Booth, 2017).

The AIDS epidemic was a dark chapter in the history of the LGBTQ+ community. Marginalization, wrongful assumptions and discriminating attitudes caused the community to lean on itself once again, with other members of the community sticking up for the ill. It showed the community could not exist without being tied to politics. To be queer is to fight to exist, and this was reinforced during the epidemic.

2.4.2 History on stonewall and pride marches

Pride marches have started in the United States and then spread across the world. Usually held in the month of June, they celebrate and remember the Stonewall Riots, a key historical moment in the history of queer activism. As explained in the book *The Stonewall Riots: A documentary history* by Stein (2019), the Stonewall Inn is a gay bar in lower Manhattan, New York City and served as an important meeting spot for member of the LGBTQ+ community. At the end of June 1969, police raids hit the inn and the situation quickly turned violent. The riot is still considered as of today to be the watershed moment that transformed the queer community and gay liberation movement (Stein, 2019). As an important key moment in the fight of LGBTQ+ rights, the riots are still celebrated and memorated worldwide in the month of June, first starting with the march in San Fransisco in 1970, then called the Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay-In. Other countries followed suit internationally, like the Netherlands with its own Christopher Street Liberation Day Gay-In. Later the marches dropped the long name and became known to the general public as Pride marches or known mononymously as 'Pride' (Shield, 2020).

Nowadays, lots of pride marches often focus on the celebration alone, but in recent years more and more members of the queer community became vocal on bringing back the original purpose of the marches: to be political and protest oppression (Baez, 2019). This uprising or new wave has been swindled by the recent wave of transphobia in politics, which is mainly focused in the United States. An unprecedented amount of anti-transgender laws is getting passed in court, partly due to the conservative members currently making up the Supreme Court with controversial members installed during Donald Trump's presidency. Many of the anti-transgender laws stem from the republican party, where Christianity and faith plays a big role in right wing political leader's views (Crary, 2023).

The 80s were full of turmoil. The Cold War, protests, climate change papers and union strikes all defined the period (Sirota, 2011). The infamous mine strikes took place in Thatcher's England. Miners were striking for better work conditions and most importantly, liveable wages. As explained by Gershon (2022), an unexpected ally came forward in support of the strikers, Lesbians and Gays Support the Miners (the LGSM). The group was created after a miner publicly spoke at the Pride march in London, asking the queer community for support. The miners and queer activists found they surprisingly had much in common: mistreatment by the police, a bad reputation in public media and seemingly no support from the government. Both communities came together, and even after the strikes ended and mines shut down, the queer community could still always count on the support of the miners. The period was a unique moment in history where two, seemingly unrelated groups came together in their shared struggle and celebrated the power of standing strong together (Gershon, 2022).

2.5 The history of environmental movements

Environmental movements have long existed in different ways and shapes before the world became fully aware of human caused climate change. The first examples of this in the modern world were action groups protesting the heavy smog and air pollution caused by huge factories during the industrial revolution (Davidson & Norbeck, 2011). The immense growth in coal consumption to keep the factories running caused polluted air and factory workers and people living nearby became sick because of this. An infamous example of the dire consequences of smog being the 1952 Great London Smog, where the episode killed thousands of Londoners in the span of a week and left a hundred thousand ill as a result. The episode led to the Clean Air act of 1956, one of the first environmental laws of Europe, as explained by Davidson and Norbeck. Estimates of deaths linked to air pollution worldwide in the 20th century vary between 25 and 40 million, with 7 million premature deaths linked to air pollution annually today (WHO, 2014).

Next to these pollution protests, conservationists called for nature protection (Kashwan et al., 2021). During the 19th century, many scientists travelled the world to explore and document biology. Next to this, imperialism and colonialism were at their peak. Nature was getting destroyed at incredibly large scale, with ecosystems suffering as a result. Multiple intellectuals of different backgrounds called to action (Kashwan et al., 2021).

The first evidence for human caused climate change was already presented in a seminal paper by Swedish scientist Svante Arrhenius in 1896. As far as documentation goes, he was the first scientist to accurately predict that changes in atmospheric carbon dioxide levels could directly and substantially alter the surface temperature through the Greenhouse Effect. He also concluded that lower atmospheric temperature would increase ice and snow at higher latitudes, which would in turn reflect more sunlight, lowering temperatures even further. The opposite situation is also true: with higher temperatures the ice melts, less sun rays get reflected and the atmosphere heats up even faster. He calculated that with doubling numbers of CO₂, the atmosphere would heat up about 5-6 degrees Celsius (Arrhenius, 1896). Though long ago, Arrhenius' results are strikingly accurate to this day (Walter, 2010).

In the following decades in the 20th century, more research on climate change has been conducted (Weart, 2010). Some scientists tested different theories of the cause of climate change, while others tried to learn from the past, using the principles of observational paleoclimatology. An example of paleoclimatology scientists is Andrew Ellicott Douglass who saw strong indications of a connection between solar cycles and tree growth in tree rings when he noticed the tree ring pattern was similar between trees in the same area. This drawn connection was the birthing ground of tree rings indicating occurrences and fluctuations in climate, like climate change (Sheppard, 2010). The true value of tree ring observation was not fully understood until the 1960s (Weart, 2010). Even today, many scientists around the world observe tree ring patterns to find natural evidence in climate fluctuations, according to Sheppard (2010).

Soon after the first scientific findings were published on human caused climate change, the first environmentalists called for political action against global warming. On a global level, one of the first large-scale environmental movement was the introduction of Earth Day in 1970, after proposals from within the United Nations to host a 'day to honour the Earth and the concept of peace'. Held every year on April 22, the day is meant to showcase support for climate activism. Since the late 1980s and beginning of 1990s, environmentalist non-profit organizations such as Greenpeace, World Wide Nature (WWF) and Friends of the Earth International (FOEI) began operating, pleading to governmental bodies worldwide for urgent climate action and fight global warming (Hadden, 2015).

Famous wake up calls in the Western world on climate change are the book *Silent Spring* (Carson, 1962) by Rachel Carlson discussing the adverse effects of pesticides on nature, and *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972), a report commissioned by the Club of Rome, discussing the possibility of exponential economic and population growth with only finite supply of resources, calculated by computer simulations. Both works are now seen as important scientific works in the world of environmentalism and stress the negative consequences of environmental pollution, the limit of fossil fuels and the consequences of an ever-growing world population.

Another illustrative example to catch the general population's attention on pollution and wasting resources is Earth Overshoot Day (EOD), a calculated calendar date each year on which humanity's resource consumption for the year exceeds the planet's capacity of being able to regenerate said resources. The word 'overshoot' is used to showcase the demand that exceeds the level of which the planet is able to sustainably regenerate biological resources, like fertile land, wood, fresh water and more. In 1971, the date fell on December 25th. In 2023, the date fell on August 2nd (Global Footprint Network, 2023). It is important to note that this calculated day is an average taken from all countries worldwide. Looking at the Netherlands alone, overshoot day fell on April 12th, 2023, alarmingly early. It shows the big ecological footprint the Netherlands has, given our big population on a small land mass. It's an oversimplified, but effective method of showing the alarming rate of overconsumption.

2.6 Current climate situation

One of the clearest examples of global inter-connectedness on climate action is the Russian-Ukrainian war conflict. As explained by Orenstein (2023), the conflict does not only directly influence export limitations on wares from East-Europe, like sunflower oil and grain, denting the global trade and hiking up prices, it also directly influences the trade of fossil fuels. Russia is an important trading partner in the export of gas, with giant gas fields laying under the big surface of Russia (Orenstein, 2023). Gas pipe the Nordstrom lead from Russia to the rest of Europe but was ultimately destroyed on purpose during the conflict, according to Orenstein. Following the Russian invasion in Ukraine, global sanctions limited Russia's place on the economic world stage. The European Union, for example, vowed to heavily limit the usage of Russian gas and steer in a greener direction, as explained by Orenstein. The Union, was unprepared for this sudden energy transition, hiking up the prices of gas as a result, again resulting in an economic recession almost worldwide (Orenstein, 2023). Climate activists reacted positively, however, as the call for greening energy sources seems to get answered, according to Orenstein. The Russian-Ukrainian war may force us to push the green energy transition further and make countries further independent on fossil fuels, solving the issues of both scarcity of these fuels, which would further hike up prices, and battling pollution and global warming (Orenstein, 2023).

