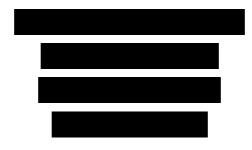# DISSERTATION

DESIRE, DISCO, DISCLOSURE

The diverse socio-cultural & political factors that have affected queer identity and culture within Glasgow's nightlife scene.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

Background

The role of queer clubbing scenes shaping LGBTQ+ culture and identity has been a consistent theme in recent decades. These spaces have served as a preliminary environment where individuals can construct and later express their LGBTQ+ identities. The origins of nightlife are closely tied to the history and culture of the queer community, and as such, nightlife has continued to play a crucial role in the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals. Before legalising homosexuality in the UK and Scotland, queer spaces were defined by the individual's participation in homosexual behaviour within a given space. As society became increasingly accepting of the notion of homosexual identity, the landscape for how the needs of the LGBTQ+ community were met made a shift towards clubbing scenes. These clubbing scenes are ephemeral, and their relevance has evolved in line with LGBTQ+ community values and needs.

Methods & Analysis

Theoretical foundations that underpin the research on Glasgow's queer culture - examining key concepts such as queer theory, cultural geography and cultural practices. These then informed the methodology used to investigate Glasgow's queer culture. It outlines the data collection methods and explains how it was analysed.

Discussion

This research explores the changing landscape of queer clubbing scenes in Glasgow. By conducting a series of semi-structured interviews with participants in these scenes, this dissertation will suggest evolving values and needs of the LGBTQ+ community and how these are reflected in their nightlife spaces. This research will contribute to the ongoing discourse on LGBTQ+ issues in Scotland and beyond. Providing an insight into how these communities navigate socio-cultural spaces in the pursuit of acceptance, inclusivity, and self-expression. Glasgow's queer culture presents the findings of the research by discussing the varying political factors that affected queer lives before decriminalisation as well as the cultural and social practices that shaped queer life in Glasgow. It then explored the individual experiences of queer people in Glasgow to ground the study within a modern context.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Context

Dancefloors and clubbing scenes are aligned with values of diversity, liberty, and defiance. Within a city's nightlife scene, a network of venues and events offer live music to the LGBTQ+ community in what's known as 'the queer clubbing scene' or 'the gay scene'. These spaces accommodate a segment of the population characterised by alternative gender and sexual preference.[1] They exist as safe environments to allow exploration into identity whilst presenting an opportunity to encounter other members of the community.

This thesis is an exploration of queer clubbing spaces in Glasgow, which are commonly known as 'queer spaces.' Varying forms of queer space are erratic, displaying diverse characteristics that adapt to present-day preferences and circumstances. They display an ambiguous and defiant nature that possesses a symbiotic relationship with societal equality progression. The ethos of club culture functions as a manifesto for LGBTQ+ community values and expression. These spaces and their routines are formed out of necessity and play a role in an LGBTQ+ individual's identity construction. This study provides a historical context of queer experience to understand better the originating factors that affected sexuality and queer expression within Glasgow over the last century. Moreover, the research looks closely into the flexible nature of the spaces in which queer identity is constructed and expressed; as such the research will focus on Glasgow's queer nightlife scene, which emerged after the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1981. The justification for this period is due to the vast number of changes that have been made to Scotland's LGBTQ+ identifying citizens' lives. This research aims to further analyse current enquiry on LGBTQ+ experiences during this period. Furthermore, a comprehension of the cultural and social implications arising from the advancement of legislation in Scotland, with particular emphasis on its impact on queer spaces in Glasgow, will be referenced.

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[1] Almonte, Eddy. (2019) *Queer Nightlife as Social Infrastructure: Nightlife Regulation Initiatives in New York and London.*

1.2 Key Arguments

The key motivation for this research is that it is being undertaken at a time of significant threats to the visibility of the nightlife industry. As we navigate through the aftermath of the pandemic, nightlife spaces have been kept in a state of abeyance. Businesses have voiced their frustration at being kept in the dark. In contrast, politicians have faced accusations of favouring high cultures establishments like theatres over others in the distribution of emergency funds and government support, leading to claims of 'elitism'[2]. Consequently, there have been severe implications for different minority participants who, without these spaces, fell victim to extreme social isolation.

The closure of LGBTQ+ venues has reached an all-time high, with over '60% of London LGBTQ+ venues closing down in the last decade'[3]. This consistent decline is significant to the nightlife economy, as nightclubs that do not fall into the queer leisure category have been closing for several years. The cause for discretion could be considered to no longer be necessary for Scotland. Which arguably has recently gained a reputation for being one of the most progressive countries in Europe concerning its commitment to equality law. The UK decriminalised homosexuality in 1967 [4]via the Sexual Offences Act, which permitted consensual acts between men over 21. However, it took until 1981 for Scotland to achieve the same level of equality.[5] Following this, it wasn't until 2001 that the age of consent for same-sex activity was equal to that of opposite-sex activity. The gradual acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals in Scottish society can be attributed, in part, to the legislative reforms that have taken place over time. Yet in more recent legislation, the Scottish Parliament proposed a Gender Recognition Reform Bill in 2020 [6] to simplify the process for transgender citizens to have their gender identity legally recognised. The UK government in Westminster later blocked the bill, citing concerns about the proposed changes to the gender recognition process. This decision has been heavily criticised by supporters of the bill, who argue that the legal reform is necessary to improve the lives of transgender people in Scotland.

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[2] Bol, D. (2020) *Nicola Sturgeon Accused of Elitism as Clubs, Pubs and Music Venues Issue Funding Warning*
[3] Kheraj, A. (2021) *In the Past Decade, 60% of London's LGBTQ+ spaces have closed down.*
[4] UK Parliament. (2023) Regulating sex and sexuality: The 20th Century.
[5] IBID
[6] UK Parliament, House of Commons Library (2023)

Figure 1 Protest against UK Government's blocking of Section 35

Therefore, it is essential to recognise that there is still progress in achieving full equality and inclusion for LGBTQ+ Scottish citizens. The number of charges reported with a sexual-orientation aggravation in Scotland has 'increased by 5% between 2020-21. Except for 2014-15, a year-on-year increase in charges has been reported since hate crime legislation came into force in 2010'[7]. A report from 2017 undertaken by LGBTQ+ charity Stonewall Scotland revealed that at 'least 20% of LGBTQ+ individuals had experienced a hate crime or incident due to their sexuality and gender identity within the last twelve months'.[8] These statistics evidence that despite advancements in protective legislation, positive changes in societal views and the gentrification of queer leisure spaces in urban areas: discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals remains a significant threat.

1.3 Outline

The primary focus of this research is to explore the diverse LGBTQ+ experiences in Glasgow over the last forty years. The dissertation investigates the city's nightlife, the distinct subcultures prevalent within it, LGBTQ+ culture, and their inter-relationships. The central argument posits that queer spaces serve as platforms for creating and expressing social and individual identities. This claim aligns with the broader hypothesis that leisure spheres

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[7] Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service, (2021).
[8] Bridger, Sophie and Chaka L. Bachmann. (2017) *LGBT in Scotland: Hate Crime and Discrimination*

provide a conducive physical and emotional framework that significantly influences identity construction. The study contends that political changes and representation played a crucial role in evolving LGBTQ+ nightlife. Furthermore, it argues that developing social and individual identities within queer spaces propelled political representation within the framework of sexual citizenship and equality. The research also challenges the notion that queer people are inherently associated with Glasgow's commercialised gay scene, instead demonstrating how varying subcultures emerged in resistance to this rhetoric. The thesis employs diverse modes of argumentation and evidence to support these claims, moving beyond anecdotal accounts to consider alternative associative approaches. The study concludes by exploring contemporary attitudes and everyday realities of Glasgow's queer community, offering a grounding perspective on queer sites through lived experience.

Chapter 2 – Exploration of Socio-Cultural Theoretical Frameworks

In the upcoming subchapters, previous theories, academic research, and political milestones will be revisited to determine the most critical factors which have influenced LGBTQ+ identity within leisure spheres. This research aims to explore the various factors contributing to the formation and expression of queer culture and identity. This will be achieved by an exploration into the field of queer theory and previous theoretical constructs surrounding LGBTQ+ identity development will be discussed. Second, I will look at the intersection of sexuality and space. Such a conceptualisation is essential to grasp the complex relationship between queer culture and the space it inhabits. Finally, I will discuss the diverse cultural practices that exist within queer communities and analyse how these are integral to the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals.

2.1 Revolution of Identity, Assimilation of Culture

To understand why individuals, participate in queer leisure spaces, it is essential to examine how LGBTQ+ individuals are treated in Western Society. The concept of queerness as a distinct identity is a relatively recent development. As the American academic Kristin Esterberg observed in 1994, 'while homosexual behaviour can be found throughout history, homosexual identity as well as the concept of homosexual people, is essentially a late nineteenth and twentieth-century phenomenon'. [9] LGBTQ+ individuals have faced discrimination and persecution in various adversities, such as legal punishment, social ostracism, and active violence. Until recently, homosexuality was illegal in many countries within Western society and is still illegal in several countries in the Global South. On the 22nd of March 2023, Uganda passed a bill that makes it a crime to identify as LGBTQ+, and they are looking to reinstate the death penalty for such "offences." [10] This tumultuous battle, no doubt the product of patriarchal norms and values, remnants of colonialism, and religion has resulted in a lengthy period of oppression and marginalisation for LGBTQ+ individuals.

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[9] Esterberg, K. (1994) *From accommodation to liberation: A Social Movement Analysis of Lesbians in the Homophile Movement. Gender & Society.* (3):424-443.
[10] Reuters (2023) https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/uganda-passes-bill-banning-identifying-lgbtq-2023-03-21/

It is crucial to acknowledge the pioneers who fought for LGBTQ+ recognition and rights through shared personal experiences. The Homophile Movement emerged in the 1950's before the concept of homosexuality as a minority human identity was widely accepted.[11] With various societies advocating for gay rights throughout the twentieth century, The Mattachine Society and The Daughters of Bilitis[12] were two prominent groups founded in the United States during this time. These organisations were the first to engage in activism and push for the development of the law to benefit LGBTQ+ individuals. Despite the concerted efforts of the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society, the LGBTQ+ community did not experience significant advancements during their respective eras. The limitations of these early LGBTQ+ organisations paved the way for the emergence of the more radical and inclusive Gay Liberation Movement in the 1970s. While the Daughters of Bilitis and the Mattachine Society focused primarily on legal and social reforms to achieve greater acceptance, they largely avoided confrontational tactics that would challenge the status quo. As a result, their progress was relatively modest and limited in scope. However, the Gay Liberation Movement[13] rejected these gradualist strategies in favour of more direct action, such as street protests, sit-ins, and other forms of civil disobedience. By pushing the boundaries of what was socially acceptable, this new movement helped to mobilize a broader base of LGBTQ+ individuals. It ultimately paved the way for greater visibility, acceptance, and equality.

Historically, "queer" has been used as a derogatory slur against LGBTQ+ individuals. Yet, the terminology has recently been reclaimed by the current generation of LGBTQ+ youth. Now used as an umbrella phrase which encompasses a wide range of sexual orientations and gender identities that do not conform to the standard of heterosexual or cisgender norms. The ambiguity and fluidity of the term are intentionally broad to allow for varying levels of self-identification and self-expression, as queer identities have the potential to change over time.

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[11] Jagose, Annamarie. (1996) *Queer Theory, An Introduction.* New York University Press
[12] IBID
[13] Dee, H. (2010) *The Red in the Rainbow: Sexuality, Socialism & LGBT Liberation.* Bookmarks Publications

Queer identity is complicated, dynamic and deconstructionist due to its rejection of fixed and normative identity politics. Due to the intersectionality of queer identity, individuals can experience multiple forms of marginalization based on traits such as race, ethnicity, class, and disability. These collective experiences of marginalisation often initiate the formation of communities built upon a shared sense of identity and resilience which this study aims to examine. The term has also been adapted into the wider language to incorporate not only LGBTQ+ identities but also social, cultural, and political movements. For example, 'Queer Art' is a relatively new artistic movement which draws from LGBTQ+ imagery and issues, challenging traditional aesthetics and representation.[14]

'Queer Theory' is the academic discipline this study seeks to enrich. It explores how power relations and identity categories shape social, cultural, and political life. The field exists as a critical approach to understanding gender and sexuality and seeks to challenge and deconstruct the traditional binary categories associated with them. Its primary motivation is to explore how power, privilege and marginalisation are liked to gender and sexuality, as well as how these factors shape individual and collective experiences. The discipline has been shaped and studied by numerous scholars across various academic backgrounds. Namely, Evelyne Hooker (1957) was arguably one of the first scholars to treat LGBTQ+ people as equal members of society. The American psychologist's research played a significant role in homosexual identity being understood outside the psychological outlook of mental illness.[15] Ultimately her inquiry helped to undermine the legitimacy of efforts to 'treat' homosexuality through psychotherapy or other forms of intervention.

