Universiteit van Amsterdam

Graduate School of Social Sciences

MSc Sociology: Migration and Ethnic Studies

'Niet gay genoeg'?

The construction of borders around 'credible' queerness in Dutch LGBTI asylum interview preparation

Anna Wallis (12289604)

August 2019, Amsterdam

Masters' Thesis

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Sarah Bracke

2nd Reader: Dr. Lea Müller-Funk

Word-count: <u>25607 words</u>

I.

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This research project explored the construction of narratives around queerness in LGBTI asylum interview preparation in the Netherlands, as well as how symbolic borders are (re)created in this context.

Many people receive a negative decision on their asylum claim because they do not produce a narrative of queerness that is deemed 'credible' by authorities. This results in violent exclusions that have potentially life-threatening consequences. Yet it occurs in the name of detecting 'fraudulent' claims and protecting state borders, while maintaining an image of the Netherlands as 'open' and 'tolerant' towards queer subjects.

To examine these processes, 12 semi-structured interviews were carried out with actors engaged in asylum interview preparation work for claims made on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity, such as lawyers, support workers and 'evidence' letter-writers.

Their accounts demonstrated that notions of queerness are situated, normative, and rely heavily on an identity framework of sexuality. Lack of intersectional awareness produced imaginaries around queerness that engaged with homonationalist and occasionally racist discourses. Overall, there was a large degree of support for the contemporary asylum system, and thus, real and imagined borders of the Dutch nation-state were upheld and corresponding exclusionary boundaries around queerness reinforced.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1.   Introduction

On the 3rd August 2019, during the world-renowned 'Botenparade' in Amsterdam, queer refugee group Sehaq and Black Queer and Trans Resistance organised an alternative pride event called "We Reclaim Our Pride" to take a stand against mainstream, white 'Amsterdam Gay Pride'. Their event description read: **50 years after the Stonewall riots we see little change for BPOC, trans people, disabled people and sex workers** (We_reclaim_our_pride 2019).

It was a protest against depoliticisation and commercialisation of LGBTQ+ rights, police and military presence at pride, to raise awareness for the structural violence many queer people still face on a daily basis. These groups used their voices to speak out against limiting conceptions of queerness in Dutch society and institutional discrimination.

Particularly asylum seekers and racially othered new arrivals to the Netherlands are confronted with narrow stereotypes and normative tropes around what it means to 'be gay'. From their moment of arrival, they are othered and discriminated against, especially in moments of contact with Dutch national authorities.

For example, in-depth asylum interviews are set up to assess someone's claim to international protection, based on the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UNHCR 2010). Their official objective is to establish whether someone has claims to asylum based on "a well-founded fear of persecution" in their origin country. Questions asked in this interview are meant to assess the applicant's story according to criteria such as 'credibility' (Right to Remain 2017). Hereby, the burden of proof lies with the applicant and interviewers generally operate from a standpoint of mistrust and suspicion (Griffiths 2012).

In cases of an asylum claim made on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity, these standards of credibility rest with whether the official interviewer believes that one is 'legitimately' LGBT(I), according to the terminology used by the Dutch government and IND (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst), responsible for managing asylum claims (Government.nl 2018; IND 2019). This occurs according to assumptions about what queerness means, demanding a specific narrative about one's life and sexuality in order to 'pass' as believable and be granted refugee status.

For example, some elements that are 'expected' in a 'credible' account of persecution based on sexuality include feelings of same-sex attraction, an internal identity struggle, a moment of 'coming out', non-heterosexual relationships and sexual experiences, experiences of

hostility or violence (Jansen 2019). If the interviewer does not identify the aforementioned elements in an applicant's story, their asylum claim is rejected. However, claims for asylum have also been rejected simply on the grounds that an interviewer thought the claimant "did not act or dress gay enough" (The Guardian 2018).

Consequently, it can be very difficult to have one's asylum claim granted on the basis of non-heteronormative sexuality. Not only must one tell one's story to fit criteria, but trauma and past experiences of violence can complicate giving a full and coherent narrative account, including all the relevant facts required for a positive decision (CSEL 2016a). Many queer asylum seekers are therefore refused refugee status and are made at risk of detention and deportation (Fekete 2005; Dutta 2015).

In response to this, a variety of actors in the lives of queer asylum seekers help them prepare for their interviews, making them aware of the criteria according to which their story will be assessed and assisting them to create a detailed, consistent narrative that is more likely to be approved by the government. These can include refugee support organisations, LGBTQ+ organisations, lawyers and legal advisors, social workers, etc. Many of these supporting figures will carry out this work with positive intentions, to support people in getting refugee status.

When obtaining legal status as a refugee is often a matter of life or death, 'playing the system' can become a survival strategy and technique of resistance against restrictive regimes of immigration control. However, in doing so, these actors inadvertently reinforce the situated assessment criteria that the asylum interviews are structured around. Subsequently, this potentially serves to further entrench dominant tropes about who is 'legitimately' and 'authentically' queer.

A review of the existing literature on LGBTI asylum claims already points towards the existence of narrow conceptions of queer experiences and stories. For example, a comparative study between Brazil and the UK highlighted different interpretations of the UNHCR Refugee Convention in relation to claims based on sexual orientation (Pollini 2013). In the UK, Olsen (2017) researched how LGBTI identity as a grounds for asylum claims were introduced historically, and what assumptions this carried about sexual and gender identity. Dauvergne and Millbank (2003) also describe how interviews in the Australian system contribute to homophobic stereotyping.

In the US, for example, this specifically leads to displays of stereotypical 'masculinity' by gay male applicants being punished and claims being rejected (Hanna 2005). In France also, Kobelinsky (2012) explained how a climate of suspicion and distrust seems to 'legitimise' or condone posing intimate questions in LGBTI asylum interviews. In the Netherlands, a recent report published by the national LGBT organisation COC uncovered how asylum interviews were also routinely based on stereotypes and normative tropes around queerness (Jansen 2019).

It has not been extensively researched however, how people who help prepare queer asylum applicants for their interviews contribute to these constructions, and their role in the creation of different kinds of normativity. Additionally, how they navigate these practices within structural frameworks, with reference to their political values, warrants examination. I am interested in tensions of working within a system and taking political action to help certain people who are discriminated against in that system, while simultaneously possibly supporting an imaginary beyond the system on an ideological level.

Whether consciously or not, these actors draw on certain ideas and tropes about what defines a 'queer person', in particular the framing of queer sexuality as an issue of identity, and are hereby involved in reinforcing these narratives (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). Thus, they become complicit in constructing dominant discourse about non-heteronormative sexualities, which shape how the concept of 'credible' queerness in asylum interviews is understood and inform criteria according to which people's stories are judged.

I anticipate that asylum interview preparation reinforces norms and dominant narratives around queerness, in particular framing queer experiences as matters of identity. I make use of queer theory to complicate these constructions and draw attention to their situatedness. I also hypothesise that these processes function as a dimension of symbolic bordering. Here, I draw on the literature within migration studies around (symbolic) bordering practices.

My thesis therefore aims to have theoretical relevance, through asking questions about how the construction of imagined 'credible' sexualities comes about and is maintained. Furthermore, the societal relevance evidently concerns asylum seekers' lives in host societies, as well as those of the actors caught in tensions between working within a system they may not support. I see interesting and important parallels between queer theory and an open-borders approach to migration, in terms of their subversion of constructed boundaries and emphasis on the power associated with defining borders and categorisations alike.

Consequently, the aim of this thesis is to examine how dominant narratives around non-heteronormative sexualities are created and maintained in asylum interview preparation for claims made on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. I investigate the role of people involved in preparing queer asylum seekers for their in-depth asylum interview, especially in the construction of these dominant tropes.

I pose the following research questions:

- What notions of queerness are constructed by different actors in the process of asylum interview preparation?

  o How do actors in this process draw on, refer to, or resist stereotypical or normative tropes around queer sexualities? In particular, how are nonhegemonic sexualities framed as identity by these actors, and how do they (re)construct LGBTQ+ categories?

  o How do they understand and interpret their practices of preparing asylum seekers for asylum interviews?

  o How does this contribute to symbolic bordering practices present in the contemporary asylum system?

Chapter 2.   Theoretical Framework

As my introduction illustrates, I aim to investigate constructions of queerness within LGBTI asylum interview preparation practices in the Netherlands.

In this chapter I discuss and review relevant sociological literature on sexual migration, asylum and the concept of bordering, theoretical work on queer sexualities and intersectionality, as well as the Dutch context and LGBT asylum in the Netherlands. I draw on a wide range of theorists in sexuality and gender studies, as well as migration and refugee research. This provides the conceptual framework for my research, as well as situating myself and explaining how I approach my research questions.

2.1   Sexual Migration

To begin addressing my research question, I draw on the theoretical field within migration studies, where the so-called 'drivers' for migration, and crossing a geographical border, are related to sexuality. 'Sexual migration' refers to:

> "international migration motivated, fully or partially, by the sexuality of those who migrate, including motivations connected to sexual desires and pleasures, the pursuit of romantic relations with foreign partners, the exploration of new self-definitions of sexual identity, the need to distance oneself from experiences of discrimination or oppression caused by sexual difference, or the search for greater sexual equality and rights." (Carrillo 2004:59)

In this field, a variety of sexual migration trajectories are researched. For example, queer tourism involves temporary movement of people, typically from rich to poorer countries (Cantú 2009). In other cases, people move to 'gay urban centres' for perceived freedom and acceptance (Carrillo 2004). Here, different expectations and pressures are placed on migrants according to ethnicity and class. For many however, migration motivated by sexuality is a matter of survival, becoming a case of forced migration.

Despite diversity within sexual migration, Epstein and Carrillo (2014) note a lack of focus on sexuality in migration scholarship more widely. Luibhéid (2002) highlights how sexuality is routinely assumed to be heterosexual, and non-heteronormative sexuality is routinely monitored and discriminated against. Heterosexuality here occupies the hegemonic position, producing social hierarchies which immigrants are pressured to conform to (Ruvalcaba

2016). The field also lacks investigation into how inclusion into a national community is based on sexual normativities, and what exclusions this produces. Assumptions around family, marriage and heterosexual reproduction tend to structure and constrain migrant lives (Manalansan IV 2006). These are issues I will address in my research.

Regimes of state governance of migration and sexuality are interlinked, whereby normativities are created and strengthened through various governmental strategies (Canaday 2003). This is tied to state interest to regulate and control movement of both bodies and identities (Beauchamp 2012). Sexual migration thus in turn shapes conceptions of 'the nation' (Beauchamp 2006). I follow researchers who investigate how queer migrations can (re)configure or question nation-states.

Luibhéid's (2008a) paper on central discoveries of queer migration scholarship emphasises contributions of this field to broader knowledge production. For instance, sexuality is constructed within intersecting dimensions of 'race'/ethnicity, class, gender, citizenship, and location. These insights are highly relevant for my purposes of investigating constructions of queerness in LGBT asylum claims. Queer migration studies also critique Eurocentric models of knowledge, which are embedded in global relations of power. This ties in with my use of 'queer' to acknowledge the situatedness of theories of sexual experiences and desires, and how these transform through circulation and exchange.

I also draw on literature about queer marginalisation producing vulnerabilities to deprivation of liberty and protection from the law (Eskridge Jr and Hunter 1997). In instances of forced migration, where inclusion into the host society becomes a matter of survival, exclusionary organising principles have a violent impact on queer migrant lives. My understanding of sexual migration aligns with Gopinath's (2005) queer feminist standpoint. She uses the concept of 'queer diaspora' as critique of 'the nation', and a challenge to heteronormativity, as well as oppressive gendered and sexual ideologies. Following Manalansan IV (2006), I combine theoretical insights from queer studies for a more nuanced and sensitive understanding of sexual migration.

Specifically, I examine what sexual migration movements mean for conceptualising sexuality. Patton and Sánchez-Eppler (2000) discuss how sexuality and sexual identity change when subjects and ideologies move across literal and figurative boundaries. Queerness and LGBTQ+ identities are affected in ways that are varied and nuanced like the cultural, social, and physical environments themselves. Luibhéid's (2004) work showcases how movements of people can both disrupt and re-create normativities and hierarchies in terms of gender and sexuality.

This is facilitated by sexual immigrants' transportation of practices, ideas, and knowledges across international borders. In Carrillo's (2004) words: "Sexuality is intimately and immediately felt, but publicly and internationally described and mediated" (2004:61). Adopting a situated discourse thus changes how sexuality is enacted and understood, both in sending and receiving countries. In **section 2.4** I will elaborate on how different constructions of sexuality shape subject realities across social, cultural, and national borders.

Especially identity narratives of sexuality can actively be employed to foster belonging across geographical borders (Fortier 2001). Queer migration might thus be experienced as 'homecoming' in cases of forced migration and displacement, as one seeks acceptance in host societies' queer spaces. However, finding this transnational belonging is contingent on openness and tolerance in receiving societies, which is often not given. Moreover, this is further complicated by exclusionary asylum procedures (Squire 2009). It is therefore important to investigate how notions of queerness are constructed in specific contexts and regulate entry into LGBTQ+ and queer communities.

Anxieties around violation of sexual and gender normativities are hereby related to state fears about un-sanctioned national border crossings (Beauchamp 2012). State interest in controlling undocumented immigration is also not independent from state governance of sexual and gender expression. Luibhéid (2008b) detects an expansion of criminalisation on both fronts in her research, as queers and migrants both threaten the way the US nation-state is imagined. Furthermore, LGBTQ+ organisations and immigrant rights groups often contribute to boundary maintenance by (re)drawing borders through exclusionary discourses (Chávez 2010). The construction and maintenance of borders through (symbolic) bordering practices is an aspect I will discuss next.

2.2 Forced Migration & Asylum

Situations of involuntary or forced migration can incite people to seek international protection. The UN 1951 'Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees' informs national asylum processes, and decrees that refugee status should be awarded to:

> "a person who owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his [*sic.*] nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, unwilling to avail himself [*sic.*] of the protection of that country" (UNHCR 2010)

National refugee policies are nonetheless situated in historical and political context, and concern moral judgements about refugee entitlements, national self-image as humanitarian, and foreign policy (Bernstein and Weiner 1999). Mobility is habitually viewed as a political concern and conceptualised as a threat to national security, economy, and 'culture' (Bigo 2002). Movement of people is therefore surveilled and analysed, determining who can move freely and who is subjected to border controls (Leese and Wittendorp 2017).

2.2.1   The Asylum Process

To make a claim for asylum one must present oneself to the authorities, typically the police, in the country itself, necessitating an illicit border crossing. After applying, one must complete an initial screening interview, followed by a longer substantive interview with the immigration department of the country's government. Following this interview, one must wait for the government to evaluate one's story and make a decision about whether or not one is granted 'leave to remain'. This process can take many months, or even years, during which time one is at the authorities' discretion, with the ever-present threat of detention or deportation (Crumlish and Bracken 2011; Liebling et al. 2014). This constitutes an intentional legal production of precarious status by the government (De Genova 2002). The uncertainty and limited possibility for personal agency has been described as "fundamental to the system's functioning, rather than an unfortunate byproduct" (Whyte 2011:21).

Central to one's asylum claim is the substantive asylum interview, where one must tell one's story and demonstrate need for international protection. Much research has uncovered that these interviews commonly involve intrusive questioning, and disclosing intimate personal details to "justify" one's claim for asylum (Schock et al. 2015). It can also mean recounting experiences of persecution and abuse, while authorities scrutinise for evidence of fabrication (Right to Remain 2017). Since many people are unprepared and do not know their rights, asylum interview themselves can be traumatic experiences.

Schock et al.'s (2015) research found that interviewers and interpreters were generally not aware of how trauma affects memory. As CSEL (2016a) has argued, the needs of the present conversation influence memory reconstruction, as it involves interpretation from the person's current understanding of the world and their place in it. Also, an asylum interview requires a coherent narrative, which may be close to impossible to produce for traumatic events (CSEL 2016b).

The concept of 'credibility' is fundamental here, as it forms the basis on which the asylum decision is made. 'Credibility' in an interview is understood first of all as clarity, consistency and level of detailed information provided (Right to Remain 2017). Furthermore, it stands for 'believability', for a chronological narrative supported by documents and letters that are 'genuine'. This standard for asylum interviews has further consequences for LGBTI asylum claims.

If already vulnerable asylum applicants are put through a legal system and consequently suffer detrimental effects to their health and psychological wellbeing, the government consistently and strategically falls short of its promises and human rights obligations (Campbell and Steel 2015). In other words, a restrictive and exclusionary asylum system can be regarded as constituting a form of state violence against people it deems 'outsiders' before recognising them as human beings (Squire 2009).

Griffiths (2012) argues that designing an asylum process that is difficult to navigate is fuelled by negative perceptions of asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are considered to pose a problem to border policing operations, habitually mistrusted and accused of manipulating the system (De Genova 2002). This is part of a wider trend of conflating asylum with immigration in general, which simultaneously positions 'regular' migration as less worthy and acceptable. Nancheva (2016) describes a rhetoric of "protection *from* asylum seekers" (2016:549), undermining state obligations of granting protection and commitment to human rights.

Luibhéid (2008a) consequently identifies asylum rhetoric as constructing a racialist, colonialist discourse that allows asylum destination countries to portray themselves as humanitarian, democratic 'saviours', despite engaging in violent border governance. Defending refugees at the expense of demonising other new arrivals also creates a dichotomy between 'deserving refugees' and 'undeserving economic migrants'. In this manner, borders are constructed and maintained, both in terms of geographical state lines and in drawing symbolic boundaries between different categories of migrants.

2.2.2   Bordering

Theories of bordering and bordering practices intend to address the social and structural background behind contemporary processes of exclusion and marginalisation. Specifically, they explain how border construction gives power to nation-states, through signifying difference (Vaughan-Williams 2009). Borders are maintained as a means of controlling migrants in the public and private sphere, rooted in assumptions about collective

identification and belonging. Borders are "historically contingent, politically charged, dynamic phenomena" (Vaughan-Williams 2009:1). They are redefined and asserted in different times and places, always acting as a barrier (Newman 2003). Thus, they serve to generate the differences that they are supposed to be an indication of (Green 2010).

Yuval-Davis (2013) conceptualises borders beyond their geographical, physical reality, as active processes. Borders are performed by various people in normalised processes in everyday encounters. Thus, for people subject to these bordering practices, the everyday becomes a site of invisible discrimination and routine violence, gaining authority through repetition. As borders are imagined between asylum seeking new arrivals and residents, they "acquire double meaning as state boundaries and symbolic social and cultural lines of inclusion and difference" (2013: 14). Here, although the physical border of the nation-state has been crossed, further borders are constructed, such as through categorisation of migrants (Puumala 2009).

For asylum seekers, borders are played out through exclusionary practices at government level. Nancheva (2016) uses bordering to explain how complicating asylum is used as a strategy of deterrence, for example through rules preventing claimants from leading an active life while their case is processed. Thus border functions are extended from merely being performed at physical borders of the nation-state, to technologies of power in everyday encounters (Walters 2006).

Bordering literature is important in drawing attention to how these processes tie into wider experiences of asylum seekers in relation to categories and exclusions (Yuval-Davis 2013). Dominant discourse around asylum seekers tends to invoke language around 'waves of immigrants' who are ascribed 'backward values' that 'threaten developed societies'. The essentialist notion of 'incompatible cultures' is also commonly referred to, avoiding direct references to racial difference (Hausbichler 2019). Nonetheless, bordering practices seek to exclude certain social groups through the construction of 'ingroups' and 'outgroups'. These processes are of course not independent from existing social stratification, and contribute to racialised 'ordering' of society (Wemyss et al. 2016).

Andersson (2016) describes how intensified border control measures are rolled out, and border crossings become increasingly criminalised in response to perceived lack of control over physical borders. Hereby, conditions of 'illegality' are created, and affect the lived realities of irregular migrants such as asylum seekers through threat of deportability and lack of legal or social protection (De Genova 2002). White (2013) explains: "The management

of migration is an inherently violent process as it is firmly yoked to the establishment of territorialized enclosures of populations, and thus biopolitical governance" (2013:39).

Consequently some scholars have turned to an 'open borders' approach to migration (Hayter 2000; Anderson et al. 2009; Fetzer 2016). White (2014) argues:

> "The solution to the geopolitical disparities organized through the nation-state form and its hierarchies of citizenship cannot be 'citizenship for all.' Rather, it must be the dissolution of borders and the dismantling of the differential rights that the categories of citizen, migrant, refugee, undocumented, and so on hold in place." (2014:985)

2.3   LGBT(Q+) Asylum

To examine how bordering plays out through constructions of queerness in asylum interview preparation, I must look at the specificities of LGBT(Q+) asylum.

Non-heteronormative sexual minorities are persecuted in many countries across the world, where expressions of queerness are criminalised, punished with a prison sentence or the death penalty (Jansen 2019). Many people feel forced to conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity in order to avoid violence in their home country (Spijkerboer 2013). Queer subjects who fear persecution from national authorities, family and wider society may subsequently make the decision to flee, resulting in reportedly thousands of LGBTQ+ asylum applications in Europe every year.

