Identity and the Socio-Cultural Values of Queer Clubbing Scenes.

The Perspective of Clubbers.

Student name: Théotime Pelsy

Student number: 507002

Supervisor: Dr. Arno van der Hoeven

Master Media Studies: Media & Creative Industries

Erasmus school of History, Culture, and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract:

Queer clubbing scenes do not cease to grow in popularity. Queer clubbing events now attract a highly diversified crowd of clubbers willing to taste the assumed freedom and safety of those events. Nevertheless, previous studies have taken limited account of the socio-cultural values of queer clubbing scenes and their contribution to the identity construction of their participants. Since the origins of club culture are closely connected to the history of the queer community, it is assumed that clubbing plays a crucial role in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. Yet, more recent academic accounts highlighted that queer clubbing events are increasingly opening their doors to 'non-queer' individuals. Hence, the socio-cultural values of queer clubbing scenes have the potential to influence the identity construction of queer as well as non-queer individuals sharing their dancefloors. Therefore, this research aims to explore how 'queer' as well as 'non-queer' clubbers construct the socio-cultural values of queer clubbing scenes and the impact those values have on their identity construction. 12 qualitative interviews were conducted with a diversified sample of clubbers frequenting Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. The data collected from the interviews show that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene play various socio-cultural roles in the lives of clubbers. Namely, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene acts as a refuge, a nest, a bubble, and a laboratory for the respondent. Besides, queer dancefloors were characterized as a safe space of expression with strong historical values. Results show that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene holds mutually constitutive socio-cultural values for queer and non-queer clubbers. Finally, the analysis of the data collected from the interview shows that queer clubbing scenes play a crucial role in the expression of the respondents' identity rather than its entire process of construction. Therefore, more research is required to understand the need of contemporary society subjects for a safe space of expression.

Key Words: Queer Clubbing Scene, Socio-Cultural Values, Identity Construction, Safety, Diversity, Expression.

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On a personal note, I am highly grateful for the impact this research had on my understanding of my own community. In this sense, I am also extremely happy to have included the voices of 'non-queer' individuals in this project and honored to have focused on what unites us rather than divides us. Finally, I would like to thank all my friends and relatives for their boundless love and support. Their positive attitude towards my aptitudes was much appreciated and so valuable in moments of doubts and insecurities.

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Introduction

Dancefloors and clubbing scenes are mostly associated with values of diversity, freedom, and transgression. Within cities' clubbing scenes, a network of venues and events offers live electronic music to the LGBT community; known as 'the queer clubbing scene' (Ekenhorst & van Aalts, 2019; van Langen, 2019). The LGBT community is a segment of the population characterized by their nonconformist sexualities; regrouping lesbians, gays, bisexuals, and transsexuals. They are now commonly congregated under the umbrella term 'Queer' (Zosky & Alberts, 2016).

Dancefloors and club culture have a strong historical connection with the LGBT community. In the 70s, the darkness and intimacy of New York City's underground gay Discos allowed marginalized queer individuals to express their sexual identity with a new sense of freedom. Besides, gay discos permitted queer individuals to encounter other members of their community (Lawrence, 2011; Peterson, 2011). Since then, queer clubbing scenes became considered as a 'safe space', where LGBT individuals could share endless dancing nights and build a sense of commensality, far away from the fear and rejection that they experienced in everyday dominantly heterosexual societies (Buckland, 2002; Moran et al., 2001, 2003). Nevertheless, more recent accounts of contemporaneous queer clubbing scenes show that organizers are increasingly willing to open their doors to non-queer individuals sharing their values (Ekenhorst & van Aalts, 2019; van Langen, 2019).

This shows that queer clubbing events now hold certain social and cultural values for queer individuals and an increasingly diversified crowd of non-queer clubbers. In other words, the social relationships and cultural meanings generated on queer dancefloors are nowadays worthy of interest to understand the process of identity formation of queer and non-queer clubbers. Values are defined as the worth and importance of something, along with the principles and beliefs of one's identity (Klamer, 2004). Scenes provide to their participants a different set of values and group features such as music tastes, dancing habits, style of dress, and ways of communicating and interacting (Lange & Bürkner, 2013). Besides, live electronic music brings intrinsic values to participants' lives such as happiness and a sense of belonging (Hitter & van der Hoeven, 2019). The values ascribed by the increasingly diverse crowd of queer clubbing events and the impact those values have on the construction of clubbers' identity are at the core of this Thesis project.

Research Question and Social & Scientific Relevance

Academic spheres already separately tackled the topics of queer clubbing, LGBT identity construction, and the values of live electronic music. At the beginning of our 21st century, Moran et al. (2001, 2003) were concerned with the safety of queer individuals and their perception of danger, notably 'straights' as danger. In their findings, queer spaces and clubbing events provide clear norms and values that allow LGBT individuals to experience a sense of freedom, security, and belonging. Their approach is embedded in the conception of space as either heteronormative or homonormative. Almost a decade later, new academic inquiries provided new directions for further research on the topic. Most notably, Browne & Bakshi (2010) and Visser's (2008) results urge future researchers to move beyond the conceptualization of space as binary. This line of argument is reflected in recent studies conducted by Ekenhorst & van Aalst (2019) and van Langen (2019). They showed that queer clubbing scenes must now be understood as 'fluid', meaning that organizers and participants do not want to exclude people based on their gender or sexual orientation, crystalizing a shift from 'safety' by 'exclusivity' to 'fluidity' by 'inclusivity'.

This research is situated in the ongoing debate surrounding the increasing inclusivity of queer clubbing scenes. Indeed, the values that LGBT individuals ascribe to queer clubbing events were guaranteed by the exclusion of non-queer individuals (Moran et al., 2001,2003). However contemporary queer clubbing organizers and participants are willing to keep their events open to non-queer individuals sharing their values (Ekenhorst & van Aalst, 2019). This is notably crystallized in the words of Giorhi Kikonishvili "We do not only want to dance with our friends, but with our former enemies" (in van Langen, 2019). As a result, it was decided to conduct qualitative interviews of queer and non-queer individuals sharing the dancefloors of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Besides, in the current context of global pandemic and Covid-19 outbreak, a great majority of countries decided to close all licensed events and cultural institutions until further notice (2020-2021). This somehow translates the significant social values of those cultural institutions and organizations. Indeed, clubs and temporary parties are a place of gathering and encounter, where the proximity between clubbers on the dancefloor makes it impossible to keep up with the social distancing measures needed in times of pandemic. In times where social distancing is the norm, there is no room for highly social places like clubs. Besides, the community and identity-based nature of the queer clubbing scene and its relationship with live electronic dance music makes it particularly

relevant to study through the lens of a social and cultural value framework of inquiry. It is now more than ever needed to assess the social and cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as venues and organizations are at high risk of closure and bankruptcy due to the loss of their main source of revenue. As a result, this study can have an impact on queer clubbing venues and organizations in need of governmental and financial support. Value centered research can indeed help non-profit organizations endangered to legitimize their role and importance for a city's cultural scene and its inhabitants (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019). Therefore, the following research question was elaborated: *How do the social and cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene contribute to the identity construction of queer and non-queer participants?*

This thesis contributes to the fields of Queer Theories and Scene Studies by adding the perspective of the values of culture and through three main contributions. Firstly, to this day, there is an insufficient academic assessment of the relationship between queer clubbing scenes and the identity formation of queer as well as non-queer clubbers. Second, this study is the first to focus on Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Ekenhorst & van Aalst (2019) study of Amsterdam's queer nightlife presents the Netherlands as a place of sexual freedom, where LGBT+ individuals can enjoy a relatively good level of integration into everyday society. Amsterdam indeed earned a reputation of 'gay mecca' and attracts a growing population of LGBT+ individuals seeking a place of tolerance and acceptance. Hekma & Duyvendak (2011) are the researchers of reference when it comes to understand queer identity politics in Dutch society. On the one hand, Hekma & Duyvendak (2011) recognize that the Netherlands included queer and LGBT+ rights in its political agenda earlier on, notably with the *Equal Treatment Act* of 1994. Also, the Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriage in 2001 and to have a memorial dedicated to homosexuals killed during world war II; the *Homomonument* built in 1987. In regards to transgender individuals, the Netherlands allowed individuals to change their gender on official documents in 2013. In a more recent account (July 2020), the Netherlands is seeking to completely erase gender markers on official documents from 2025 onwards (Ghoshal & Knight, July 2020). Nevertheless, Hekma & Duyvendak (2011) urge researchers to remain critical. For Hekma & Duyvendak (2011), the achievement towards equality remains tied to the domain of the private. In other words, they raise the need to consider that LGBT+ individuals are indeed equal and tolerated in the privacy of their home, but there is still a

great deal of work that could be done to integrate queer individuals in public Dutch society. In this regard, the Netherlands of a place of cultural liberalism and ethnic diversity.

Rotterdam is the second biggest city in the Netherlands and its clubbing scene was overlooked by academic spheres but is also worthy of interest. Richard & Wilson's (2004) account of the process of urban regeneration that the city went through after its nomination as 'Capital of Culture' in 2001 showed how crucial it is for cities' inhabitants to have a vibrant cultural offer. Nevertheless, Richard & Wilson (2004) results showed that the identity of Rotterdam remained tied to its modern architecture, its harbor, and 'water' features that composed part of the myth of Rotterdam. A few years later, van den Berg (2012) conducted research on the 'feminization' and 'gender-bending' of Rotterdam. With the use of those terms, van den Berg (2012) seeks to assess how the urban generation process of Rotterdam brought into its midst a new population of creative individuals and families. Indeed, Rotterdam earned a reputation of a 'blue collar' city due to its harbor and vibrant industry. Van den Berg (2012) notified that a new population of 'pink collar'; composed of creative and cultural workers arrived in the city and started to participate even more in the vibrancy of Rotterdam's cultural scene. All in all, the Netherlands' liberal attitude towards LGBT+ individuals and Rotterdam's newly acquired vibrant cultural scene provides a fertile ground to explore the socio-cultural values of queer clubbing scenes and their participation in the identity formation of clubbers. Finally, this research will be the first to tackle identity construction and queer clubbing scenes through the use of a qualitative value-driven perspective. A focus on social and cultural values was judged particularly relevant due to the tendency of past research to concentrate their attention on economic values to assess the worth and importance of cultural events (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019). A more qualitative, meaningful, and up to date understanding of queer clubbing scenes and clubbers' identity construction emerged from the interviews.

The following of this thesis is outlined as such; the subsequent chapter will discuss relevant literature on Queer Theories, Scene studies, and the socio-cultural values of culture that will a fertile soil for this research. Afterward, the qualitative nature and methodological structure of this thesis are developed. Sections on the choice of using semi-structured interviews, sampling criteria, operationalization, method of data analysis, and particular ethical considerations are thoroughly explained. Then, the chapter of the results contains the seven emerging themes found through the thematic analysis of the interviews. Finally, a

conclusion and answer to the research question are provided, along with a critical reflection and recommendations for future research.

2 Theoretical Framework

Introduction

In the upcoming sections, previous theories and academic research relevant to design a solid and fertile ground for this research will be laid out. First, the field of Queer Theories and past models of queer identity development will be discussed. Such conceptualization is necessary to grasp the complexity and fluidity of queer identity. Second, the concepts of subcultures, neo-tribes, and scenes will be introduced using the work of Cultural Studies scholars. Those concepts are necessary to understand how queer dancefloors and the experience of live electronic music play a role in the development of one's identity. Finally, previous research on the socio-cultural values assumed to be held by live music events and queer clubbing in particular will be discussed.

2.1 Queer Theory, Identity & Intersectional Considerations

Providing an overview of the different academic perspectives on Queer Theories and identity development is crucial to conduct this thesis project. In academic language, the term 'queer' relates to the field of Queer Theories that this research seeks to enrich. Based on Abes & Kasch's conceptualization (2007), the three main premises of Queer Theory are the following; first, questioning heteronormativity and reexamining the consideration of heterosexuality as 'normal', as it positions other forms of sexuality as 'abnormal'. Second, considering gender identity and sexual orientation as created through socialization and performativity, not as biologically determined characteristics. Finally, Queer theory emphasis the 'fluidity of being', meaning that individuals go through different phases, identity is not fixed, and we take on different identities through the course of our lifetime.