That globalization interconnects countries to one another on a world scale, has yet again been proven by moments like the Covid-19 pandemic, when industries worldwide slowed down or came to a halt in lieu of health risks, or the cargo ship the Ever Given floating sideways and getting stuck in the Suez Canal, an important artery for the world economy, for several days (Ramos et al., 2021).

2.6.1 Perception of the climate problem

A survey study was conducted by Eurobarometer and commissioned by the European Parliament in 2022, the designated European year of Youth. As the survey highlighted, almost one in two Europeans (49%) sees climate change as the main global challenge for the EU, with higher support percentages in the youth category of 15 to 24 year olds (Eurobarometer, 2022). With the European Green Deal and goal to become fully climate-neutral by 2050, the European Union positions itself as a key player in world politics surrounding climate policies, but this is not without critique. The European Union being a stronghold in the so-called Global North (formerly called the 'developing world' or 'first world') has various ambitions, and historically was created as an economic trade pact. This ambition is still important to European Union Member States today, and should be critically and carefully viewed as Četković and Buzogány (2021) highlight in their research, especially as the worldwide debate surrounding the shifting of power between the Global North and -South is ongoing (Četković and Buzogány, 2021).

A current important debate is the determination of responsibility and actors in solving global climate change. To summarize, one could argue that the countries mainly responsible for rising global temperatures should be the one responsible solving the problem, though it is hard to point out a single list of responsible regions. Next to this, the complex history of colonialism and imperialism and the trickling down of polluting production sites and factories to the Global South clouds the vision. Without traces of post-colonialism, polluting countries would be divided differently. All in all, this debate on responsible countries is very complex, and a simple solution and task division is out of the picture. An article by Parks and Roberts (2009) discusses this debate on fairness and responsibility between the global North and global South, highlighting three broad types of inequality which play a role in climate change negotiations: climate-related inequality, inequality in international politics and inequality in international economic regimes. Parks and Roberts advise to include issues like inequality, trust and fairness in the negotiations to tackle climate change, though putting this to practice is diplomatically complex.

When focusing on the opinion of youth on climate change worldwide, Hickman et al. (2021) found that in every corresponding country, which were spread worldwide in all continents and socio-economic regions like the Global North and -South, youth were worried about climate change. With a large sample size of 10.000 respondents spread over ten countries in varying regions, 59% of them were extremely worried, while 84% were at least moderately worried. With a similar result spread across every response group, young people felt more betrayed rather than reassured by their governments. This research is interesting, as it highlights that climate change anxiety is not tied to (young) members of a specific country or region, but rather exists worldwide (Hickman et al. 2021).

2.7 Conceptual Model

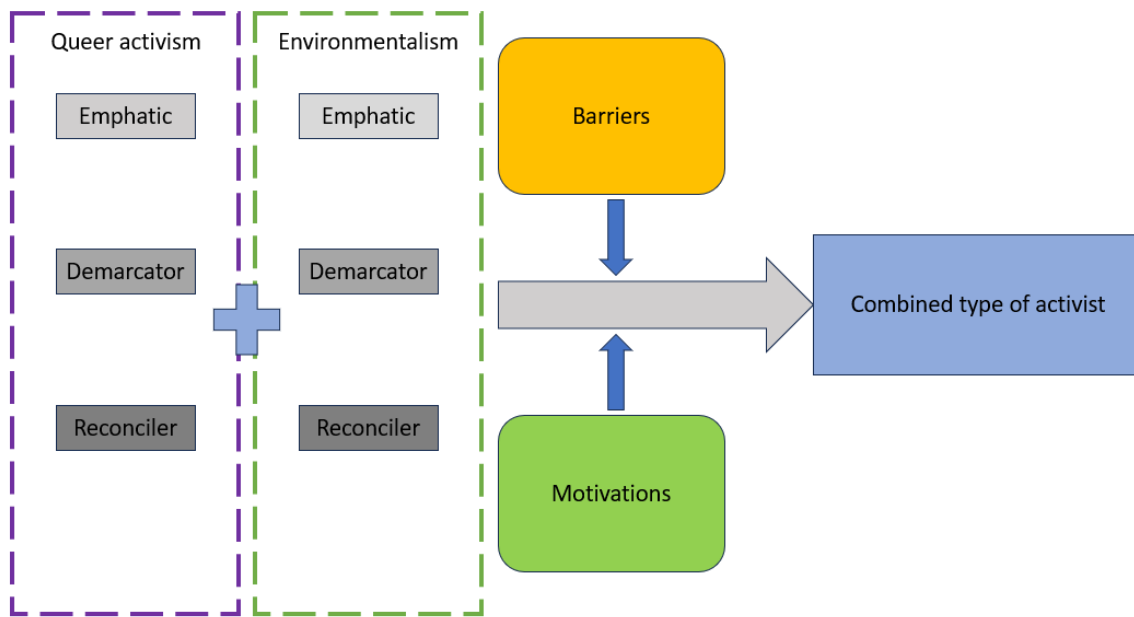


Figure 3: Conceptual Model

To illustrate the approach of researching the seven case study participants and their individual approach to the two types of activism, the conceptual model above is created.

As this thesis researches the different roles queer activists play within queer activism and environmentalism, the three types of activism previously explained by Cortese (2015) will be used as a base: the emphatic, the demarcator and the reconciler. As explained above in section 2.1, these categories will be expanded and broadened into six categories:

- Pure emphatics, pure demarcators or pure reconcilers, or
- Emphatic-reconcilers, reconciler-demarcators or emphatic-demarcators. The combining types are used to illustrate different approaches to queer activism or environmentalism, where the order of types in the combined category type doesn't matter, meaning that 'emphatic-reconcilers' would be the same as 'reconciling-emphatics' for the sake of clarity.

These combinations are influenced by different motivations and barriers, explained below in chapter 2.8. Motivations describe elements that push activists to become active, while barriers are elements that hold activists back. Each activist is influenced by a different set of motivations and barriers and may approach queer activism and environmentalism differently because of said motivations and barriers, although that is not a given.

2.8 Operationalization

For this thesis, semi structured interviews with seven interviewees are utilized to explore the dimensions of the topics surrounding environmentalism and queer activism in queer youth. To clarify the process of data collection, a broad focus is applied to zoom in on the different barriers and motivations the interviewees face, within both environmentalism and queer activism. After this, the difference between motivations and barriers is studied and conclusions are drawn based on the results stemming from this data. Examples are loosely based on Guerrero et al. (2021), whose paper described motivations and barriers within social justice engagement. They recognized motivations to fall under two categories: motivations for personal gain (to make friends, acquire skills and more), and motivations to achieve a greater social good (to reduce community violence, achieve broader goals of social justice and more). With my own interpretation, I categorized four categories to focus on: physical, social, external and other factors. The table below summarizes the data collection focus points based on motivations and barriers, with broad examples given within both queer activism and environmentalism:

Categories		Queer activism	Environmentalism
Physical	Motivations	Close distance, easy accessibility, like through easy or cheap transport access, or online.	Close distance, easy accessibility, like through easy or cheap transport access, or online.
	Barriers	Far distance, difficult accessibility, like expensive or difficult travel opportunities.	Far distance, difficult accessibility, like expensive or difficult travel opportunities.
Social	Motivations	Knowing fellow activists or friends joining in, safe space for their identity.	Knowing fellow activists or friends joining in.
	Barriers	Lack of (sense of) safety, like not being able to (safely) express identity, or not wanting to be outed by joining.	Lack of (sense of) safety, for example by anti-protestors or governmental institutions.
External	Motivations	Creating a safer world for queer people, better queer healthcare.	Achieving climate goals, green justice.
	Barriers	Feelings of hopelessness.	Feelings of hopelessness.
Other	Motivations	Other motivations.	Other motivations.
	Barriers	Other barriers.	Other barriers.