From a legal perspective, asylum for sexual orientation or gender identity falls under the 'social group' category as the basis of one's claim. One must prove "membership of a particular social group" and give sufficient evidence of "well-founded fear of persecution" (Miller 2005). Persecution must have been carried out by the government or by individuals whom the government is unable or unwilling to control (Luibhéid and Cantú 2005). Even when evidence of a country's criminalisation of queer experiences and desires is apparent, the issue of 'credibility' in asylum legislation generally does not allow for self-identification, and requires 'proof' of one's queerness (Spijkerboer 2013).

According to ILGA Europe (2016), only 10 countries world-wide accept LGBTI people as a "social group" facing persecution, with national context playing an integral role. In the Netherlands, sexual orientation as a reason for claiming asylum has been recognised since 1981, gender identity was added in 2011 (Jansen 2019). However, research by Spijkerboer

(2013) found vast discrepancies in how queer asylum claims were handled in different European countries.

It is particularly difficult claiming asylum on basis of LGBTI identity, as one is subjected to invasive questioning and asked to 'provide evidence' of one's sexuality (Carrillo 2004). Queer asylum seekers are regularly rejected despite 'evidence' and detailed testimonies. Brennan (2017) describes people receiving negative decisions "for various failings in their 'gay performance', including not being effeminate enough or not participating in an LGBT scene in their home country". Lack of specific knowledge about national LGBTQ+ laws has also been used against claimants. Moreover, national criminalisation of queer identities is not considered direct persecution unless it directly pertains to the individual's life in particular (Jansen 2019).

In claiming asylum, one must make a case for remaining in the country, which involves telling a story that is judged on its 'legitimacy'. Epps et al. (2005) explain the difficulties of having 'to pass' as the gender and sexual identity one claims, and have it considered valid by authorities. Refugee status is only granted if the claimant is accepted as both genuine and in need of asylum. Individual nation-states thus hold authority over determining the 'truthfulness' of an account, through which an asylum interview becomes a test of "truthful performance" of LGBT identity.

Epps et al. (2005) indicate the need to pass visibly and even stereotypically, involving performative acts intended to conform to identity or behaviour norms. 'Credibility' is thus performed in reference to categorisations and standards, through narrative accounts of the self that asylum interviews require (Butler 2011). The state hereby also governs sexual identity itself, though granting select migrants refugee status based on their 'credible' asylum claim and interview (Hertoghs and Schinkel 2018).

This includes one's narrative containing a storyline of sexual self-awareness, 'coming out' and subsequent persecution. The Dutch government refers to this as one's "personal, authentic story" (Government.nl 2018). It implies a linear process of self-knowledge, ending in self-acceptance, which is necessarily presumed to happen before the asylum interview. Particularly, there needs to be evidence of an 'internal struggle', as the assumption is that a hostile environment towards queerness will be internalised (Jansen 2019).

These standards rest on creation of stereotypes and normative tropes, which Olsen (2017) found in the UK and I will investigate more closely for the Dutch context. In France Kobelinsky (2012) explained how suspicion and mistrust towards asylum seekers seemed to condone posing intimate and ill-informed questions to LGBTI asylum seekers. Official

guidelines in Europe advise against this, yet this still occurs (Jansen 2014). Dauvergne and Millbank (2003) also describe how asylum interviews in Australia contribute to homophobic stereotyping. In the US, this specifically leads to displays of stereotypical 'masculinity' by gay male applicants being punished and claims being rejected (Hanna 2005).

2.3.1   Criticisms

Consequently, there has been extensive criticism of the current framework for assessing 'credibility' in LGBTI asylum interviews. 'Proving' queerness is arguably problematic from the onset, not least because many queer asylum seekers will have spent years prior to their claim hiding their sexual desires (Brennan 2018). Moreover, it re-asserts heterosexual and cisgender as normal, by requiring only queer applicants to justify their sexuality (Spijkerboer 2017).

Furthermore, rhetoric and practice of asylum gives legitimacy only to certain expressions of sexuality, accepting and reproducing only a narrow set of LGBTQ+ identities (Miller 2005). Hertoghs and Schinkel (2018) found: "it is the homosexual male that constantly comes to represent the group" (2018:696). White (2013) also condemns the reification of stable sex-gender categories and the collapsing of sex into gender. There is no 'Q' included in the acronym used by asylum legislation, as 'queer' is not regarded as conforming to conventional sexual norms, and consequently rendered non-existent. For an asylum claim to be accepted, one must prove that queerness is an 'immutable' aspect of selfhood, re-inscribing essentialist notions of 'gay' identity (Luibhéid and Cantú 2005). This fixes the fluidity of sexuality, creating identities to fit legal standards in the name of granting protection.

Kuntsman (2009) discusses how demonstrating belonging to an accepted LGBTI category is performed through violence, as it necessitates rejecting parts of oneself and constructing sexuality as one's primary identifier. This is rooted in historically specific development of the concept of international protection, whereby systems of law function to create individual sense of self through depicting experiences as individualised (Halley 2013). The international asylum system rewards a recognisable, transnational, often 'gay', identity, where sexuality is understood as innate, fundamental and unchanging (Miller 2005).

Berg and Millbank (2009) indicate how the model of 'homosexual identity development' underlying asylum decisions is based on white middle-class cis men. Carrillo (2004) further argues that these processes are led by problematic 'Western' assumptions about

homosexuality, disregarding complexity of sexuality and its cultural construction. Brennan (2016) writes: "there is an embedded assumption not only of the universality of sexual categories and experience of persecution, but that both may be immediately recognizable and understandable universally" (2016:78).

Spijkerboer (2013) revealed that asylum decisions across Europe are frequently based on prejudice and misunderstandings of social, cultural and legal systems form various national contexts. Murray (2014) also found them to be based on conceptions of sexuality that are historically and socio-politically situated, privileging very specifically gendered, raced and classed subjects. In other words, the international nature of asylum does not make it a balanced and culturally sensitive system. The geopolitical asylum framework encourages a discourse around who is 'worthy' of claiming rights, while framing receiving nations as 'good' and countries of origin as unambiguously 'bad' (Miller 2005).

This rhetoric draws on homonationalism, which I will discuss in depth in **chapter 2.5** when discussing the Dutch context. Here, 'autonomous', 'self-realised' individuals are positioned against 'backward', 'unliberated' queers, who are usually conceived of as communities of colour (Luibhéid 2008a). Rahman (2014) poignantly states: "receiving asylum requires painting one's country in racialist, colonialist terms", thus maintaining violence against one's own community across national borders.

Importantly, queer asylum it is not independent from modern regulation of movement of people (Miller 2005). In academic literature as well as popular rhetoric, hostile dispositions towards asylum seekers stem form fears of 'fraudulent claims', which is explicitly referenced by the Dutch State Secretary (Government.nl 2018). This discourse is strategically used to make sexual desires and "lifestyles" subject to state scrutiny, interrogation and control (Epps et al. 2005). Brennan (2016) concludes:

> "[R]efugee status [is] necessarily and by nature exclusionary. Working to expand the definition of a refugee, expand our definition of who fits in the categories of "LGBT," still reproduces the hierarchies inherent in this system. Such limited reform still has us sorting piles of the worthy and unworthy, the "morally legitimate" and illegitimate, and credible and the frauds." (2016: 78)

2.4   Constructions of Sexuality

As Hertoghs and Schinkel (2018) explained, LGBTI asylum relies on certain constructions of sexuality in asylum interviews. In this section I discuss existing literature on theorising non-heterosexual sexuality.

First however, I would like to pause on terminology. My main objective is to investigate how certain situated narratives and normative tropes of sexuality are constructed and maintained. I therefore use queer theory, specifically the terminology of 'queer', as a starting point, in order to situate and contextualise discourses around non-heteronormative sexualities. I utilise queer theory to question normalised ways of knowing and being and challenge essentialised or binary notions of sexuality and gender.

To develop my theoretical framework further, I must also draw on literature about 'non-Western' sexualities and intersectional thinking. Although the origin of organised and officially sanctioned narratives of sexuality as identity can be traced back to 'Western' scholarship and the discipline of sexology, queerness cannot be claimed as a 'Western' invention. The creation of norms and different kinds of normativity is situated, yet LGBTQ+ identity categories are now used by organisations, communities and individuals worldwide. However, certain tropes around non-heterosexual or non-cisgender subjects are still overwhelmingly determined by white institutions and organisations in the 'West'.

2.4.1   Queer Theory

To theorise discourse production around non-heteronormative sexualities in rhetoric related to the asylum system, I draw on the body of literature around queer theory. De Lauretis (1991) first used the term in an academic work, but has since abandoned it stating that it no longer represents what she intended. Queer theory has subsequently been called a "discipline that refuses to be disciplined", with different queer theorists not sharing much common ground (Sullivan 2003). Thus, instead of attempting to define what queer theories *are*, the question is more what queer theories *do*, how they function, and what effects they have on knowledge and understanding.

Resistance/Challenge

Ruvalcaba (2016) understands queerness as "understanding politics of the body" (2016:2), destabilising and troubling what is considered 'normal', 'natural' or 'legitimate' regarding bodies, sex and gender. Browne (2009) defines queer theory as examining the creation of these normativities. Hereby, queerness becomes a demand for recognition of non-heterosexual, non-cisgender people who fall outside the labels of 'gay' and 'lesbian' and have traditionally been marginalised as deviant and mis- or underrepresented.

Butler (1990) and Wittig (1980) conceptualised heterosexuality as a 'matrix' of normalised discourses, identities and institutions. Berlant and Warner (1998) subsequently coined the term 'heteronormativity' as a hegemonic organising principle of unequal social relations. This also produced what Rich (1980) termed 'compulsory heterosexuality' that rewards conformity and demonises difference. People who fall outside this privileged and state-sanctioned existence have, been labelled 'homosexual' or categorised through the LGBTQ+ acronym that refers to 'identity'. This gave rise to what Duggan (2003) defines as homonormativity, when queer subjects do not challenge heteronormative institutions but contribute to their maintenance. Sullivan (2003) thus establishes a central dimension of queer theories as contesting essentialised identities and identity-based politics

In attempting to resist normative conceptualisations of non-heterosexual people, Gopinath (2005) uses "'queer' to refer to a range of dissident and non-heteronormative practices and desires that may be incommensurate with identity categories of 'gay' and 'lesbian'" (2005:11). Thinking beyond these categories requires acknowledgement that theorising about sexuality has been promoted primarily by lesbian and gay voices, shaping dominant understandings of what non-heteronormative sexuality means. Ruvalcaba (2016) aims to deconstruct 'identity', to undermine its borders and exclusionary nature.

Queerness has sometimes been regarded as a form as resistance to regulation of sexuality and gender expression. Sedgewick (1990) famously challenged binary oppositions of heterosexuality with homosexuality, positioning queer theory as a deconstruction of essences, oppositions and dichotomies. Furthermore, an aspect of much 'Western' theorising of sexuality that queer theories take issue with is the underlying assumption of gender as binary and stable. Here, Butler's (1990) ground-breaking work on 'gender trouble' deconstructs 'male' and 'female' as a dichotomy. She also challenges the association with certain bodies and structural violence that enforces conformity to one's gender assigned at birth (Butler 1993).

For me, queer theory informs terminology I use to refer to experiences of sexuality and gender that are not heterosexual and cisgender, and subsequently 'othered'. I understand

queer to mean this radical questioning of social and cultural norms and normativities. This involves repeatedly posing the question of who occupies a position to define, and who benefits from, certain constructions of categories, including 'queer' itself.

Situatedness of understanding

This brings me to another dimension of queer theory I draw on in this thesis, namely, how conceptualisations are situated in social, political, cultural, and historical context. Foucault (1976) initially imagined sexuality as a 'discursive construct', which takes culturally and historically specific forms. In my case, the history of 'Western' academic thought situates the way queerness is thought about today, most notably the medical and psychological research of 'sexology'. In the 90s, queer theory and activism sought to challenge medicalised discourses and include bodies and experiences not conforming to neat identity categories (Sullivan 2003).

This also pertains to the notion of 'the individual' as socially constructed. Instead of regarding relations between actions, desires, and gestures as stemming from someone's 'core identity', Butler (1990) introduced the notion of 'performativity', which is useful for my investigation of asylum interviews, where narratives of queerness are performed for the purpose of obtaining protection.

I use the term 'queer' in my research to signify awareness of this situatedness. I employ 'queerness' to distance myself from the language employed within narratives of asylum, as found in asylum interviews, interview preparation and by various actors in the process. Thus, the existence of these arguably limited imaginaries of queer experiences and desires, may be contextualised and disentangled from their self-image as universal and inclusive.

Assimilation vs liberation

Situated ways of being and knowing give rise to a variety of strategies and approaches towards political activism. In the English-speaking 'West', one of the arguably most significant conceptual shifts over time has been the goal of assimilation being challenged by liberation movements (Sullivan 2003). 'Assimilation' calls for acceptance into mainstream culture and the same human rights awarded to heterosexuals by challenging the 'othering' narratives that emphasised deviance (Stein 2004). Ruvalcaba (2016) argues that much contemporary LGBTI activism still aims for inclusion of marginalised, disenfranchised groups into citizenship. This however leads to imposition of homonormativity, reproduction

of traditional gender roles and sexual dynamics. Thus, 'liberation' aimed to create alternatives to heteronormative society, for example through 'coming out' as a strategy to demand visibility and disrupt heteronormative conformity Stein (2004).

Queer activism takes this step further by contesting assumptions of unambiguous identity that these movements relied on and critiquing the ascension into state-sanctioned structures and legal protection of privileged queer subjects at the cost of others (Posocco et al. 2014). Tokenistic inclusion into liberal regimes of representation and rights is recognised as complicit in capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism. The production of a 'necropolitics' of death and disposability, draws a dividing line between those queer bodies deemed 'able' and 'desirable' to contribute to a nation-state's project, with those deemed unproductive consequently worthless (Ahuja 2015). This occurs strongly along racial and ableist lines, as I will elaborate on in subsequent sections.

The word 'queer', here, is utilised as an attitude, an approach to politics. I see transformative potential of a queer lens to resist assimilation into oppressive structures. Queerness strives to encompass an awareness of racism, classism, ableism, and ageism. However, within disagreements and divergences in the field, this potential is not always realised. Queer theory of course also includes assumptions and marginalisations, and is itself critiqued on grounds of being racist, classist, ableist, which I will also discuss below.

Furthermore, different understandings of sexuality giving rise to different political approaches pertains to my research as the actors I interview understand queerness in situated ways, which undoubtedly influences their work with queer asylum seekers. It may also inform their attitude toward the asylum framework at large and how they conceive of their role and practices in it.

2.4.2 'Non-Western' Sexualities

If queerness and non-heteronormative sexualities are understood and experienced in place-specific ways, questions arise regarding attributions of certain understanding to 'the West'. In the field of migration studies, questions of 'sexual globalisation' address the movement and exchange of bodies and discourses (Carrillo 2004). 'Queer globalisations' address commonalities in expression of queer experiences as identities across numerous social, political, and cultural contexts, and are not exempt from forms of power that accompany globalisation generally (Cruz-Malavé and Manalansan 2002).

In Massad's (2002) influential work on the 'gay international', he argues that internalisation of a 'Western' project of modernity and progress has occurred in the 'Arab world', which has led to a transformation of all same-sex contact into subjects identifying as 'homosexual' or 'gay', erasing subjectivities and sexualities that are organised differently. Massad (2002) understands this as part of a hegemonic projects which is underpinned by exporting ideas and concepts, including conceptualisation of sexuality and gender. Here, origins of queerness are located in the English-speaking 'West', and location of agency is simultaneously placed here (Jackson 2009).

Globalising and universalising ways of thinking about queerness are also evidenced in international human rights law, defining right to recognition before the law of one's self-defined sexual orientation and gender identity (Gross 2007). Massad (2002) indicates how U.S. and European human rights organizations and NGOs contribute to the concept of the 'gay international'. Katyal (2002) also critiques global civil rights movements for uncritical imposition of 'gay'/'lesbian' identities with assumptions that these are universally applicable.

Claiming a 'sexual identity' can become framed as synonymous with rejecting one's cultural heritage and tradition (Katyal 2002). Massad (2002) subsequently questions whether 'Western' discourses about homosexuality are applicable to 'non-Western' societies. While gay civil rights movements give importance to politicisation and visibility of sexual identity, there exist differences in meaning attached to queer experiences and behaviours, whereby sexuality is not necessarily a central aspect of personhood. Tacit understanding', through strategic self-presentation, are more prominent than verbal declarations in certain communities, yet they are often displayed as internalising homophobia (Decena 2008). This results in exclusions, from either one's local community or 'Western' standards of queerness. In this sense, a global LGBTQ+ movement may be regarded as being directed by 'Western' interests.

This is central to stereotypical narrative of gays 'needing saving' by white US or European (Schmitt 2003). Hereby a conflation of liberating and colonial intentions serves to reinforce dichotomies between white empowered individuals and passive racialised 'others' (Vidal-Ortiz 2019). Epstein and Gillet (2017) describe how reclaiming gay and lesbian history as part of national history in many 'Western' countries has affected how sexuality is understood in relation to nation-states. Countries in the rest of the world are consequently constructed as 'backward', in line with colonialist logic and imaginaries (Said 2003).

This constructed dichotomy also carries an implied hierarchy. It simplistically divides the world into West/non-West, which is associated with modern/premodern divisions (Schmitt 2003). Furthermore, this positions 'non-Western' contexts in a reactive position towards the 'West', depicting them as void of a coherent queer movements or 'proper' political mobilisation (Amer 2010). Savcı (2016) indicates that awareness of what counts as legitimately political, or what constitutes 'proper' politics, is informed by hierarchies that are classed and racialised. Therefore, 'translating' a concept such as queerness, and applying it to different contexts means dealing with situated challenges (Ruvalcaba 2016).

Moreover, difficulties with attempting to ascribe 'queerness' to 'Western thought' is that 'the West' is not a uniform entity that has always existed and where each person identically understands their sexuality. Non-heteronormative sexualities have been conceptualised very differently in various points in 'Western' history (Schmitt 2003). Gross (2007) thus defends queerness as not inherently 'Western' or 'non-Western'. Narrow definitions and generalisations across contexts are thus problematic, since they do not consider internal variations and divergencies (Amer 2010).

Queer BPOC movements in 'Western' countries have highlighted how there is often a conflation of 'race'/ethnicity and certain ways of thinking and being. In the case of queerness, BPOC communities are habitually assumed to either 'integrate' into 'Western' categories of sexuality, or otherwise are demonised as presenting a 'threat' to 'Western values'. This ignores the alienation that white queer groups produce when they lack intersectional solidarity.

Therefore, perhaps instead of drawing simplistic divisions between 'Western' and 'non-Western' understandings, an awareness of multi-faceted contextual differences in the articulation and understanding of non-heteronormative sexual experiences and desires is needed (Katyal 2002). There also ought to be awareness of local knowledges that problematise modern 'Western' sex-gender systems, to decolonise issues and practices of sexuality, gender and uses of bodies (Ruvalcaba 2016).

2.4.3   Beyond Queer Theory

Consequently, to interpret my research findings, I need to look beyond dominant Euro-American discourse and understand experiences of non-heteronormative sexuality that fall outside typical categorisations and the hegemonic framework of 'identity'. The potential of queer theory, Ruvalcaba (2016) has argued, lies in its promise of critiquing normative

conceptions. Its ability to situate narratives that are presented as universal remains a strong point of the theory. It allows recognition of historical, social, political conditions that give rise to particular actions and identities as available and desirable (Luibhéid 2005).

However, there have also been criticisms indicating important shortcomings of queer theory. Mostly, they point to exclusions embedded within existing literature. For example, ignoring internal differences produces what Anzaldúa (1991) has called a "false unifying umbrella" (1991:250). For, this indicates notions of a 'queer community' that are informed by assumptions of commonality, such as imagined shared social positionality or politics (Sullivan 2003). Yet taking into account imposed geographical and symbolic borders, no such homogenous queer community exists (Malagreca 2009). Queer theory can hereby negate internal differences, political divisions and most importantly, the privilege of some queers (Cohen 1997).

Additionally, there has been indication of inadequate incorporation of trans voices and issues. Transness is often conceptualised as radical anti-binary subversion, but questioning gender has not as readily been extended to people who feel comfortable in the gender they were assigned at birth (Benavente and Gill-Peterson 2019). However, cisgender experiences can be complicit in securing stable, normative sexuality categories, since they depend on stable, binary gender categories. Stryker (2004) argues that this particular figuration of transness is severely limited in its ability to account for experiences of gender non-conformity on a global scale. Thus, the full potential of queerness in gender is not realised in much queer theorising.

Moreover, Namaste (2000) has argued that while queer movements significantly build on black trans and trans of colour activism, it ultimately does not fight for the lives of its BPOC trans members. This occurs through unhelpful abstraction of trans experiences from their material livelihoods and experienced violence. An unreflective queer framework of this nature might thus actually support systems of inequality and violence.

Luibhéid (2008a) also highlights queer complicities with neoliberalism and capitalism, which upholds hegemonic nationalism and thus, heteronormativity. Furthermore, it creates the illusion of an inclusive community, when in fact membership is contested and exclusive, governed by who has defining power. There are evident parallels here with definitions of 'credible' and 'authentic' queerness in asylum claims, as I have outlined above.