Vivienne Cass, a clinical psychologist, and sex therapist created what's known as the 'Cass Identity Model' in 1979, which is a fundamental theory of LGBTQ+ identity development. The model is split into six stages: 'identity confusion; identity comparison; identity tolerance; identity acceptance; identity pride, and identity synthesis.'[16] Each stage reflects one's state of being within the realm of discovery, understanding and eventual acceptance

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[14] Halberstam, J. (2011) *The Queer Art of Failure.* Duke University Press
[15] Hooker, E. (1957). The adjustment of the male overt homosexual. *Journal of Projective Techniques*
[16] Cass, V. (1979) *Journal of Homosexuality: Homosexual Identity Formation*

of one's sexuality or gender identity. Cass (1979) has made significant developments in the understanding of LGBTQ+ experience as a fundamental aspect of human identity. Their contributions have been hugely influential not only to the social and political dimensions of queerness but also in the positive reception of queer individuals in society. These studies have altered the societal perception that biological characteristics determine sexuality. Instead, they have asserted that sexual meanings, identities, and categories were negotiated previously as social and historical products – in simpler terms, sexuality and gender are constructed ideologies – this study employs a Queer Theories framework to examine the development of culture and identity related to gender, sexuality, and clubbing practices - emphasising the significance of performativity, lifestyle, and fluidity.

2.2 Sexuality within Spatial Paradigms

Nightlife spaces have little exterior significance besides their entrances, often burying themselves within the vast urban cityscapes. This assimilation into the underground arguably allowed these clubs to serve as platforms for collective and individual freedoms. Holding status as sites for the avant-garde and escapism from societal norms. The ethos of such spaces helped forge the connection between LGBTQ+ culture and nightlife culture, both being rebellious and ephemeral in their nature. Queer culture positions itself within a multitude of leisure spheres which have been subject to reinvention over time, commonly addressing the 'four key needs of an LGBTQ+ individual: safety, sex, community and culture'.[17] The freedom of expression and escape from discrimination that these spaces permitted created an ever-expanding subcultural landscape which has played a crucial role in the steady exposure of queer individuals as direct opposers of the heteronormative expectations of society.

For this study, which focuses on Glasgow's LGBTQ+ nightlife, it is vital to ascertain political and socio-cultural factors that have affected queer space internationally. This thesis argues that shifting identities have been formulated through participation in various nightlife activities and cultures. Such a contention rests upon the notion that even in modern-day society, equality law and progression do not meet the different needs of an LGBTQ+

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[17] Walters, Ben. (2016) *What is Queer Space for Anyway?*

individual. Thus, participation in nightlife activities can be driven out of necessity rather than one's desire. Therefore, it is important to develop a greater understanding of the varying factors that contributed to the integration of queer space within cities. This study will evaluate different socio-cultural and political factors contributing to queer spaces emergence and developments. Consequently, it is necessary to analyse the current theories related to sexuality in space.

Tim Cresswell (1996)[18] has examined the connection between space and sexuality in his book 'Place/Non-Place: An introduction to Non-Representational Theory', his work explores how queer identities and communities can be shaped by geography as well as the connection between LGBTQ+ culture and the gentrification of urban settings. Cresswell (1996) has also studied the politics of cruising grounds and public sex. He argues that space and place are not neutral but are instead profoundly intertwined with questions of identity and power. For example, why queer people have been banned from public parks and beaches and looking into the tactics employed by the queer community in establishing their own spaces of belonging. His research also discusses the idea of 'queer space', which he defines as any area characterised by an air of openness, transgression, and defiance of social conventions. He asserts that queer spaces are not only found within legitimate places but also in cultural practices and representation, such as literature, music, and film. Creswell's research has played a significant role in drawing attention to how place and space influence our perceptions of identity and sexuality, revealing how geography plays a role in the formation of social identity.

Other academics researching LGBTQ+ sexuality within space include David Bell and John Binnie [19], who have examined the intersection of queer identity and urban environments. Their interpretation and ideas surrounding queer space within a city's diverse urban fabric contend that 'in linking sexual politics to the politics of space, the main argument has been to link rights-claims to contests over space: to establish forms of queer territoriality as the base for political work'. Bell and Binnie (2004) present a model for how queer space defines

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[18] Cresswell, Tim. (1996) *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression*
[19] Bell, David and John Binnie. (2004) *Authenticating Queer Space: Citizenship, Urbanism and Governance.*

itself as territorial, and it contributes to their ideology of queer space possessing internalised discrimination and exclusionary processes. When the boundaries of queer space are redrawn by expanding their market to non-gay-identified consumers, in doing so, the spaces push out the 'queer unwanted'.

Lisa Duggan (2002) [20] contributes to this theory in that 'the new homonormativity' takes the form of 'privatised, depoliticised gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption'. These theories suggest that queer space is subject to a level of supremacy from gay males. Their dominance 'works to exclude undesirable forms of sexual expression, including their expression within space'. The work of Gregor Mattson also builds on this idea, described as the 'homonormative critique', which accuses modern gentrified neighbourhoods of 'engaging in the process of sanitation' where 'institutionalisation is visible' leading to the 'less privileged gays', having diminished 'spatial capital'.

2.3 Queer Subcultures, Neo Tribes and Scenes

Subcultures form in response to various social, cultural, and economic factors and often provide their members with a sense of belonging and identity. Queer subcultures are born from the continued marginalization and exclusion of LGBTQ+ individuals in mainstream society. Their cultural practices provide space in which queer individuals can connect with others who share similar experiences and values, serving as sites of important activism and resistance. Queer subcultures have emerged in a variety of forms, including dance music. scenes, ballroom culture, leather, kink communities, and drag and burlesque performances. With each providing a form of respite from legal discrimination and social stigma, they have all developed their own unique identity and cultural practices in the form of language, music and fashion.

Gay Polari [21]– known simply as Polari – exists in-between slang and a unique form of language. Emerging in the mid-20th century in the United Kingdom, it was developed as a way for LGBTQ+ individuals to communicate with each other in secret at a time when

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[20] Duggan, L. (2002) *The New Homonormativity: The Sexual Politics of Neoliberalism. Duke University*
[21] Baker, Paul. (2002) *Polari: The Lost Language of Gay Men.*

homosexuality was still perpetuated under the prism of legality and severe social stigma. Mainly used by gay men, female impersonators, and prostitutes to anonymously express themselves without being detected by wider society. It enabled LGBTQ+ individuals to communicate openly with one another in public spaces such as bars, clubs, and cruising grounds without drawing unwanted attention or suspicion.[22]

Polari draws on a variety of languages including Romani, Yiddish, Italian and Cockney rhyming slang, as well as theatrical and circus jargon. It is characterised by its use of camp humour, creative wordplay, and innuendo. However, as homosexuality was decriminalised in the United Kingdom and social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ individuals became more tolerant, the use of Polari declined. As the LGBTQ+ community became more visible, so did the diversity of their subcultural practices, 'from this outpouring of repressed energy came not only the politics of the gay liberation movement but a new community and culture'.[23] The development of subcultural environments has been of great importance to the communities they represent, especially concerning intersectional forms of oppression such as race, gender, and class. The black gay clubs of New York fostered an atmosphere of near-religious fervor, which served as a model for subsequent dance cultures ever since. The euphoria was born of a desperate need: as black individuals, they were systematically excluded from the economic and social advantages of mainstream American society; as homosexuals, they were ostracised from its moral framework; as black homosexuals, they were unable to express their identities within their own communities openly.[24] As such, dance music culture came to be strongly associated with LGBTQ+ culture.

Disco music, known for its pulsating beats and uplifting lyrics, began crossing into popular culture in the 1970s.[25] Many LGBTQ+ individuals found refuge in disco clubs as the darkness and intimacy of these spaces allowed queer individuals to express their identity with a new sense of freedom. Additionally, disco fashion often included flamboyant and androgynous styles that allowed LGBTQ+ individuals to express their identities in a way that was not

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[22] Baker, Paul. (2002) *Polari: The Lost Language of Gay Men.*
[23] Colin, Matthew and John Godfrey. (1997) *Altered State: The Story of Ecstasy and Acid House*
[24] IBID
[25] Gilbert, Jeremy and Ewan Pearson. (1999) *Dance Music, Culture and the Politics of Sound.*

accepted in mainstream society.[26] As such, the music genre became a symbol of queer liberation. Eventually, disco became increasingly commercialized, leading to backlash and the 'death of disco' in the late 1970s. However, the energy and rhythmic engagement of the genre did not disappear entirely. Instead, it was reimagined by DJs and producers in the club scene of Chicago.

The cultural uprising emerged from the experience of being both black and homosexual, facing exclusion, and finding solace in a music genre deemed obsolete and rejected by the dominant culture.[27] By blending elements of disco, funk, and soul with electronic and synthesizer-based music, they created an entirely new sound which has come to be known as house music. Many house music pioneers, such as Frankie Knuckles and Larry Levan, helped create and shape the genre's sound. This new style was characterised by driving beats and pulsating rhythms and commonly featured lyrics that celebrated love, unity, and acceptance, which were essential themes for the LGBTQ+ community at a time when they faced widespread discrimination and marginalisation.

Ballroom culture emerged in the 1980s in New York City and was primarily made up of Black and Latinx LGBTQ+ individuals. It provided a platform for these marginalised groups to express themselves in various categories such as voguing, runway and face. The Balls cultural practices and aesthetics have significantly influenced popular culture today in fashion, music and dance. Voguing is a style of dance that originated within the ballroom scene and is characterised by sharp, angular movements, poses and fluid arm and hand gestures.[28] Madonna's hit song Vouge and its accompanying music video brought voguing and ball culture into the mainstream. As well as this, the term 'house' was used to describe familial structures that are socially rather than biologically configured within the diverse membership of the ballroom community. Members of a house participate together in ballroom events and take on traditions of 'Mothering' and 'Fathering', where elders of the

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[26] Kries, M. (2018) *Nightfever: Designing Club Culture. 1960 – Today*

[27] Reynolds, S. (1998) *Energy Flash: A Journey Through Rave Music and Dance Culture.* Picador

[28] 'Paris is Burning'. (1990) Jennie Livingston. *Academy Entertainment. Off White Productions.*

community take on mentorship for the younger members to provide them with guidance and life skills. Additionally, the drag scene, which emerged from ballroom culture, has become increasingly popular in recent years, with the television show RuPaul's Drag Race attracting a global audience and mainstream recognition.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1 Qualitive Approach & Semi-Structured Interviews

This project attempts to understand better the socio-cultural and political factors that have affected queer space and culture within Glasgow and the development of one's identity by participating in either. Consequently, the research is interested in the ephemerality of queer cultures in response to their current political climates and the construction of one's reality, values and identity, which are essentially qualitative in nature.

Qualitative data is a valuable tool for exploring the complex aspects of queer culture and identity, because it offers insights into lived experience. However, this lived experience is subjective, therefore, the findings cannot be extrapolated to the wider population. Semi-structured interviews are a standard method used to collect this type of data, as they allow for flexibility and deep exploration of the interviewee's experiences, perspectives and beliefs. Through these interviews, I have been able to gain rich insights into lived experiences of LGBTQ+ individuals, including their personal journeys, challenges, and triumphs. Qualitative data gathered through semi-structured interviews can help shed light on the nuances of queer culture and identity, such as the intersectionality of identities and the impact of societal structures on LGBTQ+ individuals. This data type can also provide a more nuanced understanding of queer culture beyond stereotypes and generalisations, highlighting the diversity of experiences within the LGBTQ+ community.

2.2 Ethical Considerations

As a researcher exploring queer culture and identity, I understand the essential role of ethical considerations within this project. Care must be taken when dealing with sensitive topics that may cause harm or discomfort to participants and steps must be taken to mitigate these risks. For example, participants may feel exposed or vulnerable when sharing their personal experiences related to discrimination or trauma. Therefore, informed consent must be obtained from participants whilst explaining the study's purpose and procedures. Confidentiality and anonymity are also crucial to ensure participants feel safe and protected. In addition, I must consider the potential impact of my research on the LGBTQ+ community - ensuring that the work is not used to perpetuate negative stereotypes or

further marginalise queer individuals. Ultimately, ethical considerations are paramount in this research project, and the well-being and protection of participants must be prioritized.

2.3 <u>Sampling Material & Recruitment of Participants</u>

To gather data on queer identity and culture, sampling material and recruitment of participants are crucial components of the methodology in this research project. I have employed purposive sampling, seeking out individuals who identify as LGBTQ+ with experiences about culture and identity within the context of nightlife in Glasgow's diverse scenes. Recruitment was conducted through various methods, including social media, known LGBTQ+ individuals in professions that could prove beneficial to the topic and word of mouth.

To ensure the participants feel comfortable sharing their experiences, I have prioritised building rapport and trust through open and non-judgemental communication. It is important to note that LGBTQ+ individuals may have concerns about disclosing personal information due to potential discrimination or stigma, as previously mentioned within my ethical considerations. Therefore, care has been taken to ensure a safe and supportive environment for participants and emphasise confidentiality and anonymity in the disclosure of their experiences. Additionally, there has been a central objective to achieve a diverse sample of participants. Ensuring that multiple voices from within the community are heard ensures a wide range of perspectives, experiences and identities are represented in the research.

2.4 <u>Data Analysis</u>

The data analysis process for this dissertation involved thoroughly examining qualitative data collected through semi-structured interviews with participants. The data was analysed using a combination of inductive and deductive approaches, focusing on identifying common themes and patterns in the responses of interviewed participants. The analysis process was guided by the study's objectives, which were to understand the adverse socio-cultural and political factors that affect queer culture and identity, as well as relevant theoretical framework and literature. The process included several stages, including data coding, categorisation and interpretation. Open coding was a technique employed to

systematically label and categorise data segments based on their content and meaning. These codes were refined and consolidated through axial coding, where broader themes and patterns were identified and related. This allowed for a more holistic understanding of the data and enabled vital concepts and themes to emerge from the participants' answers. Additionally, a constant comparison was used to compare new data with existing data to identify similarities and differences. This iterative process aided in refining emerging themes which ensured the rigour and reliability of the data.

