



PINK NETWORKS

*An exploratory study of queer older adults' use of
queer joy, practical kinship, and care relationships to
do relatedness in the Dutch context*

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Summary of the argument

In this thesis, I argue that queer older adults in the Dutch context do relatedness through queer joy, practical kinship, and care relationships, in which:

a) Relatedness is meant to include “literally any kind of relation between persons” (Stafford, 2000, p. 37) and is based on metaphorical con-substantiality, or the idea that flows between people of things that are not *actual* substances but possess animating properties and are linked to strong emotions, that has the power to build a connection between people (Carsten, 2011).

b) Queer joy is the kind of bittersweet joy that one, as a queer person, might feel when they realize that although they are not living in their ideal reality, they have the power to imagine, play with and occasionally get a taste of this ideal reality (Muñoz, 2019; Royster, 2021); but also a doing - the act of creating a temporary, utopian space together - with the power of creating fluid and mutable networks of relatedness.

c) Practical kinship is kinship seldom based on norms, hinging instead on the choice to maintain it through kin work (Yan, 2020), which I argue is what enables my participants to not be alone even when they have little in ways of normative kinship.

d) Care relationships are what allow queer older adults to confirm, undo, create, and strengthen ties with kin of all kinds, and are mostly focused on experiencing the need for care in groups, leading to the formation of care networks akin to therapy networks (Krause, 2008).

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Introduction

“Do you know about the Gay Games? [...] In 1998, all of Amsterdam was gay. Friends of mine who were straight said something like, ‘I think that I understand what you were talking about now. I was standing in the metro, and I think I was the only hetero there!’ And I said, ‘Now we’re talking!’” – Manon, 77

Like Manon, every participant who told me about the 1998 Amsterdam Gay Games had joy in their voice. For two glorious weeks, the whole city had been gay, and anywhere you would look, you would see rainbow flags and queer people from the world over. Nearly a quarter of a century later, the event still echoed in the minds of those who were there to see it, and it baffled them to hear those of younger generations might not even know what it was.

From the perspective of someone who had not been there, what interested me as much as what it might have been like to live the Gay Games was why they had remained so important for so long to my participants. What made it so special for Amsterdam to be visibly queer¹ both in terms of decorations and the people who filled it, and why was it so pivotal for Manon’s straight friends to understand how Manon usually felt as the only queer person amongst a (presumably) heterosexual crowd? Furthermore, what does it say about this generation of queer people that the “most beautiful week of their lives”, according to Catharina (74), and the time they have felt perhaps most at home in their own city, occurred while being surrounded by queer strangers from all over the world?

The literature on queer kinship, and most famously Kath Weston’s (1997) study on “Families We Choose”, has highlighted queer people’s propensity for finding home, care, and a connection with one another. Stories like those of the Gay Games, however, prompt questions of why that is and of how the very same event which builds connections between queer people can also be what tightens their connections with straight friends. They push me to ask, as anthropologists have about many different groups, how do queer older adults in the Netherlands relate to one another, and what does this have to say about relatedness in general?

¹I use the word “queer” here to refer to people who are part of what has also been called the LGBTIA+ (or other variations of this acronym) community or sexual and gender minorities. I do this deliberately as it is a term that is both vague and powerful, by escaping the need for fixed labels and carrying a legacy of disruptiveness (Schey, 2021; Sicurella, 2014). When other authors or participants use alternative terms, I will follow their lead. More on this in the Theoretical Framework section.

For the past thirty years, anthropology has been in the midst of a reckoning with kinship, rethinking at all different levels what it means to be “kin” with someone. At the center of this reckoning lies the realization that the nuclear family has for many people neither been the reality nor the norm (Few-Demo & Allen, 2020; Gerstel, 2011). We can expect this increasing awareness and the existence of “not-so-nuclear families” (Hansen, 2004) and of relatedness beyond biological kin to be a growing trend in the next generations. Donna Haraway (2015, p. 159), amongst others, in fact calls for us to “make kin, not babies” in the face of several incumbent major system collapses (including but not limited to climate change). Queer people, and particularly for those of older generations for whom it was even more difficult to become parents than for young queer people today, are amongst those who have been building “not-so-nuclear families” for many years already (Kneale & French, 2018). Their lives, with kin of all kinds but often without children and spouses, therefore yield hints as to how to organize futures where having babies and getting married are decentered from kinship (Hayden, 1995) and kin are “abundant, unexpected, enduring, and precious” (Haraway, 2015, p. 163).

Studying queer kinship, because it is so varied, also yields insights into how kinship is built – a process I will refer to as kinning (Howell, 2002) in this thesis – but also undone, redone, or never done (de-kinning, re-kinning, a-kinning) (Guerzoni & Sarcinelli, 2019). In particular, studying queer kinship can allow the observation of the role of care in these diverse kinning processes, as queer kinship and care often occur where no one else – be it state or nuclear family – is willing or able to provide care (Miller, 2016).

Queer people in the Netherlands now aged fifty or above are a particularly interesting group as they constitute the cohorts who have lived through key moments in the history of the queer community. This includes the community’s emergence into the public consciousness, the HIV-AIDS crisis which disproportionately affected its members, and the gradual obtention of civil rights such as marriage (Bos, 2020). These trends and events have impacted them as people, as well as their relationships, and together, these cohorts form the first “out” generations, that is to say the first openly² queer elderly people and the first to explicitly have queer families (Fokkema & Kuyper, 2009). Additionally, although queer people and issues surrounding queerness have become increasingly visible, aging seems to render queer older adults in some ways once again invisible, and they remain a largely

² By openly, I do not mean to imply that all queer people aged fifty or above are completely out in all aspects of their lives, nor that only people who are out in all aspects of their lives “count” as queer. Rather, I refer to the fact that they are the first generations in which claiming a queer identity became more common practice.

understudied and misunderstood part of the queer population (Allen & Lavender-Stott, 2020; Kneale & French, 2018).

From the relatively few existing studies, we do know that queer older adults have diverse kinship and aging experiences, which often diverge from those of their cisgender and heterosexual contemporaries (Allen & Lavender-Stott, 2020). Research has found that queer adults of all ages have varied relationships with the families they were born and/or grew up in, sometimes called families of origin, but also tend to have close relationships with people not related to them in the traditional sense (Muraco & Fredriksen-Goldsen, 2011). This different composition of kinship points at a different negotiation and organization of the roles of kin. For example, a British study found that queer older adults with children (a minority as most do not have children) were unlikely to want to rely on them for care, out of conviction that it is not a child's role to do so (Heaphy et al., 2004), whereas non-queer people expect their children more than their friends to care for them in times of need (Croghan et al., 2014). However, queer kinship can at times also (seem to) follow normative conventions. For example, 40 percent of queer older adults in a study done in Minnesota, USA reported providing care to their parents, with more women in the sample, both cisgender and transgender, doing so than cis- and transgender men (Croghan et al., 2014). In general, kinship, because it plays a role in (re-)producing, reinforcing, and enforcing culture and social rule, has the power to be both transformative and normalizing (Rapp & Ginsburg, 2011). Queer families are thus an ideal setting for studying the complex realities of kinship.

Negotiating queer kinship while aging in the Netherlands

The aim of this thesis is to gain insights into how queer older adults in the Dutch context create and negotiate kinship as they age. More specifically, it explores how queer older adults build their social networks, how they navigate norms surrounding family-making and establish kinship inside and outside the nuclear family, and how they negotiate kinning processes through care. Overall, it tries to give a picture of how queerness affects kinship in the older years of their lives.

