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Queering Normal or Normalizing Queer? Marriage Equality and the Divisions Between the Queer and Mainstream Gay Movements in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This Independent Study Project examines the queer movement and the mainstream gay movement in the Netherlands and the ways in which these communities are divided and the ways in which they are united. The project specifically uses the issue of marriage equality to understand these differences and similarities. Data was obtained by conducting eight in-depth semi-structured interviews and attending a queer conference called "Queeristan." This data was then analyzed using Butler's theory on recognition, regulation, and normalization, the theory of Intersectionality, the theory of Covering, and Subculture theory. It is concluded that, while there are several differences between the queer and mainstream communities, these communities are fluid and many people identify with both communities. In addition, while the issue of marriage equality sparks some disagreement between the two communities, it is not a central dividing factor between the queer community and the mainstream gay community.

Introduction

The definition of "homosexuality" and what makes someone a "homosexual" has gone through many transformations since the inception of homosexuality as a concept. Today, homosexuals are no longer defined by the *act* of homosexual conduct. Instead, homosexuality has become an identity, defined by certain words, behaviors, styles, and beliefs, and, therefore, some may consider those who identify as "LGBTQ" to be not only individuals but also to collectively produce a cohesive subculture. As time has progressed, though, it is clear that homosexual labels do not necessarily denote one cohesive group, but several different ones. One major difference between LGBTQ identities exists between those who identify as "queer" versus those who identify as "normal." The major distinctions between the two groups can be seen in their relationships to activism, identity, assimilation and normalization. Furthermore, one of the major distinctions between the two groups in the US is their position on same-sex marriage. Therefore, I would like to know: Are the "Queer" and "Mainstream" movements in the Netherlands divided? To what extent, and by what? Is marriage the central dividing factor between queer and normal, as it is in the US? How have conceptions of what it means to be "queer" and "normal" contributed to these divisions?

Importance of the Topic and Aims of the Research

The topic of this study is the debate between the "normal" and "queer" communities in the Netherlands, which I will look at through the lens of the marriage equality debate. Marriage Equality is a major issue in the debate between "normals" and "queers" in the United States, and I am interested in whether that has also been true in the

Netherlands, or whether there are other greater dividing factors like race, class, or gender identity.

I am interested in this topic for several reasons. First, because the issue of "queer" versus "normal" or "mainstream" is a central debate in the LGBTQ community in the United States, I am curious to understand what the differences might be in the Netherlands, which has the appearance of being more progressive and open-minded than the United States. I am interested to see what the debate looks like in the Netherlands, especially because gay marriage has been legalized.

It is important to research this issue because, by understanding the divisions between the movements, and the effect of marriage on these divisions, it will be possible to further understand how queer and gay Dutch people conceptualize community and identity, and how they see themselves in relation to the "opposing" group. In addition, I hope to look more closely at the definitions of "queer" and "normal." These words are often thrown around and used to label various people and groups. However, depending on how you look at it, the same person or action could be considered both queer and normal. I would like to look more closely at what these two words mean, in an effort to show that the two sides of this debate are not and do not have to be as polarizing and separate as they appear to be.

This study is important to those in the Netherlands who identify as queer or mainstream, as well as those involved in the debate and activism in the United States. It could benefit those who identify as queer and normal by giving each group insight into the views of the other side and giving a voice to those who do not feel visible within mainstream straight society, or within the various LGBTQ communities.

Literature Review

There have been several studies done about the desexualization and depoliticization of the mainstream gay movement in the Netherlands. These studies shed light on the reasons why the primary gay movement in the Netherlands is so "mainstream," and provide reasons for the split between the mainstream and the queer movements. In addition, there have also been studies about queer and normal people on a more personal and individual level, which serve to uncover the tangible differences between people who identify as queer and people who do not.

Gert Hekma has written extensively on the subject of the desexualization and depoliticization of the Netherlands and the mainstream gay movement. In "Pro-Gay and Anti-Sex. Sexual Politics at a Turning Point in The Netherlands" Hekma writes about the "sexopolitical climate" of the Netherlands, and the ways in which it has changed from being more liberal to much more conservative. Hekma starts by writing about the sexual revolution in the Netherlands. In the 1970's, the Netherlands "transformed from a country that was strongly religious and conservative in sexual morals to one that is highly secular and liberal in affairs of sexual morality" (1). During this time, pornography and prostitution were decriminalized, and homosexuality was more accepted.

> "In 1971, the parliament decided to get rid of the only existing criminal law targeting homosexuals. Until the sixties homosexuality was generally considered to be a sin, crime, and disease and now, within 10 years, it was none of these things. This was a radical change" (2).

Due to these changes, the gay movement began to discuss political goals, which mostly had to do with social acceptance and integration. However, "more radical groups advocated that society be changed allowing for greater visibility and acceptance of sexual

and gender variation"(2). The subject of assimilation versus more radical change, therefore, has been an issue even from the very beginning.

Next, Hekma writes about identity and community. He writes that gay and lesbian people in the Netherlands do not consider their sexuality to be a defining factor, but just one part of their personality. Because of this lack of strong sexual identities, there was also a lack in definitive gay and lesbian communities. This was even more so after achieving marriage equality. Indeed, after this goal was met,

> "most Dutch citizens both gay and straight started to believe that the struggle for homosexual emancipation had finished. They argue that there is no longer any need for a movement. But these legal changes have proven no guarantee for social acceptance of gays and lesbians"(5).

Hekma concludes by saying that though gays and lesbians now have a minimal "place at the table" the Netherlands is still very heteronormative. "Dutch society may have become pro-gay, but unless you are in a couple, it is also becoming more and more anti-sexual. Dutch sexual liberalism has a very limited range"(11).

In "The Depoliticization of the Dutch Gay Identity, or Why Dutch Gays aren't Queer" Jan Willem Duyvendak also writes about queerness in the Dutch context, and outlines several reasons why the Dutch gay identity is so mainstream, rather than queer. He starts by saying,

> "Although the Dutch gay subculture has been allowed to develop in an unprecedented way, in has as yet not breached the solid walls of normative heterosexuality… having achieved a relatively favorable position, homosexuals no longer feel the need to maintain a *political* gay identity and have largely given up the struggle for change" (421).