Therefore, queer identity is by nature complex and ever-changing. Due to its connection with the refusal of normative and fixed identity politics, queer identity is purposely ambiguous, challenging, and deconstructionist (Butler, 1993; Callis, 2016). Traditional identity politics seek to classify and gather society's subjects in fixed and comprehensible identity categories. Drawing on the words of pioneer queer academic Judith Butler (1993), queer identity seeks to highlight and upset the limitations of those categories. In this sense, queer identity can be considered as a 'non-identity' or 'anti-identity'. Somehow, queer identity is constructed in a way that makes it impossible to make concrete assumptions on gender and sexuality based on the social codes of everyday society (Jagose, 1996).

In current usage, 'queer' literally means odd and peculiar. There is a long history of the word being used as a homophobic and transphobe insult. The term was recently 'reclaimed' by the younger generation and activists to confront the homophobic use of the term and is nowadays also casually used for self-identification. The elder LGBTQ+ generation might be less inclined to identify as queer due to the fact they could have experienced the term as an insult in their youth. As an 'Umbrella term', the term 'queer' is preferred by younger generations as it refers to the LGBT+ community at large rather than just a segment such as 'lesbian', 'bisexual', or 'trans', emphasizing a contemporaneous will to strengthen the inclusivity and solidarity of the community (Zosky & Alberts, 2016).

In this regard, research on queer identity should carefully consider identity grouping conventions and provide a clear conceptualization of who is considered and congregated under the umbrella term 'queer'. Indeed, queer identity is multiple and fluid (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Butler, 1993; Callis, 2016). Although individuals identifying as queer always choose a primary identity, they also attach multiple identity labels to different parts of their lives and at the same time; express a preference to not use identity labels at all. Queer individuals also tend to use non-binary language to refer to their identity (Galupo, Ramirez & Pulice-Farrow, 2017). Queer identity encompasses both gender and sexuality. As a sexual identity, queer identity includes homo/monosexual individuals such as gay and lesbians as well as plurisexual individuals. Plurisexual identities are defined by the attraction to the two genders (bisexual) as well as attraction to individuals outside of the gender binary (pansexual). Pansexuality is a growing identity label built around the consideration that sexual attraction is not constructed around the gender or biological sex of individuals (Sprott & Hadcock, 2018). In this regard, queer as a gender identity includes transgender, non-binary, and genderfluid individuals; meaning individuals of a different gender than assigned at their birth and individuals feeling like they share characteristics of neither or both genders. In the words of Galupo et al. (2017), queer identity has something to do with identity transcendence, transcendence of the body, transcendence of sexuality. Finally, recent research conducted by Sprott & Hadcock (2018) suggests that kink and BDSM identities, based on the pursuit of erotic and more extreme sexual pleasures are also legitimately included under the umbrella term 'queer'.

Through the Queer Theories Lens of this study, identity is considered as fluid and ongoingly constructed through one's lifetime. Therefore, queer individuals follow a

particular path of identity formation. Over the 20th and 21st centuries, researchers developed various linear models of identity development adapted to the different segments of the LGBT community. Namely, Cass (1979) initially developed a linear model of homosexual identity development. Later on, this model was updated by Troiden (1989) and McCarn & Fassinger (1996) who included bisexual and lesbian identities at the core of their studies. Finally, Devor's (2004) linear model provided crucial information to understand the path of identity construction of transgender persons. In an attempt to synthesize the above-mentioned linear models of identity development; queer identity development can be divided into two distinctive but interrelated processes; (1) identity formation & (2) identity integration (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2011; Zosky & Alberts, 2016). On the one hand, (1) identity formation represents how someone comes to the realization that one is gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer. All models begin with a period of self-realization, also called 'dawning awareness' or 'awareness of difference'. This first part of the process of queer identity development encompasses interrogation, confusion, dissonance, and seeking information (Cass, 1979; Devor, 2004; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1989). Interestingly enough, this reflects quite accurately the strict meaning of the term 'queer' as odd and peculiar. Later on, identity formation will entail a phase of comparison, exploration, and experimentation. Then, (2) identity integration represents the acknowledgment, synthesis, and acceptance of one's identity as queer. This final step of identity development is marked by the acknowledgment, pride, and inner commitment of individuals to their queer identity, followed by the desire to be known and recognized as such by others (Cass, 1979; Devor, 2004; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1989). In this sense, identity integration has a lot to do with 'coming out' and living authentically as queer. Non-queer individuals follow a less confusing path of identity formation because their sexual or gender identity is considered as the norm (Valentine & Skelton, 2003).

Nevertheless, theorizing queer identity development through a linear model calls for the need to consider the critical feminist theory of intersectionality. Indeed, other components of one's identity such as class, ethnicity, religion, age, or ability must be taken into account in order to fully apprehend the identity development of contemporary society's subjects (Butler, 1993). The intersectionality theory argues that one's identity is situated in the relationships and interactions between each component of one's identity. Therefore, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, social class, age, and many other factors combine to form one's

identity (De Vries, 2012). There are countless ways in which one's gender and sexuality can be developed and experienced in relation to other components of one's identity. Therefore, it cannot be argued that queer individuals share a linear process of identity development because other segments of their identity play a role as much important as their gender and sexuality (Abes, 2016). This highlights Butler's claim (1993) on the limitations of traditional identity categories that queer identity seeks to challenge, along with the complexity and need of critical thinking when it comes to conducting research on queer identity development.

2.2 Subcultures, Neo-tribes & Scene Studies

This research is interested in finding the role that the social and cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene play in the identity development of clubbers. Valentine & Skelton's (2003) seminal research argues that the traditional identity development models previously evoked do not acknowledge the crucial role that queer clubbing scenes play in this process. Indeed, for a great majority of queer individuals, the first contact with their 'queerness' will be through internalized homophobia or transphobia and a period of confusion and dissociation previously evoked. The traditional heterosexual family cannot always provide an appropriate framework of identity development and social support when someone starts to define him/her/themself as queer. Queer clubbing events represent a space where queer individuals can go to have an alternative framework of identity development, values, and find a sense of belonging (Valentine & Skelton, 2003).

Therefore, subcultures, neo-tribes and scenes must be introduced to understand how clubbing plays a role in the development of one's identity. Those concepts and perspectives are required and relevant because they provide a theoretical framework to comprehend the relation and influence of culture on identity development. Clubbing represents the practice of going to nightclubs on a regular basis. Nightclubs offer live electronic music events and a space to dance and socialize for cities' inhabitants. The local and global network of organizers, venues, artists, and audience members involved in the programming and experience of live electronic music is understood as 'the clubbing scene'. Nevertheless, this research focuses on the 'queer' clubbing scene. Queer clubbing scenes are built around the desire to provide marginalized LGBTQ+ individuals with a safe space of encounter and expression. They are also by essence constructed around the experience of live electronic

music. In this regard, marginalized and 'underground' communities built around music genres were conceptualized by 20th century Cultural Studies scholars as 'subcultures' (van der Hoeven, Hitters, Berkers, Mulder, & Everts, 2020). Most notably in the 1920s by the Chicago School and later on in the 1970s by the Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies. 'Subculture' was a term used by Cultural Studies scholars to refer to youth communities embracing non-mainstream cultures through their distinctive values, music tastes, styles, and group identities. Therefore, subcultures are conceptualized as resistance to dominant cultures (Hesmondhalgh, 2005). Subcultural thinking is useful to understand the socio-cultural and class affiliation of marginalized individuals centered around 'underground' cultures such as live electronic music. However, subcultural thinking was criticized and judged obsolete due to the rigid line that it draws between 'in' and 'out' groups members and the clear distinction that it presupposes between mainstream and underground culture (van der Hoeven et al. 2020). Subcultural thinking seems indeed obsolete based on the fuzzy line between mainstream and underground that characterizes our contemporary society, and the increasing diversity of individuals constituting the crowd of queer clubbing events depicted in more recent accounts (Peterson, 2011; van Langen, 2019). Indeed, contemporaneous Subcultures consists of small, fluid, and diverse crowd conceptualized by Bennett (1999) as 'Neo-tribes'. Bennett (1999) is the most vocal critic of subcultural thinking. His concept of 'neo-tribes' takes into account the fluid and ever-changing nature of our contemporary world and includes the crucial elements of performativity, lifestyle, and consumption to the field. Through the Queer Theories lens of this study, performativity, lifestyle, and fluidity are crucial to understand identity development centered around gender, sexuality, and clubbing practices. Besides, the concept of neo-tribes provides a fertile ground for research interested in value creation and identity development, particularly through the perspective of live music audiences such as clubbers (van der Hoeven et al., 2020). The concepts of subcultures and neo-tribes are relevant because they lead to the concept of 'Scenes', situated at the core of this research.

Indeed, more recent academic development tend to prefer the use of the term 'Scenes' (van der Hoeven et al. 2020). The concept of scene is used to describe social-cultural groups shaped by cultural goods such as live electronic music. Scene thinking allows us to consider the crucial role of space, culture, and society in groups and individual identity formation. Scene thinking acknowledges as well as transcend the local networks of actors (music

producers, club owners, event organizers, audiences…) in a greater global scene. In the context of this research, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene must be understood as the local network of clubs and temporary parties where live electronic music is performed for a queer and increasingly diverse audience. Nevertheless, such consideration and scene thinking was also criticized due to its potential descriptive use to research a local phenomenon.

Woo, Rennie, and Poyntz (2015) present scenes as a form of imagined alternative space, sometimes 'utopian' in nature due to their capacity to provide alternative values, a framework of identity construction, and a sense of belonging for marginalized groups like the LGBTQ+ community. In this regard, a dominant idea to conceptualize queer clubbing scenes is to characterize them as 'disconnected utopias', a place of hedonism and sexual freedom completely separated from reality (van Langen, 2019). To consider queer clubbing scenes as disconnected from reality is somehow legitimate as they aim to provide an alternative space, where often marginalized individuals can express freely their multiple identities and sexualities (Moran et al., 2001, 2003; Goh, 2018). However, we must not underestimate the continuity between the socio-cultural values generated by queer clubbing events and the lives of clubbers in the 'outside world' (van Langen, 2019). Contemporary researchers should reconsider the idea that dancefloors represent an 'escape' from reality. In van Langen's (2019) recent account of Georgian's queer clubbing scenes, queer clubs provide a space where alternative and peaceful ways of being together can be experimented and later on implemented in the larger world.

All in all, the concept of scenes was chosen to adequately explore how queer clubs and events generate certain values for their participants. Those values could contribute to the construction of more confidence and self-esteem in their identities (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). This can be described as the phase of acceptance, affirmation, and integration of the process of queer identity formation depicted in the precedent section (Rosario et al., 2011; Zosky & Alberts, 2016). Therefore, a value-driven framework of inquiry was chosen as relevant to understand the relationship between queer clubbing scenes and the identity development of clubbers.

2.3 Value-Driven Framework of Inquiry

A value-driven framework of inquiry allows to highlight the worth, use, importance, and impact of a cultural good on a given society or a given population (Throsby, 2001). However,

value-driven frameworks of inquiry overly focused on economic values to assess the worth and importance of cultural goods (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019). Cultural goods like queer clubbing events are assumed to be much more than businesses. In this sense, a value-driven framework of inquiry will be used to assess the socio-cultural impact of the events rather than their economic ones. Drawing on Klamer (2004), cultural goods have the potential to become a symbol for a given group or population. Individuals ascribe various meanings and draw inspiration from cultural events. Therefore, an assessment of the socio-cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene is the perfect analytical tool to understand how the experience of queer dancefloors can impact clubber's identity development. In more detail, the concepts of extrinsic and intrinsic values must be addressed to set a clear focus and direction in this research.