To do this, I first provide an outline of the different theories used to frame and interpret both the study as a whole and its findings. In the following chapter, I explain the methodology underpinning my research, after which I dive into the empirical findings. I then delve into the empirical material, giving an overview of the Dutch social, political, and historical context, how my participants have experienced this as queer people of the first

“out” generation, and why it makes an ideal setting for this study. The second empirical chapter is dedicated to queer older adults’ social networks and explains how their involvement in groups has historical precedents but has also evolved in new ways in recent years. I also analyze their relationality with younger (queer) people and how it mirrors older queer people’s manner of doing relatedness as a whole. The third chapter concerns the personal networks of queer older adults and goes deeper into how queer older adults negotiate normativity in their lives to build kinship beyond the nuclear family. The final empirical chapter zooms in on care as a specific mechanism underpinning kinning processes. In it, I explore care patterns and how they in turn build, break, maintain, and reinforce kinship in my participants’ lives. Lastly, I conclude the thesis with a discussion of the findings, the implications they have for further research as well as for future policy and practice and make a final argument about what queer kinship at an older age brings to the study of kinship.

Theoretical framework

My inquiry into queer older adults’ experiences navigating aging with their networks of relatedness in the Dutch context is informed by notions of kinship as networks of relatedness, as proposed in new kinship studies (Carsten, 2000). Additionally, I draw from theories on care, minority stress, and the effects of queer networks to explain the composition and negotiation of queer older adults’ networks of relatedness. I also explain my use of the term “queer” by positioning it theoretically and in relation to the Dutch context.

Kinship, relatedness and social network theory

Up to now, I have referred to “kinship” and “relatedness” interchangeably. This is in part due to a lack of consensus within the field new kinship studies about what kinship is if it can no longer be assumed to be based on the nuclear family. The term relatedness is sometimes used to move beyond the universalizing connotations of kinship (Carsten, 2000, p. 4), while others continue using the word kinship (Weston, 1997, p. 210), sometimes to mean the same thing as family³ (ibid), but other times as well to signify a difference between the two

³ Weston (1997, p. 210) argues for using the terms interchangeably because to forego the use of family when it comes to gay kinship would be to concede that family is always heterosexual. Butler (2002), on the other hand, separates the two to argue that kinship, including queer kinship, is more than just family. I align more with the latter perspective in this thesis.

(e.g. (Butler, 2002; Haraway, 2015)). I therefore searched for a term which best reflects the conception of kinship and relatedness guiding this thesis. Namely, I conceive kinship and relatedness as (a) a set of relations irreducible to family (Butler, 2002) which are (b) based on metaphorical con-substantiality and that (c) carry particular social, material and affective weight (Carsten, 2000, pp. 1-2); but also as (d) doings whose practices emerge to address fundamental forms of human dependency (Butler, 2002) and which are (e) shaped by power and institutions on global, local, and interpersonal levels (Gribaldo, 2016; Riggs & Peel, 2016). With the term metaphorical con-substantiality, I refer to Carsten's (2011) argument that special weight is given to certain shareable substances such as blood or breast milk to represent a link between the people who share them, but also to Sahlins' (2011, p. 14 as cited in Carsten, 2011) remark that sharing a tangible substance is not strictly necessary for making kinship. Combining both ideas leads to the realization that what makes substances important for kinship is not just what they actually are, but what they represent - a flow of something temporary, with animating properties, and often linked to strong emotions, that has the power to build a connection between people (Carsten, 2011) - and that, as such, flows between people of things that are not *actual* substances may also create kinship.

The best fit for this definition is to use the term relatedness in the widest sense possible to include "literally any kind of relation between persons" (Stafford, 2000, p. 37). This use of the term relatedness is adjacent to the one in psychology, where relatedness refers to "the need to connect closely with others" (Legault, 2017, p. 2). Defining relatedness so broadly allows for the observation of the different ways of establishing and doing relatedness, whether they have to do with kinship in the traditional sense or not (Stafford, 2000, p. 37). When the type of relatedness I am referring to requires specification, I will further define them. For example, one indigenous term which was used often by my participants to refer to the inner circle of their networks of relatedness is *naasten*, meaning "close ones". Another way I will differentiate between various types of relatedness is by using social network theory.

Social network theory suggests that social networks - one's complete web of social relations, which I also call network of relatedness - contain the potential for relations of care and support. This is to mean that there exists in the social network a subset of relations of emotional and tangible support (the support network), which itself contains a subset of people willing to provide care in case of limitations: the care network (Fast et al., 2004). Support and care networks are most likely to stem from the personal social network, or the portion of people in their social network with whom someone has a continuing bond and

contact (Keating et al., 2003). To make sense of my data on older queer adults' networks of relatedness, I will therefore make use of three units of analysis – the social network, the personal (social) network, and the support and care network. I will pay special attention to the transitions between the three, as understanding who belongs to each network and how this inclusion (or exclusion) is negotiated yields key insights into what it means for participants to “do relatedness”, and how they do it. To better understand the processes of doing relatedness, I use the middle-range theories on the role of care and queer networks presented in the following sections.

Care as relational and as social process

Key to my inquiry are also the concepts of care as a way of negotiating relatedness and of networks as a way of doing care. Care as a concept has been much drawn on in anthropology and other social sciences in the last decades to analyze the ways people relate to one another, but also to other beings (Tjørnhøj-Thomsen, 2016, p. 298), or even to the planet (De la Cadena, 2010). Although I stay strictly within the realm of relatedness between humans in this thesis, I am interested in drawing on the relational aspect of care (Mason, 1996). While care is often spoken of on the one hand in terms of obligations, intergenerational contracts, and labor and on the other hand in terms of love, selflessness, and morality (Mason, 1996), looking at care as a relational matter is more helpful for understanding its relevance to relatedness as a doing. Conceiving relatedness as a doing assumes that there is an element of choice and negotiation to relatedness; it is not just based on norms. This raises the question of what guides choices and substantiates negotiations. One explanation is that relatedness emerges to address “fundamental forms of human dependency” (Butler, 2002, p. 15), which include basic physical needs, but also emotional ones. In that case, doing relatedness becomes about noticing each other's needs and negotiating how to attend to them. This is already a form of care, although it can be referred to more broadly also as commitment (Finch & Mason, 2003, p. 60). Relatedness, then, is negotiated through commitment, and that becomes all the more obvious when it comes to more practical and sentient aspects of care (Mason, 1996). For this reason, when looking at support and care networks, I will analyze in particular the role of care in making, un-making, and reinforcing relatedness, or what Howell (2002) has called kinning and de-kinning. Furthermore, I will conceptualize care as a social process which involves neither only the care receiver, nor just a care dyad (one care receiver, one carer), but an entire care network, also sometimes called therapy network or therapy management group (Krause, 2008). I do this to draw attention to the role of kinship networks in facilitating care, mirroring

the role of care in the negotiation of kinship. Conceptualizing care as being done within networks also constitutes a parallel to viewing kinship as broader than the nuclear family, pointing to the fact that there are many aspects to care, which can be performed by more than just one or two people.

Buffering minority stress through queer networks

Queer older adults are likely to have experienced minority stress over their lifetime, but also to have developed resilient coping strategies, including through socialization and kinship with other queer people. This can provide a further frame for understanding the composition of older queer adults' networks relatedness, and particularly the importance of queer people within them. Kuyper and Fokkema (2010) have observed greater loneliness among Dutch LGB (lesbian, gay and bisexual) adults who either have experienced or expect to experience negative reactions to their sexual orientation, also known as minority stress. However, these effects were found in the same study to be buffered by connection to an LGB social network, hinting that queer people can play a sort of safeguarding role against external minority stress by being part of each other's social networks. Elsewhere, Hudson and Romanelli (2020) show by using the Health Equity Framework how queer people of color in New York City connect in health-promoting ways by providing acceptance and support, fostering interconnectedness and resource sharing, and creating potential for collective action. Miller (2016) finds similar patterns of care within the *tongzhi*⁴ community in China. He coins the term "alternative families of care" to describe the interpersonal health-enabling effects of *tongzhi* communities formed in response to a government which has been unwilling (or unable) to adequately address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in China. I was unable to find such in-depth descriptions of the potential for resilience of queer community and network building in the Netherlands in the literature, making it all the more interesting to draw from these existing studies in other places and try to see whether a similar phenomenon might be occurring in the case of Dutch queer older adults.