He then reviews the reasons for this depoliticization. The major reason for this depolticization can be illustrated by the gay movement's treatment of the AIDS epidemic. While many other countries saw radical mobilization in the form of groups like ACT UP,

the Netherlands did not experience radical AIDS activism. This has to do, Duyvendak writes, with the Dutch political model. The government authorities gave the homosexual "elite" control over the epidemic and the course taken to deal with it, and therefore, queers did not have to mobilize *against* the government, as they did in the US. However, by choosing an "elite" group to deal with the issue, the government created a hierarchy within the gay community. This also created a "privileged knowledge" where the "homosexual elite" who was chosen to deal with the AIDS epidemic claimed themselves as "experts." However, this course of action involved directing homosexuals in the Netherlands to refrain from sexual intercourse altogether, rather than directing them to use condoms, which was the practice in other countries. Therefore, the mainstream gay movement supported desexualization while alienating those in favor of sex and sexualization, thus creating disagreement and separation within the gay movement.

Joe Rollins and H.N. Hirsch conducted a study called "Sexual Identities and Political Engagements: A Queer Survey," which seeks to find out whether claims of queer theory regarding sexual identity and political engagement prove to be true in real life. In order to find out, the researchers distributed surveys in both San Diego and Albany to members of LGBTQ organizations. The researchers wanted to know whether

> "nonacademic members of sexual minority communities— lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer (LGBTQ) Communities—think of themselves as queer in the same ways that academic queer theorists describe? If they do, how are they "different" from nonacademic nonqueers?" (291).

In other words, do queer people conceptualize their "queerness" in the same way that queer theorists describe queerness? If so, what are the differences between queer people and people who are part of the gay mainstream?

The researchers then identified and listed the different characteristics that queer theorists use to describe queers. They describe queers as "sex positive, radical, angry, anit-assimilationist, young, urban, utopian, confrontational, interested in trans-aggressive acts, opposed to gay marriage… and opposed to stable identities of all kinds" (292).

They hypothesized that "self-identified queers should be socially and politically more marginal and disaffected than their nonqueer counterparts—that is, outside the 'mainstream'" (295). This hypothesis was proven right in some respects, though queers were not necessarily young or more sex positive. Queers also expressed a high degree of support for gaining equality through the right to marry and the right to serve in the armed forces. Though this seems contradictory, the researchers state,

> "It is possible that queers—although radical and liberationist in their political sentiments—recognize that their participation in and support for traditional political institutions is in itself a radical move. It may very well be the case that queers recognize the radically redefining potential of allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military and to marry" (307).

The Marriage Debate

In order to understand how the mainstream and queer communities are divided in the Netherlands and determine the place of marriage within those divisions, it is necessary to examine the debate between queers and normals on this topic. Two of the key players in this debate in the US are Andrew Sullivan and Michael Warner. Sullivan would be classified as a "normal" who has "urged gays to reject 'the notion of sexuality as a cultural subversion' because it 'alienates the vast majority of gay people who not only accept the natural origin of their sexual orientation, but wish to be integrated into society as it is'" (Yoshino, 77). Warner, on the other hand "exhorts queers to resist the normalization of the gay rights movement… Warner believes queers should insist that the

dominant culture assimilate to queer culture'" (Yoshino, 77-78). By examining Sullivan and Warner's positions, it is possible to see their conflicting opinions and how each one represents the differences between queers and normals.

In the book *Virtually Normal: An Argument about Homosexuality*, Andrew Sullivan chronicles the ways in which homosexuality has moved from completely taboo to generally accepted and "normalized" in our society. He concentrates on same-sex marriage and says that the public recognition and legitimatization it would give to homosexual love and homosexual identity is necessary and inevitable. Sullivan differentiates between four different groups in the marriage debate – the "prohibitionists" who are against marriage and see it as a threat to the institution of marriage and the family, the "liberationists" who could be considered the "queers," the conservatives, who "combine a private tolerance of homosexuals with public disapproval of homosexuality" (Sullivan, 135), and the liberals who "believe, like conservatives, that homosexuality as a social phenomenon is a mixture of choice and compulsion" (Sullivan, 135-136).

Sullivan writes about a "politics of homosexuality" saying,

"While [this politics] eschews the use of law to legislate culture, it strongly believes that the law can effect culture indirectly by it's insistence on the equality of all citizens. Its goal in the area of homosexuality is simply to ensure that the liberal state live up to its promises to all citizens" (Sullivan, 170-171).

He says, "the most powerful and important elements are equal access to the military and marriage" (Sullivan, 173). He writes that this idea "appalls liberationists with the traditionalism of the gay people involved" (Sullivan, 175), but insists that the homosexual should be able to enter public life and declare that he is indeed homosexual, but that doesn't mean he is any different from anyone else, and should therefore be treated as such. Sullivan believes that the centerpiece to this politics, to helping homosexuals gain

"public equality and private freedom," is "equal access to civil marriage" (Sullivan, 178). He expands on this by saying, "It could bring the essence of gay life – a gay couple – into the heart of the traditional family… It could do more to heal the gay-straight rift than any amount of gay rights legislation" (Sullivan, 184). Therefore, if marriage between gay couples is legal, many other problems could be solved, including hate crimes against LGBTQ people and LGBTQ teen suicide, because gays would be seen as more "normal" and would therefore be more accepted by the straight mainstream world.

Michael Warner's book, *The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, and the Ethics of Queer Life* is the queer answer to Sullivan's *Virtually Normal*. It takes the more "queer" side, coming out against gay marriage. In Chapter One, called "The Ethics of Sexual Shame," Warner writes that "the culture has thousands of ways for people to govern the sex of others… we do this directly through prohibition and regulation, and indirectly, by embracing one identity or one set of tastes as though they were universally shared, or should be" (Warner, 1). A major example of this, of course, is homosexuality and homosexual sex, which has been formally regulated through sodomy laws, informally regulated by the constant prejudice and discrimination faced by people who do not identify as straight, as well as the slightly more subtle practice of heterosexism, in which everyone is just assumed to be straight. This results in a widespread feeling of sexual shame among the homosexual community. People justify sexual shaming through religious means or biological means, which then result in what Warner calls "moralism." "All too commonly, people think not only that their own way of living is right, but that it should be every else's moral standard as well" (Warner, 4). This "moralism" has become a social-sexual norm, so much so that, "the effort of wriggling out from under it can seem

enormous. The burden becomes even heavier when one must first overcome shame, or break with the tacit force of sexual morality that other people take to be obvious" (Warner, 6). The result of this intense sexual shame is "heterosexual world domination" (Warner, 6).