In the myriad of interpretations that queer theory has left us with, Seidman (1994) warns that the equation of 'queer' with 'resistance' is a false and lazy trap many theorists fall into. He

calls for queer theory to develop and make explicit its goals, beyond merely demonising traditional lesbian and gay assimilationist movements as conservative and prescriptive.

2.4.4   Intersectionality

Queer theory has also been criticised for its uninterrupted affiliation with 'Western' scholarship, and attempts at self-awareness within the field have not been consistent. Ruvalcaba (2016) emphasises that 'queer' itself is contextually located and could be enriched through intersectional perspectives. There is often not much room for cultural nuance or contextual enactments of sexuality, and it often requires sexuality to be one's primary identifier. Considering that canonical voices developing queer theory were white middle class lesbian and gay academics, some have argued that the limitations of queer theory are in-built (Vidal-Ortiz 2019). It has been accused of race-blindness and lack of interrogation of its own Euro-American orientation, as well as resulting exclusions from the academic field (Allen 2012).

In Cohen's (1997) critique, she also proposed a re-introduction of intersectional thinking into queer theory. Although rooted in identity politics that queer theory widely rejects, intersectionality encourages awareness of oppression beyond the singular lens of sexuality. In developing intersectionality, Mohanty (1988), hooks (1989), and Crenshaw (1991) all famously highlighted the lived realities of experiencing different forms of oppression. Intersectionality allows people to be understood and respected in their multiple, simultaneous subject positions. This means acknowledging that not every queer person is situated in the same way, but that radical solidarity against oppression is nonetheless vital.

However, in a social world where identities are often violently imposed, queer theorists have criticised identity politics for supposedly being complicit in strengthening the structures it aims to contest (Sullivan 2003). Nonetheless, the ability to selectively engage with intersectionality as a way of being more inclusive or open-minded might give an indication of privilege in white queer communities, since for others, intersectionality is an embodied lived-experience that cannot be selectively taken up. Sexuality is always raced, and thinking through sexuality is automatically bound up with 'race', gender, class, and all other aspects of social existence (Cohen 1997).

Queer theory also has a history of undermining the platform of identity politics arguing for social justice for marginalised groups, in the name of developing academic theory (Browne 2009). Allen (2012) argues that queer theory has not produced the transformative politics

that are needed. An intersectional framework could help move away from implicitly racist sexuality movements and heteronormative BPOC organising, to challenge legacies of imperialism and slavery (Luibhéid 2008a). This framework must include queer of colour voices to enable an analysis of intersecting dimensions of inequality such as gender, 'race' and class, as well as their structural embeddedness in society (Ahmed 2006).

Gopinath (2005) argues that "'queerness' also needs 'diaspora' in order to make it more open to questions of race, colonialism, migration, and globalization" (2005:11). As Eng (2011) elaborates, sexual politics, 'race', migration, globalisation, and postcolonialism thus need to be thought together. For, conditions of geographical mobility produce new experiences and understandings of sexuality and gender identity, tied to experiences of marginalisation and displacement (Wesling 2008). 'Queer diaspora' thus embodies a call for transnational, intersectional LGBTQ+ solidarity in the face of violence experienced in similar ways across the globe, to find common ground in the estrangement felt to the cisgender, heterosexual majority (Fortier 2002).

Despite ethnocentrism of queer theory, many contemporary grassroots movements claim the word 'queer'. I have witnessed continued use of the term as a 'category of practice', to borrow from Brubaker and Cooper (2000). Here, the use of 'queer' is still intended to challenge the widespread LGBTQ+ framework, an acronym to which new identities are added over time. There are arguably parallels with this piecemeal inclusion of some marginalised identities into dominant terminology, and the tokenistic assimilation of identities into state protection and the civil rights framework (Posocco et al. 2014).

It is used for example by BPOC communities precisely to situate the widely represented, white, Euro-American experiences of non-heteronormative sexualities and desires. Maruf, Sehaq and Black Queer and Trans Resistance in the Netherlands, Queer Base in Austria, and Unity and Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants in the UK, all draw on queer terminology. They recognise the need to establish a language that works for their experiences, situated outside the white dominant discourse. Therefore, their use of 'queer' constitutes a refusal of structures with are racially oppressive, patriarchal, capitalist, ableist.

Thus, I see activist organisation and community-based resistance movements as an important site of knowledge production and critical thought around queerness. Consequently, for me, this means that queer theory must be aware of its own situatedness and exclusions that the 'queer canon' has generated. In every movement there are voices that are marginalised, and

queer theory is no exception, in spite of its efforts to account for sexual desires and experiences across the globe (Cohen 1997).

2.5   Dutch LGBTI Asylum

Spijkerboer's (2013) previous research uncovered vast differences between EU member states in terms of their handling of queer asylum seekers. In my research, I am particularly examining terminology and imaginary around queerness employed in the Dutch context. According to VluchtelingenWerk Nederland and ECRE's (2019) country profile for the Netherlands, the State Secretary acknowledged "LGBT persons" as a "group of higher concern". New national working guidelines issued in July 2018 decree that the following must be particularly considered:

> "the private life of the asylum seeker; his/her [*sic.*] current and previous relationships
> and contacts with LGBT communities in the country of origin and in the Netherlands;
> discrimination, repression and persecution in the country of origin" (Jansen 2019).

The IND (Immigratie- en Naturalisatiedienst), who manages the Dutch asylum system, and the Dutch government use either 'LGBT'/'LGBTI' or 'on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity' when referring to queer asylum cases in official documents and media correspondence (Government.nl 2017, 2018; IND 2017, 2019). Hertoghs and Schinkel (2018) research also found Dutch asylum procedure to be rooted in ideas of sexuality as a "fixed, invisible but ever-present identity" (2018:691). It is these constructions of queer sexuality that I investigate in my research.

2.5.1   Homonationalism

The issue of LGBT(I) asylum is located somewhere in between migrant-receiving nation-states traditionally framing non-heteronormative sexualities as problems, and more recent homonationalist discourses (Epps et al. 2005). The Netherlands especially prides itself in being renowned for LGBTQ+ rights, having also been the first country to grant asylum to a queer applicant in 1981 (Spijkerboer 2013). High-profile LGBTQ+ figures such as activists and politicians have since sought asylum in the Netherlands specifically due to its international reputation to be a 'safe haven' for queer people (Lavers 2018; Dehghan 2019).

Thus, Mepschen et al. (2010) have also identified the Netherlands as an important example of European homonationalism. Brennan (2018) outlines how Dutch political figures have made LGBTQ+ politics seemingly compatible with anti-immigrant rhetoric. Especially politician Pim Fortuyn furthered a discourse of 'saving gays' from 'backward' cultures. In the contemporary context of resurging xenophobia and populist nationalism, LGBTQ+ rights are hailed as a 'national value' under 'foreign threat' (Brennan 2016).

I here draw on literature by Puar (2013), who defines homonationalism as an ideology of 'Western' nations, characterised by a self-image as protectors of 'diversity', 'tolerance' and 'freedom' by constructing other regions as oppressive. This constitutes selective support of LGBTQ+ rights by a state to racially or culturally other certain groups (Puar 2017). Sexual diversity is claimed as an exclusive feature of 'Western' society and LGBTQ+ rights constructed as indicators of 'enlightened' society (Colpani and Habed 2014). This results in partial inclusion into the nation state of some queers at the expense of others, reinforcing racial and cultural hierarchies.

Mepschen (2016) argues that "sexual democracy and sexual liberty have become intimately tied up with secularity and 'modern' Dutchness" (2016:151). Debates on LGBTQ+ emancipation are thus employed to portray certain cultures as 'non-modern', creating a binary framing of 'modernity' against 'tradition' (Rahman 2014). Tolerance of non-heteronormative sexualities becomes part of a narrative of development towards modernity (Eng 2011).

Shield (2017) traced the inclusion of federal protection for LGBTQ+ people into nationalist rhetoric, thereby becoming compatible with right-wing, anti-immigrant ideologies. In the Dutch context, it is primarily used as a political strategy and socially divisive tool by right-wing politicians. The concept of 'culture' here, is presented as a homogenous entity, allowing 'problems' to be located exclusively outside one's own (Okin 1999). These supposed essentialised differences are violently mobilised and racialised, minorities presented as 'problems' of cultural integration (Lentin and Titley 2011; Modood 2013). Røthing and Svendsen (2011) outline how this gives rise to discourse where new arrivals are considered in need of 'education' in 'national values'.

Especially in rhetoric around asylum, 'Western' nation-states such as the Netherlands present themselves as 'rescuers' of victimised women and queer subjects (Bracke 2012). Here, queer asylum seekers become intrinsically tied to their 'culture', which is regarded as the 'perpetrator' (Brennan 2016). This international reputation is frequently then used to gain

moral and political authority, helping justify nationalist, imperialist violence abroad (Puar 2013).

However, as Puar's (2017) conception of homonationalism indicates, this racist and nationalist rhetoric is also routinely taken up by queer people and activists. While recognising their own exclusion from heteronormative national imaginaries, queer subjects can also reinforce homonational ideology (White 2013). Despite a Dutch 'gay subculture' having been given space to develop, heterosexuality is nonetheless normative and queer issues become depoliticised (Duyvendak 1996). Haritaworn (2012) explains how this allows for complicities with racism and nationalist exclusions, and systematic targeting especially gender-nonconforming people of colour.

In the Netherlands, particularly queer Muslims are discriminated against (Mepschen 2016). The 'homo-emancipation' policy, for example, specifically targets and demonises Muslim organisations (Jivraj and De Jong 2011). Queer Muslims hereby thus silenced in order to further homonationalist agendas, upholding created dichotomies between Islam and LGBTQ+ tolerance (El-Tayeb 2012).

Homonationalist discourse also makes false links between tolerance of queer communities and a supposed history of democracy in 'Western' society, when advances in terms of LGBTQ+ rights and protections are actually recent (Rahman 2014). Wekker (2009) elaborates on 'homonostalgia' in the Dutch context, where LGBT acceptance is imagined as always having been part of Dutch national identity. Yet, in the women's and 'gay civil rights' of the 1960s-80s, fight for liberation was oriented towards churches, the police, or medical establishments, rather than towards other (racialised) minorities (Shield 2017).

Moreover, colonial legislation, especially British imperial law, imposed legal codes prohibiting homosexuality in many asylum seekers' origin countries (Puar 2002). Wekker (2006) also describes how Dutch colonial histories plays into discourses around sexuality today, as legacies of colonialism are mapped on to racialised bodies. Gopinath (2005) explains: "Discourses of sexuality are inextricable from prior and continuing histories of colonialism, nationalism, racism, and migration" (2005:3).

However, Europe is still frequently portrayed as 'raceless' and 'colour-blind' (El-Tayeb 2011). Essed and Trienekens (2008) discuss how instead of conventionally recognised, biologically-rooted racist discourses, discourse revolves around ethnicity and national identity, or religion and 'culture'. The concept of 'culture' creates the same racialised and essentialised taxonomies of difference, while simultaneously depoliticising anti-racism (Lentin 2005). Wekker (2016) thus argues that racism is part of the Dutch 'cultural archive',

evidenced in one-sided notions of 'integration' and supposedly uniform 'Dutch values'. Rhetoric of 'Dutch exceptionalism', to which academic knowledge production often contributes, further institutionally embeds racism in the Netherlands (Özdil 2014).

2.5.2   What this means for Queerness and Asylum

Thus, sexual freedom is considered an integral part of 'Dutch culture' and society. However, "while the Dutch may have fluid sexualities, they require asylum seekers to conform to narrow definitions of sexual categories to be 'credible'" (Brennan 2018:30). Hertoghs and Schinkel (2018) found sexuality "operationalised" for purposes of asylum assessment, driven by political motivations "concern[ing] entry into or expulsion from the nation-state" (2018:695). Consequently, queerness in asylum applications is surveilled and policed, just as claimants themselves are. In my research, I aim to test whether asylum interview preparation also contributes to this boundary control around non-heteronormative sexuality categories.

White's (2013) research found that positive image of countries in terms of LGBT acceptance exempts them from criticism for violent and excluding legal regimes, such as asylum. Despite Dutch homonationalist claims of openness and tolerance, refugee expectations of rights and freedom are frequently dashed as they are met with exclusions and isolation (van der Pijl et al. 2018). Many face discrimination both from people fleeing the same country for different reasons, and from government officials, police, and wider society. Especially transgender migrants and refugees are subjected to widespread abuse, violence, sexual harassment.

Homonationalist discourses thus have an impact on border policies, particularly disciplining immigrants in their expression and to an extent, understanding, of sexuality (Luibhéid 2005). This subsequently also becomes a way to discipline presumed 'culture' and 'race', in conflation of 'culture' with "hegemonic community sexual norms" (Luibhéid 2004:230). In this manner, states reproduce racist exclusions, as Goldberg and Solomos (2002) explain: "modern states are intimately involved in the reproduction of national identity, the national population, labour, and security in and through the articulation of race, gender, and class" (2002:235).

Hage (2000) also elaborates on how modern nation states in the 'global West' are imagined as white, functioning in the interests of white people. Asylum seekers are othered as whiteness is positioned as the norm, and divisions are imagined, created and reinforced

between citizens and new arrivals. Although seeking asylum should fall outside state immigration regulation, state concerns with racial self-definition seek to govern racially othered asylum applicants. Racism is thus at the heart of the asylum process, via selective inclusion of only those queer asylum applicants framed as 'loyal' to the nation (Haritaworn 2012).

2.6   My Thesis

However, the deep-seated position of these discourses in asylum is not only due to their dominance in 'Western' rhetoric, but tied to the nature of contemporary asylum systems and their exclusionary function (Squire 2009). This is rooted in conceptions of the 'West' as morally superior to 'refugee sending countries', regarding the external border of Europe as the threshold to freedom and human rights, for people fleeing conflict, poverty, and disaster (Andersson 2014). The asylum system hereby 'threatens' the success of managed migration, as countries are obliged to offer protection to those fleeing persecution. Fears around irregular migration and inability to control borders lead to heightened policing and stricter border regimes, imposing the concept of 'illegality' on certain subjects (Anderson 2013). Normativities and narrow conceptions of sexuality immigration policy disproportionately produces undocumented queer people (Luibhéid 2008b).

Here, borders are "both real and imagined", manifested as geographical realities and routine practices of exclusion, demarcating access to protection and support (Vidal-Ortiz 2019). Bordering literature here connects to how construction of narrow definitions of queerness are part of wider symbolic bordering practices. White (2013) summarises succinctly:

> "For anyone who has crossed 'borders' of sexual, sexed and gendered intelligibility, the crossing of other territorialized borders only intensifies those experiences of potential social abjection, unevenly and in tandem with other dynamic registers of social difference." (2013:39)

With this theoretical context in mind, I aim to explore what notions of queerness are constructed by different actors in asylum interview preparation in the Netherlands. To situate accounts, I need to look closely at tropes around sexuality embedded in the Dutch asylum process. As I have discussed, the framework of asylum can be regarded as almost neo-colonial in its saviour narratives and constringent criteria for granting a positive asylum

decision. I am interested in how this ties into state control of sexuality as well as state control of immigration.

Miller (2005) indicates that it can be necessary for people working within the system to exploit the contemporary system to favour asylum claimants. I anticipate this playing out in the accounts of various actors in asylum interview preparation, as they engage in advocacy and support within a framework that they may not support on an ideological level. Stemming from the importance of being granted asylum in a system that claims to guarantee protection, yet in reality has a gate-keeping function and governs freedom of movement, professional practices must navigate this balance for those they are supporting. However, I also foresee tensions existing between reproducing what will successfully obtain refugee-status papers, and appropriately reflecting complexity of people's sexual realities.

In this, certain conceptions of queer sexualities are more readily recognised, favoured, or even unconsciously reinforced. I will examine how these normative tropes and situated constructions come about in asylum interview preparation practices, as well as how they contribute to symbolic bordering practices present in the contemporary asylum system.

Chapter 3. Methodological Framework

As outlined, this thesis aims to investigate the construction of notions of queerness in Dutch LGBTI asylum interview preparation. To comprehensively explore this, my research primarily involved interviews with lawyers, support workers, and 'evidence' letter-writers engaged in interview preparation practices. In this chapter I outline the underlying methodological framework for my project, demonstrating the quality and ethical responsibility of the research and illustrating methods I employed to examine my research questions.

3.1 Methodology

This research is based in feminist epistemology, led by awareness of social structures and corresponding power dynamics (Reinharz and Shulami 1992). Perspectives are recognised as situated within these power structures, along lines of social inequality such as gender, sexuality, 'race'/ethnicity (Haraway 1988). This is informed by a sociological approach, seeking to understand structural frameworks behind social occurrences (Mason 2018). My research examines interpretations of social processes, grounded in an ontological understanding that knowledge is a human and social construction, based on experience and emerging through discourse (Elliot et al. 2016).

Qualitative data was gathered, as this research is interested in construction of meanings and inductively allowing insight into people's own understanding. I conducted an in-depth exploration into people's conceptualisations and experiences of queerness in asylum interview preparation practices, as well as implications of associated meanings. To best address my research questions and enquire how certain constructions occur, this meant qualitatively enquiring how actors engaged in asylum interview preparation to understand their practices and make sense of the narration of queer sexualities.

3.2 Research Design & Methods

My research is informed by (ethnographic-style) observations in a community group for undocumented queer migrants. I have been volunteering at a day-centre for undocumented people in Amsterdam since the beginning of 2019, most of whom have had asylum claims

rejected and many consider themselves LGBTQ+, and now live here without papers or official legal status. My research interests stem from informal discussions and observations with this group. They are arguably most invested in contextually situated constructions of queerness as they occur in asylum interviews, and have very tangible and immediate interests in understanding how narrations of 'credible' accounts of nonhegemonic sexuality are imagined. However, my interactions with this group merely situate my research, they do not constitute data in and of themselves, since I did not obtain their informed consent, and relationships I established were not one of researcher-researched.

Furthermore, particularly queer asylum seekers constitute an over-researched group, following Clark's (2008) guidelines. The strain on someone's time and energy arguably outweigh experienced change resulting from academic research, leading to apathy towards engagement with researchers, so-called 'research fatigue'. Additionally, there are complex ethics required for such a project, such as responsibly building rapport and trust, guaranteeing safety and confidentiality, and appropriately leaving the field without being able to promise improvement of someone's situation. This would have exceeded time and resource limitations placed on Masters' research. For these reasons I did not formulate my research questions in a manner requiring asylum seekers as main informants.

I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews with various actors involved in asylum interview preparation for sexual orientation or gender identity claims. Interviews are appropriate since their focus lies on interpretation of and meaning given to experiences and social phenomena (May 2011). 12 constitutes an adequate number for my purposes, according to Baker and Edwards (2012). Main areas of inquiry were predetermined, but I allowed for interviewees to expand on them from their own viewpoint, making this research inductive. Data is created, rather than collected, allowing the research to be shaped by participants, making interviews suitable for exploring people's views in depth (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). However, a shortcoming may lie in potential social desirability bias in interview accounts.

I interviewed 5 people working as lawyers/legal support, 3 support workers in community-based and advocacy organisations, 2 letter-writers, and 2 people who carried out support work as well as writing 'evidence'-letters. The situated knowledges of these people are essential for addressing my research questions, through their role in the maintenance of 'Western' tropes around queerness. My interest lies also in how they navigate their practices within structural frameworks, with reference to their political values, particularly tensions of working within a system and taking political action to help certain people who are discriminated against in that system, while simultaneously possibly supporting an imaginary

beyond that system on an ideological level. Differences in experience and background will inform their socially mediated constructions of reality (Gluck and Patai 1991).

After completion of this research, I will communicate my findings back to the support workers who requested this, and hear their feedback and interpretation. This will be done to strengthen societal relevance and value of my research and share knowledge gained with those who could potentially benefit most from my findings.

3.3   Recruitment & Sampling

I identified participants through convenience sampling, as defined by Elliot et al. (2016), primarily through my network from volunteering. Initially, I sought out anyone who carried out this work of preparing LGBTI asylum applicants for their IND interviews or wrote 'evidence letters' for applicants to 'support' their claims. I recruited actors including immigration lawyers, caseworkers, 'evidence letter'-writers, support workers or volunteers at refugee and asylum seeker organisations, LGBTQ+ organisations or queer migrant community groups. I gradually narrowed my search to people specialising in LGBTI claims. This contact occurred through email, or personal conversations.

Following on from this, recruitment continued through non-probability snowball sampling, as I asked participants to help me identify further poeple from their networks (Babbie et al. 2016). This constitutes purposive rather than probability sampling, since my target population is not comprehensively definable (Robinson 2014).

Participants were selected according to their involvement with queer asylum seekers. I also paid attention to include a wide variety of different roles, personal values and opinions about the asylum process and awareness of sexuality construction, which I gaged from initial informal conversations. Through these differently situated interviews I triangulates how construction of dominant tropes around non-heteronormative sexualities are created and maintained. This was done to hear differently situated accounts of similar practices and processes and add to research quality through increased scope and depth (Seale 1999). The concept of triangulation is usually employed to describe different sources of data, yet it has more recently also been used in reference to different perspectives in data collection (Gilbert and Stoneman 2015). In my case, I triangulated interviews between different actors, as well as relevant government documents about asylum in the Netherlands.