Table 1: Motivations and barriers within Queer activism and Environmentalism

It should be noted that the motivations and barriers in the table above are examples and general guidelines to base the data collection on. The interviews themselves will clarify and explain the interviewees’ actual motivations and barriers themselves.

2.9 Theoretical chapter conclusion

The long and elaborate histories of climate change awareness and queer culture provide a perspective on queer activism and environmentalism today. Examples are the discovery of the correlation of rising carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels and rising temperatures by Svante Arrhenius in 1896, the first climate laws, the Stonewall riots in 1966 and the HIV/AIDS pandemic which started in the 1980s. Activists are framed in categories provided by Cortese (2015) who recognized three categories: emphatics, demarcators and reconcilers. In this research, this is extended with three combining types to explain potential differences between activists' queer activism and environmentalism approaches: Emphatic-reconcilers, reconciler-demarcators, and emphatic-demarcators. A conceptual model and a table on motivations and barriers were made to explain the roles motivations and barriers play for activists.

3. Methodology

By conducting qualitative research, I aim to capture contextual nuances otherwise impossible to record with quantitative research. As theorized in *the Sage handbook of Qualitative Research* by Flyvbjerg (2011), case-studies are useful to capture real-world subtleties that are otherwise hard to capture using a quantitative approach. Qualitative research enables researchers to capture human emotions and generates rich insights. It is a tool to document complexities that quantitative research often misses.

3.1 Case study on environmentalist and queer activist movements

To contextualize the research frame, a case study on both queer and environmentalist movements around the Western part of the world has been done. This way, surrounding context is created around the interviewees, who are all active in the Netherlands.

Since the late 1980s and 1990s, environmental non-profit organizations have existed, seeking to influence the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) (Hadden, 2015). These activist groups try to bring awareness to climate change at the general public and politicians. Strategies to get their point across wildly vary by group, situation and area, according to Hadden. One of the environmental NGOs is Fridays for Future, a movement started by Greta Thunberg, who is a young environmentalist originating from Stockholm, Sweden where she skipped her classes each Friday to protest against climate change (Fridays for Future, n.d.). Members of this movement are often school-goers, varying age, and, too, skip classes every Friday to bring awareness to climate change, according to Fridays for Future. The movement reasons that going to school is pointless as long as no drastic measures are taken against climate change, since no education is useful in a future where humans cannot exist on Earth (Fridays for Future, n.d.). By 2023, many sub-branches of Fridays for Future exist, and the movement has been active in over 230 countries according to their website, www.Fridaysforfuture.org.

Another example of such an environmentalist movement is Extinction Rebellion. The movement uses non-violent protest actions to demand political change to protect the environment. Their mission, according to their website www.Rebellion.global is to advocate for more democratic involvement, reformation of the economy to be climate friendly and to create a regenerative culture, so goals like zero-waste can be achieved. Next to these two environmentalist movements, many more exist. Their goals are often shared, to bring awareness to climate change, demand political change and fight for a more sustainable way of living (Yoshihisa et al., 2014). Within these environmentalist movements, individuals strive towards their personal goals within environmentalism, adding to their *environmentalist identities*, according to Yoshihisa et al.. Next to this, they strive towards a common goal set by the movements they're part of (Yoshihisa et al. 2014).

Queer movements differ by approach when compared to large-scale environmentalist groups. Firstly, there is no comparative queer movement that's on the same international scale as Fridays for Future or Extinction Rebellion, for example. When talking about queer rights, many organizations seem to combine queer activism with social justice (Highleyman, 2002). When looking at queer activism by itself, they often take the form of small scale protest actions, often based on a local level, Highleyman (2002) explains. The position of queer people varies wildly when viewed from a global perspective, according to Gross (2013). Factors like religion, (post-) colonialism, oppression and other societal factors play a role in the position queer people have (Gross, 2013). Nevertheless, queer movements are active on a worldwide scale, as explained in the book *We are Everywhere* by Riemer and Brown (2019).

A clear example of visible queer movements are Pride parades, which were explained in chapter 2.4.2. In these parades, queerness, freedom and authenticity are celebrated. Though, within queer communities, the idea and goal behind pride parades are discussed.

For example, last year the municipality of Amsterdam has decided that one of the most famous pride parades in the world, Amsterdam Pride, will focus more on activism in the following editions, as reported in 2022 by the Dutch news organization, the Nederlandse Omroep Stichting (NOS). According to queer movements involved in the decision, Amsterdam Pride has become 'too commercialized' and lost focus on the activist background Pride once had (NOS, 2022). This example alone shows the varying opinion and discussion within the LGBTQ+ community.

To give a clear example, within our understanding of the world around us, a heteronormative approach is used without clear reason. Like Russel et al. (2021) explain in their research, too often it is regarded as 'normal nature' to identify as cisgender (to align with one's assigned gender at birth) and be heterosexual. The challenge is to drop this idea and embrace humanity as diverse (Russel et al., 2021).

3.2 Data collection

For my sampling strategy, it was important to me to collect a wide range of respondents for my qualitative interviews. I sought to conduct interviews with people that ranged from casual activism to radical activists who take part in civil disobedience ('burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheid'). My goal was to find different as many types of actors, which are explained above in chapter 2.1.

At first, I contacted many local and national climate movements and local queer movements, but no actual response was forthcoming. Reasons were seldomly given, but most respondents explained that members either had no time for interviews or were wary of my position as researcher.

Eventually I was able to score interviews through personal connections. By making sure to be more approachable and casual with my wording, many people were enthusiastic to join in. Some interviewees were friends of friends and knew queer people active in activist movements, others were reached through a community post on WhatsApp. Some interviewees forwarded contact information of people to interview next, as a so-called 'snowball effect'. In this thesis, I have studied seven queer activists who are experienced in both environmentalist and queer rights' fields. They range in their approach, intensity scale of activism and backgrounds, to get a diverse image.

First, a literature review has been conducted to establish the state of the art around research already done, around queerness and environmentalism, as explained in the Theory chapter 2. I also noted down historical backgrounds and aspects that could play a role for queer activism and environmentalism today. Next to this, I dove deeper by approaching my research using a triangulation of data collection. I performed a case study by conducting interviews with people active at multiple activist organizations, like Extinction Rebellion, youth branches of Dutch political parties and multiple local queer groups. These individuals are young and active in both queer and environmental activism.

The choice to conduct qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research is motivated by the fact that I wanted to center personal experiences of people for this research. Both motivations and barriers for activism and queerness are deeply personal aspects and to me, are best reflected in personal stories, not in quantitative data. Furthermore, this research is focused on young adults as opposed to a bigger age range. This is because I am young myself and see the world around me rapidly changing. Social media, climate change and politics influence me and my peers more than ever before. I was curious to find out more about the intersectionality of queerness and activism and bring a representative research about my peer group forward.

I set an age range to be covering young adults, looking for people between 18 and 27 years old. Then, I selected those identifying being part of the LGBTQ-community, for simplification reasons called queer people. To explain the reasoning behind this, the label 'queer' is often used as an umbrella term in the LGBTQ-community, where everyone not being straight and/or cisgender fall under. It is important to note that not everybody that is part of the LGBTQ-community self-identifies with the word 'queer'. When using this term, those falling in the community as a whole are addressed. Lastly, the participants are selected by them having an affinity towards protesting against climate change, in any shape or form.