Warner's problems with "gay marriage" stem largely from his ideas about sexual shame. He writes about the reasons why the gay rights movement, for so many years, did not pursue gay marriage. He says that these reasons "lay at the heart of an ethical vision of queer politics and centered on the need to resist the state regulation of sexuality" (Warner, 89). He continues by listing the principles upon which queer thought previously rested. These principles include a resistance to the idea that "the state should be allowed to accord legitimacy to some kinds of consensual sex but not others, or to confer respectability on some people's sexuality but not others" and the insistence that "much of what was taken to be morality, respectability, or decorum was, in practice, a way of regulating sexual pleasures and relations" (Warner, 89). Warner feels that advocating for gay marriage is not consistent with these principles. Instead, he believes that marriage creates a system of status and privilege, in which those who get married are of a higher status and greater privilege than those who do not. In addition, marriage regulates sex by legitimizing certain types of sexual relations and further demonizing others. So, gay marriage regulates sex by saying that certain types of sex are okay and acceptable, but other types of sex are not acceptable, but shameful.

In addition to regulating sex and dictating sexual shame, Warner states, "Many gay men and lesbians who now say that they want marriage seem to focus on the way it confers, in their view, respectability and public acceptance" (Warner, 99). By engaging in

a relationship that has been deemed acceptable and respectable by the majority, homosexuals who get married are attempting to deal with their sexual shame by conforming to the accepted sexual standards that marriage provides. However, marriage does not rid homosexuals of their sexual shame, but instead reinforces it. Marriage is "a state-sanctioned program for normalizing gay sexuality" (Warner, 111). Therefore, those Queer people who do not identify with the normalized notions of sexuality must face even more shame.

Warner also specifically mentions activism. "The AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power– commonly known as ACT UP - … made the recognition and affirmation of queer sex central to its strategies of political resistance and HIV prevention" (Warner, 51). Warner is a proponent of the activism style of ACT UP and blames the end of such "in your face" direct action for part of the desexualization and normalization of the LGBTQ community. Warner believes that the activism that Sullivan and others propose, where lobbying legislators and signing petitions is more common, are not effective or "queer" enough because those actions themselves are normalizing and assimilationist.

In addition, Warner disagrees with Sullivan, who "claimed that gay politics [is] reduced to only two issues: military service and marriage" (Warner, 60). Warner and others show this to be a false statement. In an essay in *Queer Youth Cultures* called "Rethinking the Movement," Megan Davidson writes about the "clean up" of New York City, in which the piers, where many queer youth used to hang out, were closed to the public. She says that this is part of the larger attempt to "clean up" or mainstream gay people and the gay movement, which highlights,

> "integration into the status quo or mainstreaming as the guiding principle and
> most widely shared ideal of the movement and this is a strategy that will not

deliver genuine freedom or full equality because the goal of winning mainstream tolerance differs from the goal of winning liberation or changing social institutions in lasting, long-term ways" (Davidson, 245).

Another issue, which both Warner and others address, is the issue of gender. Mainstream LGBTQ organizations claim to be trans inclusive, yet that is often not the case. (Davidson, 250). One self-identified queer person said, "It's like the issue with marriage. So many people are working on this and it is getting a lot of attention, but who does this help? There are more transgender women *murdered* than married in DC" (Davidson, 251). In addition, advocating for same-sex marriage reinforces and perpetuates binary ideas about sex and gender, which many in the queer community disagree with, and which serves to stigmatize trans and genderqueer individuals even more (Davidson, 252)

Both Sullivan and Warner's arguments shed light on the issues that are important to both sides of the debate between normals and queers, which will be helpful when examining the divisions between the two movements in the Netherlands.

Conceptualizing Queer

The word "queer" does not have one specific meaning or definition and can apply to many different types of people. There is no fixed demographic for who might identify as queer, and queer youth (and others who identify as queer) are not "discursively containable" (Driver, 5). The word "queer" can be used as a noun, an adjective, or even a verb, and is purposefully broad (Driver, 11-12). Some use it as an umbrella term for LGBTQ, while others use it for a specific type of LGBTQ identity, in which one is specifically resistant to normalization or mainstream dominant culture, and makes a point not to "cover" homosexual feelings or queer identity, but flaunt them.

For the purposes of this paper I am using "queer" in contention with "normal." Queer can be defined as people who in some way do not identify as heterosexual or "straight" and resist dominant ideals or cultural norms about the "appropriate" ways to present themselves and their sexuality. Specifically, queers are against the "mainstreaming" attempts of the modern gay rights movement and are resistant to the ways in which certain activist agendas serve to "normalize" queer identity. "Normals" are in favor of what queers would call the normalization or "mainstreaming" of gay identity. Often, they choose not to live their lives in vastly different or "radical" ways merely because they are not straight.

Theoretical Framework

For my theoretical framework, there are several approaches I will use when looking at the issue of the divisions between the queer movement and the mainstream gay movement in the Netherlands to help me answer my research question: "Are the "Queer" and "Mainstream" movements in the Netherlands divided? To what extent and by what?"

Covering

There are several different perspectives from Queer Theory that will help me when looking at this topic. First, the theory of "Covering," sheds light on some of the key differences and debates between "mainstream" gays and "queers." In the book *Covering: The Hidden Assault on Our Civil Rights*, Kenji Yoshino writes that "to cover" is to "tone down a disfavored identity to fit into the mainstream" (Yoshino, ix). He differentiates covering from passing. Passing is defined as keeping one's true identity hidden, while covering means that one is public about his or her identity, yet "tones it down" and does not flaunt it or make it extremely obvious. Yoshino says, "If conversion divides ex-gays from gays, and passing divides closeted gays from out gays, covering divides *normals* and *queers*" (Yoshino, 77). Yoshino argues that people may cover in some ways and flaunt in others, so the lines between "queers" and "normals" are not necessarily fixed, but can be fluid. Yoshino writes that people can "cover" or "flaunt" based on their appearance, affiliation, association, or participation in activism. Appearance concerns one's self-presentation and style, affiliation has to do with one's cultural identification, association refers to the type of people one surrounds themselves with, and activism concerns how politicized one's identity is (Yoshino, 79). Based on these qualities, a

person could be considered to be covering or flaunting. However, one can cover in certain ways and flaunt in others.

The theory of Covering will be useful when looking at the mainstream and queer communities in the Netherlands and provides one way to understand the differences between what it means to be mainstream and what it means to be queer. It is a way to understand both similarities and differences within the movements, as well as ways in which certain people could be considered both queer and mainstream, depending on the context. Therefore, this theory could also shed light on the fluidity of identities and the way in which a person could be both queer and mainstream.

