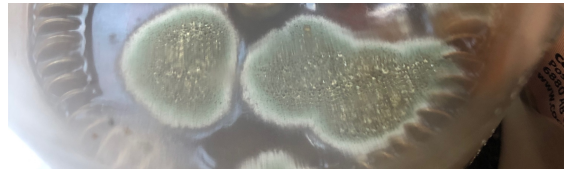*mold, blood, snails,* and *the apocalypse*

exploring the infinite space of the in-between

A study into queer non-normativity and how this can be understood and expressed by photography
beyond consensual categories of representation

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Abstract

This thesis uses the creative method photo-story to answer how queer non-normativity can be understood and expressed by photography beyond consensual categories of representation (Campany & Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2022). It is a report of lived experiences of gender-queer people that challenge norms. Gender-queer people refuse to order themselves and thereby explore a space outside of categorization, already imagining how ways of living together could be different (Halberstam, 2020). The open and reflexive method photo-story is used to explore the queer relation to order, by letting gender-queer people represent their world. The base of the understanding of queer non-normativity is to embrace its ambivalence. By using the four concepts refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity, it becomes clear they do not have one strict example, meaning, or representation, since gender-queer people push the definitions, rethinking norms, and values, as a way to navigate through mainstream normativity. They transform and engage in actively altering the human as image and stereotypical representations, by disidentification.

Key words: Gender, non-normativity, photography, queer, representation.

Strangers meet

Self encounters Other

Image finds object, body meets shadow pride blends with humility

This meeting place

is where borders dissolve away

So the rigid curve between you and me is just a contingent turn of a spiral,

a spot in the expanse of infinity

But lo and behold!

It wears an illusive face of a border

Part of poem The space in-between by Martha Kuwee Kumsa (2007)

Introduction

I have been insecure about my flat chest from the day I started to explore my sexuality. This insecurity was place dependent, I figured out I was happy with my body when I was alone or on holidays, topless on the beach. It was in the context of sexuality and men, that this insecurity popped up. Growing up in a small village, in a heteronormative designed world (Jackson, 2006), I learned a woman had to be attractive to men, and in my mind, this went hand in hand with boobs. And if I was a woman, I needed those boobs. By the time I got my first girlfriend, this insecurity vanished. I realized I am stranded somewhere in-between normative gender and sexuality and have been given the perfect body for who I am, although very much influenced by me being sexed as a woman at birth. The idea gender could be more fluid, and that more than one way of living was possible, somewhere in-between, gave me more freedom. I have been blessed with a flat chest.

In Antiboy (2022), Valentijn Hoogenkamp writes about his experience of exploring the space outside or in-between the gender binary. From this point of view, he makes sense of the world around him, in which 'facts' about what makes a 'man' or a 'woman' no longer stand. He notices how people struggle with this, including himself, since it is an unscripted life (Halberstam, 2020). By the "attempt to determine what men and what women are" there is actually scripted "what makes a human" (Hoogenkamp, 2022, p. 69). A border is drawn: who has a right, who can do something or who belongs (Butler, 2018). This often leads to questions like "What are you?" or "define yourself" (Lewis, 2023) from those who define truth in categories. How you define the truth, relates to how you experience the state of the world, or the order. How you experience order, relates directly to your position. This research investigates these personal positions and experiences, using the creative method photo-story, in which participants are asked to make representations, photographs.

Halberstam (2020) argues that the things that refuse to order themselves, explore a space outside of categorization. When you do not have the 'truths' that are given by those that argue truth comes in categories (you are either a man or a woman), you have to account for a whole new imagination of the world, and you already imagine how ways of living together could be different (Halberstam, 2020). This thesis uses the creative method photo-story and is a report of lived experience of gender-queer people from firsthand everyday realities that challenge norms and leads to the question: How

can queer non-normativity be understood and expressed by photography beyond consensual categories of representation (Campany & Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2022)?

This thesis aims to explore the queer relation to order, by letting gender-queer people represent their world. It investigates how those experiences, the capturing of their specific moments in time, and communal reflection of those inform this relation, beyond consensual categories. A recognition of what has been there, of what is there, and what is becoming, and therefore in need of a reflexive and open method to investigate it. Including a past, present and future, that does not presume linearity or a destination. The method explores non-normativity expressed through photography and the ways it articulates social relations today and sees the method photo-story as a language productive of meaning and theory (Park, 2020).

Theoretical framework

In the same way Halberstam (2011) uses failure as a method towards experimental ends, I will use queer theory that defamiliarizes and problematizes the 'borders' between what is normal and abnormal. It is exactly where there is disagreement, disidentification or the ambiguous, that possibilities become apparent, and we learn how ways of living can already be imaginative. In the following, the concepts refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity are used to navigate through the infinite space of in-between. These concepts are rooted in queer theory and help to explore the queer relation to order through gender-queer people's representations.

The body as an Archive

The Archive

When writing about life and of how people experience life, in an academic language, a writer often performs an outsider's 'objective' perspective. Matters that do not speak in this distinct language, are played down as 'non-science', thereby demarcating between the way people live (reality) and science. Subjectivity is pretended to be hidden but is present. Research methods using the archive of the academy give the impression the research is logical and linear in describing 'the truth'. It thereby becomes hard to challenge matters of life from within the academy, since knowledge on experiences of living, often lack the actual experiences of people, that could appear

in so many ways. These experiences form the way you look at the world and what you define as truths. Which truths are true?

When doing research within the academic language, a consensual archive of knowledge is often used. In this archive, knowledge and truth are based on order and rationalized with science (Halberstam, 2020), reproducing straight, white, cisgendered, masculinist conventions (Simpson, 2017). This order, or 'the state of things' (Butler, 2018), is often not noticed because it is what we consider normal, as common sense (Gunderson, 2020). It provides us with rules on how to live in a certain way. Photography could lead to traces (Parks, 2020) that are not particularly self-evident within this archive. What follows is an encounter (Parks, 2020), familiar for 'all' that 'do' critical research, and thus research into gender, race, and class. This is a confrontation with the hidden, the missing (Spivak, 1985), the non-existing, or existing in a whole other realm of what an 'archive' could look like. "As an atmosphere for misplacing things, photography is an instrument for finding things in loss, for detecting lower frequencies" (Moten, 2018, p. 145). It would therefore be odd to research photography and the potential of the picture using the often-used archive of the academy and the academic language.

An archive of knowledge, to make sense of or to include picture in, can reinforce normative discourse (Hall, 2001). This could lead to cultural, social, or political bias (Hall, 2001) in interpretation, using descriptive data from the 'academic' archive. Being aware of oppressive dynamics or not, the desire of the archive of knowledge, reproduces certain structures of knowledge over and over (Singh, 2018).

All bodies are changed bodies

Fluidity of the body opens a world of imagining things otherwise. Singh (2018) presents the queer body, with its traces of change, as an archive: a "hopeful gathering, an act of love against the foreclosures of reason" (Singh, 2018, p. 29), and an archivist: a "becoming and unbecoming thing", gathering knowledge by living. Non-normative bodies are looked at with a "catalogue of deficiency" (Singh, 2018, p. 30), through failure or unhappiness. Looking at the body as an archive is a search for what a representation of a human is, of what contains a human. This archive includes the defined 'inside' as well as the 'outside' of the body. The outside influences the inside and the other way around, as they are tightly connected. The queer body Archive is

non-normative, and relates to notions of refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity, beyond consensual categories.