However, due to my sampling methods, my participants may not be most representative of all actors in asylum interview preparation. Therefore, I do not make generalised claims about my findings. As conventional in much qualitative research, I instead conducted an intensive analysis on a smaller number of cases. Instead of generalisability, I prioritised internal validity, which I understand to refer both to my methods for data collection being suitable and accurate in addressing my research question, as well as congruence between my findings and existing literature. Guba and Lincoln (1994) refer to these alternative criteria for qualitative research as 'trustworthiness'.

Strategies to ensure this involved making use of multiple data sources, consulting relevant policy documents and reports from associated organisations, and debriefing with peers on my research findings. Through the practice of reflexivity, which I go into greater depth below, I also discuss complexities in my data, and do not shy away from disclosing complicated or ambiguous findings.

I will also be drawing on Guba and Lincoln's (1994) standard of 'authenticity', concerning political impact of research. Beyond production of knowledge, relevance of my interviews lies in aiming for improvement of social life through a deeper understanding of it (Hammersley 2008). I am invested in better appreciation of others' perspectives, as well as research being an impetus for change.

I focus specifically on situating my study in the Netherlands, subsequently assessing transferability of my findings to similar contexts (Blaikie 2010). My incentive to focus on the Netherlands is because on an international stage, it presents a self-image of a tolerant, open 'safe-haven' for LGBTQ+ people (Bracke 2012). As Brennan (2018) has highlighted however, the Dutch context is also a distinctive example of homonationalist discourses, which I anticipate will have an interesting effect on constructions of queerness.

The Dutch IND underwent a change in policy for LGBTQ+ asylum claims in July 2018 (Jansen 2019). According to their new working instructions, asylum interviewers are allegedly no longer allowed to ask invasive personal questions, for example about intimate sexual or potentially traumatic experiences. However, whether this has taken effect is heavily disputed. Therefore, a year on from publication of these guidelines could be an important moment to be conducting research like this.

A limitation of my participant selection I anticipate relates to my decision not to include asylum seekers' voices. It would have been interesting to hear how imposition of 'Western' narratives are experienced first-hand. However, as I have argued, queer asylum seekers constitute an over-researched group (Pascucci 2019). Especially in the Dutch context, in

recent years there have been a number of papers, Masters' theses and reports focusing on queer and LGBTQ+ asylum seekers, asking about IND interviews and experiences in home countries (Luit 2013; Brennan 2017; Rainey 2017; van der Pijl et al. 2018). I am strongly against feelings of researcher entitlement to the stories and experiences of this group, as if they existed primarily as data for social research. Even if it is carried out with good intentions, it can feel insensitive considering that queer asylum seekers and refugees must already survive hostile anti-immigration and homophobic/transphobic discourse, and state violence.

Moreover, researching refugees in the contemporary political climate, as Thapliyal and Baker (2018) discuss, carries ethical implications that I was not able to honour in the framework of a Masters' thesis. Rather than being represented as people with multi-faceted lives and personal agency, there can be a danger of people being reduced to one-dimensional subjects of victimhood. In other words, my research aimed to be sensitive and non-intrusive, only asking things of people that they were able to give, while aiming to pose questions that are valuable to those most affected.

Secondly, although highly worthy of investigation, I also decided not to seek out perspectives from other countries and contexts on queerness and 'non-Western' sexualities, since this fell outside the scope of this thesis. It would be useful if further research could explore this, and perhaps compare different constructions of non-heteronormative sexualities in a variety of cultural contexts. Particularly how this relates to migration and asylum would be fascinating to explore.

3.4   Research Process & Challenges

Initially, recruitment of participants progressed very slowly, as I was contacting people in their professional role and many had busy schedules. Establishing myself as legitimate and conducting valuable research, for example through the provision of consent forms and information sheets, helped to address hierarchies between myself as a student and participants as figures of authority (Gilbert and Stoneman 2015). Nonetheless, it took longer than anticipated to conduct sufficient interviews.

I audio-recorded interviews, as well as taking notes during and after the encounter to enhance self-reflexivity (Schutt 2015). Open-ended questions aimed to give space for rich description and meaning made of one's experiences (Lichtman 2014). My topic guide, see **Appendix 3**,

included questions about asylum interview preparation practices, what advice they give asylum applicants and how they feel about their work. Then I progressed to LGBTI asylum interviews and conceptions of queerness, prompting for their personal definition and own experiences of sexuality.

Cisneros-Puebla et al. (2004) outline the centrality of stories for qualitative research, which I have taken inspiration from. I drew on Powles' (2004) techniques for life history and personal narrative, to capture complexity of someone's lived reality. It also helped situate my participants, enabling understanding of what informed their constructions of queerness. The questions I posed encouraged self-reflection on professional practices and taken-for-granted assumptions about asylum and queer asylum seekers. Here, I aimed to creating space for someone to have time to formulate what they want to share, instead of moving on too quickly (Back 2007). In line with this, I remained open to digressions, while non-intrusively leading conversations in a direction that would address my concerns without interrupting flow of conversation.

Location of interviews, typically participants' offices, helped establish rapport, as I initially allowed them to speak from their professional position in the discourse they embodied. Yet it made asking personal questions slightly more difficult. Many interviewees talked around certain topics and required a lot of probing (Gilbert and Stoneman 2015). Moreover, participants were often very busy and I was regularly given the impression I was interrupting their work. In these cases, I should have better explained the value of my research, to allow connecting over its importance. However, others wanted to talk and communicated that actors in this process have professional knowledges that are often overlooked.

To build rapport, I employed active listening skills I learned and regularly utilise in my volunteering work. This includes practices such as mirroring, clarifying, prompting for details, summarising, and open body language (Brinkmann and Kvale 2015). Nonetheless, one participant, when he did not like the critical questions I was asking, started critiquing my interview practice, such as the manner I was phrasing things, or saying that I should read a certain report if I wanted answers to a question.

He continuously asserted the power differences between me as a supposedly unexperienced female researcher, and himself as an experienced male figure in the field. This played out, for example, through him testing my background knowledge about the questions I was posing and dropping names of people in the field in a way I experienced as rather patronising. After the interview also, he lectured me on how to write up my results, implying I was stupid if I did not do something the way he thought was best. Here, I was reminded of my

positionality as young woman, and the entitlement some men feel to give advice unprompted.

At the end of the interview, I gave my interviewees the opportunity to ask me questions. This was done to make it more of a reciprocal encounter, to demonstrate openness about myself and my research. I also asked participants to choose their own pseudonym, a practice in line with feminist ethical recommendations (Reinharz and Shulami 1992).

3.5 Ethical Considerations

Throughout my research, I followed ethical principles of inflicting no harm on participants (Israel and Hay 2006). I provided an information sheet outlining nature and objectives of my project, as well as their rights if they agreed to take part (see **Appendix 1**). This way informed consent was ensured, which was obtained in writing (**Appendix 2**). Interviewees retained the right to refuse to answer questions or withdraw from the research. Ethical principles of anonymity and confidentiality were also assured through pseudonyms, despite some participants expressing they did not mind whether their accounts were anonymised. This was done for purposes of consistency and safety of the asylum seekers they were supporting. Recorded data and transcriptions were kept secure and not discussed with third parties (Bryman 2016).

Conducting research ethically, to me, also meant temporarily suspending judgement of participants' understandings of sexuality and the asylum process. I made a conscious effort to leave analysis until after the interview, following Palmer and Thompson (2010). Many of my participants understood the social world differently to myself and held views I would have challenged in different circumstances. Yet in inhabiting my role as the researcher, I focused on asking open questions and providing space for interviewees to reflect and explain their perspective.

Potential limitations might exist due to language, since interviews and all interactions happened in English. This meant most of my participants were expressing themselves in a language not their mother-tongue. Being fluent does not necessarily mean you have thought through a complex process or abstract conceptions in that language. Especially since my focus and attention was also on the language used to talk about sexuality, it was important to allow my interviewees time to find the right words to express themselves.

I aimed to be reflexive about my social position in the research process throughout the research (Sampson et al. 2008). I have mentioned above how my positionality as a young female researcher influenced interview encounters. For this purpose, I kept a research journal from the initial conception of my project to the point of writing up my final thesis. As this research was conducted from an intersectional feminist perspective, being a reflexive researcher meant an awareness of my positionality in all aspects (Haraway 1988).

Consequently, my positionality as a white person also affected this research, as most of my interview participants were white. While many people in the field I was investigating are white, which in itself influences my findings, my participant selection was also certainly shaped by who I felt comfortable approaching and asking for an interview. My authority as a white researcher investigating issues of migration and asylum may have been more readily questioned, and rightly so, by people who are racially othered. I was perhaps unconsciously afraid of being called out on my privileges and being questioned. If I was to conduct this research again therefore, I would therefore be more willing to be called out on my biases that are related to my 'race' and class-related positioning, to improve validity and value of my findings.

To acknowledge social production of knowledge and be more honest and ethical, I consciously inserted myself into the research process (Mason 2018). This research is therefore inevitably value-laden and does not strive to be objective, an approach Becker (1967) famously defended. I approached this research from the position of someone who has volunteered in refugee and asylum seeker support organisations for many years and is engaged in both queer and open-borders activism, with the commitment to social and political change and ending oppression.

Another limitation thus could have arisen if my motivations were scrutinised by my participants, as this could compromise honesty and level of disclosure in the interview (Aldred 2008). My research questions and overarching topic involved asking people to question what Foucault (1980) calls 'regimes of truth', and venture outside discourses that are sanctioned and accepted as true. I thus took care in formulating my questions, aiming to ask open, value-free questions and avoid deception. This was also done to minimise desirability bias (Elliot et al. 2016). At the same time, I understand that because knowledge is constructed in the conversations that I had with my participants, interviewer effects were of course present nonetheless.

Consequently, my positionality also ties into interpretation and representation of my data during the analysis stage, where I made decisions about whose thoughts and experiences

were worthy of note. My own interpretation affected this, which is not detached from my social position or political and social beliefs. Instead, I engage with and am open about these issues to enhance this research (Hallowell et al. 2005).

In accordance, a further difficulty I foresaw relates to the political impact on the people being researched as well as those they are supporting (Wiles and Boddy 2013). My allegiance, as I have explained, lies with queer asylum seekers that are subject to exclusionary conceptions of non-heteronormative sexualities in their substantive interviews (Liebling et al. 2014). Thus, publication of my findings was as issue I thought about extensively. There is a danger that my findings have the potential to disrupt and thwart the current support system in place to aid asylum seekers in obtaining refugee status. If the ways in which actors who prepare people for their interviews become known to authorities, they could act upon this information and alter the process, making it more hostile than it currently is. Therefore, when my participants disclosed information that may harm future applicants if the IND was to become aware of it, I treated it with the upmost care and confidentiality. This remained a consideration throughout the research, especially in the selection of data for this final thesis.

3.6   Analytical Framework

Data gathered in interviews was transcribed to a degree adequate to needs of the study, for research questions to be addressed (Davidson 2009). For my purposes this meant that participants' words as well as interviewer questions and remarks were transcribed.

I conducted thematic analysis on interview data, for which Atlas.ti was utilised. This process was largely inductive, based on emergent patterns. Patterns appearing across interview accounts were analysed and brought into discussion with existing theory (Babbie et al. 2016). This was achieved through initial open coding, followed by more focused coding after repeated readings of my transcripts, to identify most important strands of analysis (Charmaz 2014). Preliminary codes were, for example, narratives around self-awareness or 'coming out' (Sedgewick 1990), style of IND questioning and how participants related to it (Schock et al. 2015), and concepts of 'credibility' in asylum (Right to Remain 2017). Subsequently, I revisited my data with a lens of symbolic bordering and bordering practices (Yuval-Davis 2013).

I grouped emergent themes around these headings: **constructions of queerness**, **asylum interview preparation practices**, and **processes of symbolic bordering**.

Chapter 4.   Findings

This chapter will discuss and interpret my findings from data generated in interviews I conducted. My central research question asked **what notions of queerness are constructed by different actors in the process of asylum interview preparation**.

My findings are organised around the following themes:

1. Constructions of Queerness

2. Practices of Asylum Interview Preparation

3. Symbolic Bordering

4.1   Constructions of Queerness

A question I posed at the beginning of this research was the following:

- How do actors in this process draw on, refer to, or resist stereotypical or normative tropes around queer sexualities? In particular, how are nonhegemonic sexualities framed as identity by these actors, and how do they (re)construct LGBTQ+ categories?

4.1.1   Stereotypes & Normative Tropes

The majority of my participants began by explaining how they felt stereotypes were being employed by the IND in asylum interviews. In doing so, they attempted to distance themselves from normative conceptions of queerness they bore witness to at a government level. Support workers and most letter-writers got their information about the IND through volunteering with grassroots organisations, listening to people's experiences in the LGBT community. Lawyers had more direct insight, from their work reading and amending transcripts from asylum interviews.

Firstly, support workers and lawyers problematised the content of LGBT(I) asylum interviews. Specific experiences and knowledges of LGBT communities in one's country of origin and host society are commonly assumed by officials and decision makers at the IND. Narrow conceptions about the 'age of self-realisation', with 12 years being deemed "too early" and 17 "too late", demonstrate reference to a specific, supposedly universal idea about

'normal' sexual development. Iris also observed stereotypes around "opposite-sex relations" and having a family taken as an indication of not being "truly gay". For example, she has seen cases where photos of family on social media have been used to challenge someone's queerness. This stereotype revolves around certain behaviours, where sexual behaviours with "the opposite sex" are somehow proof of someone's 'credible' sexuality. Michel phrases it so:

> "*If you had relationships before with men, or with the other sex, then it should be a mistake, or almost abuse or something. It doesn't help your case. So it's better not to mention straight relationships.*"

Another significant stereotype present in IND interviews related to an expected 'inner struggle', followed by a process of 'self-realisation' and 'self-acceptance'. Jop traced the origins of this to a paper by LaViolette (2004) and saw a problem with this, but only because he thought asylum applicants are not capable of "*speaking, talking, creating a good story*". Michel mentioned that "*a lot of people don't have an experience like that. And they are not being taken seriously at the moment*", adding the situated aspect to accounts of sexuality.

Some participants also mentioned incidents of verbal harassment by IND officials, patronising and accusative language, even blaming applicants for horrific things that had happened to them in their home societies due to their open queerness. This apparently occurs to the point where people feel violated, by IND's use of words and non-verbal communication. More often however, stereotypes are more subtle, making people doubt themselves or their experiences. Yet, my participants were largely inclined to believe this was due to implicit bias and lack of awareness within the IND rather than deliberate malintent.

In July 2018, new guidelines were issued for the IND, following lobbying by Dutch LGBTQ+ organisations and research (Jansen 2019). According to these, there ought to be more focus on a person's "authentic story", supposedly allowing personal use of words to describe experiences. Yet, comparable narratives around queer sexualities, such as "feeling different", are nonetheless expected. Marjolein's explanation showcases this:

> "*In asylum now, we now have: You have always been gay, or you're not gay. That's the two sides. […] there must have been a point at which you realised that you have this sexuality.*"

None of my participants felt these guidelines had resulted in any significant positive changes. Especially lawyers reported not seeing any differences in the manner of questioning, or how

interviews are conducted or judged. For instance, Jop interprets these 'official' changes merely as a way for the IND to claim they are improving their practice. Marjolein also noted that these working instructions deliberately do not constitute a change in policy, to prevent past rejected asylum claims having to be reassessed in light of the changes. This in effect meant that they are not consistently enforced.

As I have shown, most lawyers I interviewed acknowledged the stereotypes present within asylum interviews, however none saw their own work as part of that. Nonetheless, a variety of actors in the interview preparation process for LGBTI asylum cases play a central role in constructing notions of queerness, and what counts as 'credible'. They are equally embedded in their own understanding of sexuality, which they communicate to the people they support. Granted, many may have slightly broader understandings of queer sexualities or more open minds about stories of persecution and migration, yet their work is nonetheless part of larger process and should be regarded in this context.

In general, queerness is habitually positioned in and defined through its opposition to the heterosexual norm by my participants. While queer theory literature often promotes positive assertion of difference, this strengthens heterosexuality as normative and 'others' as deviant (Sullivan 2003). Moreover, this logic also encourages a consideration of queer sexuality as one's primary identifier. Not only do heterosexual subjects typically not strongly identify as such, but it also erases other dimensions to one's identity, rendering them less important and secondary to queerness.

Within queerness, stereotypes and normative tropes are still prevalent. Iris, for example, uses 'he' consistently to refer to LGBTI asylum claimants, demonstrating how the default 'queer person' is still a gay cis man. Michel talked about "*healthy sexuality*" and "*normal sexual development*", thus indirectly creating sexualities that are 'unhealthy' and 'abnormal'. Even in arguing for tolerance and acceptance of queer sexualities, there is still a hierarchy imagined.

Jop used the phrase "*supposedly gay asylum seeker*" a lot, which, other than using the word 'gay' to stand for any LGBTI claim, conveys the position of mistrust occupied by some lawyers, as well as the IND. He himself is highly suspicious of his "clients", as says he encounters many people who he does not believe. Here, law advisor Marjolein highlights the difficulty of judging 'credibility', although in the same sentence she also says, "*some people are obviously LGBT*", a statement evidently itself based on stereotypes. Jop also admitted that determining someone else's sexuality is impossible, and describes this as a problem for the IND. Yet again, he has confidence that he is able to pass judgement about it:

> *"My gaydar is really not all that good. But I think that I'm, in most cases, I do know whether my client is telling the truth […] there are many, many people that are SO gay, I mean, that even a blind person would see it."*

Aside from the ableist joke, this statement includes assumptions about queerness, although he was earlier trying to refute that this is possible. Contradictions such as this were frequent among my participants, who partially seemed to embody a discourse of tolerance or compassion towards queer asylum seekers and criticism of the IND, yet also held many normative assumptions and stereotypes themselves.

Another aspect where this was apparent was in how sexuality was regularly understood as a fundamental, internal 'truth' about oneself. Marjolein described sexuality as a deep, emotional dimension of the self, vehemently separating queer behaviours and expressions from an LGBTQ+ identity. She says: "*solely sexual relationships are not enough to actually be gay*". Regardless of how important a behavioural dimension might be for someone, a normative trope around physical sexuality being superficial and inauthentic is created here.

Moreover, rather than being a situated knowledge, one's ability and frequency of, for example, expressing feelings, is interpreted as a cultural difference, a 'deficiency' that asylum seekers must learn. As Jop phrased it:

> *"They very often do not know how to express their feelings about a partner. And then the IND says we can't conclude that there is a deep, emotional, romantic relationship. While the client very often doesn't even say that, or mean it, and the relationship is maybe just about sex, or maybe about watching television together, I mean, who is the IND to actually decide what a relationship should look like?"*

Here, differences in expression of sexuality are reduced to 'cultural norms', although the statement was said with the self-conviction of value-freedom. Instead of an acknowledgement of contextual understanding and expression, asylum applicants are othered, sexualised, and rendered incapable of 'real' emotional connections. In these processes, asylum seekers are subjected to the same exclusionary logic from their lawyer as from the government.

4.1.2 Identity & LGBTQ+ categories

Sexual identity categories were often unreflectively drawn upon and utilised in my participants' accounts. Sexuality was reiterated as a core part of the self, as most of my participants used the language of 'sexual identity' and expressions such as "***a person* is *LGBT***" or "***LGBT person***". Michel explained how a 'credible' performance of queerness was synonymous with 'proving' "***this is who I am***". Iris described sexuality as part of "***inner nature***". In other words, sexuality is conceptualised as a matter of being, as something that one definitively is, can understand and recognise in oneself, and then communicate to others.

Lawyers, support workers and letter-writers also reaffirmed 'identity' in their interview preparation by encouraging narratives that showcased a development of queerness according to normative measures. For example, strong emphasis was placed on an assumed internal struggle and 'coming out' process. Non-heteronormative experiences and desires are framed as an individual reality that someone will have come to know about themselves through challenges from the social world around them. The expectation is that people should be able to fully understand themselves and be able to justify every decision and situation they ever found themselves in. Whether explicitly or not, this development is also presumed to be associated with a certain label from the LGBTI acronym.

Lawyers especially used identity categories to describe queer sexualities. Iris, for instance, used 'LGBT' and 'gay' interchangeably. Others occasionally also used 'lesbian', and there were few mentions of 'bisexual'. Primarily however, 'gay' was used in an encompassing fashion. This highlights for me the normativities and assumptions present in their discourse that first and foremost envisages men exclusively desiring other men. To be recognised as 'credibly queer' in an interview, and therefore also in much interview preparation, you thus need to claim a label, even if you are doing so for the first time for the purposes of asylum.

The individualistic framing embedded in this is, one could argue, what informed the new IND guidelines that call for focusing on a 'personal story' of recognising and living one's queerness. Thus, the asylum procedure encourages a specific understanding of sexualities as identity, as well as being shaped by the reiteration and maintenance of that understanding by actors involved in that process.