The aim was to run five to eight different interviews, with people from different organizations, either queer movements, environmentalist movements or both. In these interviews, lasting from 20 to 90 minutes, I started by asking guided questions to gain an insight about the interviewee's background, with the variables of their experienced motivations and barriers. Afterwards, the interviews took a more open form by asking the current topics at depth, and interviewees had the opportunity to tell their own story. The goal was to get a diverse, unbiased and honest insight, from which I could run multiple analyses.

This research was done by inductive approach. To ensure I get a clear and unbiased view on the topic, I purposely left certain aspects of this research approach open. For example, I will work with predominantly unstructured interviews. This way, the results mostly showed an unbiased world view, filled in by the interviewees themselves.

For this research, I understand that the group researched is a marginalized one. For this, a careful and secure approach will be used to make sure the sensitive data is handled with care. I also have conducted multiple interviews, which can help form a more unbiased view on the topics discussed. To ensure sensitive data will be handled with care, I anonymized those interviewed, and make sure that collected data and information cannot be traced back to the individual. Interviewees also have been offered the option to erase parts of their interview.

3.3 Data analysis

After I collected my data, I analyzed this using multiple approaches. Firstly, I summarized established research data in the theoretical chapter. Next to this, I ran a report on my interviews. I analyzed these using the program Atlas.TI, coding the transcripts by highlighting frequently used words, anecdotal data and highlighting useful sections and finding overlapping motivations as told by those interviewed. This data then has been categorized under multiple code groups, to make the data more manageable for interpretation. This approach was utilized to ensure most aspects of the data, provided by the seven different interviewees, were equally brought forward. This way, my own research bias was limited. Instead of zooming into the most important aspects told by the interviewees, most aspects were taken along and put next to one another.

4. Results

After collecting data through qualitative semi-structured interviews with queer youth, the most prevalent findings will be discussed below. Due to the nature of the interviews being semi-structured, people had a lot of space to discuss topics they found most important or relatable to the overarching subject on queer activism and climate activism and its intersectionality. Using table 1 to explore the different barriers and motivations for each respondent, a research framework was created. Together with the new sub-categories based on the theoretical framework created by Cortese (2015) to categorize types of actors, barriers and motivations for each interviewee are taken along to create a full image. With anecdotes and personal experiences, main topics could be categorized in multiple subsections, these being the following:

- Animal rights (including veganism)
- Personal background
- Emotions
- Motivations
- Barriers
- Critique
- Social media
- Relationships

Next to this, most topics discussed in these seven interviews were unprompted and were naturally landed upon during the course of the conversation. Interviewees mostly spoke about associated emotions (both positive and negative), human (social) rights compared to animal rights, social media with both negative and positive sides to it, personal experiences, barriers and motivations to be active, free time, the pressure of studying at university or college and their work lives, personal relationships with friends and family and different factors of pressure surrounding them (like social expectations, homophobia, feeling at home, et cetera) and lastly, explanations on the overlap and differences between queer activism and environmentalism.

The results will be discussed below. Prior to this, a quick overview on the respondents and their backgrounds is given in the table below:

Interviewee (Deelnemer)	Age	Main organization(s)	Years active	Type of queer activist (Cortese, 2015)	Type of environmentalist (Cortese, 2015)	Combining activist type
D1	23	PINK! (Partij van de Dieren's Youth organization)	~3 years	Emphatic	Emphatic	Pure Emphatic
D2	21	Local Queer Youth organization	Unclear	Demarcator	Reconciler	Demarcator-reconciler
D3	21	Jonge Democraten (D66's Youth organization)	3 years	Reconciler	Reconciler	Pure reconciler
D4	22	None	~5 years	Reconciler (with activism burnout)	Demarcator (with activism burnout)	Demarcator-reconciler
D5	23	Extinction Rebellion, queer protests	~4 years	Emphatic	Emphatic	Pure Emphatic
D6	22	Extinction Rebellion, queer protests	~11 years animal rights, ~7-8 years social/queer rights	Emphatic	Emphatic	Pure Emphatic
D7	26	Vegan Student Association, Amnesty	~4 years	Demarcator	Emphatic	Emphatic - demarcator

Table 2: Interviewee data

Next to the collected data above in table 2 on the interviewees themselves, table 3 below explains the motivations and barriers in practice. The graph first distinguishes three levels of activism by the analytical framework conceptualized by Cortese (2015) as explained above in chapter 2.1, them being *emphatics*, *demarcators* and *reconcilers*. Furthermore, these have been split in two subsections to explain the differences and overlapping themes between climate activism and queer activism. Lastly, the two rows explain motivations and barriers for each category. The graph can be interpreted by looking at either two combinations of activism types of both environmentalism and queer activism, respectively, given above in table 2, with the 'pure' types being the same two ones. A general summary of motivations and barriers, which came forward through the research have been provided in the graph.

	Types of activism	Motivations	Barriers
Climate activism	<p>Emphatics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ‘Classic’ understanding of activism. Positive connection to activism, the movement and outcomes. 	<p>A positive impact on the topic they’re active about, a positive connection to activism itself, and a deep dedication to the movement and outcomes.</p> <p>A positive impact on climate activism, a sense of feeling that they make an impact, a fierce dedication to the climate movement itself and the people part of it.</p>	<p>Performative activism like Greenwashing, senses of false hope/false promises about climate action coming from political organizations.</p> <p>A sense of losing hope, not being listened to (e.g. by climate change deniers), or ridiculed about their climate change worries.</p>
	<p>Demarcators:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Categorizing activists under ‘good’ and ‘bad’. Seeing activism in everyday settings instead of radicalization. 	<p>Gentle and quiet types of activism being well received, small-scale impact on people around them instead of on a broad scale, presenting themselves as more reasonable climate activists than their radicalized counterparts.</p>	<p>Bad representation of climate activism (according to them), like oil/paint smear actions in public spaces, museum protests et cetera. Being seen as ‘too radical’ or ‘problematic’ by those around them.</p>
	<p>Reconcilers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rethinking the definition of activism, setting their own standards, a more casual understanding of activism. 	<p>Low-level commitment to climate activism, safe and easy to take part in protests, mostly online, like sharing petitions or information posts. A sense of ‘wanting to do something’.</p>	<p>Seeing little result from their efforts, being ridiculed in media and by other activists for being hypocritical or uncommitted.</p>

Queer activism	Emphatics	A sense of educating people around them on queer topics, a deep connection to the queer community, and a sense of positive impact on queer policies/policy makers.	Performative activism like Pinkwashing, spokespeople that aren't queer themselves. Homophobia, unaccepting family members, exclusion or being seen as 'too aggressive'.
	Demarcators	A sense of having a positive impact on a small scale, like friends or family. Wanting to positively change the reputation of the queer community one step at a time, or a sense of success by (gently) educate those around them about things like gender-inclusive grammar, different identities and more.	Homophobia, unaccepting family members. A fear of excluding important people from the narrative, not being taken seriously as a whole queer community because of others who are too extreme or unwilling to find a middle ground with policymakers.
	Reconcilers	Allyship to show support to the queer community, motivating others to take 'small' steps in favor of the queer community (like sharing petitions, joining pride marches et cetera).	Homophobia, unaccepting family members. Sense of unsafety, and/or not being out of the closet. Keeping their mouths closed about the topic in fear of outing themselves in an unsafe setting.

Table 3: Motivations and barriers within activism types

As seen in the table above, there are certain overlapping features within different levels of activism for queer and climate activism. Both climate and queer emphatic activists are deeply motivated by the hopes of making a positive impact and are fiercely dedicated to the movements they're in. Both groups are incredibly committed to the cause they're fighting and face varying types of threats of violence against them. Next to this, the demarcator groups want to stabilize the movements' reputation and work on smaller scales in hopes of gently making an impact. Besides that, they have a negative view of radicalized activists. Lastly, the reconcilers commonly share the nuanced motivation and are retracted back to a 'safer' position to be active from, like through social media channels, keeping their activism on a small scale, or other means.