Queer non-normativity

Queer modes of experience do not necessarily follow the linear social mainstream (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011), moving via altered paths or pace in relation to shared social timely phases. The impossibility or abjection of following a certain normative trajectory, could appear in the forms of refusal or failure (to achieve the norm) (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011), and is related to sequence, including potential (un)happiness and/or futurity. Non-normativity is the "constant breaking of habits" (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011, p. 10). Where repetition of habits naturalizes hegemonic power logics. Breaking those helps redefining the norm (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011). As Moten (2018, p. 144) writes: "those of us who are out of sync can't help but be committed to sequence". This commitment allows for "constant rupture" and "continual aperture" (Moten, 2018, p. 144), in which the photograph, the image, tells us about seriality, incalculability and the gap between what we desire from a photograph. An image could be the 'happiness' (Ahmed, 2010) we desire. The photograph, with its imposed "stillness" (Moten, 2018, p. 144), relates directly to the unseriality and unsequence of queer time (Halberstam, 2005).

Refusal

Non-normativity can be seen as form of refusal (Seitz, 2022) of the given order. Some people refuse this order by living their life, making choices, applying imaginative political agency (Seitz, 2022). This form of refusal is described by Honig (2021), as a way of looking into other ways of living together, where refusal is constructive. It generates counter communities, alternatives, and engagement in collective political practices (Seitz, 2022). Olufemi (2021) underlines refusal and opens a question, simply refusing and saying no to normative standards is not enough, what comes after that is the question. What do you desire? Which aligns with Honig (2021), as refusal opens desire towards other ways of living together.

Seitz (2022) argues that what brings this theory of refusal of norms from Olufemi and Honig together, is the archive. In which the archive in itself contains ambiguity of political imagination. The archive stores tools to re-imagine the past and the present

(Seitz, 2022). The ambiguity is present in the way the archive is also a way in which normativity is repeated. As Olufemi (2021, p. 18) writes, that with "its shadows and gaps" the archive is "a colonial invention" in "narrative consistency". With as its biggest trick the modern thought of linearity. Refusing is thus saying no to this forward movement (Seitz, 2022). This trick of linearity of cisnormative life, comes with 'success', 'family life' and objects of desire that pull us through time and are supposed to bring 'happiness' (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015). It depends, of course, within what discourse you assign something as 'failure' or something as a 'success'. For gender-queer people, linearity is not a given, it is something to think about. By being in-between categories, you let go of predestined expectations of what life means. What life means, or looks like, is often based on norms. Refusal is non-normative living. Set norms are seen as good and permissible. When refusing those norms, one could be seen as bad, doing impermissible things.

Sometimes refusal is unconscious and first appears on your own terms (Singh, 2018). Sometimes it is a feeling that cannot (yet) be put into words, therefore this method uses picture, story, and community to reflect. Examples of refusal from others (Singh, 2018) – people that exactly express what you have been feeling in your own terms – are therefore important as representation for your own.

Failure

In The queer art of failure, Halberstam (2011) uses 'low theory' to explore alternatives. He thereby focuses on in-between spaces and uses failure, as "ways of being and knowing that stand outside of conventional understandings of success" (Halberstam, 2011, p. 2). Where success is closely tied to heteronormative and capitalist ideas. Queerness, in the west, is related to a positioning in time and relation to social norms plus non-normative orientation towards the future (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011). A non-normative relation with temporality is seen as failure (Halberstam, 2011; McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011). Failure pushes norms of the discipline, the norms that follow a linear path of success towards a predictable adulthood (Halberstam, 2011). Failing is thus also not knowing and could offer more creative or surprising ways of being in the world (Halberstam, 2011). Halberstam (2011) shows how failure can help getting to the truth. Previous ways of knowing follow paths that we know, paths of knowledge production that are serious and 'correct' within the discipline. When looking for alternatives, an unserious path is into the wrong direction allows you to lose the way

(Halberstam, 2011), and that might be exactly what is needed. This nonlinearity is a space for possibilities and hope (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011).

Happiness

Both Berlant (2011) and Ahmed (2010) draw a connection between traditional paths towards supposed happiness and the queer subject. Ahmed (2010) describes the normative desire, the waiting for and expectation of happiness that paints a specific imagination of the future. With happiness in orientation towards a linear future "where things will be better" (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015, p. 29). This is a specific image of a future that does not work for everyone, and questions happiness as something to desire at all, since it is tied to these drawn out normative ways of living. It restricts from the choice of not being happy, and implies happiness is freedom. Ahmed (2010) describes finding freedom in unhappiness like Halberstam (2011) writes about finding freedom in failure. Failure (non-normative choices or ways of living) and unhappiness (non-normative desires of what potentially brings happiness) in non-normative relation with the future are full of potential. They open a space for re-orientation of desire that could make "exclusion first bearable and then potentially radical" (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015, p. 31).

Halberstam (2005) explains this non-normative happiness, or unhappiness as a queer use of time. That opposes itself to the institutions of family, reproduction, and heterosexuality. Identification and movement (Halberstam, 2005) are logics along which you could say something about someone's position in queer time. Just like definitions of 'success' and 'failure', 'happiness' is too based on norms. Any definition of what happiness is, privileges or oppresses one or the other.

Futurity

Linear time of supposed happiness and success is related to human capital (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015). Success is measured in achievement, productivity, beauty, or health. The queer refuses and is contrasted as having lost potentials or the impossibility of desired straight futures (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015). Queer temporality asks what happiness means when it refuses and fails normative life-building, onwards speculative investment of a certain point in the future (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015). Queer timelines are distorted and go back and forward in age, in states of ecstasy

(Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015), described by tension between desire and imagination. Ecstasy involves past, present and future (Muñoz, 2009) in a moment of queer relational bliss. Since in queer temporalities, the map of everyday life is rewritten every day. Queerness steps out of the linearity of straight time (Muñoz, 2009) and uses the creative potential for questioning presentness of straight time, in which the ecstatic queer could create openness, allowing desire and imagination to think about the utopian, a more collective futurity. Muñoz (2009) describes this with his critique on "straight time" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 22), the 'natural flows of what we are supposed to do', that lives in the now, the everyday life, and not in the future (not in a queer future) only in a reproductive heterosexual future. He explains how queerness is not yet here. We do not know it yet, because it is affected by neoliberal ideology and representations of queerness (Muñoz, 2009). Thinking about what could or should be, using a we of multiple forms of belonging, that adhere to a collective, and the "not-quite-conscious" (Muñoz, 2009, p. 21). As potentiality could paint a picture of futurity and desire that is utopian. Being queer is remodeling futurity, ways of becoming outside cisnormative (reproductive) paradigms, being queer is imagining time differently (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011).

Futurity is here defined borrowing from the definition by Campt and Clayton (2023). They write about a black feminist futurity, "always grasping at that possibility that is dangled before you". Halberstam's notion that gender queer people already imagine life differently by living, aligns with Campt and Clayton's (2023) definition of a futurity in which you start to "live that reality now in order for it to even be possible in the future", "an investment in change", exploring queer possibilities of futurity (for example, an unhappy one (Ahmed, 2011).

The human as image (reimagining the human)

Representation

"Representation is the production of meaning through language" (Hall, 1997, p. 28) in which pictures are signs that carry meaning and are open for interpretation (Hall, 1997). There is no 'true' meaning of what is exactly represented (Hall, 1997), "meaning is constructed" (Hall, 1997, p. 21). It constructs a self you define and a self others define for you. This definition helps interpret or represent you as social or political being or person (Ariadad, 2015). Often representations of gender, race, sexuality, and class come first when looking at the body (Singh, 2018). And therefore, cannot be

disconnected from cultural, political, and historical archives. What we see is defined by culture, so what is seen, experienced and discussed around pictures, tells us about how people see and construct the world, how 'true' meaning is applied and how there is thus thought about 'the truth'.

Pictures have a distinct form as well. What people choose to photograph, what they choose to leave out, what is hidden and what is visible tells us about how they see the world, how photos shape images (Moten, 2018). It brings us closer towards people's positionality towards certain representations, how images relate to their place in the world (Moten, 2018) and can reinforce normative discourse (Hall, 2001; Singh, 2018). If you lie outside, or in-between normative representation, you look for ways to navigate through this and find ways to identify and relate, because often you cannot, it is hidden or non-existent (Spivak, 1985). Muñoz (1999) describes dealing with this as disidentification, in which people outside normative representation, find ways to insert themselves within the mainstream by claiming privileged representations or phenomena. Queering where it does not exist.