At the same time, an identity framework assumes that a similar social position will lead to similar social experience (Appiah 2006). This implies a communal dimension to sexuality, that it might be an element of social life that incentivises one to seek out people who are in that same social position. Trying to 'prove' sexuality, or gather sufficient 'evidence' of

queerness, as the IND requires, therefore rests on a kind of 'social verification', such as the 'evidence' letters some of my participants write.

Drawing on an identity framework was only sporadically supplemented with a reflection or analytical engagement with terminology. When I asked my participants directly about their thoughts on sexuality in a more general sense, many struggled for words. Thus, while talking about LGBTI asylum seekers, felt familiar and comfortable, many did not embody a critical discourse around queer sexualities.

However, drawing on the framework of 'identity', did not mean they considered it in fixed, essentialised terms. There was also acknowledgment of fluidity by some. Michel, for instance, noted that sexuality is only one dimension to the self, and that differences exist in the weight given to that aspect at different times in one's life. In that sense, sexuality is understood as more of a category that one can employ for specific purposes, rather than essential. This ties in with queer theory literature, especially in the work of Green (2007), where identities are strategically employed and actively modelled.

The terminology Michel used occasionally drew on identity, but not exclusively. Consequently, I do not imagine his work would be restricting people's narrative, but rather opening it up and presenting the sexual identity framework as a possibility, without othering those for whom this does not fit. Nonetheless, although he acknowledges that not everyone thinks in terms of identity, he still portrays it as a knowledge that asylum seekers lack, instead of situating or contextualising it.

4.1.3   Queerness

This is where I arrive at my search for queer understandings of non-heteronormative sexualities in asylum interview preparation. To start with, I found no explicit mention of 'queerness' in Dutch government or IND documents. The terminology of 'queer' has not made it into dominant discourse of the establishment. This filters down to lawyers as they work within the legal asylum framework. Yet, many support workers and letter-writers also embodied this discourse, not talking about 'queerness' until prompted.

Nonetheless, I examine their accounts through the lens of queer thinking, to situate understandings of non-heteronormative sexualities. I felt it important to 'defamiliarise' the familiar 'Western' narratives around sexual desires and experiences deviating from a heterosexual majority, because terminology and concepts employed are arguably ill-suited

to fully explain and account for complexities and nuances of all asylum seekers, with diverse life experiences, national and cultural backgrounds, intersecting social positions in terms of 'race'/ethnicity, class, gender, age, and so forth.

There was some awareness of situated knowledges among support workers and letter-writers I spoke to. Billie, for instance, recognised that asylum seekers she supported were mainly situated outside white 'Western' discourses, and needed interview preparation as preparation for IND conceptions of LGBTI sexuality. Michel also alluded to situatedness in identifying multiple factors contributing to understandings of sexuality, such as family, 'culture', religion. This links to what Wesling (2008) theorised about cross-cultural and international constructions of sexuality. In that sense, some participants did imagined sexuality as contextually shaped.

However, working with people who have been persecuted in their home countries for sexual orientation, my interviewees predominantly experienced contextual elements as hostile and negative towards queer desires and experiences, limiting someone's understanding of themselves. Michel said:

> *"You're trying to repress yourself, you're trying not to be that person. So, when people arrive, they're not able to talk about these things, because they never had the internal freedom to think about it, let alone discuss it with anyone else."*

This relates to Foucault's (1976) observation that if you do not have language to express something, you cannot understand yourself in those terms. For the Dutch asylum system, this means if you are a new arrival who has not had previous contact with discourses around sexuality in the Netherlands, it will evidently be more difficult to construct a narrative to suit the IND's judgement. For example, the reference to 'sexual identity development', is situated in a country that, in spite of discrimination, does not criminalise or persecute non-heteronormative sexuality to the same extent (Berg and Millbank 2009). Therefore, assumptions that people's discovery of their queer sexuality has already been established and can be coherently narrated is also arguably flawed. This holds for officials in the Dutch asylum system as well as for interview preparation.

As well as binary thinking around people as either 'in' or 'out of the closet', many of my participants implicitly assumed gender to be binary, and there was almost no critical engagement with gender as a concept. For instance, heterosexuality was habitually called "opposite-sex relations". Judith further explained she understands sexuality as clearly divided and separate from gender. Where sexuality was regarded as informed by context, gender was considered more fixed and 'given'. Although some support workers had

encounters with people for whom gender and sexuality were intertwined or related, such experiences were 'othered' and not granted much significance.

Moreover, despite situating asylum seeker's understandings of queerness, the majority whom I spoke to did not recognise their own conceptualisation as situated. An abstracted notion of a "Dutch approach" as objective and unbiased was present in many accounts of support workers, often positioned in contrast to asylum seekers' 'authentic story'. This involved constructing "Dutch sexualities" as unified and coherent, free from other influencing factors or intersecting identities. Although queer BPOC communities in the Netherlands, such as Black Queer and Trans Resistance or Maruf, have been calling out these white dominant narratives, the common conceptions I encountered were ones of Dutch exceptionalism (Özdil 2014).

Only when criticising and trying to distance oneself from the IND, did more reflective and arguably queer discourses emerge among my participants. Some were quick to position themselves in opposition to the IND, since "*they do not allow for complex sexualities, whereas I do*", Billie explained. Michel critiqued the IND, stating: "*There's no fluidity, there's no nuance, it needs to be all very clear to you from the beginning. This is the category, you are gay*". Frank also strongly emphasised that the framework of the Dutch government does not account for all experiences, while his work is more accepting and tolerant.

Lawyers were overall not as quick to argue against the IND, but some also called for more nuance and acknowledgement of implicit biases. Yet again, while Iris for instance highlighted a need for the IND to acknowledge their subjectivity, she did not recognise her own perspective as subjective. This showed itself in how she, and others in interview preparation, related to the people they were supporting, and how they, perhaps unconsciously, displayed attitudes akin to those of the government. Notably, in practices of interview preparation, many of my interviewees admitted imitating some expected questions and 'mindset' of the IND, in order to "*prepare the claimant*".

Interestingly, when asked about their own experiences of sexuality, more queer thinking appeared in my participants' stories. Marjolein said: "*I always say that sexuality is a field and that you can move freely around.*" Judith described the complexity of coming to understand one's sexuality, and how it may change over time. These notions go beyond strict identity categories referred to previously, with some of my participants directly illustrating aspects of queer theory to me, even without the theoretical background.

Michel, for example, understands himself as 'fluid' and 'diverse', arguing against "***putting people in a corner***". Sexuality is merely "***attraction, given an expression***", without any mention of labels or specific experiences that 'verify' someone as 'credibly' queer. Letter-writer Hannah described sexuality as "***a bodily energy, desire that has been shaped from childhood onwards***", which does not invoke a concept of gender or sex. She continues: "***it has a social life […] social positioning and individual history shapes how affect goes through your body.***"

Michel also defined non-heteronormative sexuality through feelings of 'joy' and 'confidence' it can give people. One's queerness here, is something exciting to discover about oneself, something vibrant and happy that can be freely expressed and celebrated. With regard to their own experiences, for the people I spoke to, non-heteronormative sexuality becomes complicated, abstract, open and flexible. This is strikingly different to portrayals of queerness given earlier, when discussing their work with queer asylum seekers.

Thus, when talking about their asylum interview preparation practices, my participants spoke of sexualities in terms of identity categories and culturally situated stories, with overarching themes of self-repression due to external hostility and violence. 'Queerness', here meaning fluidity of identity categories, was a notion reserved for Dutch, and most likely implicitly white, people. Only when attempting to distance themselves from the IND did actors in the asylum interview preparation process extend this line of queer thinking to asylum applicants.

4.1.4   Intersectional Thinking & Racism

I have already indicated that most accounts and narratives of actors in asylum interview preparation are not in conflict with the dominant white imaginary of the Dutch nation-state. In fact, many reinforce and perpetuate racist tropes and lack intersectional thinking. Furthermore, as I outlined in my theoretical framework, queer theorising is also frequently complicit in these exclusionary discourses that position sexuality as the only, or at least most important, dimension of identity.

Many of my participants reinforced notions that one's social positioning outside of heteronormativity constituted a fundamental aspect of the self. I see this stemming from an implicit requirement in LGBTI asylum interviews that one's queerness must necessarily be presented as one's primary dimension of personhood. Inability to demonstrate this will likely result in a negative decision based on perceived insufficient risk of persecution (Miller 2005). However, given the multifaceted lived realities and social positioning of asylum

seekers, as well as potentially complex migration decisions, IND expectations of one-dimensional accounts of fleeing persecution are arguably unrealistic.

When you're in the asylum system, you are defined first and foremost as an asylum seeker, the rest of your self becomes second to the fact that you are seeking protection. You are seen as subject of suffering, based on your queerness and forced migration, and no longer as a complex human being with dreams, ideas, and opinions. This is connected to symbolic bordering practices and othering, which I will elaborate on later.

I observed racism and colonial legacies in the way sexuality and queerness are talked about in asylum interview preparation across the different roles my participants occupied. In its milder forms, this resulted from the aforementioned lack of situatedness and intersectional awareness. However, some of my interviewees engaged in racial stereotyping and sexual exoticism, akin to what hooks (1992) describes. For instance, lawyer Jop gave the following anecdote:

> "***Many people from Iraq that have been in a relationship know how to talk about emotional aspects. I hardly ever see that in African cases. There very often, the focus is on sex, as in: We went to the woods together in order to collect wood for the fire. And it was warm, and we had a swim in the lake. And we started to touch each other. […] I liked him or her very much, because he had such a nice ass.***"

Here, an imagined increased desire for sex without corresponding feelings is associated with national and ethnic background. While a generous reading of this account may identify his statements are referring to situated understandings of sexuality, he nonetheless explains this as fundamentally tied to someone's origin country and 'culture'. Furthermore, a description of "***African cases***", as if Africa was a uniform unit of analysis and all "African" experiences comparable, as "***collecting wood for the fire***" paints an entire continent in recognisable tropes of 'simple' and 'backward'.

Jop's account became a little more complicated, when he later added that some gay men in Amsterdam also have relations primarily focused on sex. Yet he still ultimately 'others' asylum seekers and draws on homonationalist discourses to make sense of what he experiences in his work.

Explicit racism was also present in the accounts of my other participants, although not as widespread. Queer asylum seekers were described as passive, obedient to authorities, not interested in fighting for their rights. This was cited as an 'explanation' why someone "***doesn't do well***" in an asylum interview, since people are "***too submissive***" and "***want to***

please an officer". In line with this, Jop did not think asylum claimants ever really understood what is asked of them in an interview, even after his preparation work. However, instead of aiming to improve his practices, he blamed "***cultural differences and education level***".

Michel also mentioned level of education in shaping his interview preparation: "***It's easier to talk to them, to prepare them***". What remains unclear to me here is whether he intended 'education' to mean situated education and a familiarity with 'Western' concepts of sexuality. Nonetheless, referencing education level in a discussion around conceptualisations of sexuality carries a hierarchical judgement, whereby someone's access to education is conflated with their intelligence, which is conflated with their ability to 'pass' as 'credibly queer'.

Given the institutional racism that many asylum seekers are exposed to in everyday life, from authorities, police, and citizens, it is dangerous and worrying to see people who occupy a supporting role in the asylum framework display racist attitudes and unreflectively making racially prejudiced judgements about asylum applicants.

4.1.5   Resistance

As I found in my research, some actors in asylum interview preparation resist being complicit with expected 'Western' understandings of non-heteronormative sexualities as exemplified by the IND, through an awareness of their own situatedness. However, this often remains limited and does not provide as much unconditional solidarity and acceptance towards queer asylum claimants as it could. Moreover, when constructions of queerness do not resist racist prejudice, they in themselves become mechanisms of managing people and identities, instead of being the basis of safety and inclusion.

I here refer to Duyvendak's (1996) explanation about 'why Dutch gays aren't queer'. 'Queerness' is here understood to signify a movement that is inherently political, whereas he observes a gradual process of depoliticisation of 'gay identity' in the Netherlands. In this sense, a lack of queer thinking in the Dutch context, which is in accordance with my observations in LGBT asylum interview preparation, may be indicative of political complacency among certain non-heteronormative Dutch subjects, who inhabit positions of privilege in terms of 'race' and class. However, political awareness and mobilisation is very much needed for advocacy and support in the context of asylum. If LGBT(Q+) identities are

detached from strong political objectives, the potential for political solidarity with those subjects who need it is limited.

Yet, simply arguing that certain categorisations and imaginaries around queer sexualities produce violent exclusions does not nearly communicate the urgency of what this means for those affected. These processes, almost routine operations of passing judgement over someone's queerness, have life-altering consequences for LGBT asylum applicants. From my work volunteering with undocumented migrants, I have seen the very real and often devastating consequences of this play out first-hand. When queer asylum seeking people receive a negative decision, due to the IND not considering their narratives as valid, it has implications that violently shape their lives and futures.

Having one's claim for protection rejected means being made homeless and cut off from financial, social, and medical support. Although the government has decided that someone is not in danger of persecution and should be able to return home, this clearly does not mean that someone *can* return home. As a result, many remain in the country without papers and become undocumented. Being framed as "illegal", the possibility of being detained or deported is an ever-present threat, making it extremely difficult to build up a new life or work towards a more hopeful future. Not being allowed to legally work or access accommodation, one's situation becomes incredibly precarious. It means living in fear of authorities and the police, fear of survival for oneself and any dependents such as children. People are left on their own to deal with trauma and psychological ramifications, social isolation, and marginalisation.

Support workers and many letter-writers involved in the asylum interview preparation process are, by nature of their work, largely aware of these consequences. This often informs their motivations and personal drive behind their work. It also affects how they understand their own practices relating to the wider asylum system, which will be the focus of my next chapter.

4.2 Practices of Asylum Interview Preparation

In this chapter I investigate the following question:

- o How do lawyers, support workers, and letter-writers understand and interpret their practices of preparing asylum seekers for asylum interviews?

Different actors in the asylum interview preparation process carry out various roles to assist asylum seekers in the lead up to their substantive interview with the IND. I interviewed lawyers, support workers, and people who write so-called 'evidence letters' for asylum procedures, who are involved to varying degrees with peoples' claims.

4.2.1 Logistics

Firstly, my participants explained the logistics of what asylum preparation involves. For instance, legal asylum preparation work provided by lawyers, involves explanation and providing information about the IND and asylum process, about what happens in an asylum interview. As I have explained, asylum seekers are subjected to judgement on the credibility of their claim, as well as their risk of danger if they were to be deported. My participants argued that asylum interview preparation is a necessary part of one's claim.

Jop described his preparation as '***practical'***, such as explaining what questions to expect and occasionally asking people to share some of their story. Yet he deliberately only covers the basics, saying: "***I think, just like the IND actually does, that it is the story of my client and the client should tell the story***", that it wouldn't be "***fair on the system***" to instruct people, beyond this brief explanation.

However, many support workers disagreed, considering preparation beyond this as vital. For them, preparation should include developing people's confidence, instructing people to 'own' their story and state their boundaries if they felt uncomfortable. Michel emphasised the importance of teaching people to "***take control of the interview***" and embody the approach "***This is my story, and I won't let you steal it away from me***". Billie worded it as follows:

> "***You need to be on fire there. You have to be, like: I'm here today, I'm proud of myself […] I'm going to tell you my story. You're gonna listen to me.***"

Helping develop someone's story, creating a narrative with someone for them to present to the IND, is how many asylum support workers would describe their interview preparation work. This involves having to break down one's story to the 'basics', for people's narratives to be compatible with supposed "***Western European***" ways of linear and detailed thinking. This includes especially focusing on one's 'realisation' of queerness and associated feelings, as I have argued (Jansen 2019). Billie especially talked about importance of "***sharing your emotions, giving words to how you feel***", as inability to elaborate on emotions negatively impacts 'credibility'.

As for letter-writing, there seems to be less certainty about what constitutes a helpful supporting letter. In broad terms, letter-writers mentioned including a description about their connection to the asylum applicant, followed by outlining LGBTQ+-related groups they were attending, or information about their origin country. Sophie described having difficulty with her first 'evidence letter', because "***you're just not sure what the IND is going to accept, and you wish there was more you could do to help someone***". Hannah added: "***at least you know that you can enhance chances if you have good, solid letters***". She explained trying "***to not make it essentialising***" and being "***strategic***" in what to include, bearing in mind stereotyped thinking of government officials.

4.2.2   Motivations

In their motivations for doing preparation work with queer asylum applicants, my interviewee's attitudes towards asylum, sexuality, and constructions of normativity also became apparent.

The majority understood their work as driven by desire to help, a sense of justice or improving LGBT asylum policy. Many described as their goal to help people obtain refugee status in the Netherlands. Iris displayed a strong sense of justice and fairness, wanting to help people in a system that is not designed in their favour: "***I feel that everybody has a right to be who he is, freely without any risk of persecution, or discrimination, you have a basic right to be safe***". Many support workers talked about their interest in understanding and supporting people with asylum claims, positioning this in opposition to lack of support from the IND. Billie stated: "***I'm interested, and I try to get the best out of people, IND is not***".

Michel specifically identified contact provided by support workers as allowing people to open up, whereas an asylum interview setting does not. Providing an environment with minimum stress or pressure, and conducting all practices on a consensual basis, is therefore

integral. Michel also conducts counselling sessions and emphasised how an interview setting does not take into consideration someone's medical situation, such as trauma. His own preparation therefore includes developing confidence in someone to stand up to possible IND intimidation. A further source of motivation was perceived insufficient preparation by lawyers. Especially Michel made a lot of critiques, stating that instructions to simply '*be open and honest*' in an interview are not enough to adequately prepare someone. He argued that good preparation must take time and is often a difficult process.

All support workers mentioned being personally touched by stories they hear. Becoming emotionally invested in someone's case means sharing their pain and being there regardless of what happens, which was described as draining. Coping strategies of taking comfort in the smallest of positive developments, such as a change in someone's disposition after meeting, were shared with me. Michel described his work as a "*beautiful contact with people*" and Frank displayed a great level of compassion towards those he is supporting, stating as his aim to give people the feeling: "*that I may exist, that I'm a human being and that somebody cares about me*". Some support workers and letter-writers seemingly go above and beyond, in some cases, to support someone, even if it is not part of their job, or they do not get paid for it. In comparison, the majority of lawyers I spoke to did not express this same emotional involvement.

On the other hand, there were also more personal, self-centred motivations mentioned. One lawyer I spoke to regarded winning LGBT asylum cases as first and foremost having helped his career, making him successful and "*building a name for himself*". He did not demonstrate any awareness of his own privilege, as a legal resident, as a white, middle-class, cis man. It was particularly striking to me, because for many of my other participants, an awareness of oneself was a starting point towards supporting someone who shared none of one's own privileges. The lawyer also showed no regard for devastating consequences of a negative asylum decision, since his work was primarily about his own reputation. I regard this as very dangerous, if people in a support position have no interest in how their practices affect people's lives and futures.

4.2.3 Degree of Support for the Asylum System

The asylum process in the Netherlands and the way it functions today is central to the work of asylum interview preparation. All my participants expressed an urgent need for change,

only few however felt that the current system needed to be fundamentally re-thought or even abolished.

Lawyers displayed the greatest level of trust in the contemporary framework. This would make sense due to their situated knowledges, having been educated in the legal field. Iris explained: "***I will say to them, you've got to help the IND, help them to make it as easy as possible for them to believe you.***" As the asylum process itself does, this puts burden of proof completely on the asylum seeker, and demonstrates trust in the judgement of the IND. She equates what she 'needs' from someone to build a successful case with what the IND 'needs' to give a positive outcome. However, Iris also realised the power the IND holds over someone's life. She did not think this was wrong, but cautioned they should be careful with it, and more considerate of the fact that they are asking a lot of someone, to be ready to share their entire story and be scrutinised by authorities. Iris believes these expectations are too high, with too little regard to the wellbeing of asylum claimants.

Nonetheless, she and other lawyers did not see the legal asylum framework as situated, but as a reflection of 'universal' moral standards, successfully deciding right and wrong, including passing judgement over someone's entitlement to international protection. Despite being aware of the devastating effects the asylum process can have, and criticisms such as biased and loaded questioning style of IND officials, their support for the current asylum system had not been fundamentally shaken.

Claiming asylum, every element of someone's life becomes an element of their legal case, being viewed through the lens of 'proof' and 'evidence'. People's lived realities become reduced to this legal framework, in the name of helping them. No thought is paid to possibilities beyond the current system. Working within it is considered the best option. Lawyer Jop expressed:

> "***To be honest, I'm not really interested in whether people are gay or not, I will not tell them to lie, I will not lie for them, but I'm actually only interested in doing the case as good as possible.***"

I anticipated this framework with lawyers, yet many support workers echoed this. Billie, for instance, displayed a lot of trust in the contemporary Dutch system. Although she demonstrated an understanding that interviews are difficult for people, and the IND needs to improve in their conduct, one of the pieces of advice she gives people, is to listen to the questions asked by the IND and ask for clarification if necessary. This advice relies on regarding the IND as committed to making asylum interviews accessible and provide a safe environment for applicants.