Furthermore, I use the concept of queer joy - the kind of bittersweet joy that one, as a queer person, might feel when they realize that although they are not living in their ideal reality, they have the power to imagine, play with and occasionally get a taste of this ideal reality (Muñoz, 2019; Royster, 2021) - to explain how queer networks might create a buffer for the effects of minority stress. While queer joy has been not widely theorized or used as a concept in the social sciences, it can be considered the other side of the same coin as

⁴ 同志, literally meaning comrade, but used to designate men who are attracted to other men.

minority stress and resilience. In the examples of Hudson and Romanelli (2020) and of Miller (2016), relationships built in the face of minority stress have created not only resilience, or a means of coping, but also instances of optimism, self-love, and what one of Miller's (2016, p. 58) participants calls "a practical kind of happiness".

On queer, "pink" and the "alphabet soup"

Using concepts such as queer joy cements the link of this study with queer studies. In this section, I discuss what I draw from this field theoretically, my use of the word "queer", and why I also use other somewhat equivalent terms throughout this thesis. I use the word "queer" to refer to people who are part of what has also been called the LGBTIA+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, asexual; several variations of this acronym exist) community and/or are considered sexual and gender minorities. I do this deliberately as it is a term that is both vague and powerful, by escaping the need for fixed labels (Schey, 2021; Sicurella, 2014). In a practical sense, using the word queer allows me to include people who identify with all sorts of terms, including those who do not particularly want to use a certain term at all, in my research. However, it must be noted that this did not always resonate with my participants. While some did identify with the word queer, others felt distanced from it, were unsure of what it means or felt it was being pushed onto them. There is no easy solution to this, because there is no universal term which all people I include in the term queer use themselves. Still, the term *roze*, meaning pink in Dutch, probably comes the closest for the specific context I conducted research in.

The term *roze* stems from the color of the pink triangles male homosexual prisoners were made to wear in work and death camps during World War Two (Zebracki, 2017). It is a symbol which has been re-appropriated by several queer groups since, including perhaps most notably ACT UP, in their imagery of a pink triangle on a black background with the words "Silence = Death" underneath (Levine, 2012). In Amsterdam, the Homomonument erected in 1987 takes the shape of three triangles (Zebracki, 2017). Moreover, the word pink is commonly used to refer to queer institutions, such as media or non-profit organizations (e.g. PinkNews, an online LGBT+ media platform, and Pink Dot, an organization at the origin of an annual LGBT+ demonstration in Singapore). In the Netherlands, the word "roze" has been used to describe queer institutions since at least the first edition of the annual demonstration in favor of gay rights, called *Roze Zaterdag* (Davidson, 2020). It is also part of the name of the organization through which I recruited most of my participants, the *Roze Stadsdorp*.

I argue that *roze* is the closest indigenous term to queer for my research population due to its inclusivity. While some participants used legacy terms from the early days of the gay liberation movement, often referring solely to gay and lesbians (e.g. *homo's en lesbo's*), identity even among this generation is more complex nowadays. Indeed, one of my participants started her interview by stating, "First of all, I'm bisexual." (Annelies, 72). One person at an event where I conducted participant observation also remarked that, had the term "non-binary" existed in his youth, he might identify as such now. This shows that newer terms and ways of identifying, while maybe not widely used, are taken up to some extent by this group. On the flip side, I talked to older women who did not like the term lesbian, which to their ears sounded too posh. They preferred to say they were "*op de dames*" (into women) or "*vallen op vrouwen*" (fall for women). Similarly, several participants expressed some confusion or amusement about the LGBT+ acronym, with some calling it "the alphabet soup". Considering this, the term *roze*, like queer, allows for including people with many different identities, including those who would rather not name their identity at all (like one person who, when asked at an event what term should be used to refer to his him just said, "my name"). Thus, while I believe few participants would directly identify themselves as "*roze*", they all accepted this terminology, making it the best imperfect solution for this text. Throughout the following sections, the terms queer and *roze* will therefore be used somewhat interchangeably, although *roze* will mostly be used in the context of my fieldwork and queer in the context of theory. Additionally, to respect participants' own identities, I will reprise their own terms when talking about them directly.

Beyond individual meanings of identity, I also draw an equivalence between the terms queer and *roze* because of their larger political meanings. Both in popular and academic discourse, the word queer carries a legacy of disruptiveness, a connotation of not just *being* different but of *doing* things - gender, sexuality, science, and the very creation and definition of these categories - differently (Landström, 2007). Because queer is a reclaimed slur and the pink triangle a reclaimed symbol of condemnation, they carry the power to transform hate into pride. I call onto this spirit of subversion by using the words queer and *roze* in this thesis in the same way that I use the term relatedness in a broad sense instead of kinship: to be able to research not just a clearly defined group doing a clearly defined thing, which might obscure much of the phenomenon I am trying to study in the first place, but any people feeling they belong in this study relating in many different ways to all types of people.

Methods

Ethnographic methods

The present study is of an exploratory nature and I chose to use ethnographic research methods to answer its research questions. Due to a relatively short research period (most of the fieldwork took place between late February and early March of 2022), true extended ethnographic fieldwork was not a possibility. However, I retain the word “ethnographic” in reference to the objectives of and approach to the research (Brewer, 2000, p. 59). The approach was inherently ethnographic as I studied the activities, meanings and relationships which make up Dutch queer older adults’ networks of relatedness in their naturally occurring contexts to understand their role in the aging process (Brewer, 2000, p. 6). Ethnographic methods included here a mix of key informant and participant interviews, participant observation, and a focus group discussion. In this section, I explain further how I went about the sampling of participants, the gathering and analysis of data, and ensured ethical compliance throughout the process.

Interviews

I approached my research population through an Amsterdam-based organization called the *Roze Stadsdorp* (henceforth RSD). According to the RSD’s website, it is an initiative which aims to connect fifty-plus LGBT Amsterdammers to help them find support in each other as they age. Participants meet through *buurtgroepen* (neighborhood groups) or groups based on a shared interest such as outdoor swimming, museum visits, or going to the cinema. Monthly drinks are organized for all (prospective) members at varying locations and members can post messages in a forum on the RSD website asking for or proposing assistance with specific activities or daily tasks (*Roze Stadsdorp Amsterdam*, n.d.).

I chose the Roze Stadsdorp as a starting point for my research due to its explicit aim to connect older queer adults and help them form support networks. Queer samples tend to be biased towards people who have many ties to a queer network or community, or even are engaged in political or queer rights activism, as researchers often rely on convenience and snowball sampling as well as self-identification (Meyer & Wilson, 2009). This limitation is widely recognized and does not always endanger the validity of a study. However, in this specific case, relying on a sample with pre-existing strong ties to local queer activism and networks would have likely restricted the breadth of variation in the social, support and care networks of participants. By recruiting participants with varied reasons for joining and depth of engagement within the RSD, although still an instance of convenience sampling, I

planned to mitigate this effect to a certain extent. I aimed to have participants in my sample ranging from people with no support outside the group to people with large existing networks wanting to lend support to others, with many participants probably somewhere in the middle of these two extremes⁵.