Normalization, Recognition and Power

Dutch culture in general is one that intensely promotes normativity. Rather than standing out and being unique individuals, Dutch people are encouraged to "be normal." By looking at Judith Butler's theories on normalization and recognition, it is possible to understand how that may affect the mainstream and queer communities. Butler writes, "The social norms that constitute our existence carry desires that do not originate with our original personhood. This matter is made more complex by the fact that the viability of our individual personhood is fundamentally dependent on these social norms" (Butler, 2). Butler then links these social norms to recognition, saying that people are only recognized as human if they abide by the norms of society, and others will be recognized as "less-than-human." People then internalize these norms and regulate their behavior to conform to them, so that they can be seen as legitimate and recognizable within society. As Butler writes, "The norm governs intelligibility, allows for certain kinds of practices and action to become recognizable as such, imposing a grid of legibility on the social and

defining the parameters of what will and will not appear within the domain of the social"
(Butler, 42).

In "Not Yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of
Gender and Sexuality" Stephen Valocchi uses Butler to explain the way queer theorists
define and use the concept of power.

> "For Butler, rather than the expression of a core self or an essence that defines the
> individual, identities are the effect of the repeated performance of certain cultural
> signs and conventions. There is no original from which gender and sexual identities
> are derived. … The conscious and unconscious adherence to the norms and cultural
> signifiers of sexuality and gender both bring the subject into being and constrain the
> identity enactments of that subject" (Valocchi, 756).

Therefore, LGBT and queer people both use these norms to define themselves, but also
are limited and restrained by these norms, and may not be able to be their true selves. As
Butler writes, "If the schemes of recognition that are available to us are those that 'undo'
the person by conferring recognition, or 'undo' the person by withholding recognition,
then recognition becomes a site of power by which the human is differentially
produced"(Butler, 2).

Valocchi then relates this concept of power to heteronormativity.

> "For queer theorists, heteronormativity means the set of norms that make
> heterosexuality seem natural or right and that organize homosexuality as its binary
> opposite. This set of norms works to maintain the dominance of heterosexuality by
> preventing homosexuality from being a form of sexuality that can be taken for
> granted or go unmarked or seem right in the way heterosexuality can" (Valocchi,
> 756).

One of the central reasons that queers disagree with mainstream gays on assimilationist
topics like marriage is that attempts to assimilate reinforce heteronormative power
structures, creating a homonormative power structure and privileging some gay people
over others (Warner, 2000).

However, for the purposes of this project, it is also important to note Foucault's definition of power as something that is not static, which does not follow a "rule/ruler" model. Power can move in multiple directions. Therefore, though "queers" view mainstream gays as having privilege and possessing power, it is important to take note of the power and privilege that queers posses, and be open to the idea that in some ways, queers may posses more power than "mainstream" gays. (Foucault, 1980).

Intersectionality

Another important issue in Queer Theory is that of intersectionality. The Theory of Intersectionality has been widely used in Critical Race Theory, most notably by Kimberle Crenshaw. The Theory of Intersectionality concerns the idea that facets of identity (race, class, gender, sexuality) are all interconnected and related, so that it is not possible to separate them from one another. Intersectionality states that, when examining the experiences of individuals, it is impossible to paint a clear picture of one's experience without taking each different facet of identity into account. For example, a white woman's experience as a woman will be different from a Black woman's experience as a woman, because "the intersection of racism and sexism factors into Black Women's experiences in ways that cannot be captured wholly by looking at the race or gender dimensions of those experiences separately"(Crenshaw, 1994, 1244). These different experiences, as Crenshaw states, stem largely from the experience of multiple oppressions. Often, racism, sexism, and homophobia are spoken about as singular issues, when, in reality, they all come into play at the same time, and cannot truly be divided.

Queer theory, like Critical Race Theory, subscribes to this theory of intersectional identities and intersectional oppressions. Valocchi says,

"The understanding of sexual identity may be inflected in unique ways depending on racial, ethnic, or class affiliations; thus, the practices, expressions, and interests emergent from this intersection of differences cannot be captured by the dominant categories of homosexual or heterosexual or any other single identity category" (Valocchi, 754-755).

Intersectionality is important when looking at the issues that divide the queer and mainstream communities, because the divisions do not lie only along the lines of sexuality, but also along the lines of sex, gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, and class. In addition, these differences exist within the two groups as well, and it is important to take note of how these intersections of identity affect the communities and identities both within and outside the two movements.

Understanding intersectionality will help when looking at the divisions between the LGBT and queer communities and examining why certain divisions exist. It also might explain why certain groups of people identify more or less with the mainstream and queer communities.

Subculture Theory

I am approaching the "queer" and "normal" groups with an understanding of the two as subcultures. They can most accurately be described using Sarah Thornton's theory of "Distinction." Thornton writes about "taste cultures" that are united by specific preferences and create alternative status hierarchies. When David Muggleton writes about "Distinctive Individuality" he says, "Invoking a reference group enables certain individuals to emphasize their 'insider' status as members of an esoteric, subterranean scene through self-exclusion from a larger category of uninitiated 'outsiders.' All these sets of oppositions – the insider against the collective; the insider vs. the outsider; the minority against the majority can be found in Sarah Thornton's (1995) study *Club*

Cultures" (Muggleton, 63-64). Therefore, due to the nature of queer and LGBTQ identities, distinction is currently the most suitable way to examine LGBTQ identity and the queer and mainstream gay movements in the Netherlands.

Methodology

For this study, I have used the qualitative approach to research and have conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with participants using open-ended questions that I have developed in an interview guide. The questions asked are a mix between a fact interview and an opinion interview. In addition, I have also used some aspects of an oral history interview, because I also think it is important to get information about people's own life experiences within the queer and gay movements and how marriage equality and the debate between queer and normal has affected their own lives, identities, and conceptions of community.

Sources of Information and Finding Participants

To find participants, I did both a purposive sample and a snowball sample. I did a purposive sample in which I identified gay and queer people through going to organizations or events that are "gay" or "queer" and meeting people there. I also did a snowball sample in which I got the names of other possible interview participants from people I interviewed. This is a useful method due to the nature of the population. Gay people and queer people are not necessarily immediately identifiable, so it makes sense to start somewhere that attracts people who self-identify as such.

My target community was people who live in the Netherlands who identify in some way as LGBTQ, some of whom are more "mainstream" or "normal" and others of whom are more "queer." I wanted to interview both slightly older people who were in the Netherlands both before and after marriage became legalized, as well as younger people.

I also wanted to interview both white and nonwhite people and people of various social classes and gender identities.