She assumes that it is indeed possible to tell one's story clearly in such an interview, explain things well and defend oneself. In this line of thinking, an asylum interview would be easy if you were just confident, self-assertive, and answered all questions coherently and logically. Evidently, she did not critique the system as a whole, or consider that there may be structural issues preventing someone from accessing justice, rather than just minor difficulties that could be fixed for the process to function 'properly'.

4.2.4 Conflict

As I have mentioned, my participants consistently emphasised the need for asylum interview preparation, regardless of whether they supported the current system or not. Asylum interviews were spoken of as an event you need to "***manage***", therefore requiring coaching and support. I found a general tendency of framing asylum preparation work as "***helping***". Even when people displayed hostile or exclusionary rhetoric, they viewed their job as necessary for a fair chance at an interview. What does this say about the fairness of an asylum system, when extensive preparation for its interviews is widely understood as essential, yet not provided or ensured by the government?

However, there were also instances of explicit conflict. Michel talked about "***fighting the system***", because it is not fair even though it claims to be. It made him angry to see people receive a negative decision on their claim, after having worked with them and knowing their story so well. He said:

> "***It feels like I have to fight the system sometimes, I know that the system is flawed […] every time someone goes in for a second asylum [claim], IND says: in the first asylum we already thought it wasn't this or this. Which means that they believe 100% what their predecessors did, and a lot of times it is wrong.***"

Michel made a point about not supporting the system, even suggesting that it might be deliberately hurting and setting people up to fail: "***it is so complicated, and so, almost intent for people losing***". He understands his work of asylum interview preparation as a form of resistance:

> "***In a way I am playing the system. But in a way, I'm evening the playing field, I'm making sure that someone has a real chance […] I am empowering them to be ready to face the IND themselves.***"

The expectation from the asylum process is, as Michel feels, that people should be able to argue their case immediately, which he doesn't consider realistic. Helping people to be able to "***tell their full story***" in some way resembles how lawyers and support workers who *do* believe in the contemporary asylum system talked about their work. Yet, the attitude behind it is explained differently. Working within the system one ideologically opposes can evidently be understood as a form of resistance when it supports those who are disadvantaged by that system. Hannah summarised:

> "***There are stereotypes about LGBT people, and the officer will have those stereotypes in mind. And if that officer cannot somehow put you in their boxes, you're going to lose, there not going to see you as a 'real' claim. So we have to work with the boxes!***"

Nonetheless, in general, actors carrying out asylum interview preparation did not display as much conflict with the system as I was anticipating. Most understand their work as supportive and helpful, and their practices come largely from good intentions.

4.2.5   Sexuality of Actors

There were different levels of self-reflection among my participants, not only in terms of their preparation practices and supporting the system. Another aspect that stood out to me concerned the sexuality of the lawyers, support workers and letter-writers themselves. There was greater level of self-reflexivity among my participants who spoke of themselves as queer or identifying under the LGBTQ+ umbrella. In general, they spoke in greater detail about their relationship to the people they supported and their frustration with the IND. This is widely supported in intersectionality literature, the notion that one's position of marginality can allow someone to see things in society that someone with privilege cannot (Crenshaw 1991).

On the other hand, people who identified as heterosexual/'straight' demonstrated a great deal less reflexivity about their own social position. They did not find their sexuality especially important or worth asking about, and generally believed to understand queer experiences without the embodied knowledge. Iris, for instance, referred to herself as an 'LGBT specialist', yet did not think that her own sense of sexuality, a hegemonic, privileged sexuality, had any bearing on her work with queer asylum seekers. I feel this says something about privilege, when you see your own social position as neutral, and cannot see how it shapes your life and work in a favourable way.

Billie showed a little more self-reflexivity around her own understanding and experiences of sexuality, and how it may impact those she helps. She said:

> "*Sometimes, I think, okay, I'm helping people with talking about sexuality, about what do you like, what don't you like, why and how, but I've never been through that process myself.*"

Here, she is speaking of her ability to relate to queer asylum seekers, which she understands as a central dimension to her work. She resolved this for herself as she nonetheless felt she can support someone in their procedure with her knowledge of the Dutch system, even if she cannot directly relate to someone's experiences of marginalisation due to their sexuality.

Hannah, Sophie, and Lianne on the other hand, were the most abstract in their understandings of queerness and sexuality more broadly. They were also the ones among my participants who drew attention to exclusions and experiences of marginalisation of queer asylum seekers, and engaged most empathetically with their stories.

4.2.6   Homonationalism in the Netherlands

Throughout my discussions, I found that openness and tolerance towards LGBTQ+ communities in the Netherlands was widely imagined as a 'Dutch quality'. Europe was regarded as more progressive and advanced than asylum seekers' origin countries, and thus, even where there was sympathy for asylum seekers, there was a clearly hierarchical understanding and value-laden terminology around migration. This resulted in a lot of 'othering' and strong "us vs. them" thinking, as cultural differences were asserted as an unquestioned feature of social reality.

I understand this discourse through the lens of homonationalism, as defined by Puar (2017), whereby a tolerance for LGBTQ+ communities becomes part of a national imaginary, in order for non-national and BPOC communities as well as newcomers to be stigmatised and labelled as 'backward' or 'not embracing national values'. As Brennan (2018) indicates, the Netherlands constitutes a prime example of this social phenomenon. In my participants' accounts, it expressed itself as taking pride in the Netherland specifically because of LGBT rights, while simultaneously demonising asylum seekers' origin countries. Simone, for instance, believed in the safety and openness of the Netherlands and directly compared this to hostile discourses and violence in asylum seekers' home countries. Accordingly, Billie believed asylum seekers opened up to her and the IND "*because here they feel safe*".

Many support workers, lawyers, and letter-writers will encounter traumatic stories on a regular basis through their work. Fleeing persecution, threats to one's life, and discrimination on the basis of one's non-heteronormative desires and experiences is a strong driver of migration, as I have outlined (Luibhéid 2008a). Asylum on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity exists as a mechanism through which to grant international protection to individuals, resting on construction of certain countries as LGBTQ+-friendly and others as dangerous and hostile (Halley 2013).

This is reflected in the way queer sexualities are framed in the context of asylum. As I have mentioned, great emphasis is placed on the centrality of a struggle in asylum narratives. The assumption remains that a negative social environment will have been internalised, resulting in struggles to accept one's queerness. Michel, for instance, said: "*everything that surrounds [an asylum applicant], the whole context, is of course super negative, and really breaks down a normal sexual development*". This assumption is congruent with the nature of asylum, where one's "well-founded fear of persecution" must be demonstrated (Miller 2005). However, it requires an applicant to demonise their own home country, in order to be granted entry into the supposed 'safe haven' host society.

The requirement to talk at length about the hostile environment and dangers that lead to your subsequent decision to flee, also re-iterates the host country as a tolerant and accepting nation. As I understand from my participants, there seems to be an unspoken understanding that a successful asylum claim involves telling your story in a manner that portrays your home country as 'backward', where you did not belong because people made life hard for you, explaining in depth the horrible things they did, how you were not free and in danger. Your reasons for coming here, your justification for claiming asylum, were solely because of your bad home country. In contrast, this host society where you are claiming asylum, people understand and accept you, as you demonstrate affiliation and belonging with 'Western' standards and values, such as acceptance of LGBTQ+ identities. This almost hyperbolic description of an asylum procedure was definitely strongly reproduced in many accounts of my interviewees.

Part of this homonationalist rhetoric is putting the histories of countries such as the Netherlands on a pedestal. As I have demonstrated, some of my research participants made generalisations and simplifications about 'other' cultures, and held stereotypes around 'non-Western' societies. However, letter-writer Simone demonstrated an awareness of colonial laws and legacies shaping these discourses. Dutch BPOC activism calls for a different

narrative to make known the role of former colonial forces in the criminalisation of homosexuality which informs persecution of queerness today.

Furthermore, some of my participants cautioned that the Netherlands was not always open and tolerant (Schmitt 2003). Simone said: "***Here, we had to fight for freedom for years, and now it's still not normal, it's getting worse actually***". Duyvendak (1996) has notably argued that public spaces in the Netherlands are still sanctioned as heterosexual, and heterosexuality is still the organising principle. Billie's support work also made her aware that the Netherlands today is frequently not safe, as queer asylum seekers are left on the streets, routinely intimidated, threatened by authorities, and sometimes trafficked.

On the whole, my interviewees seemed to feel like asylum authorities should keep an open mind, as they constructed Dutch society specifically as a 'safe haven' for queer refugees. The Netherlands was framed as an attractive country that people will inherently want to move to, regardless of circumstances. This was tied to a belief that immigrants will lie in order to enter the country, for example making an untruthful asylum claim. Consequently, strict immigration policies were considered necessary and justified, as Brennan (2016) also found. In line with this, many of my participants also felt the sense of mistrust that IND interviewers conventionally operate from legitimate.

In conclusion, I observed that homonationalist rhetoric was employed to deliberately to elevate a Dutch national imaginary at the expense of 'non-Western' countries and 'cultures'. In fact, I would argue, that the asylum system as a whole, is built on homonationalist understandings. In this process, (symbolic) borders are created and maintained, as I will explore in my final findings chapter.

4.3   Symbolic Bordering

In my final analysis chapter I focus on:

- o How does asylum interview preparation contribute to symbolic bordering practices present in the contemporary asylum system?

To support my analysis, I will draw on theories of bordering and bordering practices, how they play out in the contemporary Dutch asylum system and contribute to the situated constructions of queerness.

4.3.1   Physical borders

Squire (2009) describes asylum as intrinsically violent and exclusionary, since, at its core, it is part of wider state practices of border governance. So-called 'irregular migration' is framed as a policy concern of 'Western' countries, informed by moral panics surrounding an imagined deficiency of border control (Jordan and Düvell 2002). Hostile public rhetoric of 'bogus asylum seekers' and 'illegal immigrants' has a bearing on the asylum system, even though asylum is not part of conventional immigration policy. However, it is rarely acknowledged that irregular migration in fact occurs because of restrictive border controls, the category of 'illegal' created through strictly constrained entry.

Asylum law advisor Marjolein explicitly recognised asylum as exclusionary:

> "*It's a bit cynical, maybe, but whenever it's clear that people cannot return if they are homosexual, the IND usually is very critical on the believability aspects […] And if it's credible that someone is LGBT, they will say the risk [of persecution] is not high enough.*"

She is referring here to the two dimensions that must be 'proven' in an asylum interview, credibility of one's narrative, and risk of persecution in one's home country. Marjolein felt that the IND appeared intent on rejecting claimants, in that if one aspect of their case was strong, they would challenge the other one, deliberately searching for reasons to reject someone. Hereby, the physical borders of the nation-state are abstracted, reiterated and upheld in the asylum interview itself.

In a similar line of thinking, Michel called the system *'flawed'*, because it does not allow claimants what he would consider a "*fair chance*" to have their story heard and respected. However, he does not appear to take into account vast inequalities in terms of (legal) mobility, which are embedded in government institutions such as the IND and immigration policies. Borders are generally never completely closed, they are stringent towards certain people (Bauman 1998). Thus, one is left questioning whether perhaps the asylum system is working exactly the way it was intended.

Many of my participants talked critically about restrictive immigration policies, but nonetheless re-drew distinctions between 'regular migrants' and asylum seekers. Iris said:

> "*There is a restrictive entry policy to Holland. But that goes for regular procedures, family, study, work and everything. They don't want more people coming here. But they should check that mindset at the door when it comes to asylum seekers.*"

Here again, value hierarchies are created, with asylum seekers deemed more deserving than people moving with comparatively more agency and freedom. This is underpinned by beliefs that immigration on the whole is a 'burden' or 'threat' to a country's economy, security, or 'culture' (Bigo 2002). Jop also emphasises the need for immigration policy, urging: "*There has to be a policy. We can't do without the policy. I think that would create chaos.*" Viewed through a lens of open borders, there are many misconceptions embedded in this rhetoric (Fetzer 2016).

The logic of borders does not regard all human life as inherently valuable. People are hurt, sometimes killed by border enforcement, die in detention or from lack of access to medical care (Anderson et al. 2000). Especially asylum seekers are routinely portrayed as 'undesirables' to the host society in popular discourse. Frank highlighted the consequences of a hostile asylum process on people's lives, such as long waiting times, not being able to build up anything for oneself, fear of authorities and police. Considering the consequences of a negative asylum decision, exclusionary asylum can be regarded as a form of state violence.

4.3.2   Open borders & violence

Currently, most nation-states globally regulate their borders, and thereby mobility of people across geographical borders. However, migration scholars have argued this decision is informed by erroneous beliefs about movements of people in the absence of border

regulation (Anderson et al. 2009). Constructing mobility as a problem is an ideological background to maintain the global inequalities that incentivise people to move in the first place (Fetzer 2016). Therefore, 'open borders' constitutes a political project questioning territorialising of subjects more broadly, maintaining everyone should have opportunities and freedom to choose which 'national community' they want to live in, regardless of their country of birth (Jordan and Düvell 2002). Open borders thus make freedom of movement more equal. Hayter (2000) makes a case against all forms of immigration control, which she also regards as fundamentally tied to anti-racism.

Border logic is also lent credence through myths of a 'humane border'. Many participants condoned this rationale, finding state control of borders legitimate and appropriate. Despite working to help asylum seekers in their legal process to obtain papers, there was less support for an open borders approach than I had anticipated. Jop felt:

> "*I may be wrong, because immigration is of course a thing since mankind, it has always been there. But I'd say now, in the world we live in, I'm not in favour of completely open borders myself. I'm not right-wing, but also not for anarchy either.*"

This conflation of open borders with chaos and anarchy was not uncommon among lawyers, but also endorsed by some support workers and letter-writers. The notion of control when it came to borders and immigration is so deeply rooted in the framework of asylum that imagining an alternative seemed almost unfathomable. Marjolein stated that she supports open borders, yet many of her other statements contradicted this approach. There were many such tensions between practices and ideologies, as I have explained. However, most of my participants favoured advocacy within the system over activist resistance from the outside.

Only Hannah and Sophie strongly argued that the current asylum framework, although widely believed to be 'saving' people, supports institutionally racist systems. Hannah said: "*in the current fucked up borders system, our entire model of border control is built on solidity, so there is no space for the much more fluid*". Sophie asked: "*why should a government institution be allowed to question the authenticity of someone's story, their safety, and their right to exist?*". They agreed that borders of any nature should be abolished entirely, Hannah concluding: "*Honestly, open borders, for me there is no question about that. There's too many deaths, it's too bloody, it really needs to change, it needs to disappear.*"

4.3.3   Drawing symbolic borders

Yuval-Davis (2013) talks of borders beyond territorial boundaries as being symbolic and performed in everyday interactions to communicate 'otherness' and difference. Boundaries are drawn and redrawn in the course of the asylum process, and consequently, exclusions are made, which have an impact the on lived experiences of queer asylum seekers. Symbolic bordering practices create suspicion towards certain, typically racialised, communities, the effects of which are felt well beyond the asylum system (Wemyss et al. 2016).

Many of my participants readily engaged in bordering processes of asylum. For example, Iris described only putting in the work for those she thinks 'deserve' it, those she feels are telling the truth. She admitted to doing some "***checking***" herself, with LGBT organisations, whether her "client" had attended events. If so, she used this to strengthen the case, but it nonetheless involves a degree of mistrust. She emphasised several times she had experienced people "***falsely claiming***" to be LGBT, and therefore supported government controls: "***they need to investigate, because they can't willy-nilly give everybody asylum, based on the fact somebody says they are LGBT, there must be some kind of investigation***". Marjolein also spoke of extensive controls as crucial in the name of fairness: "***it won't be fair for the ones that are actually LGBT and actually have great risk in their country***". Therefore, heavy scrutiny of asylum claimants should continue to reserve special protection for those who "***really need it***".

It is correct that the asylum system would no longer function if every applicant was given refugee status. The asylum system is built on being highly selective and granting protection on a case-by-case basis (Miller 2005). The issue I see here, however, is the implication that granting protection *should* be selective, that open borders would be negative and that the way asylum operates is ethical. Through my volunteering experience I have seen how the asylum system saves people's lives, but it also destroys the lives of many more.

In other words, there is another level of judgement around 'credibility' and 'authenticity' that occurs during the preparation stage, before IND interviews even takes place. Far from giving people a 'fairer' chance, this serves only those claimants who are already considered 'genuine', having successfully performed a notion of queerness. This creates a hierarchy of 'deservingness' and associated 'entitlement' to protection and support.

Furthermore, even when people are believed to be 'authentically' queer, borders are created around 'deservingness'. Michel distinguishes between asylum applicants who are proactive and show gratitude, in contrast with people "***just waiting for their legal papers***". There is

no acknowledgement here that this state of 'limbo' is a direct result of being denied the right to work, and other restraints during an asylum procedure.

Nonetheless, not all my participants agreed with this approach, making my findings somewhat more ambiguous. Sophie talked at length about negative effects of these exclusions. Frank also elaborated on experiences of being othered and stigmatised, particularly where borders are drawn along explicitly racial lines. Hannah felt especially conflicted about her work:

> "*I remember the first time writing that letter thinking, now I actually have to produce part of the discourse […] but even if you felt uncomfortable, and I did, because you reproduce a kind of image of, to put it very simply, a 'backward culture', these letters are needed, and therefore we need to do them.*"

She remained critical of "*official frameworks and border politics*" but also recognised people's situation and need. Here, one had to "*occupy two different spaces at the same time*", she explained.

However, instances of racism I noted amongst my participants strongly drew symbolic borders around imaginations of queerness. Dutch BPOC communities were often conflated with migrants, and othered through exclusion from supposedly 'Western' discourses. Many talked about a 'Dutch perspective' on sexuality, which they did not believe BPOC communities to share. Thus, instead of an acknowledgement of situatedness, these distinctions are made along racist lines. Racist borders are thus also drawn, which parallels fundamentally racist border policies relating to national borders (Fekete 2005).

Consequently, lawyers, support workers and letter-writers by extension become border agents through their everyday bordering practices (Wemyss et al. 2016). They become active participants in the system that racially others new arrivals. Furthermore, in the very nature of attempting to define and communicate a specific notion of non-heteronormative sexuality, actors in the asylum preparation process maintain symbolic borders around queerness.

Yet, exclusions relating to queerness concerned gender as well as sexuality. In my interviews, trans people were systematically othered and excluded. While all my participants showed support and understanding for 'gay' asylum cases, some purposefully used transphobic slurs in their accounts. Non-binary and gender non-conforming people were not even mentioned. This too is revealing of implicit normativities when talking about non-heteronormative experiences. The most overt case of this was in an account exhibiting

transphobia, seemingly heedlessly. When talking about how to determine someone's LGBT claim, Jop stated:

> *"I'm happy I don't have to judge people that claim they are gay or lesbian. Look, transgender people, it's more obvious. They actually have proof very often, because they have seen doctors, they're on meds already, they're with psychologists, there are reports from time to time. And of course, if you see, say, a grown-up man with breasts, you know, it's more clear."*

Here, trans people are portrayed as and reduced to a bodily 'abnormality' that is visible and 'obvious' in its non-conformity. As with narrow definitions of sexuality, limiting constructions of gender and trans experiences also produce violent exclusions. While part of me would like to explain this comment as ignorance, I find it difficult to believe that someone who is well-intentioned would make such a remark after years working with queer asylum applicants. Assuming a role of support, for him, evidently does not entail a responsibility towards his "clients", such as listening to their experiences and attempting to understand their realities without passing judgement.

4.3.4   Intersections & parallels

Interestingly, it was those actors who understood queerness in a reflective and situated way, allowing for complexity and resisting essentialised categorisations, who also demonstrated an awareness of the violence of physical and symbolic borders. Thus, I found parallels between someone's understanding of queerness and their approach to borders. Marjolein, for example, mentioned open borders as desirable and also supported people's right to self-definition.

Some respondents were very aware of symbolic bordering processes and talked about exclusions embedded in the current system and its conceptions of sexuality. Michel talked about his own sexuality as fluid and then reflected on how the IND would likely not accept such experiences of sexuality as valid in the context of an asylum interview. Even if he did not name them as such, he demonstrated critical awareness of these bordering practices. Hannah argued the need to open up a discussion about "*sexuality, but also geopolitics and culture*", saying:

"I think it's two regimes that need to change, the border regimes and our regimes of sex and gender. It's interesting that they both build walls. But in this particular political moment, I would first want to see the border regime changed."

As I have discussed, however, the majority of people I spoke to justified and recreated the exclusionary border logic of the asylum system. At the same time, homonationalist rhetoric allowed them to nonetheless present and understand themselves, their practices, and the Dutch system at large, in a positive light.

In conclusion therefore, I address my main research question of what notions of queerness are constructed in practices of LGBTI asylum interview preparation. First of all, constructions of queerness I witnessed were situated and contextual, and therefore predominantly normative. Notions of non-heteronormative sexual experiences and desires were, to a great extent, informed by or congruent with an identity-framework of sexuality. These notions were also habitually homonationalist and exclusionary along lines of 'race' and 'culture', as well as for non-binary and non-conforming gender expressions and identities. Asylum seekers must perform these notions of queerness in order to be regarded 'credibly' LGBTI and at risk in their countries of origin. Thus, they are also notions that (re)draw boundaries and symbolic borders, notions that uphold national borders and support an intrinsically exclusionary asylum system.

