

The Intersectional Identities of Queer Creatives in Newcastle

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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).

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?

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



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.



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.

Themes

- Representation
- Multifaceted performances - political, personal, glamorous and weird
- Physical appearance
- In-group understanding
- Alcohol
- 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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