Chapter 4 – Analysis of Glasgow's Queer Culture

In the subsequent four subchapters, I aim to provide a Scottish context for the theoretical framework presented in chapter 1. This dissertation provides a detailed analysis of the impact of different political factors on the queer community in Glasgow since the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1981. Before delving into this analysis, the first subchapter presents a historical overview of the available spaces before and after decriminalisation, focusing on the political factors that influenced their existence. I will then examine the diverse social and cultural values that emerged from Glasgow's first LGBTQ+ Nightclub Bennetts. I will then discuss the variance of Glasgow's nightlife scenes in the early 2000s and their diverse aesthetics and cultural practices. The final subchapter will explore Glasgow's nightlife communities' fragmentation and observe its current visual elements and contemporary values.

4.1 Queer Experience in Scotland

While Scotland holds a renewed reputation for being a front-runner of LGBTQ+ rights in Europe, it is important not to forget its intolerant history. Sexual acts between men were punishable by death in Scotland up until 1887. This date fell a further 26 years since the death penalty for sodomy was abolished in England and Wales. However, the number of that falling victim to that level of prosecution was generally low. It should also be noted that the reluctance to alter Scots law was due to the sentence rarely used in the 19th and 20th centuries. Regardless, the lives of queer individuals in Scotland were met with consistent persecution under the prism of legality and social discrimination. A naive public attitude aligned itself with religious values and conservative ideas of morality. Medical assertations of homosexuality were diagnosed as 'mentally ill' or 'insane' which coincided with masculinity being understood as a singular concept in 1920-30s medicine and psychology. (Appendix 1.1) Anything that deviated from that was demonised under the justification they were psychologically insane or of criminal intent, as there lay no concept of homosexual in Scots law. This societal judicial verdict resulted in formulating what could be known as a queer territory.

Before the decriminalisation of homosexuality, queer spaces secured themselves within normative spaces. Queer individuals adapted and negotiated space to change their shape and meaning to reflect their needs and desires. Public parks around Glasgow, such as Glasgow Green, Kelvingrove, Queens Park and Roukenglen, all possessed a queer dynamic. Serving as homosocial environments that bridged the gap between interaction, socialising and the foundation of relationships. Cruising grounds are not new and can be traced back to various examples in Western and European cultures.[29] This discreet intervention in normative space may result from amplified queer interaction through the construction of Scotland's main cities.[30] An increased population can create opportunities for like-minded individuals to connect and form communities based on shared experiences or interests. In the context of same-sex desire, a larger population of LGBTQ+ individuals can lead to the realisation and identification of same-sex attraction as people are exposed to a greater diversity of perspectives and experiences. This, in turn, can lead to the formation of underground subcultures, where people can freely express and explore their sexuality without fear of persecution or discrimination.

Eventually, this assimilation of identity within a conception of homosexuality allowed for accommodation and negotiation of heterosexual leisure spheres to become more receptive to queer individuals. Through trial and error, particular places came to hold a particular meaning. However, the expression of one's own homosexual identity was still very closeted due to the combinative threat of legal prosecution and the prevailing societal attitude that same-sex activity was crude and immoral. Those identifying as homosexual had to be extremely careful and cautious about interacting with others. This can be seen in the underground prostitution rings of Glasgow in the 1930s and 1940s where the adoption of female names, commonly those of famous actresses or male impersonators in theatre, is used as a protective measure to elude authorities. Examples of this can be found in the work of Dr Jeff Meeks (2015), a queer historian and researcher who works at the University of Glasgow. Meek has documented much of the previously unknown history of the lives of

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[29] Esteban Munoz, Jose. (2009) *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*
[30] Meek, J (2015) *Queer Voices in a Post War Scotland: Male Homosexuality, Religion and Society.*

gay and bisexual men in a post-war Scotland. About the male prostitution gangs in Glasgow, known as the 'Whitehats'[31] he states,

> "The sex workers in Glasgow chose the names of male impersonators on stage, so they chose the names of women who performed as men and they were men, who in the eyes of 1920-30's society were performing as women. Male sex work is something that wider society of that time has no clue about. So, the way in which they play with gender and names is interesting - it's a consistency, I mean the scene in Glasgow in the eighties and nineties, I can remember people referring to other men with female names." (Appendix 1.1)

Interestingly this use of language, whilst weaponised as a layer of protection, is a local example of Glaswegian Polari. There is an interesting parallel between this and the Ballroom scene of New York City in the early eighties, in how the choice of the female name represented physical characteristics or traits of their demeanour. However, it should be noted that in most cases, the Whitehat's use of female names was not a representation of their perceptions of gender identity, instead, it was a tool of communication used to permit the circulation of sexual acts between men. The adoption of femineity is further identified in Edinburgh, with a noteworthy contrast between industrialism and the cosmopolitanism of the two cities, with men speaking about marriage and referring to themselves as 'wives' when clients bought them a ring. Discretion was essential, as the consequences of being caught were not only the threat of a criminal record but exclusion from family life and dismissal from employment.

Scotland continued to uphold its aversion to homosexuals until 1981, nearly fifteen years since the Wolfenden Report aided in decriminalising homosexuality in England and Wales. James Adair, Procurator-Fiscal for Glasgow at the time and member of the committee responsible for the report, held a degree of responsibility for the pushback against legislative reform in Scotland. Adair saw homosexuality as 'the first step into moral

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[31] Meek, J (2015) *Queer Voices in a Post War Scotland: Male Homosexuality, Religion and Society.*

turpitude' and argued that the Wolfenden Report would allow 'perverts to practice sinning for the sake of sinning'. These attitudes prevented the legislative change for a further fourteen years; however, the campaigning for equality began in the early 1970s with the introduction of the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG). Intending to improve the 'rights and welfare of homosexuals', the group was responsible for curating the early days of the LGBTQ+ nightlife in Glasgow. Attracting no more than fifty Scots in the beginning, the SMG quickly established themselves within the wider LGBTQ+ community of Scotland; by the mid-seventies, nearly 700 Scots were travelling to their events[32]. This increase in popularity led to significant financial gain and allowed the SMG to engage in political activism and deliver essential services such as the 'befriending team' – a helpline for LGBTQ+ identifying persons.

Figure 2. Door Plaque of Scottish Minorities Group Premises.

This constitutional activism, alongside active engagement with Scottish churches, medical professionals, and psychiatrists, slowly changed the public attitude toward Scotland's LGBTQ+ community in the lead-up to its law restructuring. However, it should be noted that the public attitude of this era, whilst in a state of gradual reform, was far from progressive as it is today. Section 28, enforced by Margaret Thatcher's [33]government, was still in effect

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[32] Coming Oot! A Fabulous History of Gay Scotland.
[33] UK Parliament, Legislation (1988)

within the UK. The amendment stated that a local authority 'shall not intentionally promote homosexuality or publish material to promote homosexuality' or 'promote any teaching in any maintained school of the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship'. Whilst the gay community in Scotland was in a state of ecstasy due to its freshly endorsed culture, the same could not be said for LGBTQ+ youth being piloted through the Scottish education system. The impact of this law on LGBTQ+ youth was significant, as it effectively silenced discussions of LGBTQ+ issues and prevented teachers from offering support to students who may have been struggling with their sexual or gender identity. The law also created a culture of fear and shame, as students may have been afraid to come out or express themselves for fear of discrimination. LGBTQ+ third-party organisations were also unable to deliver crucial services to youth out of fear it would be viewed, in the eyes of the law, as a promotion of homosexuality. It is no doubt that the implications of this form of legislation and its intent have been severe. Accounts of bullying are nationwide, with little to no responsive or educational action being taken by teachers.

Repealing Section 28 in 2003 [34]was a significant step towards creating a more accepting and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ youth in schools. This suggests that even with legal reforms related to homosexual identity, in the outlook of society it was still off-limits to the decree of tolerance. Section 28 directly impacted queer youth experience in Britain, exemplified through the media representation in the Channel 4 documentary 'Too Much, Too Young: Chickens'. The documentary portrays the exploitation of queer youth in Glasgow, highlighting the damaging effects that Section 28 had on their lives. Broadcasted initially in 1997 the controversial biopic gives a fascinating insight into the past experiences of two Glaswegian male prostitutes David Young and Scott McMillan. The film portrays the two boys' lives as they offer sexual services for money, often in back streets, communal restrooms or within Glasgow's public parks. Their intent in participating in the documentary was to educate and caution the audience about the hazards inherent in their actions.

After the documentary aired, it was discovered that the two boys had filed a lawsuit against Channel 4, alleging that the film was staged and had caused significant damage to their

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[34] Stonewall (2023) 18th November 2003: Section 28 Bites the Dust.

lives. Even with this being the case David and Scott give a previously unknown first-hand insight into the harsh reality of living as a gay man in mid-nineties Glasgow. David explains the difference between the terms 'trawlin' and 'renting which describe different sexual pursuits and their opposing intentions. Both possessed a contrasting sexual dynamic in that 'rentin' defines the act of seeking sexual interaction purely for financial gain, whereas 'trawlin' describes the process of seeking sexual activity with other men in a public space. The boys openly give an account of their collective fears and the dangers they experience working in the male prostitution rings of Glasgow. They described their belief in providing a service for closeted and married men. David discussed how he, at some points, felt addicted to prostitution as a means of experiencing homosexual intimacy. Scott added to this, telling the viewers that he has experienced 'too much, too young' and now faces internalised discrimination and rejection within Glasgow's LGBTQ+ nightlife scene. The documentary highlighted the detrimental effects of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation in education by illustrating how the boys were compelled to explore their sexual identities through perilous methods.

4.2 Emergence of Queer Nightlife Culture in Glasgow

It is essential to understand the conditions of LGBTQ+ nightlife in Glasgow to discover both its development and decline throughout the period of this study. After the almost instantaneous appearance of a gay scene in the early 1970s because of the actions of the Scottish Minorities Group, the newly established legal reform permitted a new LGBTQ+ cultural landscape to manifest in Scotland's main cities. One of the first gay bars to appear in Glasgow was 'Guys' at the top of Hope Street.[35] This was followed shortly by 'The Waterloo Bar', 'The Duke of Wellington' and 'Vintners'. With 'Vintners' are deemed as 'plush, sophisticated and had the latest sound system and catered to all ages.'[36] It is notable that during this period, the Glasgow gay scene mainly consisted of bars and pubs; however, as the hedonistic and consumerist culture of the 1980s took hold, the Glasgow gay scene began to change. Nightclubs and dance parties became increasingly popular during this time, with many clubs and DJs developing a following based on their ability to provide a high-energy, immersive experience that allowed patrons to escape the stresses of daily life and indulge in sensory pleasure. The use of new technologies, such as video screens and laser lighting, added to the immersive quality of the nightclub experience. At the same time, the emergence of drugs like ecstasy provided a way to enhance the euphoria and sensory stimulation of the club environment. The first to respond to this was 'Bennett's', which opened in 1980 and was celebrated as Glasgow's first gay mecca.

Figure 3: Bennet's Sign

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[35] The Waterloo, The Vintners and the other go-to Glasgow gay spots of yesteryear.
[36] IBID

Glasgow's nightlife scene at the time was in a period of musical transition, and the disco scene was dying out. (Appendix 1.2) 'Bennetts' initially aimed to attract a straight clientele through its disco offerings, but it struggled to generate interest from potential customers. In an interview with Colin Barr, the previous manager of the club, stated:

> *"Glasgow was very grungy at this point in time, we couldn't get anyone through the door largely due to the music policy and the stabbing incident that occurred under previous ownership, someone suggested I ran a gay night instead and on our first night we had over three hundred people walk through the door with a massive queue around the block, it just took off from there" (Appendix 1.2)*

This highlights the crucial need for LGBTQ+ individuals to have safe spaces for socialising and finding solace, especially in the aftermath of decriminalising homosexuality in Scotland. Bennetts served as a space which celebrated queer culture and freedom of expression. The establishment prioritised the safety of gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals and people of colour within its walls (Appendix 1.2). Consequently, the club gained immense popularity within the Scottish LGBTQ+ community and acquired a reputation throughout the United Kingdom. During the early 1980s, the queer community of Glasgow continued to appreciate disco music despite being considered out of date by their straight counterparts. Subsequently, Bennetts would form close relationships with renowned artists and performers of the disco genre, such as Divine, Hazel Dean and Sylvester, contributing to the establishment's high profile and increasing status. The club's interior embodied the aesthetic of American discos with the overall visual concept taking elements from Broadway. Mirrored walls surrounded the four coloured glass dancefloor with Art Deco inspired carpets and seating. These features contributed to its utopian atmosphere in how its participants felt a sense of relief from the everyday realities of living as a queer person in Scottish society.