Method

When conforming to a non-normative life, the expectations of the self you define and the self that is defined by others do not align. A picture is made, a sketch of the self, a representation by the outside. This can lead to negotiation or questioning of individual desire and things taught as 'natural order of things', an anti-desire towards a painted picture of a future. For example, 'gender failure' (Halberstam, 2011) happens when women do not live up to patriarchal ideals and expectations. By saying this, the being of someone, being of a certain gender is connected to a heterosexual patriarchal framework, that allows to assign meaning to. What happens when people exist outside of gender binary? Or do not pursue heterosexual relationships? By not applying to normative standards, people outside the gender binary, can therefore recreate meanings of gender. As the relation between the sign and referent fades, meaning becomes uncertain and is no longer repeated without noticing (Hall, 1997).

In this thesis the method photo-story as described by Varvantakis and Nolas (2021) is explored. Photo-story focuses on the process rather than the result and is a reflective method for research on experience and representation. The participants were given an assignment and asked to make photographs for a week, after which

they chose ten favorites, that they brought to the workshop session that included practices of storytelling, reflection, and exhibition. The method is a mix of participant observation (ethnography), photography, interview, and workshop methods (Appendix A). They include production, view, review, interpretation, storytelling, and publication, which are thought-provoking exercises. These give opportunity to access and discuss views and experiences over time, and in a reflexive way (Varvantakis et al., 2019). Since "it is very hard to explain oneself" (Deleuze, 2007), participants are asked to photograph, thereby constituting an archive. This is done to prompt the method in a way and structure it around specific matters. The self as an archive, is open to interpretation, depending on the context, it can mean almost anything (Singh, 2018). Participants are asked to use their archive as sketch of the self. What understanding of concepts do participants have? Through individual participation, and then publication, the method gives room for multiplicity of understanding of representations and normativity. How one assigns meaning to something, about what is true to them, tells us about how their world is constructed and what is part of this.

The exhibition moment at the end of this method opts to contribute to an open archive of knowledge. The constitution of such an archive is a significant moment (Hall, 2001). The material gathered, upon the wall, becomes something to reflect on and to talk about, something considered (Hall, 2001, p. 89). A new state of self-consciousness and reflexivity (Hall, 2001, p. 89). A complex picture of representation could be sketched through a combination of photography, creative writing and lived experiences (Park, 2020). This picture is produced through the making off. The method photo-story fits this reflexivity and includes the combination of photography, writing and experience. Bringing together elements in montage, uses various pieces to build a theory, that could show ambiguity of representation, is an existing technique deployed by artists as visible critique to rising fascist ideology in the 1920's and 30s (Park, 2020) and later to denaturalize racist and/or sexist representations (Park, 2020). Photomontage captures the complexity of reality it contests (Hall, 2005).

The ethnographic biographies will be analyzed along lines of critical theory. The knowledge that is produced by the visual method (Varvantakis et al., 2019) and based on individual experience, will provide a critical and more systematic understanding of the topic. This gives space for context and in-depth research (Bryman, 2012). Lived experience includes the past, present, and future, and challenges linear ways of research design, thereby opposing research as purely issue-solving.

Nine participants were asked to join this project, that focuses on gender-queer people, meaning people who identify as neither man nor woman but as another gender, as somewhere in-between, as beyond genders or as a combination. Described by Halberstam (2020) as unnameable, unscripted, unexplained and beyond order, who, by living, already 'struggles' with imagining life differently. Nine people, who identify as gender-queer, were asked to participate. The names of the participants are anonymized, real names are known by me. Participants were recruited for the thesis via public display on the internet and word of mouth. The internet is used to reach a heterogenous group that reaches outside my direct circle. Although combined with snowballing and word of mouth, so that non-internet users are not priorly excluded.

For the assignment, participants were asked, to photograph refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity for a week. This could be interpreted in more than one way, because unambiguous assignments tend to give what you may already know (Gaver et al., 2004). The photo-story method values uncertainty and exploration and will lead to ambiguous stories. This is something of value (Gaver et al., 2004), as it is exactly uncertainty and exploration, I am interested in. The returns, including the stories, group sessions, reflections, interpretations, and photographs, were generated by people that differ from each other, where a meeting with other conceptual, physical, or emotional realities (Gaver et al., 2004) takes place. The process is in the end the most important factor in reflecting on ambiguity, doubt, or uncertainty on truth and knowledge, and what that may look like and what it could mean if it would be overt in the academy.

The second part of the research, where participants come together to present their photographs in a workshop, brings participants together around objects of common concern (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2021). The workshops were organized in two groups of four and five participants. In the workshop, that took three to four hours, participants reflected on their own photos, but also on others, and on the photos in different contexts, engaging in an open conversation about the photographs and potential meaning. Interpretations are constantly challenged (Gaver et al., 2004) by other participants, by the researcher and by the participants themselves. This makes the collection of data and the analysis a collective process (Varvantakis et al., 2019) in which participants are involved in the collection of data as well as the analysis of it, in contrast to other forms of qualitative research. Because of the reflexive nature of the method, and combination of different methods, the dynamic variety of results will lead to emerging stories and deeper truths (Gaver et al., 2004). The photos help to start

conversation among participants (Gaver et al., 2004), and the focus is on potentiality, generating knowledge for the self and the collective. The first part of the research focuses on individual experience, from which knowledge on the variety of matters representation is derived, the second part of the research, groups the participants with each other, to go into an open conversation about meaning and stories behind the pictures.

During the workshop and discussion, I made audio and video recordings, from which a transcript of the most important data, with accompanied visuals, was made in Word, to use to analyze. I analyzed the conversations and images by rewatching the videos, listening and looking at how participants spoke about certain topics regarding their images. In the group discussion overlaps, contrasts and recurring patterns already began to stand out during the workshop. By rereading and reflecting on this workshop and discussion I was able to structure what participants said about certain topics and compare contrasts and overlaps. This is what I used to find the most important parts, where the participants do not or do agree on. Since my position as a researcher, and as a human being influences how I code and how I was present in the room, it is important to keep an 'open mind' (Bryman, 2012) when categorizing (Bryman, 2012) what participants said.

Results

The body as an Archive

Representations of the body, or the human as an image, could function as an archive of knowledge. This becomes clear when the participants talk about their experience with how they define themselves, an ongoing and changing process in which there is constant reflection on how you see yourself vs. how the world sees you. Jose: "people will categorize my body". This representation of their body tells us about how Jose sees and orders the world, and the photo (photo 1) they took pushes the image of 'the body'. Looking at their pictures spread out on the table, Jose says how they feel "awkward" having them out on the table, "I literally went naked for it". They explain how they do not feel comfortable being naked at home, because people might see their body from the outside, and categorize it different than they do themselves. What reads like something directed towards these people, "I should be able to feel comfortable, especially in my own place", sounds more like talking to themselves, in a reaffirming

way. Despite feeling awkward, Jose does feel comfortable showing the pictures because "everyone knows about these struggles", they would never show these pictures in a "cishet situation" [cis hetero situation]. When I ask Jose if they would be comfortable with showing them in the exhibition, they say it would be a weight off their shoulders. "It is my body, it can be there, especially if other people can be seen why could I not?".

Photo 1 | Jose

All participants have been socialized as a woman or as a man, and later in their lives realized a discomfort with the assigned sex they were born and raised with. For example, Jan, who has been "socialized as a straight man". They were made to fit into a certain gender category, and later in life started questioning whether they felt comfortable within that category. There is a designed path created from norms that correlates with gender (McCallum & Tuhkanen, 2011). By being in-between or realizing halfway through this path you experience discomfort within one category and find happiness in another, or in none, or in a state in-between, you turn away from this designed path. To see a body as not set in stone, but changing, and representing this

with photos, expands the archive of knowledge of representation of normative discourse (Hall, 2001).