Chapter 5.   Discussion

I initially made the decision to draw on bordering literature upon becoming aware of parallels between management of physical borders around nation-states and construction of boundaries around sexual identity categories in being exclusionary, violent, and potentially life-threatening. As these processes pertain to queer asylum seekers, they are subject to symbolic bordering practices in both regards. In asylum interviews for LGBTI claimants, it is routinely communicated that they do not fit or belong, are unwanted and not 'queer enough' or 'deserving enough' to be granted protection and the same rights and opportunities as others.

While much of this comes from government authorities such as the IND, I have found that it also occurs in more subtle, and arguably less deliberate, forms on the level of asylum interview preparation. This leads me to ask questions about where power is located here, in what interactions and instances are there power imbalances, and where are these dynamics state-sanctioned. In moments of definition and conceptualisation of queer sexualities, when and where is power appropriated, and by whom?

Asylum is meant to offer a framework for international protection and the focus is supposed to be on the individual. In fact, the legislation explicitly appeals to 'the individual' in its framing. The "well-founded fear of persecution" must concern the applicant in particular. Yet the asylum process does not award power to individuals, because they are considered part of wider immigration movements, and it would require nation-states giving up some control over their physical and symbolic borders. Thus, asylum claims must be governed by the state, and individual protection must be approved and 'granted', it cannot be 'claimed'.

In LGBTI cases, where someone's queerness is essentially impossible to 'prove', there is a heightened emphasis placed on governing and regulating applicants. This is declared necessary, in official terms, to protect the system from 'abuse' and 'fraud'. Subsequently, invoking a specific narrative and clear categorisations of queer sexuality that need to be adhered to suits these objectives.

A central finding of my research was that these processes do not always happen intentionally, at least at the level of interview preparation. Understanding of sexuality is rooted in situated social, political, cultural, and historical context. However, this appears to be almost weaponised to inform and suit anti-immigrant sentiment. I particularly found homonationalist rhetoric to be drawn on in cases where my participants felt a need to be

legitimised in their practices as 'saving individuals' from 'backward cultures'. Nonetheless, many whole-heartedly believed their interview preparation work to be helpful and doing good. They would not regard their practices as being informed by, let alone upholding, an exclusionary system.

Yet, the subjects that have power to define and control margins of queerness subsequently have power to influence someone's asylum claim, potentially making them 'illegal' in the eyes of the state. This excludes them from the imagined national community and any civil protections and puts them at risk of detention and deportation. Being in a position to define sexuality means occupying a position of power, in the way that any linguistic definition is a process involving power, because you are defining the contextual knowledge about something, thus informing the way people can think of themselves.

As an asylum seeker in the Netherlands, you are required to embody 'Western' contextual understanding to demonstrate your belonging to this way of thinking and be awarded refugee status. Therefore, conceptualising queer sexualities can be regarded as having a very real exclusionary effect. It is a manifestation of power that the state can exert, and that people who work for or support the state and this system thereby endorse and reinforce. My participants did not all deliberately and actively subscribe to sharing IND views on queerness, but the majority supported the contemporary asylum system that holds that power over asylum applicants.

As I have argued, this draws borders and boundaries between people. As a queer migrant without permission to enter the country, actual physical borders become extended to symbolic bordering practices, playing out through constructions of sexuality. I see the parallels between no-borders movements and queer theory in their stance against boundaries and categories of exclusion, as well as their support for freedom of movement and fluidity in social experiences.

Subsequently, even if you don't think your practices are supporting the system that draws those borders, informs the division and criteria that includes or excludes people, you still have an authority in that situation, based in your position that is given power by the state. Asylum interview preparation practices may be designed with good intentions and considered helpful, but they only remain so if one ignores the workings of the larger system one is part of. Participation in that system helps sustain it, because in 'preparing' people or instructing them in the way that the IND imagines sexuality, those boundaries are being redrawn.

Therefore, conceptions of queer sexualities that lawyers, support workers and letter-writers have are integral to understanding wider societal and governmental conceptions of queerness. Where there is a firm belief in the larger asylum system, possibilities for improvement remain limited. The focus becomes how an asylum system can function in the best and fairest way, rather than questioning the exclusionary framework as a whole. For example, some of my participants advocated for broader or different definitions of sexuality that would better discern who is 'really' LGBTQ+. Thus, there is an imaginary about what queerness 'really' is, which the IND should determine in order for the whole concept of asylum to work 'properly' and 'fairly'.

In other words, most of my participants believed that the system needed to be better, but not that it needed to be very different or abolished altogether. They were still invested in the state, in legal 'justice', and in a system that controls and judges someone else's sexuality, thereby controlling and judging someone's 'legitimacy' to enter and be allowed to exist in this nation-state.

Furthermore, in the very process of the state determining whether to sanction someone's legal entry into their 'imagined community', it is assessed whether someone understands and can perform these situated conceptions of queerness. The asylum interview, as well as the preparation work beforehand, teaches you the 'rules' of the game, that you need to think in a certain way, you need to present your sexuality in the way it is defined by 'us'. Being granted asylum thus almost becomes an unspoken agreement to obey those boundaries, even down to the level of thinking, acting, expressing oneself and one's past. The topic of sexuality thereby becomes a way to perform symbolic bordering practices and reinforce 'us vs. them' thinking.

Consequently, power is everywhere. As it pertains to and is present in the specific example of this research, it plays out through sexuality, through how notions of queerness are constructed, and therefore, how real and imagined borders of the Dutch nation-state are created and maintained.

Chapter 6.   Conclusions

To conclude, the notions of queerness constructed in practices of LGBTI asylum interview preparation in the Netherlands were situated, contextual, and mostly normative. Notions of non-heteronormative sexual experiences and desires were, to a great extent, shaped by an identity-framework of sexuality and exclusionary towards non-binary and non-conforming gender expressions and identities. They were also strongly biased along lines of 'race' and 'culture', as well as congruent with homonationalist rhetoric.

There were fewer tensions than I had anticipated, in terms of interview preparation practices upholding the contemporary asylum system and the ideologies of lawyers, support workers and letter-writers. In fact, many endorsed the current Dutch system, although suggesting improvements that were believed to improve 'fairness'. Accordingly, their constructions of queerness thereby maintained symbolic borders, supporting an intrinsically exclusionary asylum system and national borders.

I imagine the findings of this research would be transferable to asylum processes and corresponding interview preparation work in other European countries. It would be interesting to see how homonationalist rhetoric may play out differently in countries that are less publicly performative in their tolerance of queer subjects and perhaps grant fewer LGBTQ+ rights than the Netherlands.

Overall, my findings fit very well within existing literature on bordering. Symbolic practices are embedded in the asylum process, as previous research has evidenced (Green 2010). I particularly drew on Yuval-Davis (2013) to understand the everyday nature of these processes in producing marginalisation and exclusions. In my project I observed these bordering practices to be extended to asylum interview preparation. Although some support workers understood their professional practices as a form of resistance within the system, as they were helping people's chances of receiving a positive asylum decision, many examined asylum seekers with scrutiny and suspicion similar to government officials.

Furthermore, in their understandings of queerness, actors in LGBTI asylum interview preparation largely reproduced normative tropes around (essentialised) identities, which are arguably ill-suited to allow for a wide variety of queer desires and experiences. In terms of theories on sexuality, I began with queer theory as a starting point, due to its approach of situating narratives, to enable understanding experiences of nonhegemonic sexuality outside

the dominant discourse. I did this to resist categorisation, challenge essentialised identities and binaries, and to draw attention to underlying power relations (Sullivan 2003).

However, I quickly realised some shortcomings within the field of queer theory, such as a lack of intersectional awareness (Cohen 1997) and issues relating to translation of queer theory to 'non-Western' contexts (Ruvalcaba 2016). Furthermore, to fully understand the processes at play in LGBTI asylum interview preparation I needed to also bring in literature on homonationalism (Puar 2013). My research thus suggests that queer theoretical approaches need to be expanded to incorporate intersectionality, and, most importantly, 'non-Western' voices into conversations about sexualities.

This project also contributed to empirical knowledge around asylum interview preparation practices, specifically for asylum claims made on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Limitations of my research might stem from the over-representation of white voices in interview preparation, and consequently, in this project. In future endeavours, more attention should be paid to such biases during the recruitment stages. For future research, I would also recommend looking more into the role of gender in these processes, as I focused primarily on sexuality.

However, I find it difficult to make recommendations for policy or best practice, beyond very broadly calling for greater awareness around the situatedness of sexuality constructions as they pertain to asylum and migration more widely. I do not believe that reforming the asylum process will eradicate the structural violence and exclusions inherent to the system. I have tried to remain close to what my participants shared with me, and not twist their words and intentions, yet at the same time, the violence condoned by supporting the system must not be ignored.

Challenging problematic aspects of immigration policies and the asylum system does not go far enough, as it excuses the inherent violence of borders and border regimes as tools of justifying and intensifying global inequalities. I argue that structures such as the contemporary Dutch asylum system are fundamentally heteronormative, cis-normative and racially oppressive. Rather than suggesting improvements therefore, an entirely different future and framework should be imagined, beyond territorialised forms of exclusion and creation of hierarchies.

Bibliography

Ahmed, Sara. 2006. *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ahuja, Neel. 2015. 'Intimate Atmospheres: Queer Theory in a Time of Extinctions'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21(2):365–85.

Aldred, Rachel. 2008. 'Ethical and Political Issues in Contemporary Research Relationships'. *Sociology* 42(5):887–903.

Allen, Jafari S. 2012. 'Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjuncture'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18(2):211–48.

Amer, Sahar. 2010. 'Joseph Massad and the Alleged Violence of Human Rights'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16(4):649–53.

Anderson, Bridget. 2013. *Us and Them? The Dangerous Politics of Immigration Control*. First edition. Oxford, United Kingdom ; New York: Oxford University Press.

Anderson, Bridget, Nandita Sharma, and Cynthia Wright. 2009. 'Editorial: Why No Borders?' *Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees* 26(2):5–18.

Anderson, Malcolm, Maria-Elena Alcaraz, Roland Freudenstein, Virginie Guiraudon, Leszek Jesien, Rey Koslowski, Gallya Lahav, Christopher Mitchell, Joseph Nevins, and David Spener. 2000. *The Wall around the West: State Borders and Immigration Controls in North America and Europe*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Andersson, Ruben. 2014. *Illegality, Inc.: Clandestine Migration and the Business of Bordering Europe*. California: University of California Press.

Andersson, Ruben. 2016. 'Europe's Failed "Fight" against Irregular Migration: Ethnographic Notes on a Counterproductive Industry'. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42(7):1055–75.

Anzaldúa, Gloria. 1991. 'To(o) Queer the Writer: Loca, Escrita y Chicana'. Pp. 249–63 in *InVersions: Writing by Dykes, Queers and Lesbians*, edited by B. Warland. Vancouver: Press Gang.

Appiah, Kwame Anthony. 2006. 'The Politics of Identity'. *Daedalus* 135(4):15–22.

Babbie, Earl R., Elizabeth Beiting-Lipps, and Kara Kindstrom. 2016. *The Practice of Social Research*. 14th ed. Boston: Cengage Learning.

Back, Les. 2007. *The Art of Listening*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Baker, Sarah Elsie and Rosalind Edwards. 2012. 'How Many Qualitative Interviews Is Enough? Expert Voices and Early Career Reflections on Sampling and Cases in Qualitative Research'. *National Centre For Research Methods & ESCR* Review Paper:1–43.

Bauman, Zygmunt. 1998. *Globalisation: The Human Consequences*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Beauchamp, Toby. 2006. 'Queering Borders'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 12(4):646–49.

Beauchamp, Toby. 2012. 'The Substance of Borders: Transgender Politics, Mobility, and US State Regulation of Testosterone'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 19(1):57–78.

Becker, Howard S. 1967. 'Whose Side Are We On'. *Social Problems* 14:239–47.

Benavente, Gabby and Julian Gill-Peterson. 2019. 'The Promise of Trans Critique: Susan Stryker's Queer Theory'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25(1):23–28.

Berg, Laurie and Jenni Millbank. 2009. 'Constructing the Personal Narratives of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Asylum Claimants'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 22(2):195–223.

Berlant, Lauren and Michael Warner. 1998. 'Sex in Public'. *Critical Inquiry* 24(2):547–566.

Bernstein, Ann and Myron Weiner. 1999. *Migration and Refugee Policies – An Overview*. London: Pinter.

Bigo, Didier. 2002. 'Security and Immigration: Toward a Critique of the Governmentality of Unease'. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 27(1):63–92.

Blaikie, Norman. 2010. *Designing Social Research - The Logic of Anticipation*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity.

Bracke, Sarah. 2012. 'From "Saving Women" to "Saving Gays": Rescue Narratives and Their Dis/Continuities'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19(2):237–52.

Brennan, Sarah French. 2016. 'Specter of the Fraud: Muslim Sexual Minorities and Asylum in the Netherlands'. *Perspectives on Europe* 46(1):75–79.

Brennan, Sarah French. 2017. 'So Much for Dutch Tolerance: Life as an LGBT Asylum Seeker in the Netherlands'. *The Conversation*. Retrieved 13 April 2019 (http://theconversation.com/so-much-for-dutch-tolerance-life-as-an-lgbt-asylum-seeker-in-the-netherlands-80332).

Brennan, Sarah French. 2018. 'Queer Futurity and the "Backward" Muslim: An Anxious Intersection for Queer Muslim Asylum Seekers in the Netherlands'. Pp. 27–32 in *Porous Borders, Invisible Boundaries? Ethnographic Perspectives on the Vicissitudes of Contemporary Migration*. Arlington, VA: Committee on Refugees and Immigrants, American Anthropological Association.

Brinkmann, Svend and Steinar Kvale. 2015. *InterViews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing*. 3rd ed. London: Sage.

Browne, K. 2009. 'Queer Theory/Queer Geographies'. Pp. 39–45 in *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography*, edited by R. Kitchin and N. Thrift. Oxford: Elsevier.

Brubaker and Cooper. 2000. 'Beyond "Identity"'. *Theory and Society* 29(1):1–47.

Bryman, Alan. 2016. *Social Research Methods (5th Edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Butler, Judith. 1990. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of 'Sex'*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, Judith. 2011. *Giving an Account of Oneself*. Vancouver: Crane Library at the University of British Columbia.

Campbell, Emma Jean and Emily Jean Steel. 2015. 'Mental Distress and Human Rights of Asylum Seekers'. *Journal of Public Mental Health* 14(2):43–55.

Canaday, Margot. 2003. '"Who Is a Homosexual?": The Consolidation of Sexual Identities in Mid-Twentieth-Century American Immigration Law'. *Law & Social Inquiry* 28(2):351–386.

Cantú, Lionel. 2009. *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*. New York: New York University Press.

Carrillo, Héctor. 2004. 'Sexual Migration, Cross-Cultural Sexual Encounters, and Sexual Health'. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 1(3):58–70.

Charmaz, Kathy. 2014. *Constructing Grounded Theory (2nd Edition)*. London: Sage.

Chávez, Karma R. 2010. 'Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse'. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* 7(2):136–55.

Cisneros-Puebla, Cesar A., Robert Faux, and Günter Mey. 2004. 'Qualitative Researchers—Stories Told, Stories Shared: The Storied Nature of Qualitative Research. An Introduction to the Special Issue: FQS Interviews I'. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research* 5(3):13.

Clark, Tom. 2008. '`We're Over-Researched Here!': Exploring Accounts of Research Fatigue within Qualitative Research Engagements'. *Sociology* 42(5):953–70.

Cohen, Cathy J. 1997. 'Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?' *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 3(4):437–465.

Colpani, Gianmaria and Adriano José Habed. 2014. '"In Europe It's Different": Homonationalism and Peripheral Desires for Europe'. Pp. 73–93 in *LGBT Activism and the Making of Europe*, edited by P. M. Ayoub and D. Paternotte. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1991. 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color'. *Stanford Law Review* 43(6):1241–99.

Crumlish, Niall and Pat Bracken. 2011. 'Mental Health and the Asylum Process'. *Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine* 28(2):57–60.

Cruz-Malavé, Arnaldo and Martin F. Manalansan. 2002. *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*. New York: New York University Press.

CSEL. 2016a. 'Free Movement: Centre for the Study of Emotion and Law - Myth Buster: A Truthful Account Remains Consistent'. Retrieved 2 September 2017

(https://www.freemovement.org.uk/myth-buster-a-truthful-account-remains-consistent/).

CSEL. 2016b. 'Free Movement: Centre for the Study of Emotion and Law - Myth Buster: Memories of Trauma Are Engraved on the Brain'. Retrieved 2 September 2017 (https://www.freemovement.org.uk/myth-buster-memories-of-trauma-are-engraved-on-the-brain/).

Dauvergne, Catherine and Jenni Millbank. 2003. 'Burdened by Proof: How the Australian Refugee Review Tribunal Has Failed Lesbian and Gay Asylum Seekers'. *Federal Law Review* 31:299–342.

Davidson, Christina. 2009. 'Transcription: Imperatives for Qualitative Research'. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 8(2):35–52.

De Genova, Nicholas P. 2002. 'Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life'. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31(1):419–47.

De Lauretis, Teresa. 1991. 'Queer Theory. Lesbian and Gay Sexualities: An Introduction'. *Special Issue of Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3(2):iii–xviii.

Decena, Carlos Ulises. 2008. 'Tacit Subjects'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14(2–3):339–359.

Dehghan, Saeed Kamali. 2019. 'Armenian MPs Call for Trans Activist to Be Burned Alive after Historic Speech'. *The Guardian*, April 26.

Duggan, Lisa. 2003. *The Twilight of Equality: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Dutta, Aniruddha. 2015. 'Queering Necropolitics Across Borders'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21(4):670–73.

Duyvendak, Jan Willem. 1996. 'The Depoliticization of the Dutch Gay Identity, or Why Dutch Gays Aren't Queer'. Pp. 421–38 in *Queer Theory/Sociology*, edited by S. Seidman. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Elliot, Mark, Ian Fairweather, Wendy Olsen, and Maria Pampaka. 2016. *A Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2011. *European Others: Queering Ethnicity in Post-National Europe*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

El-Tayeb, Fatima. 2012. '"Gays Who Cannot Properly Be Gay": Queer Muslims in the Neoliberal European City'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19(1):79–95.

Eng, David L. 2011. 'Queering the Black Atlantic, Queering the Brown Atlantic'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17(1):193–204.

Epps, Bradley S., Keja Valens, and Bill Johnson González. 2005. *Passing Lines: Sexuality and Immigration*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Epstein, B. J. and Robert Gillet, eds. 2017. *Queer in Translation*. London: Routledge.

Epstein, Steven and Héctor Carrillo. 2014. 'Immigrant Sexual Citizenship: Intersectional Templates among Mexican Gay Immigrants to the USA'. *Citizenship Studies* 18(3–4):259–76.

Eskridge Jr, William M. and Nan D. Hunter. 1997. *Sexuality, Gender, and the Law*. New York: The Foundation Press, Inc.

Essed, Philomena and Sandra Trienekens. 2008. '"Who Wants to Feel White?" Race, Dutch Culture and Contested Identities'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 31(1):52–72.

Fekete, Liz. 2005. 'The Deportation Machine: Europe, Asylum and Human Rights'. *Race & Class* 47(1):64–78.

Fetzer, Joel S. 2016. 'Theories of Open Borders'. Pp. 1–19 in *Open Borders and International Migration Policy: The Effects of Unrestricted Immigration in the United States, France, and Ireland*, edited by J. S. Fetzer. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.

Fortier, Anne-Marie. 2001. '"Coming Home": Queer Migrations and Multiple Evocations of Home'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 4(4):405–24.

Fortier, Anne-Marie. 2002. 'Chapter 12: Queer Diaspora'. in *Handbook of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, edited by D. Richardson and S. Seidman. London: SAGE Publications.

Foucault, Michel. 1976. *The History of Sexuality, Vol 1: An Introduction*. London: Penguin.

Foucault, Michel. 1980. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972–77*. edited by C. Gordon. New York: Pantheon.

Gilbert, Nigel and Paul Stoneman. 2015. *Researching Social Life (4th Edition)*. London: SAGE.

Gluck, Sherna B. and Daphne Patai. 1991. *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. London: Routledge.

Goldberg, David Theo and John Solomos. 2002. *A Companion to Racial and Ethnic Studies*. Cambridge, Massachusetts & Oxford: Blackwell.

Gopinath, Gayatri. 2005. *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Government.nl. 2017. 'Pride Amsterdam 2017 – Dialogue Meeting on LGBTI and Asylum'. Retrieved 13 April 2019 (https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2017/08/04/pride-amsterdam-2017-%E2%80%93-dialogue-meeting-on-lgbti-and-asylum).

Government.nl. 2018. 'Ministerie van Justitie en Veiligheid: News item - Harbers: "Emphasis on the authentic story of LGBTs and converts"'. Retrieved 13 April 2019 (https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2018/07/04/harbers-%E2%80%9Cemphasis-on-the-authentic-story-of-lgbts-and-converts%E2%80%9D).

Green, Adam Isaiah. 2007. 'Queer Theory and Sociology: Locating the Subject and the Self in Sexuality Studies'. *Sociological Theory* 25(1):26–45.