The values of live music events can be divided into two broad categories; extrinsic and intrinsic values (Lundber, Armbrecht, Andersson, & Getz). (2017). On the one hand, the extrinsic values of events are defined as the tangible and external benefits of live music events for society. Extrinsic values are most notably assessed in economic, educational, or environmental terms. Researches interested in the extrinsic values of live music events are mostly used to substantiate the impact of live music and cultural scenes on tourism activity and the overall vibrancy and attractivity of cities (Getz, Anderson, Armbrecht & Lundberg, 2017). The extrinsic values of live music events were the topic of investigation of an extensive body of academic research and are typically used to support the need for appropriate legislative, political, and financial support of cities' cultural institutions and organizations (Van der Hoeven & Hitters, 2019). On the other hand, Intrinsic values are much more difficult to assess because they are the result of a less tangible and individual work of mental, emotional, and spiritual reaction to the artistic experience (Klamer, 2004). In other words, the intrinsic values of live music represent the inherent effect of the artistic experience and the symbolic meaning that individuals extract from it. While extrinsic values are mostly assessed at a broader societal level, intrinsic values represent the impact that live electronic music has on individuals, on their emotional stimulation, sense of happiness, belonging, and identity formation (Behr, Brennan & Cloonan, 2016). Therefore this research will focus on the category of intrinsic values rather than the extrinsic ones. Socio-cultural values possess both extrinsic as well as extrinsic characteristics. Nevertheless, due to the

particular interest of this research in identity construction, a focus on intrinsic values was chosen as relevant.

2.3.1 Social Values

Queer clubbing scenes provide the opportunity for members of the LGBT+ community and increasingly diversified clubbers to gather on the dancefloor. In this sense, queer clubbing scenes provide more than a space of expression of one's identity, they provide the opportunity for others to validate this identity (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). Drawing on the words of Barth (1981); To truly say that one's identity is fully constructed and integrated, the articulation of one's identity must be read, interpreted, and validated by others. Therefore, queer clubbing scenes entail social values playing a role in identity formation.

The experience of sharing live music allows individuals to connect with each other, impacting greatly their social life and providing them with a sense of belonging (Hitter & van der Hoeven, 2019). The social values of queer clubbing scenes highly resonate with subcultural and scene thinking previously evoked due to their connection with a sense of shared identity, norms, and values (Lange & Brükner, 2013). Based on earlier research conducted by Hitters & van der Hoeven (2019), the social values of live music are understood as the formation of social relationships between participants, providing them with a sense of collective identity. Hitters & van der Hoeven (2019) looked at the social values of live music but this can be relevant to study queer clubbing scenes as well. In more detail, the social values of the values of cultural events are openness, safety, solidarity, diversity, inclusivity, tolerance, love, and friendship (Klamer, 2004). Therefore, the values extracted from the experience of live electronic music queer clubbing events can participate in clubbers' well-being and identity formation due to the potentially mutually beneficial nature of the relationships generated on queer dancefloors. Those social values are relevant to asses when researching identity development. Indeed, particularly through the Queer Theories lens of this research, identity is considered as constructed through socialization and developed within interactions between individuals and their social environments (Abes & Kasch, 2007).

Nevertheless, such consideration of social interactions as mutually beneficial raises the need to consider the history of marginalization of LGBTQ+ individuals, particularly in the context of increasing diversity of queer clubbing crowds. Indeed, one of the most crucial

social values depicted in past research on queer spaces is the value of 'safety'. The value of safety resonates with the history of fear, violence, and discrimination directed towards LGBT individuals. But LGBT individuals are also subject to fear. In Moran et al.(2003) terms; 'straight' fear. The violent history of rejection and hate towards LGBT+ individuals implied the need to create 'safe spaces', taking on the form of urban enclaves or social and cultural institutions dispersed around a city space. The safety of queer spaces was guaranteed by the exclusion of non-queer individuals and in certain instances, some segments of the LGBTQ+ community itself, mostly working in favor of white gay men (Goh, 2018; Peterson, 2011). Recent academic accounts of the safety of queer spaces report interesting but mixed findings on the inclusion of non-queer individuals at queer clubbing events. While Ekenhorst & van Aalts (2019) and van Langen (2019) found that queer clubbing crowds and organizers are willing to open their doors to non-queer individuals, they also express how difficult it is to keep queer clubbing events safe for members of the LGBT+ community to whom they were initially dedicated.

An increasingly open and inclusive queer clubbing scene could be the place of creation of new social grounds, where queer and non-queer individuals could share the dancefloor in a 'queer-friendly' and 'open-minded' manner. Therefore, the concepts of bonding and bridging social capital must be addressed. Drawing on Putnam's (2000) conceptualization, bonding capital refers to the consolidation of social relationships within an already existing group or community. In the context of this research, bonding social capital looks at the way the LGBTQ+ community reinforces its cohesiveness, solidarity, and ingroup relationship at queer clubbing events. On the other hand, bridging social capital refers to the formation of new relationships between individuals unknown to each other and the creation of relationships between different social groups. In the context of this research, the historical exclusivity of queer clubbing scenes left room for only bonding social capital to be generated within members of le LGBTQ+ community. However, as queer clubbing events are becoming increasingly inclusive, bridging social capital between the LGBTQ+ community and non-queer individuals can potentially be generated. This claim can be supported by the assumed capacity of dancefloors to break down social barriers and create a strong bond with strangers (Buckland, 2002). Indeed, the experience of live music allows people unknown to each other's to connect in a non-verbal way, through dancing. The combination of electronic beats, vocals, lightning effects as well as the use of drugs at clubbing events creates a fertile

ground for a sense of 'togetherness' to be generated, hence, potentially breaking down social barriers such as race, class, and gender (van Langen, 2019).

Nevertheless, such consideration must be made with caution. Indeed, Wilks's (2011) research on the nature of the social capital generated at different music festivals presents noteworthy findings. Wilks' research (2011) showed that bonding social capital was excessively generated at live music festivals, leaving very little room for the formation of relationships between groups and bridging social capital to be created. Wilks's (2011) findings were however based on mostly homogenous crowds in terms of demographics and music tastes. Besides, research on night-life institutions and safety in cities found that clubs can also be places where class and race barriers are still heavily operating and where marginalized individuals and women are at high risk of harassment and potential violence (Moran et al. 2003; Goh, 2018). Therefore, those findings stand against the social values previously evoked and provide a critical perspective on the matter.

All in all, the social values of queer clubbing events have the potential to participate in the identity formation of their participants. Positive social values such as safety, freedom, solidarity, diversity, love, and friendship can participate in one's identity formation to a significant extent; providing individuals with a sense of belonging, collective identity, and a set of shared norms and values. Also, the increasing diversity of queer clubbing crowds implies new potential horizons for new forms of social capital to be generated on queer dancefloors. Nevertheless, concerns on the potentially harmful and negative effects of such diversity were expressed (Moran et al. 2001, 2003; Goh, 2018). These paradoxical results and inconstancies provide a fertile ground for contemporary academic inquiry on the topic. Finally, the experience of live electronic music is at the core of queer clubbing events, which also brings intrinsic values to clubbers individually. Therefore queer clubbing events entail cultural values, which will be developed in the following section.

2.3.2 Cultural values

In 2016, Berlin's legendary queer club *Berghain* received the status of 'High cultural institution', resulting in a lowering of its taxes and a public recognition of this club as a place of artistic expression and experimentation. In other words, the electronic music performed at *Berghain* is valued as a form of high art and not simply as a form of hedonism or entertainment (Ladarola, September 2016). Queer clubbing scenes provide the opportunity

for electronic music to be played live by DJs and experienced in its 'pure form' by clubbers. Therefore, the experience of queer dancefloors encompasses cultural values. In the context of this research, cultural values must be understood as the aesthetic, creative, and symbolic value of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene (Holden, 2006). Cultural values are reflected in the variety of music genres being performed, along with the cultural meaning and symbols they convey to queer clubbing scenes' participants (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019; Klamer, 2004). Assessing the cultural values of queer clubbing scenes is a complex and daring task due to the highly subjective nature of cultural values. In Klamer's terms (2004), cultural values are independent of social and economic ones. Cultural values represent the personal and individual reaction to the artistic experience, the capacity of culture to inspire humans and be inspired by humanity (Klamer, 2004). The cultural values of queer clubbing also play a role in LGBTQ+ individuals' identity formation, in Valentine & Skelton's words (2003, p. 855); "Particular lyrics or tracks take on queer significance, the social associations and memories that go with them can thus play a part in the imagining of community".

Clubbing culture started back in the 70s United States with disco. The particular relationship between queer identity and the cultural values of live electronic music lies in the shift from the traditional dance structure of heterosexual couples to the possibility to join the dancefloor on your own, without a partner. Indeed, mid-20th-century traditional dance styles like swing, twist, and rock were based on the need for a man and a woman to share the dancefloor as a couple or 'duet'. Discos provided some of the first social spaces where queer individuals could join the dancefloor and express themselves with a new sense of freedom, what Lawrence (2011) calls 'the queering of the dancefloor'. Besides, disco music was heavily influenced by black music such as soul, funk, and gospel (Thomas, 1995). In Lawrence's words (2011, p. 236); "the juxtaposition of different styles enabled dancers to experience existence as complex and open rather than singular and closed. In other words, DJs were generating a soundtrack that encouraged dancers to be multiple, fluid and queer". Black music and the idea of spiritual salvation also 'queered' itself and became a channel to express sexual freedom and emancipation (Peterson, 2011). Later on, during the epidemic of AIDS/HIV of the 80s, the vocals of disco music took a new cultural meaning and resonated with the loss of many LGBT+ individuals. The celebratory symbolic of disco transformed into an expression of grieving and a nostalgia of times where a newly acquired light-heartedness and freedom was the norm on queer dancefloors (Peterson, 2011). What started as an

underground, black, and queer style of dance and music became quickly appropriated by gay Latinos and Caucasians, to finally fall into the hands of heterosexuals and mainstream culture, notably in 1977 with the success of the movie *Saturday Night Fever* (Thomas, 1995). Nevertheless, 80s America and the cultural conservatism of the Regan years had a strong influence on the decline of disco and counter-cultures of the 60s-70s.

Cultural values are also assessed in terms of creativity and artistic vibrancy (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019). In this regard, 80s Chicago's gay club *The Warehouse* and its resident DJ Frankie Knuckles are notably recognized as the origins of Disco's evolution into House music. Through the 80s-90s, new genres emerged from House music, emphasizing even more strongly the intensity, speed, and electronic nature of club music genres. Chicago House gained the favor of the United-Kingdom and transformed into Acid house notably considered as the vector of the birth of 'ecstasy' and 'rave' culture of the 80s-90s. At the same time, a network of artists, producers, and club owners located in the cities of Berlin and Detroit generated Techno, characterized by its anti-commercial and revolutionary nature (van Langen, 2019).

All in all the creativity, vibrancy, and symbolic meaning of cities' queer clubbing scenes had an impact on the identity formation of LGBT+ individuals. But is it still the case in 2020 Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene?

Conclusion

The theoretical framework discussed above provided relevant conceptual tools and theories to conduct this Thesis project. The field of Queer Theories and the different models of queer identity development elaborated by past academicians introduced us to two interrelated processes of identity construction; (1) Identity development and (2) Identity integration. Furthermore, Cultural Studies Scholars and the concept of 'scenes' brought to light how live music consumption and clubbing practices participate in the development of one's identity. Finally, past conceptualizations of the social and cultural values of live music events provided a clear framework of inquiry to explore in-depth our research question. In this regard, a qualitative method and semi-structured interviews were chosen as appropriate to reach the aims of this thesis project.

3 Methodology

3.1 Qualitative approach & Semi-structured interviews

This Thesis project is interested in understanding the socio-cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene and the impact those values have on clubbers' identity development. Consequently, this research is interested in the construction of one's reality, values, and identity, which are essentially qualitative in nature (Brennen, 2012). Social and cultural values are difficult to measure, due to their essentially subjective and qualitative nature (Hitters & van Hoeven, 2019; Klamer, 2004). Hence, a qualitative design allows this research to investigate and assess perceived social and cultural values in an appropriate manner (Brennen, 2012; Hitters & van Hoeven, 2019).

In particular, qualitative semi-structured interviews were implemented. Indeed, qualitative interviews take on the form of an in-depth conversation, and language is crucial to understand the articulation of one's values and one's identity (Brennen, 2012; Zosky & Alberts, 2016). Besides, the use of qualitative interviews provides the opportunity for 'queer voices' to be integrated into social science research (Levy & Johnson, 2012). Using semi-structured interviews allowed this research to find how queer and non-queer clubbers articulate the social and cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Indeed, semi-structured interviews allowed for flexibility and probing questions to be used in order to discover in-depth and meaningful findings (Brennen, 2012). Finally, the choice of conducting qualitative interviews was based on the recommendations of two studies. First, Zosky & Alberts' (2016) quantitative study showed that the younger LGBT generation is nowadays dominantly identifying as 'queer' rather than gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transsexual. Their recommendations for further research urge Queer Studies to investigate qualitatively this new preference for the inclusive and non-binary terminology of 'queer' for self-identification. Furthermore, Hitters & van der Hoeven's (2019) recommendations asked future researchers interested in the values of urban live music scenes to keep assessing the social and cultural values of events in a qualitative manner due to their highly complex nature.