Having decided on a sampling strategy, I began recruiting key informants to help me recruit my sample and gain additional insights into the realities of queer aging, kinship, and care in the Netherlands. At this point in my research, I had also planned on conducting a desk review including policy documents and reports concerning queer aging in the Netherlands written in an academic, governmental or NGO context, with special attention given to documents written in Dutch which might not have appeared in the initial literature review on the subject. I quickly realized, however, that this would be too broad a task to accomplish alongside my limited fieldwork. Instead, I selected a few key documents⁶ and resolved to find key informants who might be able to inform me of the most relevant and important developments in the field. I contacted a total number of seven potential key informants of different backgrounds: board members of the RSD, public queer older adults, academic researchers, policy makers, and practitioners such as a social worker having led a project on queer aging. In the end, I interviewed four of them: a program officer for the “Care and Information” division of Rutgers (the Dutch knowledge center for sexuality), two board members of the RSD, and a social geography researcher having just finished a five-year project on the care needs of migrant and LGBT elderly in the Netherlands.

The interview with RSD board members allowed me to start recruiting my sample. I was able to post a recruitment message on the RSD forum (see Appendix 1) and to send the board members a list of the kind of people I hoped to interview (see Appendix 1). With its help, they reached out to people in their networks who they thought might be interested in participating. I recruited 2 participants through the forum, 1 through word of mouth, and 6 through the board members. Additionally, my thesis supervisor, Dr. Trudie Gerrits, sent my recruitment message to several colleagues, asking them to refer potential participants. I recruited one more participant in this manner, giving me a total of ten people to interview. This sample fulfilled the main aim of my sampling strategy: to achieve a mix in social,

⁵ One study of Roze Stadsdorp shows that 28.7% of respondents were living with a partner and 39.6% of respondents were participating in order to enlarge their social network (n=225) (Joosten, 2019)

⁶ These included a report from the meeting at which the Roze Stadsdorp idea was first formulated and discussed, the transcript of a lecture on the situation for *roze* older adults following the 2015 care reform and how the speaker proposed to deal with it (Schuyf, 2014), life histories of *roze* older adults collected by ILHIA (Amsterdam’s queer archive), and papers from Dr. Roos Pijpers’ study “Caring for diversity” about the care needs of migrant and LGBT elderly after the care reforms (Joosten, 2019; Pijpers, 2020, 2021; Pijpers & Beek, 2021; Pijpers & Honsbeek, 2020).

personal, and support and care network composition. The sample was also relatively diverse in terms of educational and professional background (which I use to a certain extent as a proxy for socio-economic background since I did not ask participants directly about this). In other aspects, however, the sample did lack diversity: only one participant was not White and did not have two Dutch parents, and only one participant was 80 or over, while three were 60 or under (see Table 1 for an overview of the sample characteristics). This lack of diversity, however, is representative of the RSD: its members are for the most part White and, as of 2019, 66 years of age on average (Joosten, 2019). As a direct result of recruiting participants through the RSD, all but one participant currently resided in Amsterdam at least part of the time.

Table 1: Participant key characteristics

Key informants	
Ymke Kelders	Project coordinator at Rutgers, the knowledge center for sexuality
Unnamed	Board members of RSD
Dr. Roos Pijpers	PI of the project "Caring for diversity: meeting care needs of migrant and LGBT elderly in changing local care landscapes" (2016-2021), now working at Movisie
Interview participants	
Bram	54, highly educated, just moved out of Amsterdam with his long-term partner, not active in RSD
Catharina (partner: Lotte)	74, highly educated, lived with her partner of 40 years, involved in many organizations, important figure in RSD, took care weekly of two young children
Gerard	74, born and raised in Amsterdam, started working in the fashion industry at 14 and left home at 16, had two lesbian sisters, lost many friends to AIDS, went to many different <i>roze</i> activities weekly
Manon	77, former teacher, had a daughter, active in the feminist movement, liked to meet younger queer people
Paul	60, academic, best friends with three of his ex-partners, involved in the squat and punk movements in his youth, not part of RSD
Robert	58, highly educated, son of parents from Hungary and Indonesia, critical of the pressure placed on informal carers
Lucas	77, highly educated but retrained in a manual job, trans man, reduced his attendance in groups a lot due to COVID
Annelies	72, highly educated, bisexual, close with her family and friends, part of the "regular" Stadsdorp
Willem	67, had worked in the arts and hospitality, looking to start dating again soon, close with his mother, just started going to RSD monthly drinks
Toon	80, was a social worker, two daughters, lived in social housing for older adults, just lost a close friend and neighbor
Focus group discussion participants	
Marcus	63, teacher, had been buried in his work for a long time and was now trying to meet more people through RSD
Yvonne	66, teacher, member of Smashing Pink

Pauline	61, mother of two children, had always tried to have a <i>roze</i> activity next to her straight work
Thelma	70+, had never liked groups and being pushed into boxes but had found a good fit at RSD

From 31 January to 10 March, I therefore conducted 3 key informant interviews and 10 participant interviews. The interviews were semi-structured, guided by a list of topics and prompts (see Appendix 2), but also giving room for the discussion to take a direction that felt suitable for every participant. For the key informant interviews especially, I focused on the interviewee's field of expertise (e.g. the situation in care homes for LGBT elderly with the Rutgers employee and the role of RSD for the board members). I left the location of each interview up to the participant. This resulted in two key informant interviews taking place online and one (with the two RSD board members) in a café. All ten participant interviews took place in person, either at participants' homes or at the café of the Amsterdam public library. The interviews usually lasted just over one hour, with the shortest being 54 minutes and the longest ones one hour and 40 minutes. All interviews were recorded as audio, with permission from the participants. At the start of each interview, I also indicated that Dutch was not my first language but that I was willing to conduct the interview in either Dutch, English or French. All but one participant (Paul) opted to proceed in Dutch, although both the participants and I sometimes also added words or phrases in English and French. The key informant interviews with the RSD board members were also conducted in Dutch while the other two were in English. While I had originally planned to have two interviews with each participant, it quickly became clear that this was neither feasible nor necessary.

Participant observation

My plan regarding participant observation had been to gain access to a specific *buurtgroep* (neighborhood group) and join some of their activities. Through these activities, I had planned to engage in casual conversation with and observe participants' interactions within the group, and particularly the meanings they ascribed to aging as queer older adults, the everyday activities they engaged in to form and maintain their networks of relatedness, and how they leveraged these to provide or procure support as they age. In the end, this was not possible, due to the ongoing COVID-19 public health measures in February. To retain the participant observation component of my research, I planned with the RSD board members to join their March drinks, the first in 2022 to be held without a restriction on the amount of people present. Unfortunately, I caught COVID-19 myself the week of the drinks and had to postpone this observation to the April drinks. There, I was able to mingle with

RSD members over drinks for about one and a half hours and start recruiting participants for the focus group discussion. The weekend following the April drinks, I also attended a theme meeting called *Jong en Oud in Genderland* (Young and Old in the Land of Gender), co-organized by an RSD committee and ASVGay, the University of Amsterdam's LGBTQ+ study association. The meeting consisted of presentations and panel discussions in which the audience was welcome to intervene, on themes such as identity, emancipation, activism, and the future. In the end, the observations I conducted served not so much as to observe relationships, but more as a way of getting a picture of discourses in the community surrounding the goals of the RSD as well as identity and where the *roze* community stands as of right now.