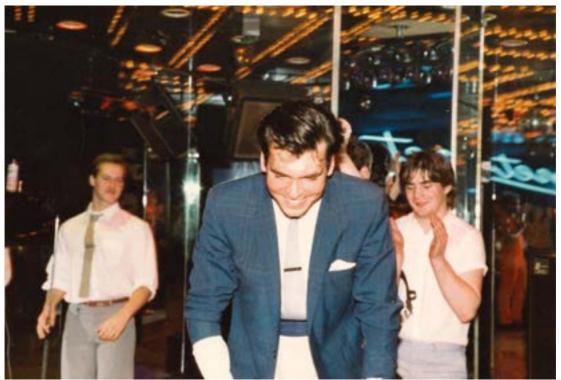*Figure 4: Sylvester Performing at Bennet's, 1980s*

Figure 5: Bennet's Mirrored Interior and Lighting Systems

Interestingly the club's popularity led apparently 'straight' consumers to become curious of its practices and culture, which resulted in participants experiencing the club's values and ethos and, in turn, embracing their own identity as an LGBTQ+ individual (Appendix 1.2). The mere existence and tolerance of queer spaces allowed for external validation and internal acceptance of one's own identity. In the documentary, 'Coming Oot: A Fabulous History of Gay Scotland' interviewees shared their experience of the club,

"There were all types of guys from varying professions, stockbrokers, bus drivers, married men, even go-go boys high kicking in shorts to Donna Summer's 'Bad Girls', it was about finding a sense of community, sex and culture."

"All of a sudden, to walk into a room and see all these men dancing together and kissing, it was quite stressful, I thought something bad was going to happen because how could all these people be having this much fun? It was like suddenly everyone who had been bullied in the west of Scotland had somehow found themselves in a room with good music, good lights and good drinks. I remember voguing, I remember dancing, I remember thinking I'm having the time of my life!"

This shift in the Glasgow gay scene reflected broader changes in LGBTQ+ nightlife worldwide, as queer communities sought new ways to express themselves and connect in the context of the 1980s culture of consumerism and hedonistic leisure. These accounts of the early days of the Glasgow gay scene are essential in understanding the actual necessity for strictly defined queer space. Diverse inclinations in the queer community meant that club culture became the new trend. Rather than socialising in bars, LGBTQ+ individuals in Scotland moved on to align with the collective sensory and performative aspects of club culture, which took influence from American discos. Following 'Bennetts' success, the Glasgow gay scene began to expand further within the Merchant City cluster with the rise of venues such as Club X, The Polo Lounge and Delmonica's initiated by Scottish businessman Stefan King who took full advantage of the unique target market. Colin Barr describes the emergence of these spaces as 'healthy competition' and that it gave LGBTQ+ individuals more choices in their pursuits of sex, community, and culture.

Figure 6: A full dancefloor at Bennet's, 1980

Figure 7: Sister Slim performing at Bennet's, 1980s

Figure 8: Drag Queen dressed as Wonder Woman at Bennet's, 1980's

Figure 9: Snake Performer, Bennet's 1980s

Figure 10: Drag Show at Bennet's, 1980

Figure 11: Hostess at Bennet's, 1980

4.3 Variance of Queer Nightlife Scenes in Glasgow

As time passed and the increasing acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals prevailed, the Merchant City cluster of gay bars and nightlife venues came to earn a reputation for being commercialised. The massification of the gay scene was a trade-off in the growing acceptance of homosexual identity and lifestyle. Integration between LGBTQ+ individuals and their straight equivalents became more common within nightlife venues in Glasgow as the notion of 'super-clubs' attracted a larger following. Club nights operating in heteronormative spaces would aim to host a queer clientele without precisely labelling themselves as a queer event, instead embracing a 'gay-friendly' strategy. (Appendix 1.3) A particular example of this objective is the once popular club night 'Love Boutique' held in The Arches in the early 2000s which promoted the performative aspects of queer culture through the encouragement of its participants to dress up in drag. Other nights such as 'Death Disco' would incorporate this strategy into their clubbing ethos but would operate on a much larger scale, sometimes catering to six and seven thousand participants across a multi-room event (Appendix 1.3).

Figure 12: Death Disco Flyers from early 2000's

These mixed events gained international recognition and attracted artists to Glasgow's flexible music scene that represented an exceptionally different sexual persona. The popularity of musical acts such as Peaches, The Scissor Sisters, Miss Kitten, and Fisher Spooner in the early 2000s brought forward an increasing queer contingent through playful aesthetics with sexuality and gender. As a result, they became a dominant part of Glasgow's underground music scene, contributing immensely to queer visibility. Wanting to branch off from the notion of clubs existing as 'gay friendly', whereby inclusivity and acceptance were afforded to LGBTQ+ individuals through integration in heteronormative space, there was a growing call for strictly defined queer clubbing that existed outside the commercial realm. Whilst integration evidenced the progressive attitudes of society, it could not address the fundamental needs of the queer community in Glasgow.

Alan Miller, a previous promotor, and DJ at the Art School began running Abnormals Anonymous. Starting at the CCA (Centre of Contemporary Arts) on Sauchiehall Street. The club night focused on stimulating participants in different ways by incorporating performance aspects, live music, and art installations; cultural issues such as representation, gender identity, equality and rights were addressed (Appendix 1.3). Upon entering the venue, it became instantly clear what it was about, as intentional imagery, lighting, and slides were strategically employed to convey a specific message to participants (Appendix

Figure 13: Abnormals Anonymous, The Art School, Early 2000s

1.3). Rather than using computer-generated projections the club night incorporated vintage equipment such as Solar 250 projectors with various effect wheels and prism attachments. Pinball lights surrounded a singular spinning starburst stage light further to amplify the sensory aspect of the club night. The images projected all over the walls of the space were made from printer's film acetates as they created a full black print with a highly detailed clear image. These techniques allowed for incredibly precise imagery, which was blown up to scale. The event was built around the concept that queer individuals came first, adopting the slogan 'weird queers and their straight peers'. This shows collective disapproval of "gay-friendly" clubbing events and indicates that such spaces no longer meet the needs of queer individuals.

Figure 14: Abnormals Anonymous Flyers, The Art School, Early 2000s

Abnormals Anonymous and Death Disco are early examples of queer clubbing in Glasgow being integrated into a larger cultural fabric instead of solely serving as entertainment. The shift in the club night's role and objectives was met with a lack of support from the Arts Council about funding, which did not perceive it to have any form of artistic or cultural significance which could earn its financial support (Appendix 1.3). The Art School, situated just a short walk from the CCA, was running its own 'gay-friendly' club night called Devine. The venue was already understood to be an inclusive and progressive environment, offering a different outlook from other locations in the city because it is an art-student-led charity with a constitutionally defined structure. Abnormals Anonymous then moved to the venue and became its first delineated LGBTQ+ club night. Already comprised of individuals with varied fashion styles and diverse perspectives, it became an ideal venue to host the queer-orientated event.

Alan Miller describes Glasgow's strong connection to a specific musical and cultural scene with artists from different locations around the globe, stating that they would come to the city and 'immediately experience the synergy within our collective scenes' (Appendix 1.3). Ultimately these variant club nights that existed outside the commercial sphere embodied a political ethos on addressing cultural issues within the community and laid the groundwork for more recent clubbing practices such as 'Hot Mess' and the highly regarded 'Shoot Your Shot', a club night which continues to push political boundaries and highlight important issues into the broader community.

In conclusion, Glasgow in the early 2000s boasted a rich and diverse subcultural landscape that catered to queer individuals' needs. The city's nightlife was a hub for queer individuals, offering a range of options from underground club nights, integrated spaces, drag shows and of course the residing commercial gay scene in the Merchant City. The city's art and performance scene also provided further opportunities for queer expression, with events and exhibitions showcasing diverse voices and perspectives. Overall, this subcultural landscape provided an essential space for queer individuals to find a sense of community and establish their identities, especially in the face of discriminatory political factors impacting their lives.

4.4 Divergence of Glasgow's Queer Nightlife Communities

Nowadays, the queer nightlife scene in Glasgow has undergone significant transformations. In contrast, the cluster of bars and nightlife venues in the Merchant City area continues to thrive as a distinct and self-sustaining cultural hub. Until recently queer clubs outside this commercial spectrum have placed themselves within heteronormative venues. By defining their ethos and values, queer clubs have established clear boundaries within these spaces that distinguish queer spaces from non-queer individuals. However, the need for a strictly defined queer club outside the commercial realm has become increasingly important to the queer community of Glasgow. Commercial venues cater to a more mainstream audience and, therefore may not be able to provide a safe and inclusive environment for queer expression.

There is currently a queer bar called 'Bonjour' located on the outskirts of the Merchant City area, strategically placed far enough away from the commercial scene to maintain its independent identity. This location allows for a sense of separation from potentially unsupportive or unsafe commercial spaces while still providing a central location accessible to members of the queer community. 'Bonjour' opened during the pandemic to specifically cater to the needs of queer women, non-binary individuals, and people of colour. The establishment was initially designed to serve as a community space and hospitality venue. However, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the venue could not operate as a club during its early days and instead served as a sit-down bar facilitating art and performance. The pandemic necessitated a change in the space's objectives. With these limitations in place, the establishment had to alter its focus and provide a unique experience for guests.

Over time, the community policy of the space gained momentum with more people became involved in this aspect. Bonjour has recently transitioned into a club, emphasizing nightlife and entertainment more. However, it is critical to note that the establishment is still dedicated to its initial purpose of being a community space. Centering on radical community action and the support of marginalised groups. The intention is to create a safe and inclusive environment where people feel liberated to express themselves. The organisation runs various club nights, including 'Orisha', which is focused on creating a space for black queer

people and 'Phat', which celebrates queer bodies of all shapes and sizes to combat societal pressures to conform to narrow beauty standards.

Figure 15: Orisha Poster, 2022

Figure 4: Phat Poster for Bonjour, 2022

They also offer mentorship programs for queer individuals looking to get into performance and subsidise costs for new club nights that might not have existed otherwise. The space is entirely non-profit, and funds are redistributed within the community to help with the current cost of living crisis. Like many other queer spaces in Glasgow, the organisation adopts a strict safeguarding policy, with queer stewards on the door and dedicated awareness reps to ensure the safety and comfort of all patrons. This highlights the importance of creating queer spaces that center on community and inclusivity -evidencing the potential impact that such spaces can have on marginalised groups and queer culture in their entirety.

The space has given birth to an enormous variety of avant-garde cultural practices. Most notably, Ponyboy which has recently burst onto the Glasgow queer clubbing scene with an emphasis on showcasing queer beauty through its club spectacles. Run by hairstylist Reece Marshall and their partner Dill Dowdall the couple have put an emphasis on documenting the showcase's looks, with the overall aim that Glasgow's queer community should contribute to the archives of queer experience and aesthetic. Ponyboy works collaboratively with other queer club nights in the city to empower its core values. People who attend are encouraged to embody what is perceived to be a 'freak' and what individuals find to be 'freaky' within them. The club nights first spectacle drew upon a Mugler fashion runway

from 1995 that explored the dawn of the internet age and how quickly aesthetics could change in response to this. Ponyboy is a contemporary example of the queer community of Glasgow's consistent reinvention of aesthetics and cultural practices. The inspiration drawn from Mugler's fashion show demonstrates the creative dimensions of Glasgow's queer community and showcases its current avant-garde nature.
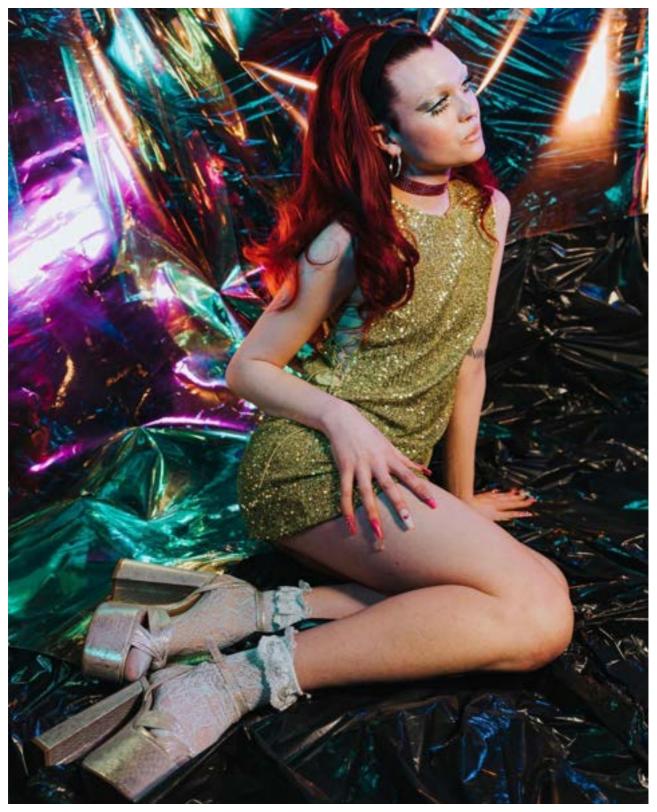

Figure 17: Mugler, Fall/Winter, 1995

Figure 18: Lourdes at Ponyboys first showcase at Bonjour, 2022

Figure 19: Dill performing at Ponyboy Showcase, Bonjour, 2022

Chapter 5 - Inquiry into the Individual

This section of the research aimed to understand the experiences of Glasgow's varying queer clubbing scenes from the perspective of the clubbers. This research is focused on the adverse socio-cultural and political factors which affected queer culture and identity since the emergence of queer clubbing culture in Glasgow in the 1980s. Therefore, it was essential to gather data that could disclose the contemporary values and beliefs of the queer community in Glasgow to ground the study within a modern context. From the data, three themes emerged: experiences of conflicting scenes, discordance and dilution of queer space, clubbing and identity construction.