The qualitative nature of this research and the use of semi-structured interviews conducted with queer individuals involves particular methodological considerations. Drawing on Ferguson (2013), qualitative inquiries need to de-construct and 'queer' their scientific approach in order to fully appreciate and understand the multifaced, fluid, and

ever-changing possibilities that queer individuals attach to their identity. Indeed, Queer identity has something to do with the refusal of traditional identity categories. As a result, qualitative interviews must remain sensitive and open to queerness in all its forms and complexity instead of trying to categorize it in fixed identity categories. In Ferguson's words (2013, p.6) "Queer methodology's determination is to question sex, gender & sexuality from a perspective that constantly enables possibilities instead of closing down answers to questions that are informed by scientific rationality and empirical thoughts". Therefore, understanding the life narratives and experience of queer subjects requires to listen, think, and analyze beyond scientific language (Ferguson, 2013). In this sense, particular attention has been given to understanding the multilayered aspect of queer identity rather than trying to categorize interviewees into fixed identity categories.

In more detail, Levy & Johnson (2012) elaborated six main guidelines to adequately prepare researchers to conduct qualitative interviews with queer individuals and include 'queer voices' in social science research. Those guidelines are the following and were carefully scrutinized and integrated by the interviewer. Firstly, (1) Be comfortable with fluidity; meaning that the interviewer was prepared to apprehend conceptualizations of identity that are fluid and resistant to usual identity categories. Second, (2) Be attentive to identity; meaning that the interviewer understood the ever-changing and multiple and nature of queer identity and integrated it into his interview routine and analysis. Third, (3) Be prepared for the unknown; meaning that the queer researchers must be willing to let the research process generate unpredictable findings and let go of any resistance towards the uncertain and the unknown. Fourth, (4) Be ready for questions; indeed, the term 'queer' was only recently reclaimed and brought under a positive light, therefore some respondents might need a clear conceptualization of what is meant by 'queer' in the framework of this research. Answering interviewees' questions with patience and sensitivity can also provide the opportunity for rapport, education, and advocacy to be implemented through the interview. In this regard, the fifth recommendation is (5) Be sensitive. Indeed, when conducting research about marginalized groups like queer individuals, researchers expose the narratives of vulnerable individuals to a wider hegemonic audience (Ryan-Flood & Rooke, 2009). Therefore, researchers must be particularly sensitive to the wider homo/transphobic socio-cultural context that interviewees might have experienced through their lives. Besides, queer individuals are commonly misunderstood, misinterpreted, or

misrepresented in nowadays society. Therefore, systematic checking of the understanding of the respondent's answers was implemented through the course of interviews in order to validate if the interviewer's interpretation was fair and correct (Maxwell, 2012). In this regard, Levy & Johnson's (2012) final recommendation is the following; (6) Be an advocate. In fact, it is crucial to emphasize that nowadays society remains homophobic and heterosexist. Therefore, researchers interested in queer subjects' narratives must consider their role as advocates in an ongoing fight for equality.

3.2 Ethical Considerations

Regarding the previous methodological considerations, particular ethical considerations were implemented. Notably, the topic of this research and some questions touched upon the values and sexual identity of the respondents. Those topics belong to the intimate sphere of the respondents. When topics like this are discussed, great caution must be given to make the interviewee feeling safe, comfortable, and listened. Therefore, passive listening was favored over active listening. Passive listening consists of letting the interviewees guide the tempo of the conversation, giving a particular attention to make the interviewee feel listened, and avoiding too obtrusive questions (Kvale, 2019). Informed consents were signed and it was re-stated orally at the beginning of the interviews that there is no obligation to answer every question and that the interview can be stopped at any moment without the need of any explanation. This was meant to minimize the imbalance in power between interviewer and interviewee (Kvale, 2019). Besides, particular attention was given to create a safe and open space of conversation, through the use of a carefully thought location, which was preliminarily discussed with the respondent. Also, icebreakers were integrated into the interview guide through the form of a 'Chinese Portrait' (see interview guide, Appendix B). A Chinese portrait is a useful and playful way to create a safe space of conversation, show interest in the interviewee's person, and prepare the interviewees to self-reflect on their identity and their capacity to develop and justify their answers. Finally, the anonymity of the respondents was guaranteed.

3.3 Sampling Criteria & Recruitment of Participants

12 qualitative interviews were conducted between September and October 2020. Interviews stopped at 12 because saturation was reached, meaning redundancy in the

interviewees' answers (Brennen, 2012). Participants were selected as relevant based on their sexual identity, the fact that they frequent Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene regularly, and believe that they have strong affinities with it. Therefore purposive sampling has been implemented (Brennen 2012). The recruitment of participants occurred on social media, Facebook, and Instagram in particular. A post has been uploaded on Facebook groups such as *Queer Rotterdam* and past Rotterdam's Queer clubbing Facebook events. Snowball sampling and the use of the researcher's network had also been used, however, interviewees did not belong to the same group of friends as they might share perspectives and affinity which could have resulted in biased results.

The sample was composed of an equal number of respondents who identify and do not identify as queer. Determining which respondent was considered as either queer or non-queer will based on the respondent's self-identification, not the perspective of the researcher. Therefore the following question was asked to every potential interviewee before scheduling the interview; "Would you identify yourself as queer? There is no right or wrong answer, I am genuinely interested in the perspectives of both queer and non-queer individuals ☺". The queer or non-queer identity of the respondents was based on the answers provided. All in all, this sample aimed at being highly diverse in terms of gender, sexual orientation as well as ethnicity in order to adequately reflect the fluidity and diversity of contemporaneous queer clubbing crowds depicted in Ekenhorst & van Aalst (2019) and van Langen (2019).

3.4 Operationalization

The Interview guide and the topic list were based on the five different sub-chapters of the theoretical framework and previous studies in order to guarantee a high level of face and construct validity (Silverman, 2013). To begin with, an introduction including the ethical considerations was included in the interview guide. Then the first topic 'clubbing practices' will be discussed. This topic includes broad questions on the respondent's relationship with clubbing and Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Second and third, the topic of social values was discussed followed by cultural values. The operationalization of Social and Cultural values was based on Throsby (2010), Kamer (2004), Hitters & van der Hoeven's (2019), and Holden (2006)'s conceptualizations. Finally the topic of 'clubbing and queer identity' will be based on Valentine & Skelton (2003) and Zosky & Alberts (2016)'s conceptualizations.

3.3.1 Clubbing practices & Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene: In this first topic, a discussion on the respondent's clubbing practices will be implemented. This topic is necessary to understand the overall relationship between the respondent and Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Besides, this topic is relatively non-intrusive and easy to discuss, therefore it is located at the beginning of the interview (Brennen, 2012).

3.3.2 The Social Values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene: Based on Hitters and Van der Hoeven (2019), Klamer (2004), and Throsby (2010), the Social values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene were conceptualized as the social interactions and relationships that respondents develop within Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. In this regard, questions on the nature of the relationships built on queer dancefloors were discussed. For example, respondents' sense of belonging, freedom, security, collective identity, solidarity, friendship, and other romantic encounters were discussed (Klamer, 2004; Throsby, 2010). Also, questions on the interactions between groups (queer/non-queer) were included in the interview guide. In this regard, Putnam (2000) and Wilks' (2011) bonding and bridging social capital will be used as sensitizing concepts. Indeed, since contemporary queer clubbing scenes are opening their doors to non-queer individuals, there is a potential for bridging social to be generated, meaning social interactions and relationships between groups. Therefore, this sensitizing concept will investigate whether contemporary queer clubbing scenes can provide a fertile ground for social capital to be generated between queer and non-queer individuals.

3.3.2 The Cultural Values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene: Second, the cultural values ascribed by respondents to Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene will be discussed. Cultural values were operationalized as the historical, aesthetic, artistic, symbolic, spiritual, and more abstract values ascribed by respondents to their scene (Holden, 2006; Klamer, 2004). Historical values are understood as the relationship that contemporary queer clubbing entertains with the broader history of clubbing and the LGBT+ community. Besides, symbolic values represent the repository of meaning and symbols that respondents will attach to Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. Aesthetic values are hard to conceptualize because it involves the consideration of what is 'beautiful' and rests on a judgment of taste. However, respondents' viewpoint on the inherent 'beauty' of queer clubbing will be taken into consideration. Finally, spiritual values will acknowledge the role of the mystical and sublime

in the respondent's experience of queer clubbing events. Both topics of social and cultural values were operationalized in such a broad fashion in order to leave the interview questions as open as possible. In this sense, more specific and narrow definitions of the values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene are expected to emerge from the respondents' answers. Therefore, the concepts of social and cultural values play the role of sensitizing concepts in this research.

3.3.4 Clubbing and Identity Formation: Finally, the identity formation of the respondents and the role that the social and cultural values of queer clubbing play in this process will be discussed. The topic of respondents' identity(ies) will be observable with the question "who are you?". The Identity of respondents will be made observable by discussing which features and values matter to the respondents' lives and how clubbing participated in the construction of those values and identity (Valentine & Skelton, 2003). In other words, this topic will investigate how respondents define their 'self', and the process that they went through to fully realize themselves (Zosky & Alberts, 2016). It has been decided that this topic will be discussed at last because if social and cultural values are articulated first, it will be easier for the respondents to connect them to their identity (Brennen, 2012).

3.5 Data Analysis

The 12 Interviews conducted through the months of September and October 2020 were transcribed verbatim. Through the month of December 2020, transcripts were used as entries for data analysis. Hence, primary data was generated, which fits the inductive and exploratory nature of this research (Brennen, 2012). In particular, thematic analysis was chosen as the most appropriate method due to its capacity to make emerging themes and patterns appear in the respondent's answers in an inductive manner (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In more detail, this research used Boeije's (2010) three steps of open, axial & selective coding. First, each transcript was segmented into smaller fragments assigned with a code, so-called Open codes (See Appendix C: 'Open codes). Second, open codes were compared, merged, and reassembled into new coherent entities, Axial codes (See Appendix C: Dimensions). Finally, axial codes were merged once more into even more narrow entities, Selective codes (See Appendix C: Themes). Those selective codes were translated into themes and provided the answer to the research question. All in all, thematic analysis allowed new emerging themes and patterns to appear through the data (Boeije, 2010).

3.6 Objectivity, Credibility & Reliability

Qualitative inquiries are often considered as too subjective (Brennen, 2012). Hence, methodological tools were implemented to guarantee a high degree of objectivity, credibility, and reliability of the results. On the one hand, the objectivity and credibility of qualitative research refer to the extent to which the researcher's interpretation and analysis of the data are persuasive, reasonable, and convincing (Silverman, 2013). In this regard, constant comparison with the past literature was implemented through the entire process of data analysis to provide the step of data analysis with a solid theoretical embedding (Boeije, 2010). On the other hand, reliability refers to the extent to which the findings of this research are free from external factors or circumstances during their production (Silverman, 2013). In this regard, field notes were taken to report the external environment of the interview and other individuals potentially present around as they might have influenced the conversation. Besides, feedback from the supervisor and peers on the interpretation of interviewees' answers and the elaboration of codes were implemented (Silverman, 2013). Finally, qualitative research calls for transparency and reflexivity. Therefore, personal information on the identity of the interviewer; his gender, ethnicity, and sexual orientation will be evoked in the discussion as they might have impacted the dynamic of the conversation (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009).

4 Results

The aim of this research is to explore the social-cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene from the point of view of clubbers. Besides, this research aimed at figuring out how those values impact the identity construction of clubbers. The respondent's perspective on Rotterdam and what it's like to be 'queer' in contemporary Netherlands will be discussed first, followed by the social and cultural values of queer clubbing events. In total, 7 salient themes emerged from the interviews and will be introduced in the following order. Queer Identity: 1) *The shifting and open nature of queer identity*, Social values: 2) *Queer clubbing as a 'Refuge'* 3) *Queer clubbing as a 'Nest'* 4) *Queer clubbing as a 'Bubble'*, Cultural Values: 5) *Freedom, dressing up and self-expression* 6) *The Laboratory, inspiration and experimentation* 7) *Historical values and awareness of the past*.