Focus group discussion

The ultimate step of the data gathering process was to conduct a focus group discussion. Focus group participants were RSD members who I had not previously interviewed. The focus group discussion served to gather reactions from participants on the preliminary findings and ensure a participatory approach to the research (Morgan, 1996), which in turn aided in nearing theoretical saturation in the study (Low, 2019). As is good practice, and particularly due to my limited Dutch fluency, I had enrolled a fellow researcher to help me run the focus group (Morgan, 1996). The fellow researcher was finally unable to attend the discussion, however, this did not cause any issues as the group was small (four participants) and I had met them all briefly before either at the RSD drinks or the theme meeting. The focus group discussion lasted just over two hours and was conducted in Dutch. It took place at the COC office, in a private meeting room. Short descriptions of the participants are included in Table 1, along with those of the interview participants.

Data analysis

Data analysis took place throughout the research process. I followed the steps for the analysis of ethnographic data outlined by Brewer (2000, pp. 110-117). First, I stored all audio recordings in computer assisted qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. I also stored transcripts in Atlas.ti as I completed them⁷. I then regularly reviewed transcripts and interview reports (written for the first two key informant interviews) to familiarize myself with the data and start generating an index, documenting topics occurring in the data. Having done this, I decided to conduct directed content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) to have

⁷ I transcribed all participants but one fully, sometimes entirely by hand and sometimes with the help of automated transcription software. The key informant interviews and focus group discussion, I did not transcribe fully but indexed to summarize information.

a more focused approach to coding and analysis. I used Assarroudi et al.'s (2018) method, which provides clear instruction for using theory to form categories to guide content analysis. In my case, this meant going back and coding all transcripts, creating in-vivo codes and classifying them as concerning either social networks, personal networks, or support and care networks. From there, I proceeded to summarize the codes, and, through an iterative back and forth between analysis and writing, create categories based on the preliminary codes. These codes corresponded to the main sections and points of discussion within each chapter. I applied the constant comparison technique as advised by Assarroudi et al. (2018). This helped create new categories of codes and develop arguments based on the empirical material.

Positionality

In the spirit of being transparent and reflexive about the methodology of this research, including data gathering and analysis, I add here a short note about my own positionality with regards to the topic at hand. This is especially important as my positionality, but especially my sexuality, was questioned, assumed and/or discussed in almost every instance of data collection. I do not present it here as an attempt to establish proximity to, distance from, or a privileged understanding of the participants. Instead, I discuss it because, as one of the participants put it, it gives me "kinship [*verwantschap*] with the topic". Therefore, I focus here on a non-exhaustive series of elements of my identity and life experiences thus far which I believe influenced the way I approached the research topic and conducted this study.

Firstly, most frequently discussed was my identity as a lesbian. I did not disclose it upfront to my participants, unless asked about it during the recruitment process, but it was regardless often assumed, for example based on my appearance, my interest in the topic, or my presence at an event organized for queer people. It is difficult to assess to what extent this influenced my interaction with participants, but several of them indicated they believed it legitimated my interest in the topic. Additionally, the significant age difference between us, prompting comments such as "I could have been your grandma", potentially diminished the assumption that we lived our queerness similarly, encouraging the participants to consider me as an "outsider" and explain their experiences more in depth. Concerning my national, linguistic, and ethnic background, the former two were often discussed as I began every interview and discussion by stating that Dutch was not my native language and that I was willing to conduct the interview in Dutch, English or French. All but one participant interviews were finally conducted in Dutch, but this opened up discussion about my

nationality and again possibly prompted the participants to be more explicit in their explanations of the Dutch context. My ethnicity - my mother is ethnically Belgian while my father was adopted by Belgian parents from South Korea as a child - became a topic less often. It was at times made visible by direct questions about my ethnic background, as in the focus group, and at other times invisibilized, such as at the theme meeting where I was involved in a discussion about the lack of racial diversity at the meeting but everyone else involved assumed I was myself white. The relative ambiguity of my ethnic background, as compared the obviousness of my not being Dutch, therefore made it somewhat irrelevant to the interactions with the participants. My personal history with adoption, however, has undoubtedly influenced the way I relate to the topic of relatedness.

Ethics

I followed the ethical guidelines set forward by the Faculty of Social and Behavioral Sciences during the entire duration of the research. This included protecting participants from harm to the best of my ability, ensuring confidentiality and anonymity, and storing data appropriately. Before commencing the research, I weighted the potential benefits to come from it: although I would not be able to compensate them, other benefits could come from participating, such as being able to share the positive sides of their aging process and finding a space to discuss negative experiences. Then, while recruiting participants, I shared a research prospectus (Appendix 3) with all prospective participants to make clear the topic of my research and the type of topics participants might be brought to address. This helped me get informed consent from willing participants, which was confirmed through an informed consent form (Appendix 3), read and discussed with every participant. As stated on the form, I ensured confidentiality by anonymizing all data and removing identifying details. Some parts of the data were shared with my supervisor throughout the analysis and writing process, but I had made sure to warn participants of this in advance. Finally, all data was stored on the secure online drive provided by the university. Any data recorded on other devices was moved to the drive as soon as possible.

Chapter 1

The case of the Netherlands

“The biggest shift happened right during the period when I came out. We had older [female] friends, they’re both dead now, who were friends with a gay couple, who told us that – they worked at the university [...] – when they went to official gatherings, they would split up, so man-woman, man-woman. [...] So, the change really came in ‘67, ‘68, with the hippie movement, the student revolts. [...] That made a lot of change happen.” – Catharina, 74

During their interview, I asked each participant to tell me what they thought about the Netherlands being called an open-minded country in terms of *roze* topics, but also how the situation for *roze* people in the Netherlands had changed over their lifetime. The answers to the first question were mixed – participants felt lucky to live in a country where their rights were for the most part upheld by the government and where most people were tolerant, but also remarked that they had recently noticed an increase in violence, especially against those *roze* people who visibly did not conform to gender norms. With regards to the second question, however, there was a clear consensus: the sexual liberation which had taken place in the sixties had been the beginning of a sea of change for *roze* people in the Netherlands. While this is a movement which swept over much of the Western world, the exact way it played out and the practical consequences it had for *roze* liberation are unique to the Netherlands. These historical factors shaped the lives of my participants and greatly affected the ways they experienced being queer older adults, which in turn impacted how they built relatedness. What’s more, existing studies about queer aging have been conducted mostly in Anglo-Saxon settings, meaning mainly in the UK, USA, and Australia. The resulting findings about network formation of queer older adults therefore reflect on the context influencing kinship, care, and aging as queer people over there. To be able to draw comparisons with the results of these studies, it is therefore necessary to understand the Dutch context. For these reasons, I highlight in this section some of the spaces, movements, and events in the Netherlands which have molded the lives of the generations I am studying.

The sexual revolution, student movements and gay liberation

“I grew up in... it started out as a Catholic family from Limburg, and then uh, as most people in the Netherlands in the sixties, they sort of fell off their religious beliefs, my parents and then they divorced very soon, like when I was 7. And then my father became kind of a hippie and started with two... with a lesbian

couple, and they had like a ménage à trois, so it was more like, your old fashioned hippie commune, if you want [laughs], so homosexuality was already there in front of my face. [...] it was not really articulated, but it was there.” – Paul,

60

Over the course of the second half of the twentieth century, the place of religion in most Dutch people’s lives changed greatly and quickly. This was the case of Paul, born in the early sixties, but also of several other participants born in the mid to late forties. For them, religion became one of the earliest points of contention with their parents. It is in this context, of changing beliefs and cultural institutions, that most of my participants grew up and came of age. By the time they started studying, working, and participating in night life as well as, in some cases, becoming politically active, the mentality which Catharina called, “we can think for ourselves; everything is allowed, everything is possible,” ruled many of the circles they ran in. This also extended to the place of queer people in Dutch society.