The difference between queer activists and climate activists is the specific discrimination queer activists face. With many people being active for queer movements while being queer themselves, they face homophobic or discriminating remarks, sometimes from strangers, though sometimes from their inner circle as well, such as family members or (former) friends. Aside from this, queer activists are often more focused on changing personal world views from others and to solidify their existence if they are queer themselves. Climate activist groups, on the other hand, are made up of people with a wider range of backgrounds, as the issue often impacts everyone. The environmentalist movements are also much bigger in scale than queer movements, with the latter often being active on a much smaller regional scale.

4.1 Veganism and animal rights

When looking at the overlap between queer rights and environmentalism, the right to live and be yourself was mentioned often. Interestingly, many of the interviewees saw a direct correlation between these two topics and animal rights, more specifically reflected back in practicing veganism. As they mentioned, it felt hypocritical to fight for equality rights between humans when not taking animals into the equation as well. Not only existing rights for animals were mentioned, but the impact of the meat and animal industry on the environment as well. As one interviewee put it:

“How can you connect human equality to animal rights if we don't even treat every human with the same amount of respect? Both should be acknowledged. I think it is tied together, in a way.” – D7.

People felt urged to become vegetarian or vegan when confronted with news or media, such as documentaries on the meat industry shown in class by their teachers, while others have been following vegetarian or vegan diets through their household diet patterns since they were young.

4.2 Emotions and personal relationships

Emotions around activism varied heavily between the respondents. Most were expressing feeling hopeless, shocked or tired when looking at their expected future, some shocked by recent news items like the floods in South-Limburg in 2021, extreme weather getting more common, hate crimes against queer people and more. Interestingly, those mentioning they didn't have much experience with activism, were feeling more pessimistic than those with more experience. This can be tied back to Cortese (2015) with distinguishing activist types, with emphatics, who tend to be more radical and also more optimistic than other types of activists. This isn't to say that there is a direct correlation between degree of activism and feelings of hope, more future research should be conducted for such a conclusion, but it was interesting to note.

A lot of the respondents were feeling small, felt like they had little impact regarding the environment and felt like their actions alone weren't doing enough. Those that did more extreme activism, like the A12-highway protests where groups of people sat on the highway, or occupying stakeholder meetings, were more hopeful. They also added that feeling like peaceful protests weren't doing enough. Reasons for that were little media attention, little to no acknowledgement in the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer) or ridiculing from right wing voices on social media.

When asking about personal relationships, responses varied heavily. On one side, like mentioned before, people found new friendships through activism, feeling positive that moving in activist spaces helped them connect to likeminded peers. Vice versa, already having activist friends introduced them to the world easier and people felt more welcome, with the activist world feeling more approachable to them.

On the other side, people also experienced negative consequences, albeit mentioning it played a smaller role to them. Many experienced frictions in their families. Some mentioned having family members that believe in conspiracy theories surrounding climate and/or queer rights. Some of their relatives believed climate change was a money laundering hoax, others were often discriminatory towards queer and other marginalized groups. More often, friends and family members outside activist circles felt very indifferent about climate change and queer rights, didn't feel like educating themselves or simply didn't really care as it wasn't 'affecting them personally'. Many of the respondents mentioned feeling lonely, misunderstood and frustrated when confronted with these themes. Some mentioned wanting to avoid debates to keep the peace. Others did engage in discussions, but faced negative feedback from other family members.

When facing relatives with wildly differing world views, many respondents felt unprepared to handle the arguments. Some mentioned their relatives being so deeply invested in hoaxes, that they had no way of debating with them, as these hoax-believing relatives disregarded any science-backed fact as fiction. This mainly happened to be the case surrounding climate change topics.

Many of the respondents faced struggles on social media, being confronted with homophobic or transphobic comments, or quarreled with climate change deniers. People mentioned algorithm 'bubbles', in which you only interact with people who mainly share same opinions or talk about the same topics. People do sometimes post information and are activist on social media but do acknowledge that they usually don't reach those outside of their bubble, often only reaching their friends.

As this interviewee 6 put it:

[...] but also because it doesn't make sense to stay in your bubble and tell each other how well you personally know everything, because then the movement doesn't grow either. So 'activistically' it makes no sense at all to keep talking to each other instead of other people outside of the bubble. -D6

However, most don't mind as they are wary of activist burnout and view social media as a place to positively connect and wind down, not wanting to bring activism into every aspect of their lives. Some express that they actually want to incorporate activism in many aspects of their lives, but find no time or willpower to do so.

Some debated with others on social media in the past, though it tired them out and held negative consequences to their lives and some even decided to quit engaging afterwards. One interviewee noted:

Yes, with my uncle it really was something. It was during the wave of Black Lives Matter protests. I posted a lot on my story about it, and then he started talking about All Lives Matter. So then I was [caught off guard]. We had a fight about that through Instagram. He was calling me childish and stuff. And I was, I don't remember, 18 or so. Maybe 19? I just thought, you're my uncle and you're 50 years old. Why are you calling me childish? And yeah.... I really don't like him that much ever since then. – D4

4.3 Critique and barriers

The interviewees feel misrepresented by media and politics. Some common complaints are about the current cabinet at the House of Representatives. Important actors involved in scandals like the Childcare Benefits scandal (the 'toeslagenaffaire'), earthquakes in Groningen and more face no true consequences, the interviewees complain. This is an example of how huge political issues get ignored in the Netherlands, and also represent in the interviewees' eyes how urgent problems like climate change don't get prioritized. Multiple goals have been set by the Cabinet to reduce emissions or go climate neutral, but the deadline keeps moving forward. This also frustrates activist youth. Peaceful protests get ignored entirely by politics and media, they complain, there's a left-wing politician speaking publicly at these protests at most, interviewee D6 remarks. Young people feel desperate to make a difference and reach out to more dire ways of protesting, like through burgerlijke ongehoorzaamheid (civil disobedience).

When explaining their view on different types of activism (with the difference between gentle and radical activism), and their ultimate choice to start taking part in civil disobedience, D5 explains: "[...] to the point that I'm thinking, 'oh if I'm not arrested, it doesn't count'. It doesn't work that way, of course, but it kind of feels that way." – D5

When asked about their main reason to join in with civil disobedience, interviewee D5 noted:

Well, this week the news outlets also said "Oh yeah, it is very difficult to get this nitrogen dossier done properly. We will delay it a little bit again." Well, that is really not feasible anymore. So you have to make a lot of noise to make people think, "Oh yes, it's important, [irreversible climate change] really is happening," that's what you protest for, and that's what civil disobedience works better for, I think. I remember the first time I got involved in these actions and I was like, 'Why would you let yourself get arrested? You know, this makes no sense at all'. And now that has changed. I still don't know if it's THE way, but it's a way." -D5

Another common critique was the lack of representation in the Dutch House of Representatives and the Cabinet. While politicians fighting against climate change are abundant, many queer representatives are lacking, especially queer people that aren't white cisgender gay men. In the interviews, many voiced their discontent and wish to be represented better. To quote interviewee 2:

I feel like diversity, like more LGBT diversity for example, in power positions could help. That could certainly help at the actual LGBT level. If you have actual transgender people in the body of power that decides about money going to trans care and what is allowed about trans care, I think you make much better decisions about transgender people.” – D2

Another section of critique is about the activism groups themselves. A widely shared opinion is that regarding environmentalism, peaceful protests aren't doing enough. One interviewee, D5, mentioned a huge international Extinction Rebellion protest in London that took place earlier this year. This protest had thousands of participants but little to no media attention at all. Even though the interviewees acknowledge that the civil disobedience protests, like on the highway A12 are intense and extreme, they feel desperate to be seen and heard, no matter if it is positive or negative. Their main goal is to keep people talking and keep climate change on their mind. This opinion was mostly shared by those falling under the 'pure-emphatics' category, as illustrated in table 2.