4.1.1 The shifting and open and nature of queer identity

The analysis of data collected from the interviews provided valuable insights on how respondents constructed what it is to be queer in our contemporary world. The emerging themes found in the respondents' answers point to a rather shifting and open nature of identity. All participants used a wide range of identity labels rarely overlapping with each other's to articulate their identity. On the side of gender, respondents labeled their identity as 'cis-male/female', trans', 'non-binary', or 'gender non-conforming'. Interestingly enough, the latter two have the negation 'non' included in their name. This negation was emphasized in the respondents' answer who depicted queer identity as something to do with the refusal, opposition, and negation of normative identities; here the heterosexual norm. This finding corroborates Butler's (1993) characterization of queer identity as an 'anti-identity'. To support that claim, one of the respondents was in complete refusal of any identity labels, highlighting the limitation and incoherence of contemporary identity politics in her answer. She said:

> "I really hate identifying, I think that it's something that is contradictory to all the concept of what is within the gender politics you know [...] I am open to anything but I also don't wanna say I am anything, and put myself into a box and limit myself because people often to me hum, they have a label for themselves and they define themselves

within every action that they present to the world." (23, Complete refusal of Identity labels)

This consideration of the limits of identity labels and categories was conceptualized as 'Boxes'. Participants expressed that once you place yourself inside of an identity category, so-called 'box', it's difficult to get out of it. Therefore, participants overly highlighted that they would rather keep their identity open and consider it as an ongoing process rather than something fixed. In this regard, participants used generally a minimum of two identity labels to depict their gender or sexuality. In this sense, the data collected from the interview show that gender and sexual identities are multiple rather than unique. Respondent's answers relate different phases of questioning, exploration, and affirmation of their gender or sexuality through the course of their lifetime. Their answer also expressed the feeling of never been set, provoking a desire to stay open and keep exploring their sexuality in particular. Even the sexuality of participants recruited as 'non-queer' remained open through their answers. Most notably, the appellation 'Bi-curious' and the expression of questioning on homosexual or pansexual forms of attractions were expressed by all respondents. Two female respondents said:

"I have to say, I have only been interested in males for the last couple of years but my curiosity towards women has definitely increased, especially this year so I try to approach that and explore that a little more. It's not easy for me because I've been so used to only be dating and being intimate with men that it's sometimes hard to leave this box. But I'm exploring this side of me." (26, Female, Bi-curious)

"I identify myself as cis-woman, but I get quite a bit of 'thing' of being confused for androgynous or non-binary. So I don't know if I am done with my identifying myself in that sense. And I would say I'm straight but Bi-curious." (25, Female, Straight/Bi-curious)

The central elements in those quotes highlight some phases of confusion, increased curiosity, exploration of their gender and sexuality, and a feeling of never being 'set'. Nevertheless, those two respondents didn't identify as queer. Interestingly enough,

respondents' construction of their gender and sexuality rarely used the term queer as an identity label. Emerging themes found in the respondents' answers showed that there is a clear difference of understanding upon the meaning of the word 'queer' between queer and non-queer participants. Indeed, while participants identifying as gay, lesbian, non-binary, or transgender understood queerness as a state of mind, respondents combining a rather straight and cis identity understood queer as connected to the LGBTQ+ community. Indeed, participants recruited as 'non-queer' expressed that being queer refers to be a member of the LGBTQ+ community. Besides, those participants understood the concept of community as something that has to do with a sense of 'shared struggle and suffering'. Half of the respondents shied away when it comes to identity as queer because they didn't feel like they went through a shared experience of struggle. For one of the respondents recruited as non-queer, this is articulated as such:

> "I don't identify as queer, but solely because… the reason I don't think I 'deserve' to identify with a community that has been through so much you know. Because I guess I attach more transgender people, gay people, who had to fight for their place. And now that's what I think of when I think 'queer' you know." (25, Female, Straight/Bi-curious)

Nevertheless, respondents recruited as queer articulated a completely different definition of queerness. For those respondents, queerness is rather a state of mind than an identity or a community. Respondents characterized queerness as a form of openness towards the multiplicity and fluidity of being. For queer respondents, people considered as 'Straight' can be even queerer than some members of the LGBTQ+ community. Queer is constructed as something abstract that inform your daily life, an urge to break away from a dominant system of thinking and living. In the words of one of the respondents.

> "Hum, I think, no for me queer, I don't think it's specifically 'pointed' at gay, lesbian or trans, I think queer is more a state of mind or a feeling when you accept the multifaceted aspects that there are in gender, identity, and sexuality. Because I feel, also a lot of straight people can be very queer […] like they have an open mind, they are people identifying with different things, they are learning, and not really into it, but interested in it, they accept it, and I think that this is also queer." (27, Male, Gay)

Those two different perceptions of queer emphasize the difficulty when it comes to grasping what queerness means to members of contemporary society. In this sense, respondents' construction of queerness corroborate Ferguson's (2013) consideration of queer as open rather than closed. To consider the shifting, open, and multiple nature of queer identity remains the only way to conceptualize it.

Drawing on the data collected from the interview, the engagement of clubbers in Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was a determining factor in the expression of respondent's queer identity rather than its entire process of development. Indeed, a great majority of the respondents had already clearly integrated their 'queerness' as part of their identity before going to a queer clubbing event. In the words of two respondents:

"I think clubbing is a symptom of who I am. I mean that I really knew who I was, hum and who I am before I went clubbing […] I also love reading, fantasy books, games, I really just like developing this idea of who I am outside of clubbing and I think it's important." (28, Male, Gay)

"Maybe I've been to gay bars, when I didn't came out yet. But I think I went to clubs when I got a boyfriend so I came out and then I went to Amsterdam from Breda, to go out, you know, to the NYX and stuff. I came out of the closet because I had a boyfriend, so I identified myself as gay. And that's when I went to the club I felt like 'Okay now I can do this'." (28, non-binary, gay)

This last claim highlights that queer clubbing events acted as an outlet to express that newly affirmed identity with a sense of freedom and security. Nevertheless, fewer respondents expressed that Queer clubbing events impacted their views on the different ways to love and being, resulting in their coming out as a bisexual or pansexual person. This somehow challenges as well as corroborate the claim made by Valentine & Skelton (2003) on the role of the gay and lesbian scene in the 'coming out' and the identity construction of its participants. Indeed, while Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene had little impact on the coming out of participants, queer clubbing events had a clear impact on the expression and

affirmation of participants' identity. This could be done through a wide range of socio-cultural values that will be developed in the next sections.

4.2. Social Values

In the following section of the results, the social values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as understood by the respondents will be explained. Drawing on the analysis of the data collected from the interview, three metaphorical conceptualizations of queer clubbing scene as 1) a Refuge, 2) a Nest, and 3) a Bubble were generated.

4.2.1 The Refuge & Consent as a primary social value.

Emerging themes found in the respondents' answers depicted Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a 'Refuge', where 'Consent' is the primary social value and a guarantee to a feeling of safety. In a literal sense, a refuge represents a space providing temporary protection from a threat or danger. In a symbolic sense, a refuge is understood as a place where people sharing commonalities gather and feel accepted. Respondent's construction of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene showed consistent similarities with the purpose of a 'Refuge'. Respondents depicted Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a space trying to provide a safe environment and make everyone feel accepted, where not everyone has that opportunity in the outside world. This theme was constructed based on previous consideration of nightlife spaces as an alternative to other fundamental dimensions of modern societies; the public space and the work place (Lawrence, 2011). Based on the data collected from the interviews, queer clubbing events represented an eccentric substitute to everyday life and the public space due to the concentration of 'likeminded' others and the opportunity for social interactions with them. In the words of one of the respondents:

> "I think you cannot apply those things in your everyday life obviously, because in
> reality, not everyone will accept you and accept your thoughts, I think we are
> constantly hiding in our workdays, it's hard to be completely transparent, to be
> completely, hum.. yea, we are like little crabs who need to sometimes hide our
> thoughts because not everyone will agree with you and if you don't like confrontation
> like me, I think it's the way to go sometimes." (26, Female, Bi-curious)

Her words emphasize Lawrence's (2011) claim that queer clubs provide an alternative to the reality of the public and work place, in which unconventional ways of being and thinking can be expressed without the fear of being judged by other society members. Indeed, despite a relative sense of freedom and security in the Netherlands depicted by respondents, queer interviewees relate some difficult interactions and a feeling of oddness in comparison to the rest of society. Queer respondents shared a need to 'come out every time' or 'explain their existence' to others. The data collected from the interviews highlighted that people seek 'understanding' and 'acceptance' in queer clubs. This reflects Hekma & Duyvendak (2011) claim that the liberal and tolerant values attached to the Netherlands' consideration of LGBTQ+ identities remain too tied to the domain of the private. The recently established queer collective '*Klauw*' came back with consistency in the respondents' answers. *Klauw*'s function is perceived as going way beyond providing dancing events to queer individuals. For the respondents, queer collectives like *Klauw* are standing for social values like 'acceptance', 'inclusivity', and 'caring for one another'. *Klauw* kept defending those values despite the current ban on events due to the pandemic. This collective did so by extending its reach and service through a magazine. For Ji (23), a Dutch transgender person, the social values represented by *Klauw*'s were described as followed:

"Klauw is doing a really good job. Because even if there's no events right now [*Due to a context of global pandemic*]. They're still working on stuff and they're making magazines and sort of trying to bring a community together and doing photo shoots with all kinds of people, everyone's represented and like, they stand for a lot of good values like love and community. And I feel like, that's really nice, sort of being accepting, inclusive, and caring for one another and the community. Trying to make everyone sort of feel at home in a space when not everyone has that opportunity elsewhere" (23, Transgender male person, Gay)

Interestingly enough, the function of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a 'refuge' applies to queer individuals as well as women. In the respondents' answer, women were depicted as 'preys' and 'hunted down' by men in straight clubs. In order to create a safe space for queer individuals as well as women, queer clubbing events have a mix of explicit and implicit policies, so-called 'written and unwritten' rules and values. Explicit rules are

described by respondents as communicated via written signs inside the club and at the door, or promotional material found on social media and collectives' websites. The 'Written rule and value' that came back with consistency from the interview data is 'consent is key'. This rule can notably be found on a sign at the entrance of *Klauw*'s events and inside of *The Performance Bar*. Other written rules depicted by respondents included a no tolerance for sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and an overall promotion of respectful conducts and behaviors. Nevertheless, respondents expressed concerns on the respect of one's boundary and consent in nightlife environments. In the words of one of the respondents:

"In my opinion girls go to queer club to sort of get out of this gaze that they are constantly under when they are going to straight club, and guys hunting them. So I think in some cases straight girls would seek refuge almost to be embraced by the gay community because they are not always hitting on them. […] I mean consent is somehow difficult for certain people but were getting there. I think it's also good that it's getting attention in the media, it gets attention in friends group that we are really having to look at consent and being in a space that should be safe for everyone and that we work together as all of us, straight, queer whatever.. to sort of protect this safe space." (27, Male, Gay)

This quote emphasizes that for the respondent Nightlife and safety are intimately connected with the notion of consent. Respondent's negative experience in clubbing environments always had something to do with a lack of consent or the invasion of one's space. Interestingly enough, inappropriate behaviors and lack of consent were not only attached to straight men but also gay men. Experiences of harassment were expressed by female respondents as well as male respondents in queer clubbing environments. For one of the straight male respondents who experienced what could be called a 'reversed harassment' experience, being suddenly the one 'hunted down' made him realize how some of his behaviors can be intrusive or problematic.

"Yea there has been some harassing, and very sexualized flirting, that made me feel uncomfortable. […] And also it kind of made me change my perspective on how I treat girls, because like I said I can be direct and being on the other side of the situation

really made me change my behaviors, it made me understand what it's like so it was sort of a learning experience." (26, Male, Straight)

In conclusion, queer clubbing scenes still operate the role of 'refuge' for queer individuals depicted by Lawrence (2011) and van Langen (2019). Besides, queer clubbing events also play the role of refuge for women, and the value of consent reigns as primary social value at those events.