The longest-existing LGBT organization in the world, the Cultuur en Ontspanning Centrum, or COC, was established in the Netherlands in 1946 and 55 years later, in 2001, it became the first country to allow same sex marriage (Kollman, 2017). Until the 1960s, Dutch society was organized in a heavily normative manner, based on religious beliefs and emphasizing the nuclear family and the sole breadwinner welfare model. More progressive family and welfare policies coincided with the sexual liberation movement, including the gay liberation movement (van Daalen, 2010). The movement’s effects were in full boom during my participants’ youths, and many recalled a flourishing nightlife to have been a big part of their lives and what drew them to Amsterdam in the first place. This, along with the proliferation of gay-oriented groups, both activist and social, remain one of the foundations for their ways of doing relatedness.

Feminism: “It was almost easier to be a lesbian”

“And, of course, feminism. Feminism, absolutely. Very important for women. [...] Also, I mean, almost that... If you weren’t a lesbian then... [...] Little boys could come in the women’s commune until they were seven, and afterwards not anymore. [...] So that made it easy for women to think at a certain moment, would I like to be with a woman? It was almost easier to be a lesbian than to be heterosexual in the women’s movement.” – Catharina, 74

“Look, you had – in the eighties, you had feminism that was very anti-man. So, I didn’t dare say [that I was transmasculine] at all. Of course, this has been at play

since my childhood, the feeling that I... But I just didn't dare to talk about it. [This feminism] was very anti-man. It was not done to have it in your head to also want to be one, of course. Or have the feeling that you are one. While there were of course many lesbian women who were very masculine. [laughs]." - Lucas, 77

For most of my participants who were involved in it, the feminist movement was a space in which they found liberation. It gave them a place to question their place in society, question and explore their sexuality, do things they would have never thought themselves capable of such as become plumbers or organize international conferences, and also just live free of the many constraints marriage to a man and having children placed on women at the time. However, where some saw only liberation, others, like Lucas because it prevented him from being openly transgender, also found constraint. Annelies, who was also active in the women's movement, recalled still coming across remnants of this exclusive mentality in her older years when talking to some older lesbians in the RSD.

"From the positions [the older activist and feminist lesbians] used to have, and the non-acceptance that they had to take a strong stance against, and how they had to oppose the hetero world to carve out a place for themselves... I also understand that. But that you now [in the 21st century] say that you still need to be ashamed if you're bisexual or heterosexual, then I think, no, I don't find that okay anymore. It's not from this time anymore."

These different experiences within the feminist movement have thus long affected the way these participants find kinship. For some, it gave them a precedent for seeking a network of like-minded people and for building a community, or network, with them. For others, it taught them to be wary of groups which might not be fully accepting even if it is a space in which they should theoretically belong. This ideological struggle about the usefulness of strict categories continues to evolve nowadays.

The HIV/AIDS epidemic: "Seeing people die all around you"

"I actually don't have gay friends. Or, well, not many. In the time of AIDS, many of course... I also didn't have many gay friends then, but of course they died. A large number did die." As a 67 year old gay man, Willem's coming of age in the late seventies to mid-eighties and many of his early experiences with his peers were colored by the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Gerard, now 74, experienced the epidemic similarly. It led to the death of more than half of his friends at the time, he said, and was a big part of why he had few close friends nowadays. What's more, there is a sense of having escaped something: Robert, 58, called himself

“lucky” for having had two long-lasting relationships during the AIDS epidemic, keeping him out of harm’s way. When asked about how being gay had changed over his lifetime, he also said,

“There was also a change in [the number of] people around you who were dying. [...] I imported medicine from Germany for AIDS patients, and that saved some people’s lives thankfully. So yeah, that changed, AIDS has become an average disease now, you know, you take a few pills, and you can live a long life. I saw that [change].”

It is clear from all three men’s⁸ comments on AIDS that the large amounts of deaths of gay men around them during the AIDS period greatly affected the way they lived their gayness at the time, but also their kinship networks, even years later. It made it difficult for them to keep friends, but also to make friends in the first place: Gerard described being a buddy for people dying of AIDS, who he would accompany “until the end”. He did this through an organization, Schorer Stichting, which held regular meetings for the buddies to discuss how best to accompany the clients. Gerard’s fellow buddies did not become friends, however. At the time, they saw each other regularly, but they were also busy with their clients. After the program stopped, they did not keep in touch. This impermanence of relationships and the sheer number of deaths among friends still have an impact now on gay men’s networks of relatedness.

Regulating families and care: The long-term care reform and the normative expectations it creates

Efforts to make aging in good conditions possible for older queer Dutch people have been put into place, such as the Pink Passkey (*Roze loper*), a certificate issued to queer friendly elderly care services (Pijpers, 2021). However, the Dutch government has implemented a series of long-term care policy reforms starting from 2008 and culminating in a major reform in 2015, which have had several consequences for queer older adults. The reforms,

⁸ Four of the men I interviewed did not bring up the epidemic at all. Of the four of them, two are somewhat younger (born in 1968 and 1962), one was a trans man, not out as trans yet at the time, and the other did not come out until middle age and “began very slowly meeting men”. It is possible then that they either did not encounter AIDS as directly as the other participants, or that did not feel it affected their lives, identity, and kinship networks as much. Important to note as well is that none of the participants I interviewed disclosed being HIV positive. These conclusions about how being a gay man during the AIDS crisis affect men and their kinship networks nowadays thus reflect only indirect experiences with this illness. Finally, the fact that none of the women nor the trans participant brought up AIDS during the interviews once again points to the strong separation between the women’s movement and the masculine world, which often extended to differentiation between these two genders in queer spaces as well, especially when it came to political issues such as feminism and AIDS.

centered around the decentralization of care to the municipal level (Carlsson & Pijpers, 2020), resulted in the closing of most care homes catered towards elderly with minor care needs and towards the increased development of “aging in place” schemes (Maarse & Jeurissen, 2016). Due to these changes, long-term care for older adults is now delegated to formal home carers who are often faced with a lack of time and resources and whose care must often be supplemented by informal care coming from the (imagined) local community (Carlsson & Pijpers, 2021). In practice, assuming communities to be homogeneous, connected, and able to generate care is often overly optimistic (ibid). This means it is often family members who take on personal care needs. Indeed, a little over one-third of Dutch people between the ages of 55 and 75 are estimated to provide informal care (de Klerk et al., 2021). These care reforms have changed the place and perception of aging in Dutch society as well as the norms surrounding care for and by older adults. For example, care allowances make room for diverse care arrangements, able to involve biological and non-biological kin alike, but simultaneously create normative demands on biological kin to provide care. This does leave room for more creative, non-normative care networks to come into action, something especially interesting for queer older adults. It does also, however, have the potential to put people without an “obvious” carer in the vulnerable position of having no one to care or advocate for the quality of their care for them as they age.