Photo 2 | Jan

Jan makes clear they do not have a gender, they refuse gender as category, but see it more as an "immaterial, abstract thing, an experience". Jan here contradicts themselves, as they see gender as having no direct representation in the physical world and as an experience at, something that can be a more practical observation, at the same time. For example, for one day their gender could be "the color red" (photo 2). This means for Jan, gender is how they experience it themselves. It shows the double sidedness of their experience, Jan is aware of how gender shapes social practices, and at the same time can be about what you yourself feel and do. Senna says their "gender right now is skinny brows". By ascribing colors and body parts as eyebrows to gender norms, they push the definitions of what gender is. And as any

definition of what gender is, reinforces norms on what belongs to a category and what not, that eventually privileges one or the other, pushing those boundaries is a helpful act in rethinking norms, and thus rethinking the value of categories. Jose reflects on this, by saying how "funny" it is that "silly" things like eyebrows can make you feel [gender] "euphoric or dysphoric". It is finding happiness in a certain category or state, in gender affirming situations, in becoming (Singh, 2018). Brogán argues it can feel "gender affirming" to do something that is not considered a masculine activity, "care for themselves, take time and be gentle".

Because with the opposite comes a lot of frustration, Jan says. Since they present masculine "people see me as a man", It makes them feel like "a failure as a straight person and a failure as a gay person". Therefore, Jan ascribes dress and color (photo 1) to gender presentation, broadening what gender could look like in an image, for themselves, and for others, thereby also altering what 'failing' a possible gender presentation is. Brogán experiences a similar thing where they "always felt half of everything". They thought for a long time that they could "only be one thing", a system imposed by the order that pressures categorization into homogenous groups. For them "it has never been simple" and "it is never that simple". River has this as well, it is not "just your ethnicity" but also "being queer". By being gender-queer, they feel like they fail the normative lifestyle or characteristics of the straight person, but too that of gay people.

The human as image

When asking the participants about their experience with the photo assignment, Famke mentions they were thinking in "clichés", and that it would be a bad thing if they would only "come with clichés" to the group discussion. Behind this is a desire to be original, to differ from overused representation. A cliché on futurity, refusal, failure, or happiness would then be a repeated picture of the norm, an overrepresentation or stereotype. They wanted to stay away from that, and therefore asked their sister if their pictures meant the same to her, she said no. And that was 'good'.

The participants engage in actively altering the human as image and stereotypical representations, by disidentification. For Manu "romanticizing life" [social media trend centered around finding love and joy in yourself, regardless (un)wanted circumstances] is important. This shows Manu tries to let go of expectations and uncontrollability and uses this for structuring their days and routines. It is also about

finding love in yourself instead of others, it is making 'small things' special and big. For Manu this could be "saving snails" (photo 3) or "walking in the rain".

Sammy-Jo recognizes this, for them romanticizing life is more about indulging in a stereotype from the "sassy iced coffee gay" [social media found stereotype]. "Living" or "performing" this "fantasy" makes Sammy-Jo feel "valid". Manu agrees, it gives them confidence, they have fun playing out the stereotype, because it is "recognizable for others [other queer people]. By acting it out they feel like they are that person. "Sitting alone, drinking oat milk cappuccino, reading a book, De meeste mensen deugen, feeling better than everybody else". "Being that pretentious…is just fun". Sammy-Jo replies and mentions "havermelk elite" [social media account – havermelk elite stands for progressive, higher class citizens]. What Manu and Sammy-Jo paint here is a stereotypical picture of an urban middle-class millennial from the Netherlands. Often, following a more normative lifestyle. Later Sammy-Jo mentions another type when they explain "the promise of a hot girl summer was broken" in which a 'hot girl summer' is a way of women describing their summer full of unapologetic fun.

These stereotypes that come for example from the online queer community, can change queer representations. The need to find stereotypes like this can be explained by José Muñoz (1999) notion of disidentification, whereby queer people insert themselves in culture that has refused their representation, which helps navigate life outside dominant heteronormative culture. It is a way of explicitly not identifying with the social mainstream. These stereotypes go so deep, and change so fast, people outside the specific queer (online) communities are less likely to be on topic. They are different than they were before, the stereotypes are now about more ordinary things like drinking coffee and reading. You could argue they resemble more normative lives and conforming. Gender-queer representation moves towards a more everyday representation. They are yet another form of differentiating from hegemonic cishet-normativity, by using it.

Stereotypes yield power, repeating them creates an image of a certain group, and when this is repeated, it could lead to larger changing the appeal of being gender-queer. For example, portraying as progressive, higher class, millennial. When repeating this, an image of such a person is created that does not resemble the heterogeneity of the community at all. Thereby comes that because internet culture moves so fast, online stereotypes and representations change in fast pace as well.

The important take-away from Muñoz (1999) and the above is that gender-queer people are not obliged to refuse normativity or directly oppose it, but can navigate by transforming it, make it fit their own narrative and community. Without being represented literally within normative representation, they take the lead in creating their own representation using normative representation and making it their own. As Famke says: it is about "allowing yourself" a lifestyle.

That Brogán is aware of these stereotypes becomes clear when they talk about how it is "gender affirming" for them to do something [sewing] "not considered a masculine activity", "even though that might be cultural dependent". The same for tools. Tools have been considered masculine objects for over years. Senna recognizes the Ikea tool set in one picture. They say: "everyone who does not have tools has that". They do not mean they do not have tools, but they mean they are not the right tools. They are not the tools traditional heteronormative families have, in which the person using the tools is a person designated in advance.

Refusal

Representations and stereotypes come with a particular order, if you align with a certain representation, there appear ideas of what you think you are supposed to do (Muñoz, 2009). Manu and Jan both use the word unapologetically for describing themselves or the behavior of others in the group. It shows how they know that they do not hold themselves to a specific order that they are expected to act towards, they refuse it. And that people might expect them to be sorry for behaving in a certain way, to have regrets, but they do not feel that way.

All participants identify as gender-queer and therefore with that claim refuse to adhere to a norm. This may not be done deliberately, they could refuse this order by just living their life. In both discussions crying in public became a topic. Display of crying in public is in white western environments often considered a gender dependent sign of weakness and something private. Jan points out they do not cry in public: "you kind of want to cry, but you are in the supermarket". Brogán refuses to suppress their emotion and does cry in public spaces, just like Jose, who explains how they have "cried at every school, every workplace" "but never sees anyone cry in public". River is aware the normative suppressing of these feelings is something you actively have to oppose. "I taught myself this is a power, people always say it is a weakness, for me it is a weakness to always suppress how you feel".

In a lot of jobs you are taught suppressing your emotions is professional, and showing them is a weakness. Showing your emotions or not relates directly to your personal 'skills' and therefore human capital, where supposed happiness and success are measured against (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015). Expressing emotion is too gendered, emotions are signals of normative conduct in which social interactions are heavily based on norms. Norms that are learned, being a man means being masculine and often suppressing your emotions, women are often represented as more sensitive and emotional. As River says "only later I realized that is not how normal people deal with that".