Queer protests on the other hand are treated with more care by the respondents. Queer activism is not organized as centrally as climate protests are, and groups often seem smaller and spread around the country more to the respondents. While on the one hand respondents are frustrated that queer activism is often ignored or not often talked about in media, they feel cautious surrounding queer rights. Reasons people mention are that queer rights affect queer people, especially youth, on a very personal level. Any bigotry or backlash can hurt people personally. They also feel that more extreme versions of protesting may put queer youth in the limelight in media, dealing with more backlash as a result. One respondent, D2, feels divided about the many labels the LGBTQ+ community uses, acknowledging that labels seem to help members of the queer community, though feeling the lack of clarity to outsiders will contribute to feelings of 'othering'. Many feel stuck surrounding queer activism and are unsure how to raise their voices. Many emphasize the importance of allies that help carry queer topics to be accepted on a wider scale.

When asked about personal relationships, interviewee 2 explained he takes a careful approach defending queer topics within his family circle. He explained:

In discussions with family about LGBT issues, it's still sometimes bad. Well, certainly transgender issues are sometimes even more difficult to understand. And those are the times when I vehemently take my side. But I also especially try to give more information. -D2

Interviewee 3 explained on queer activism when asked about personal safety during activism: “Let me put it this way, I think it goes for many queer people that it's maybe unsafe to just let anyone join in and allow them access to this safe space.” -D3

When explaining the barrier of joining queer protests as opposed to climate justice protests, D5 explains:

Now you mostly see Extinction Rebellion, actually. Super big and people know it by name and can easily connect with it. The big things get organized there and then it's kind of clear to understand, and you can keep coming back. So every couple of weeks there's something that's easy to join. And I like that too. And with queer activism, you don't see such a clear group, you know what I mean? -D5

Another barrier to the interviewees was the combination of accessibility to activist organizations and free time. Some noted having little to no time. D2 explained that he often isn't aware of protests or only hears about them shortly before they take place. Dealing with his university deadlines at the same time, he often doesn't have time to go. Many respondents argued that young people in university or college, to them, seemed to have more free time than those working full-time jobs. When making a living, among other priorities, is more important to someone, joining movements or taking part in protests falls lower on their prioritization lists. Some others pointed out that protesting by itself is physically and mentally taxing, and some even had to dial back their frequency of joining in on protests. D7 explains their hypothesis on why not everyone is able to join protest activities:

What I also find difficult is that there are a lot of people who want to make the world a better place, and there are so many other problems. That if you're already in financial stress, you don't have the time or the opportunity to deal with that. Or if you're already depressed about what's going on in the world, you don't have the energy to make a change, so I think there's just so many underlying issues that keep people from doing activism. -D7

Respondent D1 adds to this:

Yeah, it's just mentally...It takes a lot of energy to go there. And I'm not super extroverted or anything like that. And it's often kind of expected of you to yell a lot or something. And I'm not always comfortable with that. And physically I just have a lot of neck and shoulder problems. And if I have to stand or walk for a long time, I get sore pretty quickly. Even a few days later. So I'd rather do something else that takes less energy and then I feel like I'm accomplishing more. -D1

Lastly, interviewed people feel very negative about greenwashing and pinkwashing, where big corporations and institutions seemingly pretend to care about the environment and queer rights respectively, only to benefit by profit made from speaking up about topics.

Many participants also voiced their negative experience with police. Civil Disobedience is, of course, a form of protesting where protestors cross boundaries of behavior and (un)written rules. Resulting from this, many protestors get arrested or get negatively confronted with police forces. Friction is expected, the interviewees told, but many felt unsafe. They feel police don't respect them, and that media puts police in an unfair positive daylight and misinterprets occurred situations. Police, ironically to the protestors, also take part in Pride parades, with a boat in Utrecht's Canal Pride for example. This angered the participants, voicing it felt hypocritical.

An anecdote on the police response by interviewee D6:

Well, I was arrested sometime after the A12 blockade, and it wasn't my first blockade, but it was my first time being arrested. And the police really didn't know what to do with us. And there were way too many of us for their system. That was all fine and well, but I had also gone anonymously [by leaving their identification at home]. That meant that I was held about four or five hours longer than people who had their ID with them. And the police really got to me. But after the people with the IDs were gone, so were the people with the cell phones that could make recordings, and the media was no longer there.....Yeah, then they kind of had the idea of, 'okay, we can do anything with these people', so, yeah. It was just.... that we didn't get any food and they threw my stuff away because I wasn't allowed to sit, so he grabbed my bag. And then he threw it away, as if to say, 'go get it, then you're not sitting here anymore.' -D6

4.4 Motivations and personal backgrounds

There were positive personal aspects that came forward from the interviews with the respondents. An important element to them was social contact. People mentioned finding new friendships through queer and environmental movements and from overlapping interests, close friendships flourished. The interviewees also mentioned feeling closer to friends found through these movements in comparison to those outside of these circles. Some reasons mentioned were:

- Facing the same struggles and relating to one another;
- Interest in the same topics meaning more common ground existed to talk about certain topics;
- Feelings of safety, where interviewees mentioned feeling like they could safely be themselves without worrying about facing bigoted opinions.

Other big positive aspects people mentioned were feelings of contentedness when being able to contribute something to protest, often mentioning feeling guilty if they had done nothing to contribute to the pertinent activism topic. Many of the respondents also mentioned having found their passion project and willing to convert topics of activism into their professional careers in the future.

As interviewee 6 explains below, through activism and volunteering, they feel like their life is enriched by activism, making social connections and have the opportunity to learn and access more information on activist topics:

I do volunteer work in a bar in Utrecht, in an old squatters' bar. A lot of my friends also volunteer there and it's a very political place. They host a lot of political speakers and social activists, and there's a little library with political texts and literature that's interesting [to learn about] leftist stuff. Yeah, it's just a lot of different topics, like animal rights, activism, feminism, queer stuff, anti-racism, anti-fascism, things like that. -D6

Mentioning motivation, many were motivated to be activist because they faced feelings of misunderstanding, misrepresentation or facing bigotry. Many want to change the world and work hard to create a more open environment. Interestingly, activist motivation surrounding climate change was focused on society, while motivation surrounding queer rights often was very personal.

Some people faced close minded people around them growing up and want to work towards a world where queer youth can feel more safe and accepted. A reason for this division was, mentioned by many, that climate change really impacts everyone around, while queer rights feel very personal, especially with people's own experiences. Some experiences were positive, but many also leaned to the negative side. With their careers later, some interviewees explicitly expressed the wish to create a safer environment for queer youth.

Another motivation for the activists is the role of age. They all felt comfortable around peers who are likeminded about the same subject matters. When asked to explain this motivation, the respondents mention friendships, as explained above, as well as the flexible schedules they experience during their time in college and university. The respondents felt like they have no responsibilities yet, as they have no full time jobs since they're still in college or university. Even though they often meet older activists, especially in climate activism circles, they most often meet peers in activism circles. Next to this, some strongly felt like their generation, Generation Z, which globally refers to people born between the years 1997 and 2012 according to Brunjes (2019), is the generation that will be in power when the greenhouse gasses are at their peak and political power is most needed.

4.5 Reasoning for an overlap

When the interviewees were asked about seeing an overlap between queer activism and environmentalism, everyone recognized this, some even bringing it up themselves before getting questioned about it. When asked to theorize for themselves why they see this overlap, they came up with the explanations listed below.