Paradoxes in the state of long-term care and attitudes towards queerness

This paradoxical state of long-term care for queer older adults in the Netherlands at present illustrates well the overall state of things regarding queerness nationally. The Netherlands is still a safe and accepting country, relative to many other places in the world⁹. Nevertheless, cisgenderism and heteronormativity remain existing realities in the Netherlands as in other countries. Several studies, for example, report queer Dutch people to feel pressure to act “normal”, especially with regards to not transgressing gender norms in appearance or behavior (i.e. not appearing too masculine as a lesbian, or too effeminate as a gay man) (Aggarwal & Gerrets, 2014; Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011). This was an experience shared by several participants, who mentioned that gender presentation was a large factor influencing safety in public space. Some even mentioned that they felt the tolerance was decreasing,

⁹ The Netherlands was ranked 13th of 49 countries in the 2021 ILGA-Europe Rainbow Europe rankings. The companion annual report on human rights of LGBTI people in Europe and Central Asia 2021 reported, amongst others, increased bias-motivated online bullying and hate speech, nearly weekly reports of bias-motivated violence, an increase in cases discrimination against trans people, and large delays in trans healthcare, in part due to COVID-19 policies. The Dutch government did in this period agree to remove gender markers from ID cards by 2024 and apologized for making trans people undergo forced medical interventions to access care in the period 1989-2014 (*Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia 2021*, n.d.).

some things having been possible earlier such as being affectionate in public anywhere in Amsterdam now also creating potential for violence in certain areas. One participant also described feeling as though queer people were sometimes used as political pawns to cast other groups in a bad light.

Thus, older queer people in the Netherlands, born in the 1960s or earlier, might have heavily felt the pressures of cisgenderism and heteronormativity throughout their lives (Kuyper & Fokkema, 2010), although it might have waxed and waned across time. What's more, they nowadays might have to deal with Dutch exceptionalism, or the idea that there is no longer any work to do to advance the acceptance, well-being and rights of queer people in the Netherlands (Robinson, 2012). Together, these norms and attitudes surrounding queerness, aging and care create a unique context for queer older adults in the Netherlands to negotiate kinship in, marked by several significant changes in context throughout their lives.

Chapter 2

We built this network on queer joy: The making of *roze* networks

“Paris was on fire,” Manon said of the year she married her ex-husband, indicating it must have been around 1968. They both came from a well-to-do background where they had grown up relatively sheltered. A few years after getting married, they moved to Amsterdam. Manon was “already sort of a hippie”, but her husband was not. “The pill had been found, so you could fuck as much as you want [*je kon neuken wat je wilt*]. It was the beginning of the women’s movement, but I found that scary.” Despite how scary she found it; Manon delved into all of what Amsterdam of the early nineteen-seventies had to offer. A teacher, she first became active politically through her work, then through the “FemSoc” a socialist feminism collective. There, she got an idea: she did not want to be the kind of woman who lived for her child, and whose child in return must live for her, as she had felt throughout her childhood as a single child, but what if she had a child and shared the responsibilities completely equally with the father? This took some convincing, as it went against all norms at the time, but it eventually worked: shortly thereafter, she was pregnant and her husband and her shared a home where each had their own floor. She had done it, had participated in the start of what would come to be known as “co-parenting”. It would shape the rest of her life because, from then, “everything went really fast: I had sex with a woman for the first time and fell in love with a woman, and I was done with men; I got a little daughter and raised her half the time, she is now 57 and lives on a farm.”

By the time I interviewed her, Manon described herself (non-exhaustively) as a 77-year-old retired teacher, amateur artist, member of the *Roze Stadsdorp*, and grandmother of two. She credited the *Roze Stadsdorp* for the new friends she had made over the last years, and for the energy it gave her:

“I gave a party for my 75th birthday and there were 100 people there, [...] a few years previously that would not have happened, the *Roze Stadsdorp* has brought me a lot in terms of contacts. There were also some friends there from FemSoc, from the feminist movement.”

“[...] Feminism was completely new, [...] It’s always fun to be in a political movement about societal issues at the beginning, then it’s a militant time and everyone is [gasps], ‘what are we going to do??’. And for me what’s funny is that the *Roze Stadsdorp* is very different of course, but I was also there from the start, so now I’m also a kind of spider in the web, and it’s great! It makes me feel

good, it gives me a lot of energy, which also comes when you know lots of people.”

If the study of kinship in anthropology has enjoyed a recent revival since the 1990's, it is because scholars have realized that, although kinship is not as universally recognizable and similar as they once thought it to be, understanding the many ways and forms in which people relate to one another is essential to understanding other intertwined aspects of their lives (Carsten, 2000, p. 13). Manon's story makes clear that the way one builds relatedness is influenced by and linked to many other experiences in their lives. For example, although much time had passed between Manon's entry into the feminist movement and her interview with me, she still drew parallels between the way she connected with people in both periods of her life. She recognized the act of forming groups over shared political convictions and identity as a formative element of her life.

Studying queer older adults, and particularly those finding relationality through groups, easily illustrates the complexities of relatedness. Manon's entry into the feminist movement had political, personal, professional and contextual motives. It shaped her life as a woman, a lesbian, a co-mother, and, as she called herself, a “political animal”. Later in her life, it continued to shape the ways she engaged with others as she imagined her older days as a queer woman. Thinking and making the future with others in the present is what had offered her many connections in her life. In this chapter, I show and argue how this mode of relatedness - thinking and making the future together - has been essential for many of my participants in building their broader social network. I also try to answer why that is.

Queer joy as relatedness

“I was an active volleyballer for a long time, and when I came to live in Amsterdam and had my hetero work [...], I always said, 'I do hetero work, great, but I always want to do something *roze* next to that.' So, I played volleyball [in a *roze* club] for a long time, and it was also a big part of my social network. You go out together, you meet at Saarein¹⁰, on [...] Queen's Day... Yeah, that's really your network. But then I couldn't play volleyball anymore, so I joined a *roze* chorus, because I thought, well, I do want to keep doing something *roze*. Then I couldn't sing in the *roze* choir anymore, because my kid had an activity on that

¹⁰ Saarein is the longest-standing lesbian bar in Amsterdam, opened in 1979 and known for being a lesbian-only space until 1999 (Fobear, 2012).

evening. [...] But now, I'm again in the RSD and [...] there I can do some activities with *roze*-minded people." - Pauline, 60

Two other focus group participants shared Pauline's impression of leading a "hetero life". All three were to some degree "out" at their workplace, but mostly did not bring their sexuality up spontaneously and disclosed it only to some of their colleagues and clients. For Pauline, this only heightened the importance of finding outlets outside of work where she did not have to worry about explaining her sexuality. Yvonne, another focus group participant, said it also went the other way around. She was a member of Smashing Pink, Amsterdam's *roze* tennis club, but played for many years beforehand in other clubs where she said she could not understand the other members, especially in the ways they viewed and discussed relationships. Because she could not relate to them, the discussions never went deeper than surface level, which left her feeling unsatisfied. Now, however, at Smashing Pink, she did not have to think about what to say, she felt "at home".

Feeling at home means different things to different people, but what is clear is that it is something most of my participants sought out. Most of them belonged to some sort of *roze* group: often (although not always) the RSD, but also sports clubs (tennis, volleyball, swimming), cultural groups (museum, reading, cinema, talking), hobby groups (gardening), church groups, professional groups, and all sorts of purely social groups for just meeting one another and having a good time. It sometimes took a while for participants to find the right group for them: some preferred a group with a theme or activity, while others liked the low commitment of social groups, and others still needed a place where you could "really talk". Toon, for example, described how the discussion group he led every other week was able to provide an intimate and safe space for a member who had recently lost his partner as well as a parent and a sibling to open up about his loss and get the support he needed. This is harder in settings such as drinks with over fifty people there. Willem experienced this difficulty when he joined the RSD in the middle of his separation with his partner, "It just wasn't a good idea, because then you don't feel happy. And you feel terribly lonely between everyone who is just chatting and having a good time." The first time, he left after ten minutes. Recently, however, he started going again, and enjoyed it. Scheduling of activities and meetings can also influence participation in groups, such as for Bram, who still worked and therefore could not attend RSD activities during work hours. In contrast, his gardening club, of which he had been a member for close to 25 years and whose members also skewed towards the retirement stage of life, made sure to always organize meetings during the weekend to make it possible for all to attend. However, even there, Bram's own partner had

not found the right fit: he attended the gardening club once, but did not go again due, according to Bram, to his lack of passion for gardening as well as the too great age difference between him and the rest of the club's members. Still, despite some initial difficulties finding the right place for themselves, all but one of my participants were members of at least one such group and related feelings of home, familiarity, and comfort to them.