5.1 Experiences of Conflicting Scenes

Respondents shared their clubbing experiences in Glasgow, drawing contrasts between the "gay scene" in Merchant City and the "queer scene," which currently exists across numerous platforms and in various locations throughout the city. Respondents generally had negative opinions about the 'gay scene', viewing it as unwelcoming and lacking in variety. According to the comments, establishments such as the Polo Lounge contribute to classifying and stereotyping LGBTQ+ individuals. Respondents also explained that the Polo Lounge was their first experience of queer nightlife and believed this was the extent of queer visibility and community within Glasgow. There was also the view that the 'gay scene' in Glasgow catered more to straight individuals. This leads to a harmful dynamic within these environments where queer individuals are objectified and viewed as a spectacle rather than equals in society.

> *"Even when I was presenting as a gay man you were made to feel like you had to fit into a particular stereotype of what being gay is"*

> *"It feels like you're in a human zoo. Straight people come to watch queer people because they've heard we're a good night out. We're treated as a commodity, not as individuals"*

Contrastingly, respondents had largely positive experiences of Glasgow's queer clubbing scene in various dimensions. The first being these spaces exist as a creative outlet for many queer individuals, standing as sites of experimentation where clubbers exchange their ideas and creative practices. Participants also expressed how they formed meaningful relationships and connections on the dance floors of queer clubbing events, describing the queer clubbing scene as having a community development focus and peer mentality. Incorporating safety measures such as strict entry policies, queer stewards and welfare officers evidences the importance of reassurance and security for participants in Glasgow's queer clubbing scene. Respondents also expressed how there was a level of authenticity in Glasgow's queer clubbing scene, noting that more attention was brought to its artistic dimensions about performance aspects and the variety of the artists booked to play.

5.2 Discordance and Dilution of Queer Space

Concerning the disrupted harmony of queer environments and the noticeable dilution of queer events, participants shared their experiences of discomfort and discrimination from non-queer individuals within both the 'gay scene' and the 'queer scene'. Several themes emerged, the first being the assumption of identity within queer spaces. Respondents expressed how straight men had sexually assaulted them due to misinterpreting femme-presenting identities, stating they felt they had to 'come out' all over again. Second, participants shared a standard view around the understanding of queer space, in that non-queer individuals lack the knowledge of queer lifestyles. As such, non-queer individuals contribute to varying discriminatory practices within queer space, particularly about using toilets and pronouns. A paradox of opinion was highlighted within the data in that many respondents share a desire for marginalised inclusion and the integration of all sexual orientations and gender identities. However, this was contrasted by a shared responsibility in the complete exclusion of straight and cis individuals in queer space due to their problematic behaviors

Additionally, participants noted that their relationships with queer people are different from those with straight people, with the former being more grounded and similar. The dilution of queer spaces in Glasgow was highlighted by several contributing factors, such as cracks in safeguarding policies, whereby exclusivity is overruled by inclusivity, with entry

being permitted to all identities, whether they are openly queer or not. Mainstream bookings also contribute to the massification of queer culture, whereby an artist or DJ's popularity caters to a broader audience which then leads to queer individuals being made to feel like the minority within their own space. Attention was also brought to the heteronormative version of queer culture that the commercial gay scene reproduces, with respondents stating 'its watered-down gayness' highlighting the view that straight people in society were still largely uncomfortable with the concept of homosexual identity existing. Therefore, diluted, and pre-prescribed versions of queer culture are incorporated and produced in these spaces.

5.3 Clubbing and Identity Construction

Respondents collectively expressed the profound impact of the queer clubbing scene on their lives and identity formation. Two themes emerged from the data, the first being freedom of expression about the unique cultural experiences found within queer clubbing practices. For most respondents, queer clubbing enhances curiosities surrounding gender aesthetics and allows them to experiment with their gender identity. Participants exclaimed that they had experienced states of gender euphoria in how they were comfortable expressing themselves authentically through fashion.

The overarching idea of these events is that all other participants are inclined to do the same, which contributes to the highly creative and nurturing ethos found only within the 'queer scene'. Second, the concept of queerness existing as a state of mind concerning personal growth, self-acceptance and community-driven activism was stressed in the respondents' answers. The concept of queerness existing as a state of mind refers to the idea that being queer is more than just a sexual orientation or gender identity. Instead, it encompasses values, beliefs, and experiences rooted in personal growth and self-acceptance. Participants stated that the importance of community values had changed their outlook on life, highlighting the importance of community values such as inclusivity, acceptance and support which has aided them in developing a sense of belonging and individual identity. Through the engagement of community-driven activism, they have also been able to advocate for social change and representation of the most marginalised groups within the queer community. Overall, the respondents emphasised the transformative

power of queerness. By embracing queer identity and engaging with the cultural issues present within it, they were able to develop a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives whilst contributing to a broader movement for social justice and equality.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

The aim of this research project was to identify the adverse socio-cultural and political factors that have affected queer culture and identity within Glasgow's nightlife scene. Such findings are particularly relevant in the aftermath of a global pandemic, where the visibility of the nightlife industry has seen consistent decline. As well as this the research provides an insight into the integral relationship between clubbing and its participants, which is significant to the ongoing political impasses regarding transgender issues and rights in the United Kingdom. An assessment of the varying factors that have contributed to the evolution of Glasgow's queer spaces allowed a better understanding of why such spaces are integral to the communities they represent.

The research brought Glasgow's history of intolerance towards the LGBTQ+ community to the forefront and revealed the innovative ways in which homosexual individuals have adapted public spaces, such as the city's parks, to meet their unique needs and desires. Even after the decriminalisation of homosexuality the introduction of section 28 reinforced the city's history of intolerance and aversion of homosexual behaviour, with particular emphasis on the impact for LGBTQ+ youth. The emergence of a distinct queer nightlife scene during the hedonistic and consumerist culture of the 1980's saw Glasgow's queer community move into the sensory and performative aspects of club culture which was greatly influenced by American discos. Providing a completely new environment for the queer community of Glasgow and beyond to come together and express themselves freely in their pursuits of sex, community and culture. Following this, the commercialisation of Glasgow's gay scene proved to be a trade off in growing acceptance and inclusion from the outlook of society. However, it certified a variation in Glasgow's nightlife activities with club nights such as 'Death Disco' and 'Abnormals Anonymous'. These events ultimately weaved gender aesthetics and clubbing practices into a wider cultural fabric that existed outside of entertainment and hedonism. These types of spaces have laid the groundwork for Glasgow's queer clubbing scene to continue pushing political boundaries and addressing important issues within the community within the mediums of performance, fashion and sensory experiences.

The research also highlighted the fragmentation of Glasgow's queer nightlife communities. The findings indicate that respondents had largely negative experiences of Glasgow's "gay scene," viewing it as unwelcoming and lacking in variety, with establishments such as the Polo Lounge contributing to the classification of LGBTQ+ as well as offering diluted, and pre-prescribed versions of queer culture to LGBTQ+ youth. However, respondents had largely positive experiences of Glasgow's queer clubbing scene, describing it as having a community development focus and a peer mentality. The research also highlights the disrupted harmony of queer environments with respondents sharing their experiences of discomfort and discrimination from non-queer individuals within both the "gay scene" and the "queer scene." Finally, the study reveals the profound impact of the queer clubbing scene on the respondents' lives and identity formation, emphasizing the concept of queerness existing as a state of mind, rooted in personal growth, self-acceptance, and community-driven activism. Overall, this research underscores the importance of creating safe and inclusive spaces for queer communities, where individuals can freely express themselves and build meaningful connections. The research has also shed light on the political implications of queer clubbing practices, particularly in the context of ongoing struggles for transgender rights and acceptance. Through examining the intersection of clubbing, gender, and sexuality, this dissertation has revealed the ways in which queer individuals navigate and resist dominant societal norms and expectations. Overall, this research has contributed to a deeper understanding of the multifaceted nature of queer culture and identity in the context of clubbing practices. The findings have important implications for policymakers, club owners, and members of the queer community in terms of creating and sustaining safe and inclusive spaces for marginalized individuals. Moving forward, it is crucial that these voices continue to be heard and amplified in the ongoing fight for social justice and equality.

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Appendix

1: Case Studies: Analysis of Glasgow's Queer Culture

1.1 Interview with Dr Jeff Meek [he/him]: Queer Historian & Professor of Sociology and Economics at Glasgow University

1.2 Interview with Colin Barr [he/him]: Previous manager of Glasgow's first exclusively gay nightclub Bennetts.

1.3 Interview with Alan Miller [he/him]: Previous DJ and Promoter of queer club nights at the Art School.

1.4 Interview with Carra [she/they] and Catherine [they/them]: Trustees of the Queer Community development project Bonjour.

1.5 Interview with Chris Tait [he/him]: Chairperson of Glasgow Pride. General Manager of The Pierce Institute, a social enterprise & community venue in Govan.

2: Individual Inquiry: Participant Interviews

2.1 Participant Information

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Case Studies: Analysis of Glasgow's Queer Culture

1.1 Interview with Dr Jeff Meek: Queer Historian & Professor of Sociology and Economics at Glasgow University

I'm looking to understand the early emergence of Glasgow's LGBTQ nightlife culture, can you tell me more about the Scottish Minorities Group?

Originally, the group felt that having 'homosexual' would be too provocative to have in the title before morphing into the Scottish Homosexual Rights Group before eventually turning into Outright Scotland.

I listened to a podcast on 'If Glasgow's Walls Could Talk: Mapping Queer Scotland'. You spoke a lot about cruising grounds in and around Glasgow Green, so what did queer space look like in Scotland prior to the decriminalisation of homosexuality in 1981?

Well queer spaces were effectively normative spaces that queer individuals adapted, negotiated and changed their shape and meaning. You know, Glasgow green was not created so that men could have sex in bushes but gay men/queer men in the past used these areas as homosocial spaces where they would engage (generally in sexual acts) with other men because obviously there was no other outlet or opportunity to meet, socialise and form any sort of relationship. Every single public park in Glasgow had an alternative shape and meaning, Kelvingrove, Queens Park, Roukenglen etc all had a queer dynamic. Generally, at the evenings and weekends. This is evident from the 19th century onwards. It's not a modern concept it's been happening for hundreds of years. Most people would have been oblivious to the queer shape and meaning of these spaces. However, the awareness develops in the 20th century through police activity and the corporations' response to growing anxieties about 'shady' men hanging about wooded areas. The counter action to this was the cutting down of trees and trimming bushes as well as enforcing an open and closing time around public parks. So, all these kinds of responses were in effect responses to what was happening between men in these areas.

And at in that period there wasn't any sort of local bars that accommodated LGBT individuals, these interactions would take place within these cruising grounds?

Yeah, I mean from post war period onwards you find there are bars that became popular with queer men and women. These were heterosexual spaces that went through a process of accommodation and negotiation to become more open and receptive to queer individuals. It was a case of them realising their own same sex desire and trying to figure out a way they could meet other men like them. Eventually particular places held particular meanings, one of the older men I spoke to, said that he overheard a conversation with his grandmother and his father saying that one of the parks in the East End was full of perverts, and he said to himself, 'right ok, I'll go and have a look'. There was a process of trial and error, he spoke about how the park became his university of life, that's where he learned about himself and

other people. However, after the second world war you do see an increase of queer invasion in heterosexual spaces but it was still very closeted. I mean it wasn't Delmonica's, it was very much places like the Strand Bar, Guys Restaurant, Central Station Coffee bar. It was a case of operating side by side with heteronormative spaces and being very careful and cautious about how you interacted with other people.

We've covered cruising grounds, but in your chapter 'Sodomy to Same-Sex Desire' you mention the male prostitution rings operating inside Glasgow, one of the things I found particularly interesting was the use of camp names, almost like how Ballroom culture operates in relation to one another?

I mean the use of camp names goes back to the 19th century. Primarily, it was used as a layer of protection for male prostitutes. To give you an example one of the older men I previously interviewed, when he first emerged onto the scene in the 50's. He told me a story about when he was having a conversation with one of the men in a bar. He mentioned the persons' name and was quickly informed he must never do that. Never speak about people using their names, you must only use camp names. He didn't know anything about this form of language. So, they said, "who's your favourite actress?", he said "well its Doris Day". They responded, "well you look nothing like Doris Day so pick another" the man replied, "ok, Sophia Lauren?", yes, they replied, "And from now on if anyone refers to you, they'll ask for Sophia. So, if anyone is listening to this conversation, they are listening to a group of men talking about women, not knowing they're talking about other men. So, it's important to be cautious when we think about why they chose camp names. It did not represent their perceptions of their gender identity; it may have in some cases but primarily it was about protection. If you're a sex worker, again, then if asking for 'Sophia' for example is much safer than asking for the male counterpart. There's an interesting angle to this, in the sese that the sex workers in Glasgow chose the name of male impersonators on stage, so they chose the names of women who performed as men and they were men, who in the eyes of 1920-30's society were performing as women. Male sex work is something that wider society of that time has no clue about. So, the way in which they play with gender and names is interesting - it's a consistency, I mean the scene in the eighties and nineties, I can remember people referring to other men with female names.