Photo 3 | Manu

Photo 4 | Jose

For Brogán, refusal of the order is about "refusing the way in which the state has failed you". "Being queer, poc, immigrated here, and being mixed" let's them conclude failure is not personal failure, but more "failure of systems, or intergenerational trauma or pain". Jose experiences the same. They have a picture of refusal where they got misgendered online by their insurance company. Jose explicitly refuses their narrative on how they gender them, a failure of a system. That with refusing one thing, comes desire (Olufemi, 2021) is shown when Jose links the refusal of this system towards a desire to live like snails, and this could alter how we look at gender. Landsnails are hermaphrodite. Jose uses them (photo 4) to explain how they think about gender and how they would like to see an ideal world. In their written story

they wrote during the group discussion they at one point write "I aspire to live my life as carefree as the snail, I aspire to live my life just as me, as snails just are". They say humans could learn from "these little creatures that have been roaming the earth for millions of years", thereby taking an example to the human imposed gender concept to the snails by describing their gender as hermaphrodite. Refusal hereby becomes constructive (Honig, 2021).

For the other participants, snails are a recurring theme as well. Brogán once was told by a presumably cishet philosopher that the snail is "your next [queer] icon". Reza adds their partners' football team's logo is a snail of their queer football team. Thereby refusing the male-dominated football world, by coming up with alternatives or counter communities (Seitz, 2022). A community and representation forms, of people and examples of refusal from others (Singh, 2018). Reza shows how simply saying no to normative standards (football is for men) is not enough, refusing shows an ambiguity that includes political imagination. By refusing, you can also say yes towards that which you desire, in this case, a queer football team. With as its logo the snail, "as snails just are" (Jose).

Photo 5 | Jose   Photo 6 | Senna   Photo 7 | Senna

Senna and Jose at one point both realize a lot of their pictures are taken at home. It makes them self-aware of their productivity and what they show with their pictures to others in the group. Senna feels the need to mention they "have been doing shit" and Jose defends "there was not really a lot going on in my life". Both feel the need to defend their individual 'responsibility' to be productive, at least, a neoliberal idea of being productive and successful. This idea of success is closely related to heteronormative and capitalist ideas, where ways of being outside of these ideas, are

considered 'failure' (Halberstam, 2011). The participants relate themselves to each other and might have felt the need to justify their photos taken at solely at home (photo 5, 6 and 7). Jose explains that for them productivity is found in working on themselves and their mental health, which they link to their pictures of futurity, which will be discussed more in-depth in the last paragraph.

River explains these two perspectives of 'being productive', one is a "capitalist idea" and the other their "inner world". To illustrate this, they mention they enjoy reading, just reading and not "doing something with it". With the latter, they argue that being 'productive' by learning and reading can be for pleasure alone. It does not have to lead towards a result, to use it to become successful, a neoliberal standard that River hereby rejects.

Photo 8 | Brogán

Brogán does this as well, while they explain the tension between what they "really want to do" and the work they have to catch up on. In which sewing, what they rather do, results in a "joyful moment", that helps "care for themselves", "take time" and "be gentile". By switching up normative gender roles and activities, they find a way to counter normative representations of what productivity looks like, using a stereotypical, time consuming, considered feminine activity like sewing. They talk about the "amateurly" and "imperfect" act of their sewing (picture 8), followed by a quote "perfectionism is a white supremacist construct" and their argumentation that it is "okay" to "be bad at something". The red color of the thread stands out against the

white of the fabric and puts emphasis on the imperfectness of the act. Ideas of excelling, getting better and being productive are typical neoliberal ideas that Brogán hereby refuses visibly, with their representation. They back this up with the link between white supremacy and perfectionism. The idea that something can be perfect, and that there is a norm, that people can hold on to and measure against and deviate from, is rejected by them.

Photo 9 | Manu

Photo 10 | Famke

If we generalize failure as all outside of conventional understandings (Halberstam, 2011) or consensual representation (Campany & Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2022), we see it appears more. As in the favorite pictures of mold, blood and graffiti, a love for things that are "not smooth" and have a nice "eww" (Famke). Things that are dirty and out of order are photographed. Participants deliberately leave out the clean in their representations. When Jan compares the picture of mold (photo 9) to the picture of sprouts (photo 10) that are out on the table, this distinction becomes clear. They juxtapose "growth we value" to "growth we try to eradicate". By making distinctions between two types of growth they make clear growth is not always linear or 'good', and that there is more than one way to look at growth. They explain their statement by giving the example of a "plant mom", who "celebrates" growing sprouts, next to the mold, we want to "kill with fire". The stereotype of the plant mom consists of the image of the existence of a plant parent [someone looking after houseplants as if it were their child]. Jan here mocks the image of the plant mom, that celebrates her houseplants. Thereby mocking the idea that consistently comes up with different stereotypes but falling back on traditional women and family norms: caring for children. Plus, Jan

hereby rejects the idea that humans are not part of nature but can bring it into their lives by mothering it [human exceptionalism]. "The mold is probably very happy".

Happiness

Overall, happiness is mentioned a lot in relation to the little things in life. Focusing on the little things, is noticing the often taken-for granted. The participants are oriented towards small forms of happiness, instead of big explicit things or future goals that might provide happiness. Earlier, participants showed how they refused normative desires. These desires paint an imagination of the future that allows to wait for and to expect happiness in that future (Ahmed, 2010). The participants show how they find happiness in non-normative timelines, that do not orientate towards a linear future (Stuhr-Rommereim, 2015), at least not a normative linear future.

Jose started hormone therapy, they say, "finally something to look forward to in the future". They explain how in the past, they "failed" their body and "failed taking better care" of themselves. If they "could have taken better care earlier on" in their life, "it would have been easier now" they say. Choosing another way of living, could feel like failure (Halberstam, 2011) and unhappiness, since it deviates from what ought to bring happiness. The body is categorized as failure by others, looked at through a "catalogue of deficiency" (Singh, 2018). However, Senna and Jose see their body as a timeline, an archive of change. The hormone therapy Jose started brings happiness, while opposing institutions that cisnormativity bring with. Senna talks about their photo of several different tank tops from which they were trying to find the perfect one, one that brings "gender euphoria", a feeling of happiness one experiences moving away from their assigned gender.

Photo 11 | Jose

Photo 12 | Senna

Brogán mentions they taken no pictures of themselves for the photo assignment. They did not once consider it because they want to show themselves "in

a way that is truthful" and how they "want to be seen". It is a constant comparison between how you want to be perceived by the outside and how you feel inside. For Senna, who did add selfies, selfies are about documenting. Documentation is keeping a record of something. By doing this via photographs of the self, you keep a record of yourself and how you look, you are filing, you are archiving "how you went through the years" (Jose), in which the photos constitute an archive of the body and an archive on knowledge on change over time. Capturing this change is capturing becoming, identification and movement, it is a queer use of time (Halberstam, 2005).

Senna and Jose discuss their visually similar belly pictures. Senna thought Jose's belly picture, that Jose links to their failure of taking care of themselves, was "supposed to be about euphoria". Especially the "haired belly" (photo 11) should bring happiness. Jose replies they "had that before T" [testosterone] and "did not think of it like that, as something positive". Meanwhile for Senna these photos are about "accepting your own vanity", "how to express themselves" and "finding their way within their own queerness". Senna has a crying picture of themselves after a lash lift, where they were feeling "so dysphoric". For them the sweet spot is to "feel perfectly nothing", the goal is to have no feelings about their looks and gender appearance. This could be compared to asking a cis gender person about how they feel about their gender, most of the time, because it works for you, you feel nothing.

Photo 13 | Sammy-Jo

Another example of a queer use of time (Halberstam, 2005) is shown when the participants talk about happiness in relation to friends. To Sammy-Jo happiness is also

curiosity. What is there to come? A strong desire to the unknown. Because you turn from the norm, you can direct it how you want, which opens space, but is also directed into the unknown. It is not that, that brings Sammy-Jo happiness, it is the curiosity, so the desire towards, that brings this. When Sammy-Jo talks about happiness, they talk about their time together with friends (photo 13). In this photo, again, the dirty is chosen to portray over the clean, refusing a spotless future. They see happiness as tied to having dinner parties with friends and thereby point in the air, as it is something they hope to achieve "soon". Hereby Sammy-Jo links their goals and dreams to happiness in the future. They also link it to their job, with which they hope to afford this goal. Sammy-Jo's goal is an example of an idea of the future that pushes definitions of the norm. They oppose the traditional institutions of family, by saying they see friends in their future living room instead. It is an image of the future, or a household that is filled in different than the norm. This leads to a re-orientation of representation of roles in the household.