I think it's a big thing that people who are queer face things that go wrong in the world more strongly. You're kind of forced by your identity. To start thinking about politics or about well, simply human rights. Though, it varies from person to person, of course. It has more or less impact on different people because of who they are. – D5

I think people who do engage in queer activism are already a little more progressive themselves. And I think being concerned about the climate is part of that progressiveness. So I think I can kind of see it that way. That you can almost see it in a pretty progressive sense. - D3

Yes. I think it is true that the moment you are in a marginalized group, you get involved more quickly. And the moment you get a little bit involved in one, you quickly get involved in the other. Although there are also many examples of people who are very blind to certain forms of oppression and other forms. Like white feminism, for example, but yeah. And I also think that as a young person I can look at the world differently because I'm just less stuck in this system. I'm pretty stuck, but I can still dream about certain changes, whereas for older people it might feel completely unattainable. -D1

It is also easier to see what other things you are told are not true, or that you begin to think critically about them as well. So that once you have taken one step, for example, the next steps will come faster and faster. -D7

If you see injustice in one area, you may see it in other areas as well. In any case, you're more open to it when someone says, "Hey, something's wrong here". Then you think, "Yeah, because it's not right there either." At least that's my own theory, or something like that. – D6

Yeah, I think if you reject one societal standard in your development, whether it's not eating meat or getting into animal rights or climate or gender... Once you reject one of those societal things and actually start to develop yourself, I think it becomes easier to take that other step of rejecting [other societal standards].-D7

The interviewees, though interviewed individually, seemed to agree that marginalization and deviation from societal standards through queerness helps queer people understand vulnerability and to place the topic of climate justice in a nuanced perspective. Experience with protesting and working to make concepts understandable to the general public also plays a role. Rejecting expectations and embracing a marginalized position helps activists be stronger and be less vulnerable.

5. Conclusion

To answer the main research question 'what motivations and barriers influence young, queer activists, and how does this differ their approach to queer activism and environmentalism?', multiple factors should be considered. Next to this, the following three sub questions will be answered in the chapter below.

Multiple types of media motivated people to start being active, either on a smaller or a bigger scale. Some told about teachers showing documentaries about the meat industry in class, with them becoming vegetarian or vegan afterwards. Others were motivated seeing the news or documentaries about climate change and feeling responsible for shifting their consuming patterns, like food, items and travel modes. Next to this, friends and relatives inviting them to protests or meetings helped lower the barrier people felt to get introduced to the movements.

From interviews, however, it became clear that many already feel hopeless regarding climate change. They are active because they feel guilty if they don't do anything, but are unsure of their impact, if they have any impact at all. Many young people feel barred by feelings of hopelessness when facing issues surrounding climate change.

Regarding queer activism, many people responded being motivated by personal reasons. They want to create an environment where more and more people can safely be their own true selves. A direct driver to the respondents is facing the reality that queer people are still underrepresented, lack social rights or recognition in multiple places like healthcare, workplaces and public spaces. Educating people is also another factor for queer activists. They often feel responsible to correct the often negative narrative around queerness and LGBTQ+ rights.

The interviewees all individually concluded that many queer activists and climate activists were actually overlapping and intersecting, meaning they experienced knowing many people in their social circle who are active for both activism movements. Reasons given for that are that friendships and social interactions play a big role here. Already knowing people in an activist environment was one of the biggest factors for people to join movements. This was also one of the most common explanations when asked about the role age plays in both queer and climate activism.

As explained in table 2 by the column of activism types, respondents do not only fall within one category of activists as explained by Cortese (2015), instead possibly falling within multiple categories. The world of activism and personal motivations and barriers is a complex structure, differing from person to person. As found in the results above in chapter 4, most activists often felt more personally affected by queer rights than they did with climate activism.

As seen in table 2, activists varied in categories, with some overlapping in both categories, like respondents one and three (D1 and D3, who were a pure emphatic and pure reconciler respectively), while some others took different approaches to environmentalism and queer activism. This is explained by the fact that activists see queer activism as something affecting them personally, as it is tied in with social human rights and their very own existence. In the meantime, the activists explained that climate change affects all of humanity globally. This difference causes the activists to see both causes differently, too. While queerness is something tied to themselves, an unchanging fact, climate change is broad and worldwide. Respondents tied words like '(mis)understanding', 'belonging', 'confrontation', '(algorithm) bubbles', 'finding yourself', and 'identity' to questions surrounding queerness often, showcasing the personal identification they have with the concept of queerness. In response to climate activism, respondents often tied words such as 'hopelessness', 'personal impact', 'anger', 'unfairness', 'solving', and 'together' to the concept. Respondents generally feel environmentalism is a wider problem and a worldwide concern.

Some respondents are not fully out of the closet with their relatives, most commonly family members that were openly queerphobic in the past, especially when their gender identity deviates from their assigned gender at birth. Because of this, some respondents voiced feeling uneasy or unsafe at home when discussing topics surrounding queerness. Others feel obligated to defend queerness or queer friends towards relatives, especially surrounding gender identity. Most respondents connected well with other members in activism circles, some making multiple friends through activism organizations. It helps them to feel less lonely. They positively respond to the sense of sharing burdened feelings with others, mostly climate anxiety around environmentalism and queerphobia and homophobia surrounding queer activism. Others feel happy to connect and feel understood by other queer people, whom they find at both queer activism and environmentalism social circles. Their queer social circle often fully overlaps with environmentalism, but not always vice versa, meaning most queer activists see fellow queer activists at environmentalist protests, but environmentalists don't always see their environmentalist friends at queer protests. Reasons for this are the fact that queer protests are often much smaller and organized on a local level, and that queer activism is often performed by people queer themselves. Some feel uneasy about non-queer people invading queer spaces, while others find allyship by those outside of the queer community an important tool to bring more awareness and safety. Both environmentalists and queer activists are frustrated at pinkwashing and greenwashing, the corporate attempts to reach queer or climate-aware audiences for economical and/or reputational gain. The relationship between activists and police forces remains complex, as an extensive tense history exists between police, queer activists and climate activists, for example the Stonewall riots in the 1960s and the police response utilizing water cannons against Extinction Rebellion protests today in 2023. Activists are wary and try to prepare well for negative responses, either from police or from anti-protestors.

When asked about whether they felt a sense of effectiveness by protesting, answers varied. Some protestors felt defeated or scared, especially surrounding environmentalism. Queer activists feel mainly forgotten by the general public when confronted with transphobia, hate crimes against drag queens or burning of pride flags. All respondents viewed activism as a positive element in their lives, gaining friendships, general knowledge about the topics and a sense of belonging from it. It also helped the respondents relieve climate anxiety when protesting against climate change. As many voiced feeling a sense of dread when thinking about the future state of the Earth, it helped doing 'something rather than nothing'. Regarding politics, the young activists feel unheard and badly represented, especially regarding queerness and diversity in the Dutch House of Representatives (Tweede Kamer). Common complaints are the undermining of the climate change problem and long and inaccessible waiting lists for transgender care in the Netherlands.

Some respondents currently face activism burnout, while almost all have experienced it to some degree at any given moment during their activism careers. The only respondent who did not experience this, expects to burn out very soon. Reasons for burnouts were lack of understanding in media, politics or relatives. Some felt ridiculed, others felt hopeless when reading the news surrounding climate change or queer rights, with news reports on global temperature records and an increase of transphobia in the United States as the main subjects. Another big stressor to the respondents was usage of social media. While all see benefits from connecting with friends and inspiring accounts, they often clash with internet trolls, climate-change deniers or queerphobic users on social media websites. Some choose to avoid posting about certain topics to avoid clashing online. Many find online discourse counterproductive and tiring. Some face backlash from within the community, debating topics like veganism or educating one another on a topic. It also frustrates respondents how social media algorithms can feel like echo chambers, not actually reaching intended audiences. Many respondents felt the need to completely disconnect from activism for a bit every day, especially when scrolling on their phones, and social media is often more stressful than they'd like it to be.

Building on the theory by Cortese (2015), three activist types can be recognized, which interpolate and can differ or overlap between queer activism and climate activism. I recognize the following types:

- Pure emphatics, pure demarcators, and pure reconcilers;
- Emphatic-reconcilers, reconciler-demarcators, and emphatic-demarcators.