Yeah, I think it seems to be a common theme. Over in America in the ballroom scene it's done out of reinvention and choosing your own identity in a sense and making a statement about it, however the same philosophy is applied here in more of a protective measure. it's funny almost how campness has to extent been weaponised against societal norms.

I mean funnily enough I'm writing a book called 'Queer Trades: Male Sex Work in Scotland' which focuses on the white hats in Glasgow and the Rosebery boys in Edinburgh. You do get a sense of that, in Glasgow we effectively only have them viewed through the prism of legality. In Edinburgh, I've got their letters, where they refer to themselves as almost feminine figures and they talk about getting married. When their customers buy them a ring, they refer to themselves as wives. I'm sure you've seen the pictures of the Whitehats in the book, they are caricatures of 1920-30's Glasgow masculinity and they don't display feminine traits. William Paton, I don't believe there's a picture of him in the book, but he used to

commit crimes in drag. When he's arrested he's quite vocal. When the evidence in presented in court about what happens in the bedroom, you don't expect a 1920's Glaswegian man to speak the way he does about sex. There are different personalities, some of these men done it for the money simply because they were in poverty. Other men felt they had to as they had previous sexual convictions, so they found it difficult to get a job. However, they become immersed in the queer culture of the 1920-30's.

There was a degree of "punitive sanctions" you said a convicted man called, 'Rae', found him to be a person 'a person of unsound mind' who 'required care and control' his general manner was 'soft and childish' behaviour was 'silly and fatuous' – camp personality diagnosed as mentally ill. To me this read that they were diagnosing camp and feminine personalities, which a lot of the time is someone's demeaner and personality. The police

Yeah, the camper you were the more likely you would end up in an institution, you know for 1920-30s doctors and phycologists masculinity is singular concept. Anything that departs from that is representations of some sort of subversiveness, some sort of deviance. The only way they can explain that is the person is mad – why else would you act like a woman?

Interestingly the Scottish police did not become homophobic until the 1970-80's. Prior to that they were just stupid and ignorant. I think if you look at the way the police dealt with the Whitehats and men that were generally prosecuted. The police are doing exactly what they would do in every other single crime, there's no difference in how they are treated even though it is a horrendous way to be treated. the Scottish Police were acting under the instruction of the PF to ensure they have corroborative evidence. So, in Scotland, someone reporting two men for having sex, even if these men come into the station and say yes that's not sufficient for prosecution. So, in the case of sodomy that's incredibly difficult to prove. You had disputes between specialist forensic medicine professors at the time about whether you could indeed find evidence of sexual intercourse between two men. When you read the medical reports for all these prosecutions its conflicting evidence, so you see that confusion. So that's why these types of prosecutions seem to be extremely overzealous is because they are desperate to secure a prosecution and they're desperate to secure enough supporting evidence. There are about 120-30 cases between 1800 and 1920, which isn't that many, but you must remember these are high court cases that are looked at, there would be hundreds more in the sheriff and police courts. If a man was caught with another man but they couldn't necessarily secure the evidence it would be bumped down the courts, to the point where they would end up with a warning and a £10 fine. I think the police became more homophobic as the twentieth century progressed. Their awareness grew of queer communities and cultures that operate in Scotland. If you look at the Central Hotel case, in the fifties the central hotel became a subject of police surveillance because gay men were meeting for a coffee on a Friday night. The police went there to watch what these men were doing, the report they filed was it was just a group of men having coffee and there's nothing they could do about it, so they quickly lost interest. I think that the police become more of a homophobic presence in the 70's and 80's alongside the rise of gay activism. This is when we start to see a police pushback against queer communities.

Thank you for speaking with me.

1.2 Interview with Colin Barr: Previous manager of Glasgow's first gay nightclub 'Bennetts'

Can you talk to me about how Bennetts started?

So the story goes, Bennetts was a mistake. I had just come back from Spain and took on the club from previous owners. It used to be known as CJ's and unbeknownst to me someone had been stabbed in the club. It unfortunately had a bad name as a result of that. Glasgow was going through a transition of musical styles at that point in time, no one went to discotheques anymore. I was a Saturday boy in a boutique and the people I worked for were gay. There was a gentleman I worked with called Trevor Davis and his brother, Craig Davis, worked in the Burnberry hotel. I knew that he went to Florida every year to get imported records. No one was doing this anymore because disco was dead. Glasgow was very grungy at the time. I was trying for weeks and weeks to get people in the door, but it was a struggle due to the reputation that people had surrounding the stabbing in CJ's. Someone suggested I should run a gay night with Craig, and it took off from there. I had 300 people walk in on the first night with a massive queue around the block. It was packed every night. I worked there from 1979 but we operated as a gay club from 1980. I didn't get involved in the politics of it all but no one ever got arrested and it was very well known for being a gay club.

What was your clientele like?

We accepted everybody; gay, lesbian, trans & people of colour. It was a very open space. There were all sorts going on. We had Devine, Hazel Dean, Sylvester. Disco acts couldn't get any work and we were paying these acts for two hundred quid a night. We had a lot of women come into the space because they felt they could let their hair down and avoid harassment from men. The rest was history we had all these artists and performers that no one else would take because disco was dead to everyone else. We had the first AIDs awareness night in Scotland because we lost trade for two weeks due to people thinking they could catch AIDs from a glass. We were strict in on our door policy. We used to have a lot of 'straight' guys come to the club who didn't know they were gay until they came into the club. I would have friends from all professions hiding in the queue out of sight from me. They didn't realise I had a security camera, and I could see them in the office. I never told anyone. People were able to relax without being judged. It gave people a chance to embrace themselves and be free to have a good time. We did have a straight corner, but I would only let them in if I knew them and trusted them. My customers came first and made people aware that if there were any guys trying to chat them up, they just had to put up with it because it was their space. Nothing ever happened, we rarely had any trouble. I looked after it for the community. Very rarely did we have anyone come in that wasn't gay. I had four very butch but gay doormen who could always spot who was gay and who wasn't. If you got banned you were banned for life so because there was nothing else for them so people behaved. We were very strict, and the message was clear – no misbehaving.

What was the design of the club like?
It was a bit like Saturday night fever, we had a four-colour glass dancefloor with all these sumptuous art deco style seating and carpets. The concept was Broadway, like the Broadway Hotel, Sinatra's Bar. We had sexy low voltage lighting with black and silver graphics around the place. The sound system was a 10k Electro Voice designed especially for us. We were also the first club to have twenty moving head intelligent lighting.

What was the response from the community in relation to the club?

Yes absolutely, every night people would thank me and tell me this is wonderful what you've done for the community. They loved the music, the style of the club and the freedom to express themselves. Bennetts was famous for winning Mr Gay UK; we had a reputation across the whole country. We were in with anyone and everyone who was running gay parties in the country. We would run buses from Aberdeen, Manchester & London. I put my heart and soul into the ethos of the club, and I took advice from all my staff who were gay regarding our music and door policy.

So when did the gay scene start to expand with clubs like Polo and Delmonica's appearing?

Polo was Stefan King, he opened Club X first. It was a bit cheaper they would offer drink promos all night long. They took about 25% of our clientele. But it was good because it gave people more choice. People would then tend to drink in Club X and then head over to Bennetts. There was Squires as well, but this was a bit riskier, then following that the Waterloo Bar which is more infamous for being a cruising spot that had a lot of male prostitutes. It fragmented the scene but at that point I was ready to move on to something else. I ended up opening Tunnels and ran a gay night on a Monday there.

Do you think this was beneficial for the scene?

I think it was healthy to have a bit competition for us. I think what was truly detrimental to the gay scene was drug use. When cocaine and ecstasy became a factor in clubbing it completely ruined the scene. It changed people's behaviour completely. The atmosphere of our venues changed and there was a lot more trouble. We would have to deal with gangs coming into our space purely with the intention of getting people full of it.

Thanks for speaking with me.

1.3 Interview with Alan Miller: Previous DJ and Promoter for the Art School

You were the first person to run exclusively queer club nights at the Art School. Can you talk to me about the nature and objectives of the club nights you've ran in the past?

We operated as a club space with performance aspects, live music, physical art installations, film loops – that sort of thing. We would put out gay and lesbian academia place cards to start conversations – laminated cards which had a provocative quotation from queer theory, lesbian and transgender writing. Trying to embrace the idea that within a club space you could also be stimulated in other ways, particularly in relation to cultural issues within the community that you couldn't really encounter elsewhere. So the whole point was to try and fill your brain with as much stuff as possible when you came to the event. At the time, we're talking late nineties and early 2000s, there was only the commercial gay scene in Glasgow. There were a few nights that aimed more directly at having queer clientele. Probably at the time Love Boutique which ran in the Arches was the biggest and most successful club night with this type of objective. Big name Djs, house music policy and had a bit more of an edge to it, they encourage people to dress up and go to the party in drag. It ran more as a gay friendly event. Venues did not openly say club nights were gay or straight. Which I guess for them was fine, but I wanted to very deliberately put across that this is a queer event and straight people can be allowed in. That was the attitude I very much wanted to take, I felt that at that point in time 'gay friendly' was a very dated and not very useful terminology. Our events were built around that gay came first, 'weird queers and their straight peers'. So, the idea was that the gay part came first and that straight people were accommodated but it wasn't really their space. I started running abnormals at the CCA, which was a great space, but it was really expensive.

What contributed to the night's development?

I had looked into the possibility of getting 'Arts Council' funding (as it was known then). The idea of getting funding for a club night was just completely alien to them. They didn't see it as part of a broader cultural landscape. Clubbing was entertainment on a very kind of ersatz level, it wasn't something that they considered artful or possessing any kind of cultural significance or role. I ended up moving to the Glasgow School of Art student association. I was already DJing there for another night called Divine. Divine fell into a kind of mixed category. As the night was situated within the art school it was understood as a poly space. The art school encourages a notion of openness and acceptance so there was a queer presence. It was understood to have a very 'art school' atmosphere. It wasn't a commercial event, musically it was incredibly diverse. So this attracted a lot of different people. There was a lot of international students, parts of Glasgow's retro scene and fashion students, there was a lot of dressing up which provided an element of gayness, but it didn't codify itself as an exclusive queer event. It was already made up of people who thought differently and dressed differently. It had this classic arty element to it. So I ended moving Abnormals Anonymous to the GSA. I spoke to the entertainment convener at the time who was really open to it. They didn't have any gay club nights and there wasn't any gay club nights at the time even though there was a small amount of spaces that identified themselves as gay

friendly. I started in there and continued with the same idea that there was a lot of written material placed around the space in the form of fan zines and place cards. We tried to program quite challenging artists who weren't just playing live as a band but had aspects of performance and more challenging elements to their show. This was the criteria that we tried to follow so there was more thoughtful elements in the clubs operation rather than just being entertainment.

I did that for about 2 or 3 years before I started running another night called record players. Ran on a Thursday night in the Art School. The Art School at this point in time was generally being understood as this sort of 'other space'. The student association is intrinsically a part of the Art School because its run by the students for the students. It's very different as a venue as it runs as a constitutionally run charity which is key because the students themselves are then involved in noncommercial entertainment and programing that doesn't necessarily always have to make money. There was always a kind of changing policy of what people were interested in, what the entertainment convenors themselves wanted to do and there was always an openness to engaging with things being run differently. It was a much more progressive space to operate a club in. A lot of the time they were willing to allow an investment of money in letting you do what you wanted to do. Abnormals was running well at this point, but I wanted to start another night because after a few years I was getting tired of it being so serious. I just wanted to run a party night where we could do something slightly different with the idea of it being queer space that wasn't so prescriptive. The way we got around this was we didn't really do any of the performances, queer theory text. We stripped it all out, and rather than have all these elements that engage with participants outside the club night. The club night itself would visually tell you something about itself that was instantly readable the second you came in the door. We created all these lights and slides and populated the whole space visually with imagery that had the deliberate intent for the person walking into the space that they would consider whether they wanted to be a part of it. It was an idea to create an invisible barrier. There was a moment where you crossed this threshold, all these lights and things happening but it was basically just a club night with everyone dancing.

It's interesting that you've created an opportunity for the potential participants of this space to decide do they want to embrace it or is it too much for them. The club night communicated its intention visually through a sensory experience right at the beginning. What did this look like in terms of the interior of the space?

Yeah, and this was slightly different from abnormal anonymous because there was so much pre-loaded into telling people what the club night was about, they had a real awareness about what the night was about so the audience was specific. And strangely most of the complaints that we had about the night came from other gay people who objected to the idea of pornographic culture, sleaziness and an obsession with sex but that kind of material wasn't present. Rather than computer generated projections we used vintage equipment. Solar 250 Projectors with various effect wheels and prism attachments, pin ball lights from the 90's and one powerful spinning starburst stage light. The images themselves were made from printers film acetates, these are used in book printing processes and create a 100% black print with an extremely high detail clear image. Using this we could get really precise imagery blown up to scale. These allowed for much starker projection. We had these images

printed to photographic size, cut them and mounted them in slide cartages to use with the Solar 250's. The Vic bar space itself had a whole series of pieces from previous refits and decorations designed to zone the space. It was pretty messy in the light. After much discussion with the venue manager and the events co-ordinator we managed to persuade them into totally repainting the space, a light grey, which really helped events come in and create their own visual aesthetic on a blank canvas. Whilst also making the room read much more as a coherently single space.

I think that aligns with gay men in media representation at that time and what was a 'normal' identity divergence under heteronormative expectations.