In order to find people I started by interviewing people I know who identify as gay or queer. In addition, I attended "Queeristan" a queer conference held in March 2010 that included several workshops, talks by panelists, movie screenings, a party, and a street demonstration. I also attended several meetings of the group QueerNL, which organized Queeristan. In addition to meeting interview subjects at these events, I also took notes on issues that were discussed at the workshops, so that I have a broader view of the issues that are important to the queer community and the queer community's feelings about their place within the larger Dutch community and the mainstream LGBT community.

After attending these events, I sent out an email on the QueerNL email list-serve and began interviewing people who replied. From there, I obtained other names from people I interviewed, as well as from my advisor.

Who I am in Relation to My Participants

In relation to my participants, I am also someone who identifies as LGBTQ. However, I am also white, college educated, and middle class, which are all points of privilege that will effect my interactions with participants and how I view them, as well as how they view me.

The issue of bias is a tricky one. I am still trying to figure out how I feel about the issue of Marriage Equality and the debate between normals and queers as a whole. I agree with both sides on various points and I cannot really say whether I would identify myself

more as "normal" or "queer." In some ways, my inability to "choose a side" was probably helpful in ensuring that I had the least amount of bias possible. However, I will say that, at the end of the day, I feel that Marriage Equality, though not the best direction to go in, is still a positive direction to go in, and therefore I may hold a slight bias in favor of the "mainstream" community. However, I think a bigger bias might be my feelings about the debate in general. I feel that the debate itself, and the lines drawn between "normal" and "queer," are problematic, and, on a more individual level, this debate can serve to alienate and delegitimize identities on both sides.

Assumptions

Going into this research project, I had my own assumptions about what my findings would be. First, I assumed that the majority of those who identify as "mainstream" are in favor of marriage equality and the idea of assimilation and normalization, and also that more "mainstream" people would not feel comfortable in more "queer" spaces.

Second, I assumed that many in the queer community are not in favor of marriage equality and do not like the idea of being "normal." I assumed that they may feel marginalized and uncomfortable within the mainstream gay community.

I also assumed that these two communities work as just that – two separate communities.

Lastly, I assumed that the debate between "normals" and "queers" is problematic and that it serves to delegitimize people on both sides. I assumed that there is no "right" or "wrong" answer to this debate and I do not feel that either side necessarily holds more

privilege than the other does. Both sides hold certain types of privilege and both sides may make each other feel oppressed or unwelcome in certain ways.

Limitations

There are several notable limitations to this study. First, due to time constraints, I was only able to interview eight people, therefore, the perspectives represented in the research, as well as the conclusions drawn, are limited, and are not able to represent all points of view within the queer and LGBT communities. In addition, though I attempted to talk with as diverse a sample of people as possible, several different groups were not represented or underrepresented. The majority of the people I talked with were white, and all but one were cisgender.[*] If I had been able to talk with a more diverse group of people, it is possible that my findings would have been different.

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[*] Cisgender refers to someone who is non-transgender. In other words, a cisgender person is someone whose gender identity is the same as their biological sex.

<div align="center">**Findings/Analysis**</div>

There are several main themes I found when conducting my interviews, which can then be related back to my primary research question.

Community

In conducting my interviews, I found that all participants identified themselves with some sort of LGBT or queer community and stated that their sexual orientation played a large role in their social and political lives. In addition, many participants did not necessarily identify with one single type of community and associated with both an LGBT and a queer community, or several different types of LGBT communities. Furthermore, many people did not necessarily view the LGBT or gay community as one overarching community, but considered it to be very diverse and made up of many different communities.

Are the community/communities separate?

When I asked about divisions between the queer community and the mainstream community I received many diverse answers. Many people expressed the idea that the two communities really are not that divided, and several people identified with being a part of both. Niruj[*], a gay man[**] who was one of the founding members of QueenNL, said, " I am gay and queer. I can be both, one or the other. I can shift." Rene, also a gay man, said something similar when he told me, "I would identify myself as queer

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[*] In the beginning of each interview, I asked each participant what name I should refer to them as in my paper. If they requested I not use their name, or use a pseudonym instead, I changed their name in my paper.

[**] In each interview, I asked each participant to describe their own sexual orientation/gender identity. I tried to accurately describe each interviewee's identity according to how they described it themselves.

politically, but not culturally or personally." Rene also told me that he is very much involved in a more mainstream social scene. And Koen, who identifies as a gay man and does not see himself as part of the queer community said, "I like [the queer community]. I feel at home there."

However, others felt that the two communities are more separate and do not feel as though they intersect so much. When asked about divisions between the communities, Vreer, who identifies as queer, said, "They are totally separate worlds of political struggle." Ze said that the social struggle is different, and that "many gays are not queer," and it is "politically incorrect" for them to call themselves such.

Another interesting finding is that several people who do not currently identify as part of the queer community expressed that they did do so when they were younger, even if they did not call it that. Cinta, a lesbian woman, said that she was more involved with the squatting movement in the 80's and 90's, and she lived in several different lesbian squats and sometimes a few lesbian-separatist squats. Now she is no longer involved in the squatting movement, and is more involved in "mainstream" gay communities and organizations. Koen said, "The queer community is new to me" but he also said that when he was younger he "was part of it, I just didn't have the name." Richard, a gay man, said that he considers queer people as a group to be younger than the mainstream community, and he felt that the desire to be different, and against the norm "is an age thing, not necessarily a gay thing… young people like the idea of being alternative."

These responses show that both the LGBT and Queer communities are difficult to define and these definitions can change based on who considers themselves to be members and how they define themselves and their communities. These ideas can be

explained by David Muggleton in *Inside Subculture: The Postmodern Meaning of Style*. He says that meanings within subculture are formed and defined by members themselves and that people may move in and out of subcultures over time. Additionally, he says that subcultures are not really about style, but about the "attitudes and values that underlie" this style (Muggleton, 59). Muggleton also explains that members of subcultures often dislike specific labels. "This dislike of the compartmentalizing implications of labeling (boxing people)… is reflected in the chosen subcultural identification, for, although this is a named group, it… breaks out of the more specific categorization" (Muggleton, 60).

Furthermore, several people expressed the idea that you cannot really identify a cohesive mainstream community and a cohesive queer community. For starters, the queer community is very new and very small. Many interview participants said that Queeristan was the first thing the queers have really done in Amsterdam. In addition, others did not think the queer community had enough size or presence to even be considered a community. Richard said, "The queer community doesn't really exist. There are squatters, but they're not really that alternative anymore." Helene, a lesbian, said that she did not know much about the queer community and had no contact with it. Furthermore, many people expressed the idea that the mainstream community was not necessarily one cohesive community, but divided along several lines, like gender, gender expression, age, and certain preferences.

