

# The Intersectional Identities of Queer Creatives in Newcastle

By Kathryn Smith - 200975670 - BA Hons Geography - k.smith29@newcastle.ac.uk

## Introduction

**Intersectionality:** An approach which recognises that identity is not singular. Identity is complex, shaped by multiple and simultaneous characteristics that evolve over time and cannot be viewed in isolation (Phoenix, 2006).

**Queer:** The term 'queer' has a history of being used against the LGBTQ+ community, often meaning weird or odd. It has been reclaimed now as an umbrella term to describe fluid sexuality and genders within the LGBTQ+ spectrum.

**Creatives:** I am using the term 'creatives' to describe anyone in the creative arts industry such as singers, actors, artists, authors, performers etc.

**Performativity:** The embodied performance of identity characteristics that reiterates and naturalises societal norms (Nash, 2000).

**Non-Representational Theory:** How everyday practices that shape the conduct of humans with others and themselves are performed and represented meaningfully through visual, bodily expressions (Thrift, 1997).



### Case Study 1 - Rhianne / Mama Rhi - She/Her - Cabaret Artist

- Mama Rhi is an "amplification" of Rhianne.
- "Queerness is so connected to neurodivergence because it's that chance to be entirely free and fully express your true self"
- "You really have to hunt" for representation of bigger bodies in the cabaret and burlesque world.
- Performance does not have to be explicitly linked to politics or identity, "you being on that stage, not feeling like you always belong is also making a point"
- Rhianne and her creative partner aim to create safe and inclusive spaces that "amplify queer voices".
- Observes a lack of sober spaces in the queer scene in Newcastle due to its drinking city reputation which she argues can never feel 100% safe.



### Case Study 2 - Max / MXYM - They/Them - Singer/Songwriter

- MXYM is an alter ego of Max. MXYM helped them find comfort in the androgyny of gender and other identity characteristics.
- MXYM was always "extensively queer", paving the way for non-drag acts in Newcastle's queer clubbing scene.
- Newcastle's music scene was not as welcoming, it felt "less friendly, less supportive and more closed off" to something new and unique.
- The queer scene understood the "Hannah Montana-ism" of MXYM, they weren't the "only show pony" at queer events compared to heteronormative ones.
- Eventually there were no boundaries between MXYM and Max - "there's no fencing off because we're all in the same play pen" - which led to the end of MXYM.

## Research Questions

- How do queer creatives perform their identities?
- What is the intersectional experience of Newcastle's queer creatives?
- What is the queer creative scene like in Newcastle?



### Case Study 3 - Amy - They/Them - Poet and Facilitator

- Created spaces like **Out Of Your Head** poetry nights to foster inclusivity - "it feels hard to find who you are in your community if you feel like all your community spaces don't represent you".
- Being queer and disabled in the Newcastle creative scene is increasingly hard due to lack of accessibility and funding - "they almost expect you to pick one struggle".
- Writes poetry about politics to **process and protest** current events. Their work is also about themselves and their identity, poetry is their "**heart art**".
- The stage is a place to be their elevated self, they felt comfortable expressing parts of their identity such as dressing "**overtly queer**" which then helped them feel confident doing so in day-to-day life.

## Methodology

- 3 case studies
- Semi-structured interviews (45m-1h 15m)
- Recruited through friendships and snowballed
- Thematic analysis
- Content analysis of participants' Instagram accounts and websites

## Themes

• Representation	• In-group understanding
• Multifaceted performances - political, personal, glamorous and weird	• Alcohol
• Physical appearance	• Exclusivity and the 'fringe'

## Evaluation

- Transcription software struggles with northern accents
- Doing a focus group would have been an interesting addition to the project due to the similarities and differences between my participants' experiences
- However, these experiences cannot be generalised to the wider population due to the personal nature of creative pursuits and complex matrix of identity characteristics

## Conclusion

- Performing queer and other identities does not have to be explicitly clear, identities intersect and are ingrained at every stage of the creative process
- Performing allows for a deep exploration of identity
- Identity is hugely personal, some identity characteristics affect the day-to-day lives more than others and evolve over time and space
- Newcastle's queer scene still has far to go before it is truly inclusive and the journey to inclusivity is not linear

## References

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