Green, Sarah. 2010. 'Performing Border in the Aegean: On Relocating Political, Economic and Social Relations'. *Journal of Cultural Economy* 3(2):261–78.

Griffiths, Melanie. 2012. '"Vile Liars and Truth Distorters"; Truth, Trust and the Asylum System'. *Anthropology Today* 28(5):8–12.

Gross, Aeyal. 2007. 'Queer Theory and International Human Rights Law: Does Each Person Have a Sexual Orientation?' *Proceedings of the ASIL Annual Meeting* 101:129–32.

Guba, Egon G. and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 1994. 'Competing Paradigms in Qualitative Research'. in *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research (1st edition)*, edited by N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln. London: SAGE.

Hage, Ghassan. 2000. *White Nation : Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Halley, Janet E. 2013. 'Chapter 2. The Politics of the Closet: Legal Articulation of Sexual Orientation Identity'. Pp. 24–38 in *After Identity: A Reader in Law and Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Hallowell, Nina, Julia Lawton, and Susan Gregory. 2005. *Reflections on Research: The Realities of Doing Research in the Social Sciences*. Berkshire: Open University Press.

Hammersley, Martyn. 2008. 'Assessing Validity in Social Research'. Pp. 42–53 in *The SAGE Handbook of Social Research Methods*. London: Sage.

Hanna, Fadi. 2005. 'Punishing Masculinity in Gay Asylum Claims'. *The Yale Law Journal* 114(4):913–20.

Haraway, Donna. 1988. 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective'. *Feminist Studies* 14(3):575–99.

Haritaworn, Jin. 2012. 'Women's Rights, Gay Rights and Anti-Muslim Racism in Europe: Introduction'. *European Journal of Women's Studies* 19(1):73–78.

Hausbichler, Beate. 2019. 'Warum Misstrauen Geboten Ist, Wenn Die Herkunft von Tätern Im Mittelpunkt Steht'. *DerStandard.At*, January 24.

Hayter, Teresa. 2000. *Open Borders: The Case against Immigration Controls*. London: Pluto Press.

Hertoghs, Maja and Willem Schinkel. 2018. 'The State's Sexual Desires: The Performance of Sexuality in the Dutch Asylum Procedure'. *Theory and Society* 47(6):691–716.

hooks, bell. 1989. *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black*. Boston: South End Press.

hooks, bell. 1992. *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston: South End Press.

ILGA Europe. 2016. 'Briefing on LGBTI Refugees and Asylum: Seeking Refuge without Harassment, Detention or Return to a "Safe Country"'.

IND. 2017. 'Annual Results Information: The IND in 2014'.

IND. 2019. 'IND Asylum Work Instructions'. Retrieved 5 August 2019 (http://ind.nl:80/en/about-ind/figures-and-publications/Pages/Work-instructions.aspx).

Israel, M. and I. Hay. 2006. *Research Ethics for Social Scientists: Between Ethical Conduct and Regulatory Compliance*. London: Sage.

Jackson, Peter A. 2009. 'Capitalism and Global Queering: National Markets, Parallels Among Sexual Cultures, and Multiple Queer Modernities'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 15(3):357–95.

Jansen, Sabine. 2014. *Good Practices Related to LGBTI Asylum Applicants in Europe | ILGA-Europe*.

Jansen, Sabine. 2019. 'Pride or Shame? Assessing LGBTI Asylum Applications In The Netherlands Following The XYZ & ABC Judgments'.

Jivraj, Suhraiya and Anisa De Jong. 2011. 'The Dutch Homo-Emancipation Policy and Its Silencing Effects on Queer Muslims'. *Feminist Legal Studies* 19(2):143–58.

Jordan, Bill and Franck Düvell. 2002. *Irregular Migration: The Dilemmas of Transnational Mobility*. Cheltenham, UK; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing.

Katyal, Sonia. 2002. 'Exporting Identity'. *Yale Journal of Law & Feminism* 14(1):4.

Kobelinsky, Carolina. 2012. 'L'asile gay : jurisprudence de l'intime à la Cour nationale du droit d'asile'. *Droit et societe* n° 82(3):583–601.

Kuntsman, Adi. 2009. *Figurations of Violence and Belonging: Queerness, Migranthood, and Nationalism in Cyberspace and Beyond*. Oxford: Peter Lang.

Lavers, Michael K. 2018. 'LGBT Cubans Seek Asylum in the Netherlands'. *Washington Blade: Gay News, Politics, LGBT Rights*, January 28.

LaViolette, Nicole. 2004. *Sexual Orientation and the Refugee Determination Process: Questioning a Claimant About Their Membership in the Particular Social Group*. Ottawa: University of Ottawa.

Leese, Matthias and Stef Wittendorp. 2017. *Security/Mobility: Politics of Movement*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lentin, Alana. 2005. 'Replacing "Race", Historicizing "Culture" in Multiculturalism'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 39(4):379–96.

Lentin, Alana and Gavan Titley. 2011. *The Crises of Multiculturalism: Racism in a Neoliberal Age*. London: Zed Books Ltd.

Lichtman, Marilyn. 2014. *Qualitative Research for the Social Sciences*. London: SAGE Publications.

Liebling, Helen, Shani Burke, Simon Goodman, and Daniel Zasada. 2014. 'Understanding the Experiences of Asylum Seekers'. *International Journal of Migration, Health and Social Care* 10(4):207–19.

Luibhéid, Eithne. 2002. *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality at the Border*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Luibhéid, Eithne. 2004. 'Heteronormativity and Immigration Scholarship: A Call for Change'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10(2):227–35.

Luibhéid, Eithne. 2005. 'Chapter 2. Heteronormativity, Responsibility, and Neo-Liberal Governance in U.S. Immigration Control'. Pp. 69–101 in *Passing lines: Sexuality and immigration*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Luibhéid, Eithne. 2008a. 'QUEER/MIGRATION: An Unruly Body of Scholarship'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14(2–3):169–90.

Luibhéid, Eithne. 2008b. 'Sexuality, Migration, and the Shifting Line between Legal and Illegal Status'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 14(2):289–315.

Luibhéid, Eithne and Lionel Cantú. 2005. *Queer Migrations: Sexuality, U.S. Citizenship, and Border Crossings*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Luit, Lieneke. 2013. 'Pink Solutions: Inventarisatie situatie LHBT asielzoekers'.

Malagreca, Miguel A. 2009. 'Writing Queer across the Borders of Geography and Desire'. *Policy Futures in Education* 7(2):244–55.

Manalansan IV, Martin F. 2006. 'Queer Intersections: Sexuality and Gender in Migration Studies'. *International Migration Review* 40(1):224–49.

Mason, Jennifer. 2018. *Qualitative Researching (3rd Edition)*. London: SAGE.

Massad, Joseph. 2002. 'Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World'. *Public Culture* 14(2):361–86.

May, Tim. 2011. *Social Research: Issues, Methods and Process (4th Ed.)*. 4th ed. London: Open University Press.

Mepschen, Paul. 2016. 'Sexual Democracy, Cultural Alterity and the Politics of Everyday Life in Amsterdam'. *Patterns of Prejudice* 50(2):150–67.

Mepschen, Paul, Jan Willem Duyvendak, and Evelien H. Tonkens. 2010. 'Sexual Politics, Orientalism and Multicultural Citizenship in the Netherlands'. *Sociology* 44(5):962–79.

Miller, Alice M. 2005. 'Chapter 4. Gay Enough: Some Tensions in Seeking the Grant of Asylum and Protecting Global Sexual Diversity'. Pp. 137–87 in *Passing lines: Sexuality and immigration*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Modood, Tariq. 2013. *Multiculturalism - A Civic Idea*. 2nd ed. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. 1988. 'Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses'. *Feminist Review* (30):61–88.

Murray, David A. B. 2014. 'Real Queer: "Authentic" LGBT Refugee Claimants and Homonationalism in the Canadian Refugee System'. *Anthropologica* 56(1):21–32.

Namaste, Viviane K. 2000. *Invisible Lives: The Erasure of Transsexual and Transgendered People*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Nancheva, Nevena. 2016. 'Bulgaria's Response to Refugee Migration: Institutionalizing the Boundary of Exclusion'. *Journal of Refugee Studies* 29(4):549–67.

Newman, David. 2003. 'On Borders and Power: A Theoretical Framework'. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18(1):13–25.

Okin, Susan Moller. 1999. *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?* edited by J. Cohen, M. Howard, and M. C. Nussbaum. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Olsen, Preston Trent. 2017. 'The Inclusive Guise of "Gay" Asylum: A Socio- Legal Analysis of Sexual Minority Asylum Recognition in the UK'. PhD Thesis, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh.

Özdil, Zihni. 2014. '"Racism Is an American Problem": Dutch Exceptionalism and Its Politics of Denial'. *Frame Journal of Literary Studies* 27(2):29–47.

Palmer, Catherine and Kirrilly Thompson. 2010. 'Everyday Risks and Professional Dilemmas: Fieldwork with Alcohol-Based (Sporting) Subcultures'. *Qualitative Research* 10(4):421–40.

Pascucci, Elisa. 2019. 'The Humanitarian Infrastructure and the Question of Over-research: Reflections on Fieldwork in the Refugee Crises in the Middle East and North Africa'. *Area* 49(2):249–255.

Patton, Cindy and Benigno Sánchez-Eppler. 2000. *Queer Diasporas*. Durham: Duke University Press.

van der Pijl, Yvon, Brenda C. Oude Breuil, Lene Swetzer, Marilena Drymioti, and Marjolein Goderie. 2018. '"We Do Not Matter": Transgender Migrants/Refugees in the Dutch Asylum System'. *Violence and Gender* 5(1):1–11.

Pollini, Fernanda. 2013. 'The Difficult Path towards the Recognition of Refugee Status Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity: Analysing Brazil and the United Kingdom'. PhD Thesis.

Posocco, Silvia, Adi Kuntsman, and Jinthana Haritaworn. 2014. *Queer Necropolitics*. New York: Routledge.

Powles, Julia. 2004. 'Life History and Personal Narrative: Theoretical and Methodological Issues Relevant to Research and Evaluation in Refugee Contexts.' *New Issues in Refugee Research* Working Paper No. 106:26.

Puar, Jasbir. 2013. 'Rethinking Homonationalism'. *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 45(02):336–39.

Puar, Jasbir K. 2002. 'Circuits of Queer Mobility: Tourism, Travel, and Globalization'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 8(1):101–37.

Puar, Jasbir K. 2017. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Duke University Press.

Puumala, Eeva. 2009. 'Book Review Essay: Navigating Boundaries, Going Beyond Categories: From the Theoretical Figure of a Refugee to the Everyday as a Refugee'. *Cooperation and Conflict* 44(1):109–17.

Rahman, Momin. 2014. *Homosexuality, Muslim Cultures & Modernity*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Rainey, Venetia. 2017. '"Not Gay Enough": Dutch Authorities Challenge Asylum-Seekers to Prove Their Sexuality'. *Public Radio International*. Retrieved 25 March 2019 (https://www.pri.org/stories/2017-11-09/not-gay-enough-dutch-authorities-challenge-asylum-seekers-prove-their-sexuality).

Reinharz and Shulami. 1992. 'Feminist Interview Research'. in *Feminist Methods In Social Sciences*. New York: Oxford University Press USA.

Rich, Adrienne. 1980. 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence'. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5(4):631–60.

Right to Remain. 2017. 'Preparing for the Asylum Interview – from Those Who Have Been There (Legal Updates)'. *Right to Remain*. Retrieved 17 March 2019 (https://righttoremain.org.uk/preparing-for-the-asylum-interview-from-those-who-have-been-there/).

Robinson, Oliver C. 2014. 'Sampling in Interview-Based Qualitative Research: A Theoretical and Practical Guide'. *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11(1):25–41.

Røthing, Åse and Stine H. Bang Svendsen. 2011. 'Sexuality in Norwegian Textbooks: Constructing and Controlling Ethnic Borders?' *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34(11):1953–73.

Ruvalcaba, Héctor D. 2016. *Translating the Queer - Body Politics and Transnational Conversations*. London: Zed Books.

Said, Edward. 2003. *Orientalism*. London: Penguin.

Sampson, Helen, Michael Bloor, and Ben Fincham. 2008. 'A Price Worth Paying?: Considering the "Cost" of Reflexive Research Methods and the Influence of Feminist Ways of "Doing"'. *Sociology* 42(5):919–33.

Savcı, Evren. 2016. 'Who Speaks the Language of Queer Politics? Western Knowledge, Politico-Cultural Capital and Belonging among Urban Queers in Turkey'. *Sexualities* 19(3):369–87.

Schmitt, Arno. 2003. 'Gay Rights versus Human Rights: A Response to Joseph Massad'. *Public Culture* 15(3):587–91.

Schock, Katrin, Rita Rosner, and Christine Knaevelsrud. 2015. 'Impact of Asylum Interviews on the Mental Health of Traumatized Asylum Seekers'. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology* 6(1):26286.

Schutt, Russell K. 2015. *Investigating the Social World: The Process and Practice of Research*. London: Sage.

Seale, Clive. 1999. 'Quality in Qualitative Research'. *Qualitative Inquiry* 5(4):465–78.

Sedgewick, Eve Kosofsky. 1990. *The Epistemology of the Closet*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Seidman, Steven. 1994. 'Queer-Ing Sociology, Sociologizing Queer Theory: An Introduction'. *Sociological Theory* 12(2):166–77.

Shield, Andrew D. J. 2017. 'Introduction: "The Disaster of Islamization ... Where Gays Are Not Safe to Walk the Streets, Women Are Seen as Inferior": Pro-Gay, Anti-Immigrant Politics and the Right, 2000-2017'. Pp. 1–18 in *Immigrants in the Sexual Revolution, Genders and Sexualities in History*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Spijkerboer, Thomas. 2013. *Fleeing Homophobia: Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Asylum*. London: Routledge.

Spijkerboer, Thomas. 2017. 'Gender, Sexuality, Asylum and European Human Rights'. *Law and Critique* 1–19.

Squire, Vicki. 2009. *The Exclusionary Politics of Asylum*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan.

Stein, Marc. 2004. *Encyclopedia of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender History in America*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.

Stryker, Susan. 2004. 'Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10(2):212–15.

Sullivan, Nikki. 2003. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*. New York: New York University Press.

Thapliyal, Nisha and Sally Baker. 2018. 'Research with Former Refugees: Moving towards an Ethics in Practice'. *Australian Universities' Review* 60(2):49–56.

The Guardian. 2018. 'Austria Rejects Afghan's Asylum Bid Because He "Did Not Act or Dress Gay"'. *The Guardian*, August 15.

UNHCR. 2010. 'Text of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees'.

Vaughan-Williams. 2009. *Border Politics - The Limits of Sovereign Power*.

Vidal-Ortiz, Salvador. 2019. '"Borders Are Both Real and Imagined": Rejoicing on Lionel Cantú's "De Ambiente: Queer Tourism and the Shifting Boundaries of Mexican Male Sexualities"'. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 25(1):73–77.

VluchtelingenWerk Nederland and ECRE. 2019. *Asylum Information Database - Country Report: Netherlands*. Europe: European Council for Refugees and Exiles.

Walters, William. 2006. 'Border/Control'. *European Journal of Social Theory* 9(2):187–203.

Wekker, Gloria. 2006. *The Politics of Passion: Women's Sexual Culture in the Afro-Surinamese Diaspora*. Columbia University Press.

Wekker, Gloria. 2009.'Van Homo Nostalgie En Betere Tijden. Multiculturaliteit En Postkolonialiteit [Of Homo Nostalgia and Better Times. Multiculturalism and Post-Colonialism]','. Presented at the George Mosse Lecture 2009, Amsterdam.

Wekker, Gloria. 2016. *White Innocence : Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press Books.

Wemyss, Georgie, Kathryn Cassidy, and Nira Yuval-Davis. 2016. 'Changing the Racialized "Common Sense" of Everyday Bordering'. *OpenDemocracy*. Retrieved 7 August 2019 (https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/changing-racialized-common-sense-of-everyday-bord/).

We_reclaim_our_pride. 2019. 'FIRST Pride Was A RIOT 3 August!' *We Reclaim Our Pride*. Retrieved 14 August 2019 (https://www.facebook.com/events/hortusbrug-brug-239/first-pride-was-a-riot-3-august/470754757076550/).

Wesling, Meg. 2008. 'Why Queer Diaspora?' *Feminist Review; London* (90):30–47.

White, Melissa Autumn. 2013. 'Ambivalent Homonationalisms - Transnational Queer Intimacies and Territorialized Belongings'. *Interventions* 15(1):37–54.

White, Melissa Autumn. 2014. 'Documenting the Undocumented: Toward a Queer Politics of No Borders'. *Sexualities* 17(8):976–97.

Whyte, Zachary. 2011. 'Enter the Myopticon: Uncertain Surveillance in the Danish Asylum System'. *Anthroplogy Today* 27(3):18–21.

Wiles, Rose and Janet Boddy. 2013. 'Research Ethics in Challenging Contexts'. *Methodological Innovations Online* 8(2):1–5.

Wittig, Monique. 1980. 'The Straight Mind'. *Feminist Issues* 1(1):103–11.

Yuval-Davis, Nira. 2013. 'A Situated Intersectional Everyday Approach to the Study of Bordering'. *EU Borderscapes* Working Paper 2:1–20.

Appendix 1.   Information Sheet

UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Graduate School of Social Sciences

P.O.Box 15725
1001 NE Amsterdam
Nieuwe Achtergracht 166
1018 WV Amsterdam
Phone: +31 20 525 3777
E-mail: gsss@uva.nl

Participant Information Sheet

Area of Study: **The Construction of Sexualities in LGBTI Asylum Interview Preparation**

Name of Researcher: **Anna Wallis (anna.wallis@student.uva.nl)**

What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to explore and understand the construction of LGBTQ+/queer sexualities in the asylum process, particularly in the lead up to asylum interviews.

This is particularly important in the contemporary Dutch context, because decisions about credibility in asylum interviews can be based on stereotypes concerning LGBTI asylum seekers, making it difficult for them to claim their fundamental human right of seeking protection.

Why have I been chosen?

You have been invited to take part because you are involved in supporting LGBTI asylum seekers, and therefore have unique insight into and experience of these processes.

Do I have to take part?

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you would like to share your thoughts and experiences of supporting LGBTI asylum seekers, please consider taking part in this study.

What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to answer some questions relating to the nature of your work, your attitudes and feelings towards your work, and how you

understand sexualities in this process. The focus will be on your personal experiences, thoughts and opinions. The interview will take roughly 30-45 minutes.

You have the right not to answer any of the questions or to stop the interview at any point. If you want to withdraw from the study, you can do so without questions.

Will my taking part in this research be kept confidential?

Your name and any details identifying you will be kept completely confidential. The audio-recording of the interview will be deleted after the research is completed and any transcripts of it will be anonymised. Anonymised quotes might be included in the thesis resulting from this research, whereby you will be referred to as a pseudonym of your choice. Any personal data you provide will also be destroyed at the end of the project.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of this study will be written up in a thesis for my Masters degree in Sociology: Migration and Ethnic Studies, which may be published in the Masters' thesis database of the University of Amsterdam.

Who has reviewed the study?

This research is being conducted as part of a Masters' degree in Sociology of the Graduate School of Social Sciences, University of Amsterdam.

It has been reviewed by my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Sarah Bracke, who you can contact at S.A.E.Bracke@uva.nl.

If you have any questions, please contact me at anna.wallis@student.uva.nl.

Thank you very much!

Appendix 2.   Consent Form

UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Graduate School of Social Sciences

P.O.Box 15725
1001 NE Amsterdam
Nieuwe Achtergracht 166
1018 WV Amsterdam
Phone: +31 20 525 3777
E-mail: gsss@uva.nl

Consent Form

Area of Study: **The Construction of Sexualities in LGBTI Asylum Interview Preparation**

Name of Researcher: **Anna Wallis (anna.wallis@student.uva.nl)**

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to interviews being audio-recorded.   ☐

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym   ☐

I agree to take part in this research study.   ☐

Name of Participant _____   Signature _____

Date & Place _____

Name of Researcher _____   Signature _____

Date & Place _____

Appendix 3.   Interview Guide

Area of Study: **The Construction of Sexualities in LGBTI Asylum Interview Preparation**

Name of Researcher: **Anna Wallis (anna.wallis@student.uva.nl)**

<u>1) Your work</u>

• How long have you been working with LGBTI asylum seekers & refugees?

• How do you help people prepare for their interviews? What are key things you tell people?

<u>2) Attitudes towards work</u>

• Main sources of motivation

• Difficulties for yourself in this process

[*probe*: conflicts?]

<u>3) LGBTI Sexualities</u>

• New IND guidelines

• Stereotypes? What are they & how much truth do you think is in them?

• Claims of 'Western' perspective vs. 'non-Western'

• Identity framework

[*probe*: definition of sexuality? self-identification? context for own understanding?]

<u>4) Conclusions</u>

• What needs to be different?

• If you could tell the IND one thing, what would it be?

<u>End</u>

• Would you like to ask me anything?

• Is there anything else you would like to say?