Photo 14 | Manu

Manu's photographs contain many of their friends, for them friendship means a lot, they explain how their friend group is very "intimate". They "hug, kiss and touch on each other a lot" (photo 14). Manu thereby refuses normative ideas of what friendship

is and what a romantic relationship is, thereby pushing the definition of a romantic relationship and ideas of love. Famke agrees, "friendship is so important" and calls it "platonic romantic", a combination of platonic (normative friendship) and romantic (normative romantic relationship). A combination of sexual attraction, closeness, commitment, or care, which can be valuable in redefining what love and family mean.

Futurity

The participants seem to be thinking about the end of the world a lot. When talking about futurity, there is rarely talked about the near future, plans of the future, ideas of marriage, family, or love. It is more about the state of the world, political conflicts, revolution, and friends. Pessimism is something that occurs very often. If Brogán thinks about the state of the world, they can sob about it, as they refer to their picture stating the "state of fascism" the world is in right now. Sometimes optimism is found in pessimism. When Jan thinks about the future, they think with optimism and pessimism as well "everything is terrible, we are all going to die, even if we fuck everything up, the whole climate apocalypse happens". That we are all going to die is a given, but the fact that everything is terrible, and the sense of climate urgency, is one everybody senses the same. Jose sees, just like Jan, futurity for nature, but not for themselves. "Nature will still be around".

Manu's relation to the future is too a pessimistic one: "things are getting worse than they were with acceptance, we need revolution". They relate this to having fun in the now. As Ahmed (2011) writes, optimism can be pessimism and the other way around. Manu illustrates their argument with their friends' queer party with as theme "apocalypse". They thereby highlight the importance of dressing up. They were in drag, a way to express and perform exaggerated masculine or feminine norms, and to play with them. The party's theme is about the end of the world as we know it, maybe here the end of the world is even celebrated. There is played with the notion the world can end or be destructed.

When Jan reflects on the whole meeting, they "feel like the happiness gets lost". They argue we talked more about refusal and failure than about happiness. And that futurity is "scary". Jokingly they mention this means "dark times" with "so much overwhelming opposition" and "impending doom scenarios right around the corner all the time". They mention this could also be because the group of four consists of all

artists. Sammy-Jo, in the end of the session, does not like how "negative" their photo-story is. They wish it was made more positive "it is not all bad".

Pessimism about a particular (normative) future, simultaneously makes place for desire and imagination, outside of straight time (Muñoz, 2009). The participants use this creative potential (Muñoz, 2009) to speculate about rewriting everyday life. Manu feels like the "going with the flow" and "fluidity" Jan and Sammy-Jo mention, when looking at Famke's photo-story is "understanding for our generation" since there is "quite some negative shit going on" and "no one knows what the fuck we are doing" "just go with it, that is all I can do".

Manu has one picture of "stereotypical straight" men (photo 15). The stereotype being a "guy with beer looking at boobs". The men in the picture are their friends, a straight group of friends that goes well together with their queer friends. They like this contrast, "they are really nice, but really stereotypical straight men". Manu explained how this group made one of their non-binary friends feel "more comfortable with straight people". Which for Jan sketches futurity "where we all get along" in "the future that we want" and are "willing and open to understand each other". Sammy-Jo adds: "it is utopic". Brogán feels a "new generation" "holds space", there are people that make space "for all of you", which makes them feel they can be more themselves.

Photo 15 | Manu

Conclusion

The base of the understanding of queer non-normativity is to embrace its ambivalence. Whether this is about the gender binary, (dis)identification with stereotypes, lost and hope towards the future and being happy and not, it appears on all fronts. The question on how truth does not come in categories is answered, and it is the queering and pushing of disciplines that make lines les harsh and pave way to move beyond normative representation (that rules and excludes).

By using the four concepts, it becomes clear they do not have one strict example or meaning, or representation. Refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity are inseparably entangled and ambivalent. The meaning is made, and the knowledge is produced in flux. By talking and going back and forth, we came closer towards the self, and how to make sense of the world around us. A self that is, for many, unproblematically there, but for others, approached by failing and refusing, but no longer without noticing. For those for whom failure is winning, and happiness, erasing the image of a drawn out future that does not work for you. Leaving room for the potentiality for resketching and creativity, making exclusion radical.

Gender-queer people push the definitions of what gender is, thereby rethinking norms and value categories on what belongs to a category and what not. The participants find ways to navigate through the mainstream, transform and engage in actively altering the human as image and stereotypical representations, by disidentification. This changes queer representations and is moving towards a more everyday representation.

The participants were unapologetic about their choices, which shows how they know that they do not hold themselves to a specific order that they are expected to act towards. They refuse it, by refusing to suppress emotions, refusing the way in which the state fails you, normative ideas of friendship and romantic love, normative ideas of failure tied to success or failure of systems. For example, by a re-orientation of representation of roles of family and romantic relationships. These are normative roles often not part of the future the participants here sketch. The end of the world is imagined through rhetoric on political conflicts, revolution, and friends, by rethinking pessimism, outside or in-between accepted forms of optimism and happiness. Refusing here opens space for desire and potential and becomes constructive. Changing towards the desired, is finding happiness in becoming and a queer use of time. It opens the possibility of imagining futures otherwise.

Discussion

The beauty of this research is the singularity of encounters, that rely on participants' experiences and representations, and the communal interpretation of each other's representations. These will not be generalizable to a bigger group, but that is also not the aim. The aim of this research was to explore how queer non-normativity can be understood and expressed by photography beyond consensual categories of representation (Campany & Wolukau-Wanambwa, 2022). Using the reflective method photo-story, I have created time and space to explore this. What I want to highlight is the importance of the participants, together we come to theory, this is something that happens in the moment, and relies on image, story, experience and presentness. The group discussions provided such a space, although it could be an intense way of meeting. After the group discussions, we talked about how it went, where some participants let the group know they enjoyed it, but it should not have lasted longer. Two people in group two had to leave early, when we were almost done. This made us speed up the process a little, which influenced the pace and order of the workshop. This influenced how the meeting went and ended, but did not do that in a way that it has implicated the research.

The participants and I had one thing in common, and this was felt through the space. Afterwards contact information was exchanged, or people recognized each other from the internet. Furthermore, several participants also mentioned the joy of joining a workshop like this.

Not one group discussion is the same, and because I did two, the second one could never resemble the first. Which was beneficial since I could bring tips from last meetings' participants to the second round, but on the other hand, it was hard to let go of expectations. The second time, will never be like the first time, I kind of knew how it would go about, which undoubtedly influenced the way I prompted the workshop.

I also recognize how my background with my studies at the art academy influences my research. During the meeting and while explaining the assignment I tended to leave people to it, where sometimes a little more explanation is needed, since some people are not used to participating in assignments like this. However, explaining as little as possible was also part of my method, as there were no right or wrongs, it was interesting to see where participants thought they were doing it ''right' or 'wrong'.

I started this thesis with a personal anecdote and went into the group discussions with a similar stance. I am grateful that the participants felt comfortable enough to share their personal life and stories with the group as well. This research highly depends on a 'safe space' like that. What happened during the meetings was a communal reflection on how to make sense of the world around us, who we are, where we stand and what we represent. From this, a lot could be learned. Sometimes you have to be confronted with fluidity and that more than one way of living was possible.

To me, the idea gender could be more fluid opened a possibility of imagining the world otherwise. To come together in a group that consists of people that push norms every day, by living their life, brought insight into how living together could be different. By embracing ambivalence, norms are pushed, and where norms are pushed, ideas of what makes a human are pushed. And that is one of the most important roots, but "wears the illusive face of a border" (Kuwee Kumsa, 2007).