The lack or recognition of the queer community in the Netherlands can be explained in several ways. First, there is the actual truth to the statement that the queer community is very small, and therefore, many people are unaware of its existence. However, this too can be explained. Due to the highly normative society of the

Netherlands, people feel compelled to abide by certain norms of society, which does not include associating with a "queer" community. Furthermore, when people talk about the queer community and do not recognize it as a legitimate group, they fail to recognize it because it does not abide by the norms that are so present within Dutch society. Therefore, people do not recognize queers and the queer community as a legitimate group.

Divisions

When interview subjects did speak about divisions, there were a few main themes. A major one is gender. Several people felt that the community is largely divided along the lines of men and women. Cinta said that in the past she was a member of several women-only squats, and sometimes felt marginalized as a woman in the gay community. Helene also felt that men and women are very separate. Richard echoed these sentiments when he said, "The men are very misogynist sometimes. There is not much common ground." Rene even went as far as to say that upper class white gay men have full legal rights and all privileges, while everyone else is still oppressed.

Several people also spoke about divisions between the trans community and other communities, as well as divisions due to race. When speaking about these issues, another common theme was tolerance. Rene and Niruj both felt that the queer community was a safer and more tolerant space for people who identify as trans. Several people felt that the queer community is, overall, more tolerant and a more comfortable space for people who are non-white. However, Vreer acknowledged that the movement itself is very white, though it is starting to get less so. Rene, Niruj, and Vreer all spoke about issues of racism, sexism, and transphobia as some of the major goals that the queer movement must fight

against. Koen and Vreer also mentioned that migrants have unique problems and may be stigmatized by certain things in the mainstream movement. What is notable here is that the people who were the most vocal about these issues were people who identify as members of the queer community. Not only did they voice the opinion that the queer community is a more tolerant space, but they also showed that issues of racism, sexism, and transphobia were personally important to them and to the queer movement. While various other people also talked about these issues, those who identified as part of the queer community were the most vocal. For example, Rene said, "QueerNL started as a demonstration against racism." He also said that the queer movement should pressure the mainstream movement to fight against racism and sexism. He said, "We should be tolerant to others as well, we should give that back." Niruj said, "Being open and tolerant to difference is a very conscious decision." He continued by saying, "In the future we need to continue to fight against issues of sexism and transphobia."

The Theory of Intersectionality states that each person's identity is multi-faceted and each part of one's identity affects the way one moves through the world, and results in multiple oppressions. Therefore, it makes sense that gay or queer women and gay or queer people of color, and gay or queer trans people have unique issues that they must face, both within greater society, and within the queer and mainstream LGBT communities, and it also makes sense, then, that the communities are divided along such lines. Furthermore, in Dutch society, queers also face multiple oppressions. On the one hand, queers do not identify as straight. On the other hand, queers do not identify as "normal." This may account for why the queer community is more tolerant than the mainstream community is.

Marriage

All participants had something to say about the issue of marriage. The responses ranged from those who fully support marriage, and some who are even married themselves, to those who do not like the idea of marriage. However, even people who did not support the idea of marriage and would not get married themselves thought that marriage was a positive and important step; not a single person said that they thought marriage equality should not exist in the Netherlands.

A range of people, from those who identified as queer to those who identified as "mainstream" (or just not queer), were either personally or politically against marriage, and often both. However, each of these people supported marriage equality. Cinta said, "I see it as a legal thing. Everyone who wants to should be able to. It should be equal." However, on a personal level Cinta said, " I don't want to be married. I don't know what more it would bring me than I have now." Rene said that he does not personally oppose it, but he "would not want to fight for marriage now." He was probably the most vocal person against marriage. He said that it stopped the fight for gay rights and that people think marriage is the end. He also said that marriage is for "rich white gay men." However, he also said that "if it's a law in your country you identify with it more" meaning that, because marriage equality exists in the Netherlands, people are more accepting of gay people.

Niruj said that, personally, he is not a big fan of marriage as an institution and would never get married himself, but "given that there is something called marriage, I don't want to see it denied to gay people." When his friends announce that they are getting married, he always supports them, but also, "always asks why." He also echoed

Rene's idea that marriage was seen as the end of the movement. Vreer said, "marriage rights are important, but we shouldn't chase it. It's part of a larger struggle and it would be best to abolish it altogether." Ze also said that some queers might be married even if they do not agree with marriage, because it is a legal tool. Finally, ze said that ze does not like marriage because it privileges some gay people over others and does not allow for things like polyamory. Daan, who identifies as a dyke, also did not agree with marriage for herself, saying, " I don't need a contract to share my love." But she also said, "If people want to marry, they can marry."

Several of the interview subjects were more positive about marriage for themselves and for the movement. Koen, who is the executive director of COC Netherlands, said that the COC did not originally play a big role in the fight for marriage equality because "marriage was outdated anyway, so why would gay people want it?" However, Koen also said, "I think that was a mistake." He said that marriage is an issue of human rights, and believes that "the COC should advocate for complete human rights and the individual choice to get married." Personally, Koen is recently divorced. Of his own marriage he said, "I'm not sure if we would have gotten married if we had been a straight couple. We felt we needed to make use of it, needed to make a statement, make our family aware and participate in activism in that way."

Richard, who has been married for 18 years, had similar comments. He said that he was always anti (straight) marriage. But when the time came to make a decision about getting a registered partnership or getting married, he and his husband chose marriage. "If you say you're registered, people don't know what that is. People don't take relationships as seriously if you're not married, people think it's more real if you're married." He also

said, "legally it solves all of your problems." Finally, there is Helene Faasen, who is one half of the first lesbian couple to be married in the Netherlands. She said that having marriage makes it "easier for straight people to understand gay people. It makes them visible and normal."

The responses of the participants show several things. First, many participants considered marriage to be something that would give them recognition, and therefore certain privileges and certain power. In addition, some people felt compelled to get married because of the existence of marriage equality, and it is possible that they would not have done so if they had been straight. Furthermore, certain people acknowledged that without marriage, relationships are not as valued, respected or recognized, and that marriage itself fails to recognize certain relationships, like polyamorous relationships. Each of these issues can be linked back to Michael Warner's arguments against marriage.

However, almost everyone mentioned the desire to be treated equally under the law, and everyone saw marriage as an important legal right that gay people deserve to have, which connects back to Sullivan's argument in favor of marriage. Therefore, it seems that, though certain divisions do exist between queers and normals when it comes to marriage equality, those divisions are very nuanced and not necessarily clear-cut. Though no one who identified as queer wants to get married themselves, there were also several people who do not identify as queer who felt similarly.