4.2.2 The Nest

Based on the respondents' answers and the focus on social values and identity construction of this research, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was conceptualized as a 'Nest'. While the previous theme of 'Refuge' underscored the values of safety, acceptance, and consent, the 'Nest' is about the perception of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a warm and home-like space, along with the social values of care and mutual understanding. A nest is a structure or a place built by animals, typically birds or insects for eggs to hatch and 'youngster' animals to develop and live in. On a symbolic level, a 'Nest', point to a comfortable and homely place, where youngsters are surrounded by family members. The emerging social values found in the respondents' answered showed interesting similarities with the function and symbolic meaning of a 'Nest'. The respondents retailed with consistency that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was perceived as comfortable and warm. The relationships created on queer dancefloors were considered as mostly meaningful, and even in some instances described at the same level as family ties. Relationships created by the respondents at queer clubbing events creates a common ground and a sense of mutual understanding with other scene members, also when met in the outside world.

"Yea, I met both my best friends on the dancefloor, my 'guy' best friend, I don't even call him my best friend, I call him my brother […] And the rest, I still know a lot of people from the time when I went out a lot and is still have this kind of connection because we just shared that time, and I feel like it's also so meaningful, like I don't have to see them, there is just this mutual understanding between us." (27, female, Pansexual)

In some instances, the 'Nest' had a literal nurturing effect on the respondents. For one of the respondents, this 'homely' feeling took on a literal 'home' and 'family' dimension through her life. The respondent's gay brother 'raised' her and being embraced by the gay community 'helped' her through her upbringing and transition to adulthood. This claim emphasizes Valentine & Skelton's (2003) consideration of the gay and lesbian scene as a crucial component of one's identity construction. Besides, her claim shows that the gay and lesbian scene can also play a role in the transition to adulthood and identity construction of non-queer individuals.

> "My brother is gay, I've been raised in a particular way to be honest, he helped me, raised me, and the first gay party I've ever been to was with him […] I had this homely feeling of 'I belong there' because my brother belongs there and I feel so a part of it because of that, I feel so embraced by that world, more so than any other world, because I've been helped, I've been growing into it pretty much." (23, Complete refusal of identity labels)

For the respondents, queer clubbing events 'bring together', 'congregate', and 'federate' people that are on a 'same value level' that they know they can easily connect with and share happy times. For the respondents, our world can be really lonely, and having a space that federates and congregates like-minded individuals is important. The relationships created on queer dancefloors were mostly characterized by the respondent as meaningful. For international respondents, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene played a crucial role in their integration into the city, their overall well-being, and their feeling of being at 'home'. Nevertheless, a fewer number of Dutch respondents described the relationships created on dancefloors as rather shallow.

> "I think well clubbing and dancing and being with people, we are all very trapped into this very bureaucratic society where we do everything alone and we are all separated but then the night comes and it congregates all these people [..] And it's really part of young's people integration process into the city, just connecting with people and it's also this creativity, so yea that's why I think it's essential […] It is a connecting factor between, even lots of friends that I haven't seen for a long time." (27, female, Lesbian)

The emphasis on 'like-mined' and 'common-mined' people encountered at those events echoes the conception of queerness as a 'state of mind' conceptualized in previous chapters of this research. In the following sub-chapter of the results, the concentration of 'like-minded' people at queer clubbing events will be further developed through the conception of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a 'Bubble'.

4.2.3 The Bubble

The last emerging social theme found in the respondents' answers was coined as the 'Bubble'. While the last two social themes underscored the values of consent, acceptance, safety, and the experience of a warm, comfortable, and homely space, the theme of 'the Bubble' points to an ephemeral utopia and the values of diversity and inclusivity. In its literal sense, a bubble is a frail and completely closed sphere of water mixed with foam. In a symbolic sense, a bubble, as in the expression 'being in a bubble' refers to a fragile, fleeting, and upbeat environment in which someone can thrive and navigate with ease. The expression 'being in a bubble' directly connotes an environment where someone is surrounded by like-minded people, characterized by an absence of conflict and negativity. 'Being in a bubble' also refers to a space disjointed from reality and unlikely to last, a form of 'ephemeral utopia'. Drawing on that last consideration of a 'bubble' as a utopia, respondents constructed the social value of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a 'space accessible to everyone', with a 'diversity of individuals on the dancefloor', and 'no dominant group'. Respondents qualified those values as 'utopian' in nature. Nevertheless, a utopia that they deem achievable and worthy to strive for. Besides, most of the respondents described queer clubbing events as disjointed from reality and an experience lived in a certain temporality. In this regard, queer clubbing events are known by respondents to have a 'no picture' policy, making sure that what happens at those events cannot be captured and stays in that very same temporality. In the words of one female respondent:

"Always things in time. Like it's not allowed to make photos. So it's just there and then it's an experience that is there and when it's gone, it's gone, it's your experience and the experience of the people that had it, and I guess what you experience in life always

shapes you as a person and everything you saw, know, it always stays with you" (27, female, lesbian)

Respondents highlighted in their answers that the crowd of queer clubbing events was highly diverse but also essentially composed of 'like-minded' individuals. This depicts a crowd rather heterogeneous in terms of demographics, but rather homogenous in terms of 'state of mind' and 'mentality'. This state of mind and mentality characterized as 'open' by the respondents is however subject to anxiety and debates. Indeed, while respondents praised the 'freedom of expression', and 'extravagance' of individuals frequenting Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene, they relate a paradoxical pressure to fit that 'open' and 'sexually liberated' mentality, by 'being overly sexualized', or 'playing with gender'. The data collected from the interviews showed that some respondents developed a sensation to not be 'queer' enough, and a pressure to fit the 'imagery' of what being queer is. For the respondents, the queer clubbing scene can sometimes feel like a 'private bubble', where only individuals fitting a certain 'queer' imagery can enter, therefore challenging previous conceptions of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a diverse and inclusive utopia. For a majority of the respondents, it's good that non-queer people get in touch with the queer community through clubbing. By 'being exposed', and 'sharing a night together', non-queer individuals could be familiarized with the queer community and favorite the integration and normalization of queer identities into everyday society. In the words of two respondents:

"Everybody has something to offer, but you are within a bubble world with only one type of person with a similar mind-set you know, which I think is unfortunate […] The queer clubbing scene can be hella exclusionary. And I get it, the safety aspect. But you are filtering out people because some people fit your certain imagery and some people don't. So you can say it's safety but that's not only that." (23, Complete refusal of identity labels)

"And I know, it's such a split story, on the other hand, it will still be a battle of explaining it to people and making it accessible to people. Because my own idea about it is that the more you expose people to it, the more they get used to it, and the more they see it as something that is not like an 'alien'. Because even for me it can be very

confronting, because I consider myself as a free and very open-minded person, but even when I, like go to a party, I wanna say Klauw for example, you already get confronted with so much […] So I don't think there is an answer to that, I think it's a back and forth, because we reflect each other, because how can I be queer without straight people?" (28, male, gay)

In conclusion, the conceptualization of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a 'bubble' points to a diverse, inclusive, and heterogeneous crowd in terms of identities. Nevertheless, this 'ephemeral utopia' is also paradoxically considered by respondents as closed, and homogenous in terms of mentalities. This finding emphasizes the contemporary struggle for inclusivity experienced by queer collectives depicted in Ekenhorst & van Aalts (2019)'s study of Amsterdam's Lesbian Nightlife scene. Indeed, while door policies and barriers to entry are being reconsidered by queer clubbing organizers, clubbers still consider contemporary queer clubbing scenes as paradoxically inclusive and exclusive. The 'open' and 'inclusive' values represented by queer clubbing events remain in a sense contested and debated within clubbers.

4.3 Cultural Values

In the following section of the results, the emerging cultural values found in the respondents' answers will be developed. Namely, three emerging themes were constructed by the respondents; 1) Freedom of dressing up and expression, 2) 'The laboratory; inspiration and experimentation', and 3) Historical values and awareness of the past.

4.3.1 Freedom of dressing up expression.

Participants retailed with consistency that the main cultural value of queer clubbing events was the freedom of dressing up the way they want and the freedom of expressing themselves through dancing. Therefore, freedom of dressing up and expression was coined as an emerging cultural theme. Indeed, the different Queer clubbing events happening in Rotterdam are for a great majority of the respondent an opportunity to wear pieces of clothing and outfits that they would not wear in their everyday life. Respondents retailed with consistency that a huge part of the pleasure of going out is that they can pull out their most extravagant outfits and be surrounded by people incline to the same thing. Besides,

the community aspect of queer clubbing nights was quoted by respondents as a factor increasing the involvement of everyone in the creation of a highly 'creative and expressive' atmosphere. Every interviewee seemed extremely enthusiastic to contribute to this 'creative vibe', by means of wearing extravagant outfits and not restrict themselves to rather 'normal' or 'random' attires. This shows that the social values previously developed had a clear impact on the construction of the cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene.

A great majority of the respondent expressed a strong need to express themselves with a sense of freedom and safety. For the respondents, our everyday world tends to suppress that creativity and expressivity, sometimes being even rejectful and hostile towards it. Despite a relative sense of tolerance in Rotterdam expressed by the respondents, Participants, express that if they would 'release' their creativity through clothing in the streets, they would be 'called names', be targeted by insults, or treated like 'freaks'. This claim fits adequately the idea of 'queer' as a marginalized identity and anything out of the norm. Interestingly enough, fashion and style can act as a marker of one's identity, which is why dressing up freely was so important to the respondents. Nonetheless, queer as well as non-queer respondents particularly enjoyed those events because they could dress up without thinking of what society could think of their appearance and demeanor, showing that fashion and style can act as a playful way to affirm one's identity as well as simply express one's extravagance with a sense of limitless freedom. Therefore, queer clubbing events act as an output to express a sometimes repressed creativity and expressivity. Respondents described the crowd of queer clubbing as highly 'dressed up', in ways that are 'gender non-conforming', and 'extravagant'. For them, queer clubbing nights are a good opportunity to show a different part of themselves and wear the most amazing outfits. In the words of two respondents:

"It's also what I'm looking for like, I always find ways to express myself, which is why I always danced and do ballroom. These are actually all platforms that I use to start a conversation […] I don't know why it's just an urge that is there. I mean, I get a lot of energy from other people who do it. It's not only for me, when I see someone wearing something cool, I get something out of that." (27, Non-binary, Gay)

"I think there is more creativity going on, I think that people feel that there is a stronger need to express themselves, maybe because life suppressed that creativity. In how they go through the world and in these moments they pour all their creativity out so that might be a part of it, and I think there is such a strong feeling of community so everyone feels so happy to put some input." (27, Female, Pansexual)

All in all, one of the most critical cultural values constructed by respondents was the freedom of expression through clothing afforded by the safety of the walls of queer clubbing events. This sense of freedom and safety acts as a means to 'unleash' repressed creativity and expressivity experienced in everyday society, allowing respondents to become a rather playful and extravagant version of themselves, a version of themselves that they couldn't be in their daily life. Music and dancing also participates and elevates this freedom of expression. For the respondents, magic can happen when people feel free to do whatever they want and express themselves in the way that they want. Therefore, it seems clear that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene plays a crucial role in the expression of the respondents' identity rather than its construction. This Freedom of expression is due to a feeling of safety and community, nevertheless, freedom overload can also make people feel uncomfortable or excluded. Indeed, a fewer number of participants expressed that the highly expressive nature of queer clubbing events made them question their queerness; 'Am I queer enough?', 'Do I need to be highly expressive and extravagant in order to be included in the community?'. Those are questionings that came back with consistency from the interviewee's answer. This shows that queerness remains multidimensional rather than unique.