The 'pure' types approach queer activism and environmentalism in a similar manner. The three combining types can be applied in any order. Each respondent had a different set of motivations and barriers, influencing their own perception of activism. Emphatics handled barriers more optimistically, while reconcilers mentioned hopelessness more often. No activist was an emphatic queer activist without also being an emphatic environmentalist. A reasoning for this could be the fact that queer people sense a certain lack of safety surrounding queer activism, though more intersectional queer-environmentalist activists should be studied to back up this explanation.

The complexity of the queer community is also seen as a barrier to one of the respondents. They argued due to the diversity and many labels queer people use, the community looks complex and is hard to understand to outsiders. The respondent D2 argued on careful usage of sexuality- and gender labels, and while they see these as a positive tool within the community, it should also be easy to follow and accept to outsiders, mainly fearing backlash and not being taken seriously by people outside of the queer community.

All respondents had the ambition to do pursue a career with an element of activism incorporated into it, favoring queer centric topics over climate related ones. In this aspect, respondents viewed queerness as a multidimensional layer, adding importance to their careers. Most often, respondents want to offer a sense of safety for other queer people and are planning to pursue careers in people-oriented professions or elements of it, like social work, confidential advising or psychology.

5.1 The role of age

Regarding age, two main reasons were given for the perceived higher level of interest in activism among young people. Firstly, people mention that the period of life and being in the physical environment of tertiary education plays a huge role. In college and university there are many opportunities to meet new people and develop your own opinions outside of your upbringing, people mention. Students are quick to join student associations and -organizations, build friendships out of shared interests and sometimes even join youth branches for political parties.

Another reason given by some respondents is the privilege of time and lack of responsibilities they anecdotally experience. They mention they have less responsibilities to worry about. The main speculation given as to why young people seem more (publicly) active in comparison to older people was not having a career where publicly protesting would either be impossible due to status, lack of time or having little to no peers willing to join when outgrowing students' age range.

5.2 Motivations

There are also differences in motivations. This will be explained more below when answering the sub-questions. For the sub-question regarding whether there are overlapping motivations between queer movements and climate movements, this does broadly differ. For queer movements, many were personally motivated. From the interviewees, many were personally motivated by their own experiences, while through literature research, many voiced that (they were motivated by knowing LGBTQ+ relatives in their environment?). Reasons given by the (queer) interviewees were personal experiences facing backlash and bigotry in their environment growing up. With queer activism they hope to create more equality, both in personal environments, like by promoting support through personal social media pages and showing acceptance to fellow queer friends, but also on a broader societal scale. Many demand queer rights, promote trans healthcare and reduction of queer discrimination. All are connected to personal experience.

Motivation for climate activism differed starkly. With climate activism, many respondents worried for the collective future of humanity on Earth on a worldwide scale. Many researched topics affecting climate both inside and outside of the Netherlands, while queer activism was usually focused on the Netherlands alone. The United States of America was often mentioned as well, probably because of the role it plays within worldwide politics in the West, indirectly affecting the Netherlands. Yet again, people reasoned that this topic is something affecting them personally, and that a start should be made on a local scale. Besides, they mention, people's behavior surrounding climate change will have consequences worldwide. Big corporations that have many emissions and behave in wasteful patterns will have a worldwide impact, often not solely in the regions they're active in.

As many respondents put it in the interviews, climate change truly affects everyone. No matter what solutions we come up on a regional scale, if climate behavior isn't adjusted on a wider scale, we eventually all get hit, one harder than the other. Examples given in the interviews were the tropical hot summers that are getting more common in the Netherlands, with record breaking temperatures. Another example is the floods that hit South-Limburg, Germany and Belgium in the summer of 2021 where unfortunately many lives were lost. No matter what someone's background was, everyone in that region got hit by the same tragedy, one way or another.

With queer rights, policies and regulations truly only affect queer people. When not queer, or having no queer relatives, it is easy for those not affected to simply not be concerned with whatever the policies are. When facing this unbalanced and often unfair reality, many young queer people voice that they feel they must work hard and kind of have to be activistic, purely from desperate necessity that if they don't voice issues, then no-one will. As some mention, why would outsiders mix into the discussion if they don't directly benefit or suffer from whatever outcome there will be? Yet again, queer people press on the importance of straight and cisgender allies.

Lastly, the three sub-questions will be answered.

- What are the differences between these types of activists and their approach to activism as a whole?
- What barriers and motivations are queer activism and environmentalism each most influenced by?
- What role does the intersectional position of the queer activists play?

First, the differences between the activists themselves are the different combinations of activism types they can form, as illustrated in table 3. Pure emphatics appeared most often, which is visible in table 2, but more types of activist combinations occurred. It should be noted that this research is not representative for the whole group of queer activists who are active in both environmentalism and queer activism, as only seven respondents were researched. Their approach to activism as a whole was influenced by their personal goals, motivations and barriers. While those leaning towards being emphatic types were more preoccupied with the greater good, reconciling types focused more on their personal wellbeing. Demarcating types (either pure or combining form) fell in between, focusing on societal benefits but approaching it through their own moral compass, while emphatics applied civil disobedience more often.

Queer activism is most often barriered by personal barriers, like lack of a sense of safety, homophobia, fear of getting outed (out of the closet) and more. Environmentalism, on the other hand was barriered more by feelings of hopelessness. Both were strongly barriered by lack of accessibility, either through physical distance or lack of transport. Queer activism was most often motivated by a sense of purpose and a sense of creating a better world for queer people. Environmentalism was most often motivated by a sense of purpose. The activists explained wanting to fulfill the sense that it felt better to do 'something rather than nothing'. Both movements were strongly motivated by social influences, for example through friends that are also active in either or both activism movements.

Lastly, the intersectional position of the queer activists played an important role. Through their own experience with marginalization, the queer activists felt stronger fighting towards a common goal. Increased signs of sympathy showed because of deeper understanding of facing struggles. Queer people seem to sympathize more with marginalized groups like people of color, women, indigenous people suffering under post-colonialism, but also with animals. The marginalized position of queer people causes an increased understanding and will to fight, both for environmentalist and queer justice.

6. Limitations

My method of finding respondents did not go without struggle. After e-mailing many activist organizations, I got very few replies, sometimes even no response at all. Eventually, I mainly found my respondents through a 'snowball effect' by interviewees recommending other potentially interested candidates. Because of this, many people I spoke to were active in the same activist 'bubbles'. I countered this by making sure I found my respondents from at least three different backgrounds. Still, all of my respondents are either college or university students (being 'hoogopgeleid'). Because of this, despite them all falling in the 'youth' category that I chose to frame the research with, a skewed image still exists. For future research, the respondent group could be broadened out to represent more youth groups in the future, like those active in trades ('Middelbaar Beroepsonderwijs', or MBO in the Netherlands). Aside from this, many respondents I spoke to were able to free their schedules to find time to protest and be active. Many were aware of this and spoke of privilege. It should be acknowledged that this privilege is not standard for students and youth. We can ask the question if this privilege is one of the reasons that students are protesting. More research should be conducted to look at this suggested correlation made by respondents.

Besides, those interviewed were specifically selected. The requirements for my research were young adults, ranging ages 18 to 27, that were both active in climate and queer activism and being queer themselves. Because of this, I was able to get a proper insight into the opinions of queer youth, but not much outside of that. This isn't a lacking aspect, per se. However, it does mean that conclusions drawn regarding certain aspects of people's background cannot be final, as it cannot paint the entire picture. An example is that queer people's motivation to take part in queer activism is, of course, based on very personal motivations, but this does not fully reflect queer activists as a group overall. For future research, it would be interesting to listen to cisgender hetero allies to the queer movement and see what their motivations are and additionally explore what their reasoning is. Literature research already covered some information on it, but perspectives should and could always be broadened out in future research.

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