Another important point to note is the timing of marriage equality in the Netherlands and marriage equality in the US. Helene stated that she thought marriage equality was a bigger dividing factor between queers and normals back in 2001 when the fight was happening. Now, nine years later, it is not such a big deal, because it is

ingrained in society, and most people would be unlikely to be strongly against marriage now, when it exists and has existed for nine years.

Therefore, referring back to part of my research question, "Is marriage the central dividing factor between queer and mainstream, as it is in the US?" I am able to make the tentative conclusion that it is not. However, because my research was conducted in the present, I posit that, during the time when the fight for marriage equality was happening in the Netherlands, this division was larger. Over the last ten years, as marriage equality has become a normal and accepted part of society, this division has closed, and is not as great as it once was.

On "Being Normal"

Another major topic of discussion was the idea of being normal. I asked all participants what they thought of the Dutch phrase "Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg" or "Act normal, as that is crazy enough." Every person immediately recognized this phrase and often said something like "Oh yes, that is very Dutch." The idea of being normal, then, is deeply ingrained within Dutch society, and certainly has an impact on the queer and mainstream gay movements.

The queer community seems to be characterized in part by its aversion to assimilation and normalcy. At Queeristan, for example, at then end of the conference when people were going around the room and saying things that they learned, one woman said something about how everyone is just normal, and a collective gasp went up around the room. People acted as if the woman had just said something awful. Queer people, or at least some queer people, do not like the idea of being normal. However, when I spoke to interview subjects individually, I found that this issue is not so black and white. For

example, Rene identifies as queer in a political sense, but not socially. He said, "It's not necessarily bad to be normal, I am very normal." He went on to say that " I don't oppose [being normal], that is their way of life." He also mentioned Queeristan. He said, "Queeristan for me culturally was way too much, but it was the only space where some people felt free."

Niruj also expressed similar feelings. He said that the movement is very normal and that society is not politicized. The queer community attempts to anti-fetishize being normal. However, he said, "One can't claim to stand outside the mainstream. That would be a bit too smug." He continued by saying, "If people are denied the right to be normal, that's a huge problem, but some people can't be normal even if they want to be."

Several people made note of the fact that although queer people may not be "normal" in the same way that mainstream people are, they still have their own norms. Vreer said that queer normativity exists as well, and that there are several normativities. Different groups have different norms. Vreer described normativity as a system, and said that though queers might have their own norms, it's not the same thing, because queers don't have power. Ze said, "When you use normal to exclude other people, that's when it's bad, because you're using power."

When I spoke to people who identified as more "normal" or mainstream, they seemed to feel as if they needed to defend themselves and their own apparent "normalness." When I asked Cinta what she thought of the idea that the gay community in the Netherlands is too normal, she said, "If they really say that, then they are really bourgeois." She continued with, "You can't say that about people before you have such a judgment… who sets the standard then?" Koen said, "The queers think we're not radical

enough, but the majority of people really really enjoy being normal." When he spoke specifically about the COC, he echoed some of what Sullivan said, and some of the issues that Warner has with the mainstream movement. He said, "When you go into the mainstream political arena you need to behave in a way that gets respect. We're not doing this for fun, we're doing this to achieve something."

Richard thought that it was true that the gay community is "kinda mainstream" but that "it's good in the long run I think." About himself, he said, "part of me is normal and part of be is not… I don't feel totally normal, but that doesn't hinder me." Finally, Helene, who identifies as a lesbian and as a member of the mainstream community said, "I don't think it's good to be normal. I don't think that by joining the queer community you're less normal, there are just different standards, depending on the community." She also said "It's shortsighted to assume that people who are married have a life that is less exciting just because they are married, have children, and live in the suburbs and don't have alternative hair or clothes. We're just as diverse as queers."

Canal Pride

When speaking to people about the issue of "normal," several people mentioned Canal Pride. Some saw Canal Pride as something very positive. Koen said that he felt that Canal Pride shows the diversity of the community. Niruj said that at Canal Pride people are able to "be public and hold hands. It's one of the only times and places where people feel totally comfortable doing this, because it's not threatening to the spectators." Others had more varied views on Canal Pride. Daan felt that it is both positive and negative, because, on the one hand, it is like "going to the zoo and watching apes," but on the other hand, "it's good that it's so popular. Who would have thought it would be so popular?"

Rene and Daan both also mentioned how commercial Canal Pride is now, and that it is no longer political. Daan said, "It's a love parade." Rene said that it is "very commercial. It's the largest event in the Netherlands and is extremely mainstream." He also talked about going once and seeing three heterosexual couples in the front row watching, which shows how mainstream it is, but it also is a very positive thing. "These people who have been everyone's parents were sitting there watching the gay pride and it was really amazing." He called it a "Dutch achievement."

The desire to be normal is, once again, a desire for recognition. People internalize norms and then regulate their behavior accordingly. From the participants' comments, it seems clear that those in the "mainstream" do this. However, it is also true that those who identify as part of the queer community do this as well. It seems impossible that anyone can truly get away from acting normal. Not only do those in the queer community abide by certain mainstream norms, but they also have their own queer norms, which allow them to recognize who is queer and who is not.

Vreer characterized the mainstream community as having power, while stating that the queer community does not. However, judging from the negative way in which "mainstream" people responded to being called normal, I would say that queers hold a certain power as well.

Further Activism?

It seems to be a common idea that after marriage equality was achieved in the Netherlands activism just stopped and people felt as if they had achieved everything. However, no one who I spoke to currently feels as if there is nothing left to achieve. Some queer people did believe that marriage ended the mainstream movement. Several

people who are more involved in the mainstream movement addressed that issue. Koen said, "We lived in a kind of 'pink dream' at the time. People relaxed a bit too much. It was definitely not okay." Helene said, "Perhaps we were a bit too proud of ourselves." In addition, though, several people felt that the age of activism in general had reached a low point. Koen said, "The age of activism stopped. Period." Cinta said, "Activism isn't currently visible in the way that it was." Richard said, "People weren't really active in the 90's either. It was really in the 80's when people were the most active."

When asked about whether activism is still needed, every person answered affirmatively. Many people identified education, especially sexual education and sexual diversity education in schools as very important, as well as education about anti-gay violence. Many people said that legally, there are still a few small issues to work out, but that legally gay people are largely equal. Therefore, the next step is to go from legal equality to social equality, which was a point made by Gert Hekma. Koen said, "marriage helped, but it's a legal thing. It's not the same as the world being safe. We're in the third phase now, which is social acceptance. We will achieve that when there are no barriers to being the person you want to be."