Yes, I think your absolutely right, people had a whole series of assumptions about what the night was about. So, I would get passed all of these complaint emails, I would sit down and reply to these complaints in a diplomatic manner and explain to them what the club was about. That we didn't feature any material that had anything to do with sex and we were much more focused on cultural issues, issues around gender, representation, equity and rights. We were interested in fringe aspects and were not in any trying to replicate what were mainstream ideas largely just about gay male sexuality, there was very little representation for lesbians, bisexuals, trans people or as it was then gender non-conforming people. I wanted to add all these elements in.

We're talking about a period late nineties/early 2000s, there seems to be a lot of queer subcultures certainly in comparison to my own experience. Do you think this is related to clubbing being in its prime during this period? What kind of queer subcultures did you see develop in Glasgow during this time?

Definitely, I would say the period between 2003 and 2007 was a total heyday for clubbing. This notion of super clubs and popularity of places like the Arches putting on things like Colours, Death Disco and Slam where they're running large scale multiroom events catering to six and seven thousand people. Death Disco played a particular role within that, even though it was a mixed event, it was a mixed event on such a large scale it was difficult to ignore. I mean it ran on the same scale as Pressure or Slam, or any of these other super straight super techno events. Artists were coming forward who were representing a very different sexual persona. I mean the popularity of Peaches, The Scissor Sisters or Fisher Spooner, there was a very large queer/gay contingent which was a dominant part of the music scene which massively contributed to visibility. Peaches was a performing artist who came out of Berlin, now the Berlin scene was quite pivotal in that kind of electro-clash movement. It kind of pivoted between New York and Berlin. New York had quite classically kind of spawned all these interesting queer subcultures.

It's interesting you say that I think there is a lot parallels between New York and Glasgow

Yeah absolutely, there was a strong connection between Glasgow, New York and Berlin. There was a kind of nexus. A lot of the time artists coming forward were bypassing London. London had really fallen behind it had really become locked into this straight male super club mentality. These artists like Peaches, Miss Kitten, DJ Hell – there was a whole series of artists who were coming up with very playful aesthetics concerning sexuality and gender. Glasgow

really latched on to that, there was a lot of people who would travel through to Glasgow to do shows. Some of the first shows that Peaches done were in Glasgow, in fact I think her very first one was at the lighthouse when she played for Optimo. The first three Scottish shows the Scissor Sisters done were at the Art School when they played for Record Players. So you know there was a real connection to a kind of musical and cultural scene where we were really plugged into artists who were doing stuff elsewhere. These artists were arriving here and instantly feeling the synergy within our collective scenes.

So from your account then, there was an incredibly rich queer nightlife scene in Glasgow in this time period?

There was, but it was all happening outside of the mainstream gay scene in Glasgow. Venues like the Polo Lounge, Bennetts and Delmonicas that remained in a kind of frozen moment, stuck on a late nineties cheesy music policy. It's like a mosquito in amber it's just never moved on. It's a very strong self-sustaining culture but I always find it interesting that when you go there the 18/19/20 year old kids look exactly the same as they did in like 1993 because they have this whole culture that has remained static.

It's interesting that you say this, if you look at the commercialised gay scene in Glasgow it's a direct example of the pink pound whereby heterosexual business owners are actively profiting from the spending power of LGBTQ individuals. I feel like there is a pre-prescribed culture that your introducing LGBTQ youth into that without a rich queer scene they are being fed a surface level of culture that they may not particularly want to engage in but are left without choice. What was your own experience of Glasgow's more commercialised gay scene?

I agree with that 100%, I think you are absolutely on the money. Even within friends of mine it didn't matter what you liked or what you were into for you to become a gay person you have to go to the polo longue and adopt that culture. Leave behind whatever it is that you liked because you didn't have access to that anymore, you became a gay person and what a gay person was, was an extremely limited field. There were many people I knew who done that, and they just became new people. The reason I do what I do is because I am 100% against that being all there is for our community. If your straight your options are unlimited to any particular scene of music – if your gay you get to go to the polo lounge and listen to shit music.

I feel like people engaging in these spaces aren't given a chance to evolve who they are and experiment with different identities and people. By essentially only offering a profitable business model as a method of engaging with culture you are essentially closing off important fragments of a queer individuals identity construction.

Historically Stephan King has been incredibly protectionist about keeping the gay scene within his venues. He has openly in the past made sure that no one can flyer for other gay nights or venues around the gay scene cluster within merchant city. Very early on there was an event running at an old drag venue at Madame Gillespie's, it was ran by the founder of Postcard Records. He received phone call threats from Stephan King telling him not to run his

event. Which as far as I can remember the guy actually turned into part of an exhibition where they just placed the voicemail on a loop for everyone to hear.

That's a pretty good way to handle that kind situation, he's showing the real incentive of these spaces which is not to offer a sense of safety, community or culture but rather to exploit a marginalised group in society - which firmly needs these kinds of spaces. I strongly believe queer people should be in control of our own culture.

Absolutely, it's really insidious that culture is quite literally gatekept by a highly commercial and rather unpleasant firm. It takes a while for individuals to work themselves out and to realise that their identity is normal. These venues opportunistically weaponize a fundamental aspect of LGBTQ identity formation through a clear message that if you do not go to the spaces, you will not meet people like yourself. Another thing I remember about the Polo Lounge, when Glasgay which was a gay, lesbian and transgender arts festival running over twenty five years and began as fundraising protest against section 28. Whenever the Glasgay Festival ran each year, the Polo Lounge would not allow their Glasgay brochures in their venue, even going on to create their own fake Glasgay programme for every night that there was an event on as part of the festival.

This has been really helpful, thanks for speaking with me.

1.4 Interview with Carra & Catherine: Trustees of the queer community development space Bonjour, located in Merchant City

How did Bonjour start? What was the intentions behind the space?

It's a grey area, Catherine came on when bonjour opened – I think it was sometime in June 2021. Basically, there was 4 directors, art school graduates. We're now down to just two. It was started with the intention of always being a community space as well as a hospitality venue. We've only turned into of a club recently. I think the intentions of the space had to change a bit because it was started pre-covid and we couldn't open as a club originally, it was a sit-down bar with an ethos of providing an environment where art & performance could be facilitated. Over time more people became involved in the community aspect. We started working with different club nights recently that are actively more engaged in supporting different minority groups within our community.

What do you think Bonjour stands for in comparison to other venues in Glasgow with a direct LGBTQ cliental?

It stands for radical community action, or the intention of trying to be as radical as possible in supporting the community. We're asset based; we look within the community to kind of resolve any issues that are happening. It also a place where the most marginalized groups of our community are represented. We run Orisha, this is a club night focused on creating a space for black queer people. These spaces don't really exist in Glasgow, they are very few and far between. I feel like the more spaces we try to create for marginalized people to exist the better and that's at the center of our intentions. Of course, there is continuous work to be done and nothings perfect, but I think it's about trying to center that as much as you can. We also run POC Drag Nights and a mentorship program for people wanting to get into performance. So, through the mentorship we can accommodate them for their first gigs/performances. We've been able to subsidies a lot of costs to start up a lot of new club nights that perhaps couldn't have existed elsewhere. The space is completely nonprofit driven It's about redistributing funds within the community and helping people find their feet. We have a safer spaces policy, there is always bouncers on the door and we're really active on awareness. We have dedicated awareness reps in order to provide a space where people feel at their most liberated. We get a lot of feedback from punters who come in to say that they only feel comfortable dressing a certain way in Bonjour, and I feel the same myself, because we are so vigilant on safety.

So since the pandemic, what sort of issues has Bonjour faced in relation to trying to secure funding?

I would say what have we not faced in relation to securing funding, there always seem to be loopholes. It's to do with the way the business is ran, as we function as a community service but technically it's still looked at as a business, so we don't qualify for a lot of funding. We've been trying to investigate different avenues of securing funding for example, turning into a Community Interest Company (CIC), this didn't really work for us because there were certain legalities that meant if we went under our assets would be given to another organization.

We've had funding from creative Scotland which has been for the mentorship program so that's more based on performance art. That's also where some of the funding has come from for our new club nights. There is an option to apply for further funding from Creative Scotland this year, but It's been cut already by a third so we're having to hold off. A few other queer projects in the city have already been rejected. I think one of the biggest problems we're facing right now is the cost-of-living crisis and we're having huge issues with our landlord's network rail, as well as this were having issues with Scottish Water as we're being charged for periods of time when were not legally allowed to be open. That's why we ended up throwing the fundraiser late last year. It feels like on a week-by-week basis stuff gets thrown our way.

Do you think some of the challenges your facing is directly tied to the fact you operate as a nightlife venue?

We get lots of complaints from the licensing board, people have racist and queerphobic and we've had a lot of hate crimes happen. For example, we had this poster up on the wall outside that said 'expect trans existence; or expect trans resistance' and people phoned to complain that was a threatening statement. Which, it wasn't at all. The neighbors don't want us here – we've had threats to be burnt down. There's been a load of noise complaints too from the same people. We even had someone spray paint a swastika outside on the front of the building. You're expected to have a level of resilience to things, as members of the LGBTQ community we've faced this most our lives and it's constant when its directly tied to your work. It's why our safeguarding policies are extra tight.

You mentioned safeguarding policies can you tell me more about them? Do you feel the crowd is mainly made up of marginalised groups at Bonjour?

We're committed to upholding a Safer Space Policy. We prioritise People of Colour, Trans and Non-Binary individuals but ultimately, it's mixed, there's less of a white presence and we are more diverse compared to other clubs. But that's because we actively make sure people are welcomed and we have partnerships with other organisations such as LGBT Unity. We're trying to make sure its diverse as possible. We don't sell all our tickets online to keep an eye on diversity inclusion. It's more important for us to safeguard nights to a particular crowd whilst adding an element of exclusivity. But our selective nature is due to the hate and threats that we have received in the past. We must actively protect these groups from that. We have an open approach, everyone is welcome, but we take care in our door policy to make sure people are aware of what the space is to make sure that people come into the space with open mind and good vibes. Another thing is, due to our location sometimes the bouncers are distracted by things happening on the street that they need to deal with. Geographically its quite a football area, we have to close when Celtic takes over the street. It's just too high risk for an incident to occur. There was an incident on Saturday night, we were standing at the bar and there was this man who repeatedly was telling us that he wasn't homophobic because he had gays in his family but continued to make sneering remarks and ask one our friends who is a trans-woman if she was my boyfriend. There's a lack of understanding that it's not just about being gay, their just missing the whole point.

The gay scene in Glasgow operates as heteronormative queer space with a focus on profit rather than community. Bonjour feels like a more open and honest representation of queer culture because its ran by queer people for queer people.

Yeah, these spaces are known to be transphobic on the door. Part of the funding we got from Creative Scotland was for the mentorship scheme I mentioned earlier but it was also for certain kinds of club nights to start up and develop. We're working with one of our residencies just now 'PHAT' ran by queer DJ Miss Cabbage. It's all about body positivity and it hasn't been done anywhere else, it serves as a celebration of fat bodies. We also run 'KIN.X', this is sex worker led but has a focus on kink and fetishes. It's a safe space that encourages people to dress in a certain way. Orisha, of course being a space for black queer people allows people to listen to music from the black diaspora. House of Flowers is another performance night and Scotland's first POC drag show. We also have Fire, which is a spoken word night, it takes inspiration from the kind of movement that was taking place in 1920's Harlem Renaissance. Part of our policy is a femme forward dancefloor, we don't want it to be a masculine dominant space. It is important to qualify that we're a queer bar and not a gay bar. We run an in-house night called 'Shite Pop' which is supposed to be an inclusive alternative to places like the Polo Lounge. We also have 'Danse Macabre' which is like a goth night, this has a particular focus on class activism. They've really supported the community financially. It's interesting because they have a huge pro-active in activism to workers' rights etc. I would say there's a greater need for it now because everything has become so commercialised. Queer culture has radical roots but if you look at Glasgow Pride for example it's heavily commerialised now as most of the march is filled with floats that are from banks. There's not an alternative pride or even a trans pride which I wish there was. We're trying to take things back to their radical origins where the things we do have real meaning. It's not possible for us to throw our own alternative Pride. It's only going to become more difficult as we're in a time where the government are actively attempting to blur the lines between public nuisance and public demonstrations.

It feels like Bonjour operates as a crucial service rather than a club after speaking with you both, do you think this kind of enterprise should run for the community rather than exploiting them?

It's very much a process of trial and error and we exist in survival mode. We're hoping to improve the space by securing more funding. We're trying to maintain sociable open hours during the day to facilitate different services, such as health & wellbeing, but until we get more funding secured we don't know how long we can stay open altogether. Our ambition is to run a service where people can come in and some of our staff will be trained in helping people apply for benefits, writing letters of support for the asylum process. I mean this is something we've already done but we're actively trying to communicate now that this is what bonjour is about; we've just got our website set up. It's a lot of labor, a lot of our co-op members can't rely on this as a job and people are sacrificing their own time to help us in any way they can because they understand we operate out of necessity as well as the fact they themselves are extremely passionate about it. The workload these queer people are actively doing is a lot more than you would experience in another gay bar. I would say on an institutional level there is no acknowledgement that this is an issue that needs focus and attention. It's unfortunate that we have to be in conversations with the police due to noise

complaints and the problems we face with the football marches. However, in these discussions we've came to learn that if there was an attack on our venue there's no sort of specialized response in the same way there would be if it were an attack on a religious institution. There is a lack of understanding of the needs of queer people on that part.