4.3.2 'The Laboratory': Inspiration and Experimentation

In the respondents' answers, the cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene were consistently portrayed as having a clear impact on the respondents' inspiration and creativity. In that sense, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was conceptualized as a 'Laboratory'. By using the term 'Laboratory', this theme emphasizes the capacity of queer clubbing events to provide a space of experimentation and artistic stimulation for clubbers and creatives. Indeed, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was characterized as a 'hotpot of creativity'. Most of the respondents happened to have a professional activity linked to the

art and creative worlds such as dancer, designer, photographer, Dj, or musician. For this group of respondents, the creative energies extracted from those events had a clear influence on their happiness and artistic stimulation. For the respondents, it is possible to 'echo' the aesthetic experience of clubbing in other forms of creation or another artistic product. In the words of one of the female respondent:

"Even when I used to go out a lot, it brought me a lot of joy and happiness, it gave me inspiration and energy to do other things […] And it depends, if I go to a ball, or Klauw, there is also so much inspiration that you can get from the people around you, from the way they decorated it, from the conversations that you might have, the energies that you are sharing with people, the dancing." (28, Non-binary, Lesbian)

Besides, queer clubbing events and club culture in general are depicted by the respondents as having a tangible influence on the art world and creative industries. Queer clubbing scenes are perceived as spaces where the boundaries of creativity can be pushed, primarily through musical experimentation but also with fashion and performance art. The 'freedom of expression' depicted in the previous theme of the results is understood as the vector of this rather abundant creativity. For the respondents, what happens in clubs has an impact on the art world. In the words of one of the respondent:

"I think a lot of creativity came from the dancefloor, a lot of fashion came from the dancefloor, because a lot of people have this sort of free pass to do whatever they want and combine whatever they want and dress the way they want. You see that things out of club culture almost find their way in the mainstream basically. So I think that what happens on the dancefloor sort of flow through the creative scene […] You see that club culture directly gets translated into other kinds of expression or performance or artworks, so I definitely think that club culture inspires a lot of people in different ways" (27, Male, Gay)

Finally, queer clubbing events can act as a literal 'laboratory' for creatives. As a concrete example, one of the respondents exercises the profession of nurse as well as fashion designer. Queer clubbing events and the different ways of expressing one's self seen at

those events are a way for this respondent to understand what people do with their clothing, how people use their bodies to move, navigate into the space, dance, and what is considered to be comfortable and desirable. Besides, queer clubbing events are a way for this respondent to try out some of his creations, experience how a piece of clothing moves when you dance in it, and see how people will react to it. In that sense, queer clubbing events can literally act as a 'laboratory' and 'research field' for creatives like him. Queer clubbing events are seen as a way to experiment and try out things, in his own words:

> "Because I think it's still interesting what people do with their clothing and how people express themselves going out, it helped me to realize how people move, is it sexy?[...] And also for me I try things a lot when going out, I think it's a testing group, I make a collection, I wear the pieces and I see how people react to it, and then I kinda also know how I feel in the clothing. I made some outfits I would go out and be like 'no this doesn't work'." (27, Male, Gay)

Interestingly enough, the respondent design clothes for performers who regularly perform at queer clubbing events. One notable finding in this research is that almost all respondents were actively engaged in different ways in Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. From bartending, to performing, to Djying, to organizing clubbing events, a great majority of respondents had a professional and active participation in their local scene. Such findings corroborate the cultural values depicted in Hitters & van der Hoeven (2019). Nevertheless, conceptualizing queer clubbing scenes as a laboratory shows that not only music is experimented at those events, but also a wide array of other forms of creativity such as fashion, photography, and performance art. Participants saw their local scene as crucial for the sustainability of the broader creative industries. Local scenes are perceived as forward-thinking and much less institutionalized, allowing respondents to experiment and take risks with their creativity.

4.3.3 Historical values and awareness of the past

For a significant number of respondents, clubbing was constructed in relationship with the past and history of club culture. Clubbing was even considered as a 'memorial of what has been'. For the respondents, clubbing in our contemporary world allows them to

somehow 'resurrect' for one night the values and utopia carried by 90's rave and club culture. Most Participants had a clear knowledge of the historical roots of club culture, when raving and clubbing were deemed to have a strong political meaning, as a mean to express freedom and liberation. The city of Berlin is quoted by respondents as a good example of such dynamic, where after the fall of the Berlin wall and years of repression, partying and simply enjoying music surrounded by others had a much more exceptional value than today. Respondents relate that contemporary clubbing scenes can be now overly institutionalized and actual business engendering a lot of benefits. For the respondents, the only way to counter such institutionalization is to remain aware of the past and the origins of club culture. In the words of two respondents.

"Well, of course, I think there's a very big symbolism that comes from being oppressed, especially after wars, let's take the example of Berlin, after the wall fell down, I think party and the queer community started using partying to represent freedom and until now, I think raving and partying symbolizes just people's freedom and the connotations behind it are not only the fun but showing the world who you are, having a voice through coming together and through partying." (26, female, Bi-curious)

"Yea I think I leave in the History a bit too much even. I always think that clubbing is stuck in the 90s you know, when people had this motto of we accept everyone, and we are just here, we are wild, we are free, and all those rushes of adrenaline. Now we are getting to more institutionalized settings, more formal, and responsible. You know Tickets, we don't have the same thing that when it started so somehow I am nostalgic of something I haven't been. That's how I relate to it" (25, female, Straight/Bi-curious)

These claims highlight a form of nostalgia of the clubbing scene of the 90s and a desire to preserve past values of clubbing scenes over new institutionalized ones. This was evoked by a significant number of respondents. Van der Hoeven's study of the cultural heritage of clubbing scenes (2014) depicted a similar process of preservation of past values. Interestingly enough, this awareness of the past is understood by respondents as a way to learn how to behave and navigate at queer clubbing events. Indeed, the rules and values to

navigate queer spaces seem located in the history of clubbing. For the respondents, being aware of the history of the queer community and its relationship with clubbing can help you to position yourself as a non-queer individual in a queer space. In the words of one of the respondent:

"And especially as a cis female in this scene, it's really good to know the history and how you stand in it so then you can be respectful, and express yourself and still feel part of the community". (27, female, Pansexual)

Interestingly, this shows that queer clubbing in our contemporary world bears strong historical values for the respondents. 'Awareness of the past and history' are considered as key components to understand the value of queer clubbing events. Respondents depicted the abundance of various resources such as books and films to inform you on the matter. For the respondents a clear awareness of the painful past of the queer community and the role that clubbing played in the emancipation of LGBTQ+ individuals allows clubbers to understand the 'unwritten rules' and 'values' of those events. Understanding the past urgency and role of clubbing in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals play a crucial role in the creation of a mutually respectful atmosphere and allows everyone on the dancefloor to share memorable nights together.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore how clubbers construct the socio-cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene and the impact those values had on clubbers' identity development. Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was placed in a value-driven framework of inquiry and apprehended in relationship with clubber's process of identity construction. Thus, the findings provided a better understanding of the different roles that queer clubbing scenes play in the lives of clubbers. Such findings are particularly relevant in the context of a global pandemic (Covid-19 2020/2021), where clubs and any form of socio-cultural spaces are temporarily closed. An assessment of the worth and importance of socio-cultural spaces like queer clubbing events allowed to better comprehend why such space matter for cities' inhabitants and their identity construction.

The data collected from the interviews suggest that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene plays the socio-cultural roles of a refuge, a nest, a bubble, and a laboratory in the lives of clubbers. Besides, queer clubbing events were valued by respondents due to the freedom of expression experienced on queer dancefloor. The findings of this thesis contributed to the existing literature on Queer Theories, and studies by adding the perspective of values of culture, by identifying new socio-cultural values, and showing their role in clubbers' identity development. First, this research provides relevant addition to Zosky & Alberts's (2016) research on queer identity. The term 'queer' was rarely used as an identity label by LGBTQ+ respondents and was understood by them as a 'state of mind' rather than an identity. Therefore heterosexuals could be considered by the respondents as queerer than some members of the LGBTQ+ community. Also, each individual interviewed expressed curiosity and openness towards queer forms of affection. Therefore, this research provides further relevant additions to the field of queer scene studies, and Ekenhorst & van Aalts's (2019) study in particular. Indeed, by identifying queerness as a state of mind rather than an identity, the increasing diversity of queer clubbing crowds can be explained. If we understand 'queerness' as a form of openness to the fluidity and multiplicity of being, everyone sharing those values is actively invited to share the dancefloors of queer clubbing events. This was notably underscored in the theme of the 'Bubble', where Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene was constructed as a diverse and inclusive utopia.

Besides, this study contributed to the existing literature on the values of cultural events (Hitters & van der Hoeven, 2019; Klamer, 2004) by focusing on queer clubbing events and by

identifying the following values. First, this study adds the value of social value consent to the field. Consent was understood by respondents as the primary social value of queer clubbing events. A new surprising finding is that Queer clubbing scenes hold strong historical values for the respondents. Holden (2006) claims that historical values are extremely rare when assessing the cultural values of events. Nevertheless, queer clubbing scenes had a strong historical charge for the respondents. A clear awareness of the past and history of marginalization of the LGBTQ+ community and clubbing was constructed as conductive to appropriate social conduct at queer clubbing events. Besides, the cultural value of the 'Laboratory' shows that Rotterdam's queer clubbing had an impact on the inspiration and creativity of individuals beyond the field of live music. Fashion designers, performers, photographers; various art forms and creative professionals were positively impacted by their experience of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. This adds relevant addition to Hitters & van der Hoeven's (2019) study, showing that live music events like queer clubbing can play a positive role in the larger creative ecosystem of a city. Besides, the findings show that the social and cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene are conjoined rather than distinct and should be considered as such in future research. Indeed, the emerging theme of the 'Refuge' represents the social values of safety, acceptance, and consent. The consideration of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene as a safe space allowed for the cultural value of freedom of dressing up and expression to be constructed by the respondents. The theme of the 'Nest' represents the social values of care and mutual understanding, and the 'Bubble' represents the social values of diversity and inclusivity. Therefore, openness, acceptance, consent, care, mutual understanding, diversity, and inclusivity were constructed as social values by the respondents. The above-mentioned social values were regarded as essential to guarantee the cultural values of freedom of expression, inspiration, and artistic experimentation. All in all, the findings show that queer clubbing events hold mutually constitutive socio-cultural values for queer as well as non-queer clubbers.

Both groups showed consistency in their understanding of the values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene. The most salient difference between both groups was the difference of consideration between queer and non-queer respondents on the use of the term 'queer' as an identity label. While queer individuals conceptualized queerness as a state of mind, non-queer ones attached a meaning of community and identity to the term. Findings show that each and every respondent attached multiple identity labels to their gender and sexual

identity. Other respondents notably recruited as 'non-queer' expressed a strong resistance when it came to identify with anything, which is quoted by Butler (1993) as highly queer. The findings and the plurality of identities corroborate Galupo, Ramirez & Pulice Farrow's (2017) claim on the preference of contemporary society subjects to not use identity labels and at the same time, use multiple identity labels when constructing one's identity. These findings supported the consideration of queer identity as a difficulty graspable subject. Levy & Johnson (2012)'s guidelines provided incredible resources to tackle the construction of the respondents' identity during interviews and should be considered in every future research interested in queer subjects. Considering queerness and straight individuals as 'potentially queer' also provides further relevance for future research interested in queer theory. Indeed, door policies and barriers to entry based on a 'state of mind' rather than an identity remain quite abstract subjects. A recommendation for future study would be to interview this time queer clubbing event organizers as well as doormen to figure out their door policy and the barriers to entry of queer clubbing events. To this day, insufficient studies included doormen know as 'bouncer' in their sample. Future research could also interview queer clubbing organizers in order to clarify how they construct the appropriate 'state of mind' needed to enter and navigate queer clubbing events.

Finally, the results of this study show that the socio-cultural values of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scenes impacted the expression of the respondents' identity(ies) rather than its entire process of construction. The theoretical framework introduced us to two interrelated processes of Identity construction; (1) Identity development and (2) Identity integration (Rosario, Schrimshaw, & Hunter, 2011). Besides, Valentine & Skelton's study (2003) assumed a crucial role of the lesbian and gay scene in the 'coming out' and transition to adulthood of queer youth which was taken into consideration. The results of this study show that a great majority of the respondents had already developed their gender and sexual identity before their first clubbing experience. Nonetheless, this might be due to the fact that their sexual and gender identity development occurred in their teenagehood, before their 18 years old, the legal age to enter a clubbing event. For only one of the respondents, frequenting Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene and witnessing the different ways to love expressed on queer dancefloors had an impact on her coming out as pansexual. Therefore, this study provides a relevant addition to Valentine & Skelton (2003). Indeed, Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene had very little impact on the 'coming out' of the respondents. Nevertheless,

finding shows that Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene had an impact on the respondents' transition to adulthood, in the form of 'finding your people' and feeling integrated into a city's socio-cultural environment. In particular, the theme of the 'Nest' conceptualized how the relationships created on queer dancefloors participated in an overall feeling of 'being at home', and provided a sense of belonging and mutual understanding to the respondents. Rotterdam's Queer clubbing scene played a crucial role in the integration of the respondent into social life and an overall sense of well-being which impacted greatly the respondents.