Richard said that "It's become them and us. Gay people are like a different species. I think the ultimate goal is for the barrier between gay and straight to break down." Cinta said something similar. "Activism is necessary as long as there are still people who are surprised that you tell them you are gay. It's still a struggle to be gay. You need extra energy to explain your situation. There's still assumed straightness."

People in the queer community have some similar goals. One issue that was very important at Queeristan was the idea that no one should assume what anyone's gender

identity was, merely based on their appearance, and if someone did not know for sure, they should either ask or use gender-neutral pronouns. Though they were more concerned with gender than sexual orientation, the general idea of not making assumptions is still similar.

The queers also had some different goals. They each wanted to see the radical community get larger, stronger, and more visible and get more political. They also mentioned issues of racism, sexism and transphobia. Vreer said, "The queer revolution is on its way, it's just underground."

In addition to particular issues, several people mentioned the importance of visibility. Cinta said "to be visibly gay is a political act." Koen, Daan, and Helene also talked about the importance of visibility as part of furthering gay rights and gay acceptance. Several people also associated marriage with visibility.

Many of the issues mentioned in this section can be related back to the theory of Covering. The emphasis on still needing social equality means that many people in the Netherlands still feel like they need to cover their gayness or queerness, and do not yet feel comfortable or safe flaunting their sexuality or sexual orientation.

In addition, the issue of visibility relates directly to covering and what is considered to be covering or flaunting. While some consider marriage to be covering, others see it as an important way to be visible, and thus see it as flaunting.

Conclusions

Summary

Several different themes arose from this research, which shed light on how and why the mainstream gay movement and the queer movement in the Netherlands are different and divided, as well as the ways in which they are similar and united. The most notable finding from this research is the fact that "mainstream" and "queer" do not exist as fully separate and distinct entities. Many people identify as both gay and queer, and both normal and not so normal.

The issue of marriage equality, unlike in the US, is no longer a major issue of contention between the mainstream and queer movements. Though it might have been a bigger issue when the right to marry was being passed, today most people, both queer and normal, see marriage as a positive step. The difference is that queers themselves may be less likely to get married, due to their political feelings against marriage, but they do not feel it should be denied to those who want it. Normals may be more open to getting married themselves. When it comes to real division however, marriage does not currently seem to be a dividing factor.

Actual divisions seem to be smaller and more nuanced than such a large issue like marriage. Most notably, queers seem to be more politicized, and have a desire for a more radical and politically active community. While many normals are not necessarily activists, it seems that most queers define themselves, at least partly, by being politically active in a radical sense. In addition, while not necessarily against being "normal," queers are also more interested in upsetting and challenging certain norms, like the gender binary, for example.

In addition, queers seem to be a more open and tolerant community, where trans, genderqueer and queer people alike can feel comfortable. Furthermore, the queer community seems to be more committed to also fighting racism, sexism, and transphobia, while the mainstream community is still largely focused on LGB issues.

Finally, there is the issue of age. Queers, overall, seem to be a younger community than the mainstream community. This could merely be because "queer" as an idea is relatively new. However, it could also be because young people, in general, are more open to alternative lifestyles. As people age it is harder to remain a part of such communities because they may conflict with other life desires, like having a family or advancing in one's profession.

Final Thoughts

In the end, it seems that the biggest goals for both the queer and gay movements are the same: equality both socially and legally, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, race, gender expression, or class. In addition, both queer and normal people expressed the desire to break down boundaries between gay and straight, male and female, etc. In this way, it is possible that the ultimate goal is to queer the definition of normal…. Or to normalize the definition of queer, depending on how you look at it.

The findings of this research challenge some of the common ideas within academia when it comes to being queer and normal, and show that, perhaps, theory does not reflect what is actually happening in the real world. While the debate between normals and queers does exist, it is clear that it is *not* as polarizing as it is sometimes presented to be within an academic context. For this reason, hopefully normals and

queers can rise above the differences that they have in order to fight together for greater visibility and social equality. Ultimately, normals and queers are not at odds with each other, and whether one "covers" or "flaunts," is married or not married, or is queer or normal, both sides must therefore have a "commitment… to autonomy – giving individuals the freedom to elaborate their authentic selves – rather than to a rigid notion of what constitutes an authentic gay identity" (Yoshino, 93). Normals, queers, and all members of the LGBT community in the Netherlands should learn from one another and embrace the differences within and between them, in order to most effectively achieve their goals and effect change.

Recommendations for Future Research

This project could not cover all aspects of this issue, and there are thus several directions to go in when conducting future research. First, it would be interesting to relate this study back to the United States and conduct a similar study there. Perhaps the findings would be different, or perhaps they would be similar, which would indicate (as I mentioned above) the extent to which the divisions between queers and normals exist more in an academic context than in people's actual lived experiences. In addition, because the US does not currently have marriage equality, and has less progressive ideas about sex, sexuality, and the separation of church and state, the findings in such a study could be rather different. Furthermore, while the Dutch focus on normalization, Americans emphasize individualism, meaning that attitudes about normalization and assimilation versus alternative lifestyles and separatism could be quite different, resulting in an interesting comparison to this study.

Additionally, because this project did not look specifically at issues of race or class, further research could be done which focuses on these topics, in order to uncover whether the issue of "queer" versus "normal" differs greatly among various races and classes. By interviewing more people of color or people from different classes it would be possible to get a better idea of how race and class intersect with sexuality and affect these issues.

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Appendix

Interview guide

1. Name
2. Age
3. Nationality
4. Race
5. How long have you/did you lived in the Netherlands?

6. What is your sexual orientation and gender identity?

7. Do you consider yourself a part of a LGBT or Queer community in the Netherlands? What kind?

8. If yes, why do you consider yourself a part of this community and how do you participate in the community? If no, why not?

9. What is your opinion on marriage equality in the Netherlands? What is your personal position on marriage? Do you feel it was a positive step for the gay community? Why or why not?

10. Do you feel that there are divisions between the LGBTQ community in the Netherlands?

11. If so, where do you feel those divisions lie?

12. What do you think of the idea that the gay community in the Netherlands is too "normal?" What is your opinion of the phrase "Doe maar gewoon, dan doe je al gek genoeg"?

13. Some argue that the mainstream gay rights movement has resulted in a "desexualized" gay identity. What is your opinion of this?

14. Do you think there is still a need for activism within the Dutch gay community? What might be the next steps or goals for ending oppression?

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