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Appendix A

Overview photo-story method

1. Participants take pictures of refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity for one week. A minimum of 15 pictures is requested.
2. Participants choose 10 pictures to bring to the group discussion with other participants.
   a. Choosing the best pictures has a moment of reflection, what matters the most? And a moment of private and public (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2021), what is there to be shared, and what not?
   b. Facilitate group discussion with care and accommodate a safe space.
3. Discussion of personal favorite photos with the other research participants, discussion of photos that stand out.
   a. How do you feel? What do we see? Why does it matter?
   b. Exploring inverse paradigms, what is visible, what is not, what are unwritten, unofficial, or official written rules, what is real, what is imagined?
4. Choosing one picture and telling a story about it. Each participant chooses one picture to tell a story about.
5. Each participant writes their story down (paper, collage, draw using accompanied photo).
6. Discuss photos together with other participants.
   a. Pick favorites, discuss with researcher and each other.
   b. Cover up stories of photos, let other participants speculate what the photo can be about. This makes the familiar strange, and the strange familiar (Gaver et al., 2004) that creates an intimate distance.
   c. Curating, making relations between photos, making collages.
7. Exhibition
   a. Exhibition: change of perspective, by putting photos and stories up on a wall. More reflections and commentaries.
   b. Ask participants together, exhibiting photos: What do we see? Why may it be important to someone? Reflection and imagination (Varvantakis & Nolas, 2021), about seeing the world through another's eyes.

Appendix B

ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT ROTTERDAM

CHECKLIST ETHICAL AND PRIVACY ASPECTS OF RESEARCH

INSTRUCTION

This checklist should be completed for every research study that is conducted at the Department of Public Administration and Sociology (DPAS). This checklist should be completed *before* commencing with data collection or approaching participants. Students can complete this checklist with help of their supervisor.

This checklist is a mandatory part of the empirical master's thesis and has to be uploaded along with the research proposal.

The guideline for ethical aspects of research of the Dutch Sociological Association (NSV) can be found on their website (http://www.nsv-sociologie.nl/?page_id=17). If you have doubts about ethical or privacy aspects of your research study, discuss and resolve the matter with your EUR supervisor. If needed and if advised to do so by your supervisor, you can also consult Dr. Bonnie French, coordinator of the Sociology Master's Thesis program.

PART I: GENERAL INFORMATION

Project title:

Name, email of student: Sanne Verdoes, 480797sv@eur.nl

Name, email of supervisor: Willem Schinkel, schinkel@essb.eur.nl

Start date and duration: December 16, 2022 – June 25, 2023

Is the research study conducted within DPAS   YES - ~~NO~~

If 'NO': at or for what institute or organization will the study be conducted?
(e.g. internship organization)

PART II: HUMAN SUBJECTS

1.   Does your research involve human participants.   YES - ~~NO~~

        If 'NO': skip to part V.

        If 'YES': does the study involve medical or physical research?   ~~YES~~ - NO
        *Research that falls under the Medical Research Involving Human Subjects Act ([WMO](#)) must first be
        submitted to [an accredited medical research ethics committee](#) or the Central Committee on Research
        Involving Human Subjects ([CCMO](#)).*

2.   Does your research involve field observations without manipulations
        that will not involve identification of participants.   ~~YES~~ - NO

        If 'YES': skip to part IV.

3.   Research involving completely anonymous data files (secondary
        data that has been anonymized by someone else).   ~~YES~~ - NO

        If 'YES': skip to part IV.

PART III: PARTICIPANTS

1.   Will information about the nature of the study and about what
participants can expect during the study be withheld from them?   ~~YES~~ - NO

2.   Will any of the participants not be asked for verbal or written
'informed consent,' whereby they agree to participate in the study?   ~~YES~~ - NO

3.   Will information about the possibility to discontinue the participation
at any time be withheld from participants?   ~~YES~~ - NO

4.   Will the study involve actively deceiving the participants?   ~~YES~~ - NO
Note: almost all research studies involve some kind of deception of participants. Try to think about what types of deception are ethical or non-ethical (e.g. purpose of the study is not told, coercion is exerted on participants, giving participants the feeling that they harm other people by making certain decisions, etc.).

5.   Does the study involve the risk of causing psychological stress or
negative emotions beyond those normally encountered by
participants?   `   ~~YES~~ - NO

6.   Will information be collected about special categories of data, as
defined by the GDPR (e.g. racial or ethnic origin, political opinions,
religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic
data, biometric data for the purpose of uniquely identifying a person,
data concerning mental or physical health, data concerning a person's
sex life or sexual orientation)?   YES - ~~NO~~

7.   Will the study involve the participation of minors (<18 years old) or
other groups that cannot give consent?   ~~YES~~ - NO

8.   Is the health and/or safety of participants at risk during the study?   ~~YES~~ - NO

9.   Can participants be identified by the study results or can the
confidentiality of the participants' identity not be ensured?   YES - ~~NO~~

10.   Are there any other possible ethical issues with regard to this study?   ~~YES~~ - NO

If you have answered 'YES' to any of the previous questions, please indicate below why this issue is unavoidable in this study.

The participants are asked to take photographs over a week. This is followed up by a group meeting in which participants decide what photos they want to make public and discuss with the group. Participants are asked to generate a story about their picture and reflect on each other's pictures and stories in group setting. This may involve talking about personal matters such as opinions, beliefs, or general life experiences. Participants are not asked to talk about this, but it could happen within the circumstances.

Since the method of photo-story is used, it could be that the photographs taken by the participants give away the participants identity. In this way, anonymity cannot be ensured.

What safeguards are taken to relieve possible adverse consequences of these issues (e.g., informing participants about the study afterwards, extra safety regulations, etc.).

The discussion of the photographs and exhibition must take place in a safe space, in which there are no other people present than the participants and the researcher, a space where there is little chance of being disturbed, an open space, in which participants have the possibility to withdraw from the study if they want.

Are there any unintended circumstances in the study that can cause harm or have negative (emotional) consequences to the participants? Indicate what possible circumstances this could be.

Since the research its focus is on experience, it could be participants are confronted with their own experiences, by themselves or in group setting. Because of the group setting, participants could also be confronted with other people's experiences, which could possibly trigger the participants individual emotions.

Please attach your informed consent form in Appendix I, if applicable.

Continue to part IV.

PART IV: SAMPLE

Where will you collect or obtain your data?

Campus Woudestein
Burgemeester Oudlaan 50
3062 PA Rotterdam
Nederland

Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the (anticipated) size of your sample?

9 participants
Note: indicate for separate data sources.

What is the size of the population from which you will sample?

9 participants
Note: indicate for separate data sources.

Continue to part V.

Part V: Data storage and backup

Where and when will you store your data in the short term, after acquisition?

Written notes during the group session and exhibition will be saved in my house, audio records of the group session and exhibition will be saved on my phone and hard drive. Printed photos will be saved in my house, digital photos will be saved on my hard drive.

Note: indicate for separate data sources, for instance for paper-and pencil test data, and for digital data files.

Who is responsible for the immediate day-to-day management, storage and backup of the data arising from your research?

Me, Sanne Verdoes.

How (frequently) will you back-up your research data for short-term data security?

After each group discussion.

In case of collecting personal data how will you anonymize the data?

The original names of the participants will be replaced with other names.

Note: It is advisable to keep directly identifying personal details separated from the rest of the data. Personal details are then replaced by a key/ code. Only the code is part of the database with data and the list of respondents/research subjects is kept separate.

PART VI: SIGNATURE

Please note that it is your responsibility to follow the ethical guidelines in the conduct of your study. This includes providing information to participants about the study and ensuring confidentiality in storage and use of personal data. Treat participants respectfully, be on time at appointments, call participants when they have signed up for your study and fulfil promises made to participants.