In regards to the step of data analysis, an important weakness can be found. Respondent's validation and the implementation of a systematic checking of the interpretation of the respondent's answers through the interviews were implemented. Nevertheless, qualitative methodologies recommend double-coding to be implemented in order to guarantee a high level of soundness and validity of the results and moderate potentially biased interpretations (Maxwell, 2005). In this study, the steps of open, axial, and selective coding were conducted by only one coder. Therefore, a possible amelioration would be to have two coders with different demographics and socio-cultural background coding the interviews separately and later on comparing their analysis. For example, double-coding operated by a queer researcher and a non-queer researcher could have improved greatly the soundness and depth of the results. Besides, triangulation could have been of great use to further the depth and richness of the findings as combining different methods could have provided additional data and provided different perspectives on the topic of queer clubbing scenes (Silverman, 2013). In the case of this research, interviewing organizers from Rotterdam's queer clubbing event could have increased greatly the coverage of this study and should be considered in further research. Having the perspectives of clubbers and organizers could provide a better understanding of every actor of the 'scene'. Besides, clubbing is by essence a form of live experience of music. Therefore, using ethnography and participant observation as a methodology could increase greatly the understanding of such phenomenon. Nevertheless, this was impossible due to the context of the global pandemic (Covid 19 2020/2021) and the complete ban on events that marked the entire research process. Using ethnography as a methodology in the years following this research could either corroborate or refute the findings of this research. In any case, ethnography could add a greater understanding of queer clubbing scenes. In this regard, the personal biography of the researcher and the influence it might have had on the interview dynamic must be

exposed (Broom, Hand & Tovey, 2009). Power dynamics between interviewer and interviewee can have a strong impact on the quality and depth of the results. (Brennen, 2012). Despite the use of mostly passive listening and a neutral attitude towards my interviewee (Brennen, 2012), qualitative research needs transparency (Silverman, 2013). As a queer individual myself, namely gay cis-male, my physical appearance and sometimes obvious 'queerness' might have made respondents more inclined to open up to me. Nevertheless, past studies introduce gay males as the most dominant and privileged segment of the queer community, such power dynamic was depicted as salient on queer dancefloors (Goh, 2018; Peterson, 2011). This claim was corroborated by some of the respondents and therefore, my personal biography might have impacted positively as well as negatively the power dynamic between me and my interviewees. Besides, my presence as an active clubber in Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene provided me with easy access to a wide range of respondents and a sense of mutual trust with my interviewees. Nonetheless, issues of transparency must be addressed and my experience of Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene might have shaped the results of this study. Once again, a potential amelioration of the soundness of this research would be to have a non-queer and non-clubber second coder.

All in all, this research shows qualitative evidence of the role that queer clubbing scenes play in the lives of queer as well as non-queer clubbers. The social and cultural values constructed by the respondents emphasize the impact of queer clubbing scenes on the expression of the respondents' identity(ies) and an overall feeling of well-being, acceptance, and creative stimulation. The findings of this research provide crucial information for event organizers willing to create a safe and uplifting environment matching the expectations of their audience members. Besides, the findings of this research can help policymakers and cities' representatives to be more aware of the different values of queer clubbing events and their role in cities' creative ecosystem. Nevertheless, more research is needed on the need of contemporary society subjects for a space of expression.

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Appendix A

Participants Information

Age, Gender and sexuality	Origins
28, No-Binary, Gay	Dutch
25, Cis-Woman, Straight/Bi-curious.	Lithuanian
27, cis-male, Gender non-conforming, Gay	Dutch
24, Complete refusal of identity labels	South African
26, Cis-male, Straight & Bi-curious	Dutch
27, Cis-woman, Straight & Bi-curious	Spanish
27, Cis-woman, Pansexual	Dutch of Surinamese Decent
28, Cis-male, Gay	Dutch
27, Non-binary, Lesbian	Dutch of Surinamese Decent
22, Transgender male, Gay	Dutch
27, Cis-Woman, Lesbian	Dutch
32, Cis-Male, Straight & Queer-curious	Dutch of Surinamese Decent

Appendix B

Interview Guide:

1 Introduction:

- Brief introduction on the purpose of the research project.
- No right or wrong answers, interviewer is genuinely interested in the individual perspective of the interviewee.
- Precise that Interviewees should feel free to ask when they do not understand a question.
- Technical aspects of the interview: Confidentiality & Anonymity, Audio recording & Transcript.
- Ethical consideration: Precise that the interviewee can decide to not answer a question and stop the interview at any moment.
- Ask if the interviewee has any question before the beginning of the interview
- Sign Informed Consent

2 Demographics & Ice Breaker:

- In order to know a bit more about yourself at an inner and deeper level, I would like to play a little game called 'Chinese Portrait':
  a) If you were a precious metal, what would you be?
      Why?
  b) If you were a piece of clothing, what would you be?
      Why?
  c) If you were a weapon, what would you be?
      Why?
- What brought you to Rotterdam?
- Now I'd like to know about your gender and sexual identity, how do you identify in this regard?
- Could you describe what it's like to be you in nowadays society?

3 Inquiry:

3.1 Clubbing practices & Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene

- What brought you to a queer club the first time you went out?

- What kind of activities do you engage in at queer clubbing events?

- What are you looking for when you go on a night out?

° What kind of experience? Sensations?

° Could you describe the ideal clubbing night for you?

- What do you think about Rotterdam's queer clubbing scene?

3.2 Experience of queer dancefloors

- Who do you usually encounter on the dancefloors of Rotterdam's queer clubbing events?

° What kind of crowd?

- How do you typically socialize with others at queer clubbing events?

- What do you think about the relationships that you create on queer dancefloors?

° Would you describe them as meaningful?

- What do you think about the increasing diversity of queer clubbing crowds?

- Could you describe your interactions with Queer/Non-Queer people at queer clubbing events?

° Did you experienced discomfort/negativity at an event and would you be okay to describe it to me?

° How did that make you feel?

- Could you describe the best event you've ever been to?

° Why was it that good?

- And now could you describe the worst?

° Why was it so bad?

-What do you think about the artistic dimension of queer clubbing events?

° and about the music in particular?

°What do you find beautiful at queer clubbing events? What do you maybe find ugly at queer clubbing events?

- What do you think about the history of clubbing and the LGBT+ community?

° How do you think you relate to that history?

3.3 Clubbing and Identity Construction

- Now I would like to know more about who you are.

- First, at surface level, could you tell me your age, life experience, and your current occupation?

- How do you define yourself? What are the most important parts of your identity? How would you define who you are?

- Is there any particular moment when you felt like clubbing was part of who you are?

- Regarding the values that we previously evoked (Cite most crucial values previously evoked through the interview), could you describe the impact they had on who you are?

- In summary, can you think about three main things that clubbing brings to your life?

4 Conclusion

- Thank the interviewees for their participation and the insights they provided

- Ask if there is anything the interviewee would like to mention, and something that the interview questions might have missed, something crucial for the interviewee that has not been covered during the interview.

- Ask how the interview was experienced by the interviewee, is there anything the interviewer should change or improve about

- Provide a brief summary of the most crucial/memorable information collected during the interview and ask for validation.

- Ask if the interviewee might know someone else relevant that could be interviewed? (Snowball sampling)

END

Appendix C

Themes	Dimensions	Open codes
The shifting and open and nature of queer identity	-Openness towards identity development and changes -Ongoing process -consent questioning and shifting -Never figured out -Multiple identity labels	-Someone who keeps it open -Don't see themselves in the binary spectrum -Allows you to do whatever you want and not think about the social role 'made up' and attached to it. -Allows you to accept yourself, being an open category as the result of many questioning -'all over the spectrum' and never fully set. -transitioned from female to male. -Still questioning whether non-binary or not. -Sexually identifies as gay.
Different conceptualization of 'Queer', State of mind and Community.	-Clear difference between queer and non-queer views on 'queer'. - Queer as community -Queer as a state of mind, openness -Straight can be queer	- Abstract concept, something that informs my daily life, in the back of my mind (not so much community) - Do not actively use the label 'queer' use mostly trans - Gay, feel like every straight person is also a bit gay. 'No one is 100% something'. Kinna 'Bi' but still identifies as gay -'Queer', not specifically 'pointed' at gay, Les or Trans -Queer as a state of mind, a feeling, when you accept the multifaceted aspects that are in gender, identity and sexuality. -Straight people can be very queer.

		-People with an open mind, identifying with different things, accepting it, learning, and being interested is also queer
The Refuge	- Interaction between Queer & Non-Queer -Difficult in the past -Ppl seek refuge and acceptance in queer clubs -Women usually hunted down in clubs, -Refuge for queer individuals and women	- feeling of being misunderstood all his life by straight people -People seek refuge in queer clubs, -Seeking to be accepted -Straight people should not ruin that energy - Queer clubs allow girls to get out of the male gaze -Men hunt women in straight clubs -Queer clubs as a refuge for girls - Rules at the door of Klauw: Black trans women at the front & CONSENT is KEY, you have to make sure that the people in get it.
The Nest	-Warm, comfortable and homely space -Surrounded by familiar & family like faces -Helped participant to grow -Nurturing effect	-Clubs are places that manage to congregate people that she loves, all over the world - Clubs attract people that are on the same value level -Shared value -Place where you can easily connect - Place provides opportunity to meet same minded/open minded people - Relationships always meaningful, you see those people again in the streets at the supermarket, and still connects. -Closeness with people in the crowd, you feel like you don't know them but could know them

		-Her Brother is gay and raised her, first experience in a Gay club, amazing & insane, feeling of belonging there and embraced by that world, being growing into that world.
The Bubble	-Fragile, closed & temporary environment -Utopia of inclusivity and diversity -Paradox between inclusion/exclusion -'The Private Bubble'	- Probleme with 'extremely queer or liberal = injunction to 'show your tits, play with gender, you have to do it otherwise you don't fit'. -Creates a private bubble, where only ppl from the scene go. -Needs more openness
Dressing up and Freedom of Expression	- Clothing, style and presentation as self-expression. -Extravagance -Freedom of expression due to feeling of safety -Freedom overload can also make people uncomfortable - More creativity going on at queer parties. Stronger need to express themselves -everyday life suppress that creativity	- More creativity going on at queer parties. Stronger need to express themselves, maybe because everyday life suppress that creativity; -Feeling of community, everyone is happy to put some input - Everyone is dressed up, also very gender non-conforming. Good opportunity to show a part of themselves and wear amazing outfits. - More extravagant to make their point, make a statement - Dancing part of expression, statement, fantasy, Freedom to do that. -Statement questioning gender, also for the sake of it 'because I like it'. -Queer clubs allow you to dress the way you want, you couldn't do that in the street, you would be called names.

The Laboratory	-Dancefloors, hotpot of creativity -Pushing boundaries of creativity - What happens on dancefloors and in clubs inspires the art world -Clubs as a creative space -Club Culture gets translated into other kinds of expression or art works -Clubbing and experimentation -Clubs as a laboratory for experimentation	-Lot of creativity emerge from dancefloors Club culture found its way to the mainstream -What happens on dancefloors flow through the creative scene and art world -Club culture acknowledged in the art world -Club culture gets translated into other kinds of expression or art works -Interested in what people do with their clothing, made him realize how people move, what is considered as sexy, -If creates clothing gonna wear them in clubs and see how people react to it.
Awareness of the past and History	-Clubbing as a memorial of what has been -Experience of clubbing in relationship with its past, its origins of something you haven't lived -Education, learning, documentation -Awareness of the past enriches the experience of clubbing -This awareness of the past teaches you how to behave and navigate at queer clubbing events -Rules and values seem located into the History of clubbing.	-History of clubbing as Utopia -Nowadays more institutionalized, formal responsible -Nostalgic of something she hasn't lived -But heavily relates to it -Feels like she could be more educated, is more educated on Ballroom. -As a cis-female, it's really good to know the history and how you stand in it, so then you can be respectful, and express yourself, and still feel part of the community