This has been great, thank you for speaking with me

1.5 Interview with Chris Tait: Chairperson of Glasgow Pride, Community Development Officer

Can you talk to me about the work you've done with Glasgow Pride?

Pride is a membership organisation, I'm the chairperson of the board of directors so we deal with the governance of the charity but there's no paid workers. There's lots of trustees, the people that were previously in charge weren't great. Previously the values were about being the biggest and the best Pride in Scotland. The scene wasn't involved previously it was all about money. It largely contributed to the commercialisation of pride. Joined as a volunteer about 8 years ago and the first job I had was diversifying Pride's amenities. I ran a dog show as part of the parade, and it was successful. After that I started working on the march, back then it was classed as a parade or celebration and only had 2500 people in it. I really wanted to change the intentions of Pride to have a more political focus. We changed it to a march. We wanted it to be known as a protest which helped engage different organisations and people. Within a few years it had increased from 2,500 to over 16,000 people. We wanted it to be more political and we incorporate a different theme each year, for example, we focused on adoption rights one year and this pulled in a lot of different activist groups to come and make speeches at the event.

What was the biggest influences that affected its expansion? What sort of political movements would take part? What caused the most change?

My job back then was a Youth Worker, so for me it was about getting more young people involved. I think when Pride was a parade it was mostly made up of regulars in Glasgow's gay scene. I tried to use my Youth Work contacts, I wanted to include charities that worked with families and young people that weren't just about LGBTQ charities. The community really needs the support of everyone. It was about how showing solidarity in numbers which communicated to people that there were others like them. I feel that the trans community really has their act together in terms of protesting. They are a huge voice within our community, and I really think that we all need to do more to support them.

What do you aim to achieve each year?

For a lot of people Pride is about going out drinking, dressing up and celebrating LGBTQ culture. We tried highlight different marginalised groups within the community every year. In order to achieve this, we had to get the right people to do speeches, we would get local councillors to come along such as Patrick Harvey who is a member of our community to stand up and engage the audience in a different way. We needed good speakers to turn the tide from it being seen as a celebration of culture to an active political movement. Another good example is the year we got Nicola Sturgeon involved in the march. We said to her that that no leader of a country has ever walked at the front of the march, she agreed to do it with us. She is the first leader of any country to walk at the front of any pride march. It ended up becoming a historical moment for Scotland and Pride Glasgow. Each year we've put a brought a particular issue within the community to focus, for example we had year of the young person, trans rights have been a huge focus for us in the past as well as adoption

rights. Last year we had 'LGBT: Lets Get Back Together' which was centred around the community coming back together after Covid.
What issues have you faced over the years?

We've faced a lot of issues from clashing groups within the community. Lots of people push for the march to be family friendly but this becomes hard when we have people dressing up in kink and fetish wear. We also have lesbian groups who are anti-trans register every year to walk the march with us. In London, 'lesbians against trans' stood in front of the march and stopped the entire parade. So, there's a constant battle with offering inclusivity to all these groups. We need to create space for families, we need to create space for commercial and anti-commercial, we need to create space for fetish and kink groups and then we must deal with groups who have a non-inclusive agenda that also identify as an 'LGB group'. We have Jehovah Witnesses protest the march every year. During Pride month and the week leading up to the march they show up to my house, post letters saying they are going to pray for me, accusing me of corrupting the world. There is also constant trolling on social media. We hosted a Drag storytelling in GOMA during Pride month as well and we had to deal with protesters outside accusing us of brainwashing children.

What do you think about the commercialisation of Glasgow's gay pride?

I think it's a massive issue and under the previous leadership this was allowed to happen. Now we're actively trying to bring the gay scene in to have a more active role in the march each year. Unfortunately, large corporations have got away with this because they have money. It comes down my own moral standpoint and I've had to make tough decisions with the board in relation to funding being offered by these organisations because we need their money to run the event each year. No one seems to get on within the Pride Glasgow network, it lacks a sense of unity. There's Free Pride, Mardi Glas and Pride in the Park.

Thanks for speaking with me

Individual Inquiry

2.1 Participant information

Age	Origins	Gender identity and pronouns	Sexuality
29	Glasgow/Berlin	Non-Binary, she/they	Pansexual, Demi-Sexual
22	Glasgow	Non-binary, they/them	Queer
25	Inverness	Cis-woman, she/they	Pansexual
24	Glasgow	Trans-Woman, she/her	Queer
27	Cumbernauld	Cis-Man, he/him	Bisexual, Queer
21	Glasgow	Cis-Man, hey him	Gay
22	Glasgow	Cis-Man, he/him	Gay

2.2 Participant Interview Guide

1. Introduction**:**

- Brief introduction on the purpose of the research project.
- No right or wrong answers, interviewer is genuinely interested in the participants perspective, beliefs and memories.
- Precise that participants should feel free to ask when they do not understand a question.
- Technical aspects of the interview: Confidentiality and Anonymity, Audio recording and Transcript.
- Ethical Considerations: Participants understand that they can decide not to answer a question and stop the interview at any moment.
- Ask participants if they have any questions before the beginning of the interview.

2. Demographics & Individual Experience

- In order to know a bit more about yourself….
- Are you from Glasgow? If not, what brought you here and how long have you lived here?
- Now I'd like to know about your gender and sexual identity, how do you identify in this regard?
- Could you briefly describe what it's like living as queer person in Scottish society?

3. Inquiry

3.1 Clubbing practices in Glasgow's divergent scenes

- What brought you to a queer club the first time you went out?
- What kind of activities do you engage in at queer clubbing events? - What are you looking for when you go on a night out?
- What kind of experience? Sensations?
- Could you describe the ideal clubbing night for you?
- What do you think about Glasgow's queer clubbing scene?

3.2 Experience of Queer Dancefloors

- Who do you usually encounter on the dancefloors of Glasgow's queer clubbing events?
- What do you think about the relationships that you create on queer dancefloors
- Would you describe them as meaningful?
- What do you think about the increasing diversity of queer clubbing crowds?
- Could you describe your interactions with Non-Queer people at queer clubbing events?
- Have you experienced discomfort/negativity at an event, and would you be okay to describe it to me?
- How did that make you feel?
- Could you describe the best event you've ever been to?
- And now could you describe the worst?
- What do you think about the artistic dimension of queer clubbing events? And about the music?
- What do you think about the history of clubbing and the LGBT+ community?

3.3 Identity Construction

- Now I would like to know more about who you are.
- First, at surface level, could you tell me your age and your current occupation?
- How do you define yourself? What are the most important parts of your identity? How would you define who you are?
- Is there any moment when you felt like clubbing was part of who you are? Regarding the values that we previously evoked (Cite most crucial values previously evoked through the interview), could you describe the impact they had on who you are?

- 4. Conclusion

- In summary, can you think about three main things that clubbing brings to your life?
- Thank the interviewees for their participation and the insights they provided
- Ask if there is anything the interviewee would like to mention or something that
- the interview questions might have missed
- Ask if there is anything the interviewer should change or improve about the interview process
- Provide a brief summary of the most crucial/memorable information collected during the interview and ask for validation.
- Ask if the interviewee might know someone else relevant that could be interviewed?

2.3 Themes & Discussion

Experience of Conflicting Scenes		
Themes	**Dimensions**	**Open Code**
Negative Experiences of 'Gay Scene'	- Gay bar vs queer scene - Stereotyping and categorisation - Unwelcoming Environment/Exclusion from space - Safety Concerns - Lack of Diversity - Lack of Inclusivity - Commodification of queer culture - Catering to straight individuals - Voyeurism/Spectatorship -Heteronormative Power Structures	*'Vast difference between gay bars and queer scene'* *'The gay scene goes against everything it means to be queer'* *'I've had numerous experiences with bouncers saying I don't look queer enough to get into the space'* *'Even when I was presenting as a gay man you must fit into a particular stereotype of what being gay is'* *'Going out in the gay scene, I never really had the same connection to the night'* *'I actively avoid these spaces because I've heard too many horror stories'* *'Commercial scene is generic, it's a just a really toxic environment'* *'It only caters to white gay twinks'* *'There is no gender-neutral toilets in the Merchant City, it's bizarre'* *'It's watered-down gayness'* *'Denying lesbians entry because they're too butch, but letting a gay guy in with his 5 straight cis girlfriends in is just weird'* *'It becomes a human zoo. Straight people come to watch queer people because they've heard we're a good night out'*

| Positive Experiences of 'Queer Scene' | -Creative Outlet

--Meaningful Relationships and Connections

-Community Development Focus

-Safeguarding Policies

-Quality and Diversity of Events

-Peer Mentality

-More attention to the artistic dimension of clubbing

-Validation of Identity

-Sensory utopia | *'Sense of creative freedom, nourishing conversations surrounding art practice'*

'When you make a genuine connection on the dancefloor it feels authentic'

'Real friendships blossom'

'Most of the queer people I know I've met them on a dancefloor'

'it's good to see familiar faces, it gives another level of assurance and safety'

'we're coming into an era where everything is more community orientated and trying to lift each other up rather than being divided'

'A big part of clubbing is the artistic people behind it'

'Queer clubs bring joy and meaning in life. There's a genuine human experience that takes place and a level you can get to on a dancefloor that is unmatched'

'It's presented me with a level of confidence I would never have achieved if I didn't go out clubbing'

'It opens a window into new and different experiences, people are there for a good time and so am I, when those vibes clash it just makes me have an even better night'

'anonymity in the space'

'I like getting lost in the lights, it takes me somewhere else, it's like a bit of relief from life' |

Discordance and Dilution of Queer Space

Themes	Dimensions	Open Code
Experiences of Discomfort and Discrimination	Assumptions and Sexual Assault Understanding of Queer Space Toilets and Pronouns Voyeurism/Spectatorship	*'Assumption that because I'm femme presenting, I'm straight and attracted to men, sexual assault due to misidentification, and expressing the need to come out again in a queer environment'* *'You can't expect every queer person to be willing to educate straight people about queer lifestyles'* *'Most people don't understand the concept of entering queer space, it's not about whether your fine with queer people it's about whether we're fine with you'* *'Trans individuals being subject to microaggressions/misgendering, need for welfare officers to deal with situations involving harassment'* *'It feels like we're in a human zoo, like were being objectified by straight people when they come into our space'* *'You know we've had to leave because the voyeurs are in the toilet misgendering people and pulling wigs off. 20% of the crowd that night were queer'* *'There is always something going on, generally non-queer interaction is negative. It's why we need safeguarding policies and non-photography measures'*

Paradox of Opinion	-Desire for Marginalised Inclusion -Integration of all Sexual Orientations and Gender Identities -Complete Exclusion of Straight/Cis People in Queer clubbing environments	*'I love diversity, I want these spaces to feel welcome to the most marginalised groups within our community'* *if we don't look out for the most marginalised of our community, we risk our rights being rolled back'* *'I think diversity is really important, clubbing shouldn't be for one gender or identity it should be for all'* *'Straight clubbers numbers are increasing in amongst queer crowds but it's problematic'* *'Do I think straight people should be cast out of queer spaces, no. But I also don't think it's right, I think they can go anywhere else, and this is our space'* *'I would never call the inclusion of straight/cis people at queer clubbing events diversity.'* *'The world is set up for them, they don't provide any level of level of diversity'*

Dilution of Queer Space	-Monotony	'Not all queer spaces are equal, there is a complete lack of queer POC club nights'
	-Cracks in Safeguarding Policies	'there's inconsistencies in different club nights approach to safeguarding'
	-Power Structures	
	-Mainstream bookings cater to wider audience	'People have too much choice, everything can be spread quite thinly'
	-Pre-prescribed Culture	
	-Heteronormative versions of queer culture	'a lot of club nights have a huge techno focus and a lot of the time these events become the same thing in different wrappers'
		'There is heteronormative power structures in place, reproduction of these structures within spaces like the Polo Lounge, it's the responsibility of the venue to mitigate these risks'
		'People have too much choice, everything can be spread quite thinly'
		'It's watered-down gayness'
		'Everything about these spaces is a cliché stereotype'

Clubbing and Identity Construction		
Themes	**Dimensions**	**Open Code**
Freedom of Expression	-Unique Cultural Experiences -Gender Euphoria -Confidence Creative Expression	*'Clubbing is the first place for a queer person to go where they can truly embrace themselves'* *'The whole thing of travelling to the club in one outfit and changing into another when they get to the club, that's really a unique queer experience'* *'Unshakeable confidence in my own identity, but I'm aware others do not have the same experience'* *'I'm paranoid talking about my partner in public, but I it feels so normal in queer clubs'*
Queer Identity as a state of mind	-Personal growth -Community and activism -Sense of Belonging -Joy and meaning in life -Reassurance and safety -Identity Synthesis -Emotional Maturity - -Kindness, positive approach to life and other people	*'It's presented me with a level of confidence I don't think I would have been able to achieve if I didn't go'* *'I've worked past being a people pleaser and I am now unapologetically myself'* *'I think clubbing has given me a degree of emotional maturity'* *'It's presented me with a new outlook on life'* *'there's been moments where we have all felt really emotional at seeing community come together'* *'It's an emotional experience, seeing everyone come together and fight for a cause'*