Furthermore, it is your responsibility that data are authentic, of high quality and properly stored. The principle is always that the supervisor (or strictly speaking the Erasmus University Rotterdam) remains owner of the data, and that the student should therefore hand over all data to the supervisor.

Hereby I declare that the study will be conducted in accordance with the ethical guidelines of the Department of Public Administration and Sociology at Erasmus University Rotterdam. I have answered the questions truthfully.

Name student: Sanne Verdoes   Name (EUR) supervisor: Willem Schinkel

Date: 26/03/23   Date: 26/03/23

Appendix C

Informed Consent Form

How can queer non-normativity be understood and expressed by photography, beyond consensual categories of representation?

Introduction
I am Sanne Verdoes and I am a student conducting my master research for Erasmus University Rotterdam. I am conducting research on knowledge controversies.

I will explain the study below. If you have any questions, please ask me. While reading, you can mark parts of the text that are unclear to you.

If you want to participate in the study, you can indicate this at the end of this form.

What is the research about?
In this thesis the research method photo-story is explored. Photo-story focuses on the process of the method rather than the result and is a reflective research method for research on experience, embracing subjectivity. Participants are asked to photograph futurity, refusal, happiness, and failure. The thesis aims to explore how queer non-normativity can be understood and expressed by photography, beyond consensual categories of representation.

What can you expect?
You were asked to take photographs for one week. This is followed up by a group meeting in which you decide what photos you want to make public and discuss them with the group. You are asked to generate a story about your picture and reflect on other's pictures and stories in group setting. This may involve talking about personal matters such as opinions, beliefs, or general life experiences.

The study lasts approximately 4 weeks.
If you participate in this study, you will take part in:

A photo assignment:
I will ask you to take a minimum of 15 photographs for one week. These will be shown to the other participants and the researcher. They will be saved on my hard drive as long as needed.

A focus group/workshop + exhibition:
This is a discussion with four to six other people that participate. The discussion will take place in Rotterdam on May 8 or May 16, depending on your group. If you do not want to show certain pictures or talk about certain topics, you can decide what you want or not want to share with me and the group.
I will make a video and audio recording of the conversation and discussion.
At the end of the discussion, you will have the opportunity to comment on your answers. You can ask to have parts of them amended or deleted.
The exhibition will be the last part of this research. We curate a group exhibition in Rotterdam (place tba.). You can choose which pictures to share and which not.

You decide whether to participate
Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You can stop at any time and would not need to provide any explanation.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?
Since the research its focus is on experience, it could be you are confronted with your own experiences, individual or in group setting. Because of the group setting, you could also be confronted with other people's experiences, which could possibly trigger your individual emotions/experience. Should you feel uncomfortable with this, please remember that you can withdraw from the study at any time. After the interview, you will be given the opportunity to talk about these feelings with me.
You can reach me via:
E-mail: sanneverdoes@live.nl
Tel: +31627903073

The discussion of the photographs and exhibition must take place in a safe space, in which there are no other people present than the participants and the researcher, a space where there is little chance of being disturbed, an open space, in which participants have the possibility to withdraw from the study if they want.

Since the method of photo-story is used, it could be that your photographs give away your identity. In this way, anonymity cannot be ensured.

What do you get for participating?
An opportunity to exhibit your photos in a group exhibition in Rotterdam, my gratitude and I will send you the thesis when it is done.

What data will I ask you to provide?
I will store your data so that I can be in contact with you. For the study, I will also need other data from you.

The following personal data will be collected from you: Name, age, audio or visual recordings, occupation, sentiments, feelings or opinions.

In addition, it is also possible that you will talk about your political affiliation and religious or philosophical beliefs and those of others, as these may also come up in discussion.

I also need your email address to send the results of the study to you by email.

Who can see your data?
I will store all your data securely.
Only persons involved in the research can see the data.

Recordings are transcribed. Your name is replaced with a code if you want to. I may use your specific answers in the article. If your answer can be traced to you or I would like to mention your name, I will ask your permission first.

Because you are participating in a group discussion, you should realize that the other participants will also hear your opinions on matters. We ask all participants not to talk to people outside the group about what was said in the group.

Do you have questions about the study?
If you have any questions about the study or your privacy rights, such as accessing, changing, deleting, or updating your data, please contact me.

Name: Sanne Verdoes
Phone number: +31627903073
Email: sanneverdoes@live.nl

Declaration of Consent

I have read the information letter. I understand what the study is about and what data will be collected from me. I was able to ask questions as well. My questions were adequately answered. I know that I am allowed to stop at any time.

By signing this form, I
1. consent to participate in this research.
2. consent to the use of my personal data;
3. confirm that I am at least 18 years old[1].
4. understand that participating in this research is completely voluntary and that I can stop at any time; and
5. understand that my data will be anonymised for publication, educational purposes and further research.

Check the boxes below if you consent to this.

Required for research participation,

Data

I consent to the researcher's collection, use and retention of the following data: Experience, opinions and beliefs.

Video/audio recording
I consent to the workshop being video/audio recorded.

I consent to the sharing of my data with the Erasmus University in the Netherlands.

My answers in the article
I give permission for my answers to be used in the thesis. My name will not be included.

Name of participant:

Participant's signature: **Date:**

_____

You will receive a copy of the complete information and consent form.

_____

Information and invitation for participants

What does

refusal,
failure,
happiness,
and
futurity

look like to you?

Q: How can <u>queer non-normativity</u> be understood and expressed by <u>photography</u>, beyond consensual categories of <u>representation</u>?

To try and answer this question, I will use the method **photo-story**, for which I am looking for people who identify as **gender-queer** (people who identify as neither man nor woman but as another gender, as somewhere in-between, as beyond genders or as a combination), that are willing to photograph refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity for a week.

Joining would mean:
- Taking a minimum of **15 pictures** on what refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity is to you, for one week.
- Participating in **one group discussion** with five other participants, in which you will discuss photos, and choose one photo to write a **story** about. This takes place in **Rotterdam.**
- Taking part in an **exhibition** where you show the pictures you want to exhibit. This takes place in **Rotterdam.**

Location:
Group discussion: Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, 3062 PA Rotterdam
Exhibition: tba

Questions or concerns:
Contact: Sanne Verdoes, <u>sanneverdoes@live.nl</u>

Overview

Part I: Photography

Instruction: <u>Photograph refusal, failure, happiness, and futurity.</u>

- A minimum of 15 pictures in total is requested. There is no maximum number of pictures.
- You do this for one week. Preferably end your chosen week before May 8.
- During this week you can take notes or keep a diary on why you took certain pictures, and other thoughts that come to mind. This might help you during the group discussion.
- After one week: share your photos with me via email: <u>sanneverdoes@live.nl</u>

Part II: Group discussion

Preparation: <u>You choose 10 pictures to share in the group discussion</u> with other participants. Please email your 10 pictures of choice by email before the meeting.

- There will be one group discussion that takes place at the Erasmus University Rotterdam (Burgemeester Oudlaan 50, 3062 PA Rotterdam), in a closed room. This discussion will be recorded.
- During the group discussion you will discuss photos with five other research participants and the researcher. You are also asked to write a short story about one of your pictures. This will be discussed after as well.
- Depending on what might happen, this group discussion and meeting will take approximately 1 to 3 hours.
- The exact date of the group discussion will be announced as soon as possible.

Part III: Exhibition

<u>You choose which pictures you want to exhibit.</u>

- This is an exhibition of chosen photos and stories, curated by you and the other participants.
- The location and date of the exhibition will be announced as soon as possible.

!

- You can opt out of the research at any time.
- If you have questions or concerns during any part of this research, you can contact me via Whatsapp/phone (+31627903073) or email <u>sanneverdoes@live.nl</u>