While looking for bonds in groups was familiar for many of the participants who had in their youth and throughout their lives been active in the various student, feminist and gay movements of the 60's, 70's and 80's, for some, the *roze* groups filled a gap in the shape of their old nightlife habits. The nightlife in Amsterdam underwent several changes during their lives. Willem (67) and Gerard (74) recalled, respectively, that nightlife in their youths meant going out to relatively hidden bars where one had to knock on the door to get in and having to show ID, putting yourself at risk of becoming known as a homosexual. By the time Paul (60) had become a student in the early 1980's, there had been a very large number of gay bars, enough to go out often and in many different scenes. In the last years, however, several participants reflected, the number of gay bars has shrunk. Friday nights at the COC, mentioned by many of the participants and discussed fondly in the focus group, no longer exists. Many of the old spots have closed, including those which had been directed at older queer people. What's more, several participants mentioned finding it harder to hear properly in noisy places, leading them to prefer a meal in a restaurant or even at home over an evening out at the bar. Even for those who would still enjoy a night out, there was ageism at play. This was remarked on mostly by the male participants, who talked about the emphasis on youth and beauty in the gay community, making it harder for them to keep frequenting some of the typical gay spaces. Taken together, these changes have largely precluded my participants and their peers from continuing to find and make relatedness through nightlife.

Political organizing, gardening clubs, and nights out at the bar might seem like they are all very different ways of establishing relationality. However, I argue that they all have one thing in common: **queer joy, or the shared act of imagining, playing with, and occasionally experiencing an ideal queer reality** (Muñoz, 2019). Although they did not use these very words to describe it, this is the feeling I identified among my participants when they talked about their involvement in a wide array of groups and movements such as the feminist movement, actions distributing condoms to women at a secretary school, taking up space and enjoying themselves in gay bars, watching the entire city turn queer for the '98

Gay Games, finding home in a tennis club, and carving out space for themselves as older queer people via the RSD. Through this series of both revolutionary but at times very mundane acts, they have long imagined and created spaces with a utopian quality to them, in which it is possible to be openly queer, possible to have children as a woman without making it your entire life, possible to get to know new people without having to explain your sexuality to them constantly. It is this flow of queer joy between them which I argue creates their relatedness, now and since their youth.

Network or family?

“Smashing Pink is family,” Catharina explained conclusively about her LGBT tennis club. Her and her partner have been members since the club’s creation some 25 years ago and have taken on all kinds of roles in the leadership and volunteer structure of the club. The weekend prior to our conversation, they had attended the club’s Winter tournament, followed by drinks where Catharina had been happy to see some of the members for the first time in over a year due to COVID. At the same time, the pandemic also bolstered younger members to join the club, breathing new air into the “family”. “That’s nice, because otherwise at some point you become a kind of old people’s club,” she had explained.

In this case, the word family is used to refer to a large group of people Catharina had known for a long time and encountered regularly, either weekly when she played tennis, through her volunteer activities at the club, at some of the social events, or outside the club for those with whom friendships had over time evolved past the tennis court. She was excited for the family to be expanding, although she also recognized that she was closest to those members who, like her, had been around for longer. This is similar to how other types of extended families might function: meeting periodically and renewing itself over time, with some relationships growing into friendships outside family gatherings. Another participant, Annelies, who was also a member of Smashing Pink, confirmed this perception, “that’s my family, actually”. She attributed it to the warmth and *gezelligheid* which she said was incomparable to other clubs she had been a part of. It is possible this is a common discourse within the club, leading its members to adopt the lexicon of family to talk about it. Nevertheless, it is clear that having a large group of likeminded, warm, and welcoming people that you can meet regularly and stay in your life for a long time had a positive effect which these two participants compared to the feeling of family.

The two other times Catharina referred to family, she used two different words: *familie*, the direct Dutch translation of the word family, and *gezin*, the Dutch word for the

nuclear family. In the first instance, she was telling me about meeting her new neighbor for the first time, and immediately having the feeling that he must be gay: "I saw him, and I thought, oh look, family!" [*oh kijk, familie!*]. In that sense, family is used to denote the *roze* community, but also specifically people who can be recognized as so somehow. By using the word family, she implies that *roze* people can recognize and relate to one another, that they share something together that they do not with heterosexual and cisgender people. This use of the word family, being applied to someone Catharina did not know but assumed she could immediately relate to, contrasts with the use of the word as it applied to the nuclear family she had grown up with. Catharina concluded telling me about her childhood by stating that, "besides that, we were a loving family," [*een liefdevol gezin*]. Moments later, she referred to her childhood as "uneventful". In this case, family denotes a unit of people living together, where the parents love one another, have children with whom they sometimes have arguments and who often argue amongst themselves, but get along well enough that it is not disruptive to their lives.

The multiple uses of words meaning "family" illustrates the ambiguity of the word. While some, such as Butler (2002) argue that family is, in contemporary Western contexts, only one subset of kinship ties and therefore is losing importance, others argue for making family more than the *gezin* and break its synonymy with heterosexuality and heteronormativity, for example by speaking of and researching families of choice (Weston, 1997, p. 109). While the appellation of family clearly resonated with Catharina, others were not so sure. There was for example Willem, for whom you could be gay, as in experience sexual attraction to other men, but not feel gay - "not like you can feel sad" - implying that simply the fact of two people being gay would not be enough for them to relate to one another. There was also Pauline, for whom the people she knew through her various *roze* groups formed more of a network than a family. This latter statement was a point of agreement in the focus group: the word family is too loaded with ideals and expectations, when in reality it is more often than not messy, like "a shoe that always keeps pinching" (Yvonne, 66). Calling it a network, according to the focus group participants, stops the comparison with both the ideals and the pitfalls of family and focuses on what Pauline called the "fluid and interactive" aspects of relationships with friends. Their interpretation confirmed something I observed about the changing breadth of *roze* networks.

Mix and mingle

Smashing Pink was also an important place for Annelies (72) - she, too, called its members her family - but not only because it was a place, "where you can be yourself, where you can

be with like-minded people." For her, it was also the place that reconciled her with men, through getting to know "the most fantastic, loving, beautiful gay men" there. She was not the only woman hailing from the feminist movement who had come to appreciate a more gender-diverse approach to social life. In her interview, Manon joked about getting along very well with her male colleagues. "People say, 'But aren't you a lesbian, doesn't that mean you don't like men?'. But of course, it's different when you're friends, there's no drama." Based on her experience within Smashing Pink, Annelies also appreciated the mixed-gender aspect of the RSD. It had not always been easy, however, according to Catharina. At the start, mostly women had joined, and they had to use a large mailing list to enroll men. Still, after some parity was achieved, men would walk into events saying there were too many women, and women saying there were too many men. By now, things seem to have evened out: at both RSD events I attended, there seemed to me to be a good mix of people present, not afraid to mix and mingle.

This new relaxation in the rigid gender separation was also welcomed by Lucas, the trans man who felt he could not come out as so earlier in his life because of the strong anti-man sentiment in the feminist movement of the seventies and eighties. When he had come out about eight years ago, however, he said most of his friends had already changed their mindsets and accepted his transition. Although this meant he felt at home in the RSD, he also sought out trans-specific groups to find relatedness. He was part of Trans Amsterdam, a group gathering trans people of all ages in the city, and regularly attended Trans Swim Amsterdam, for which the municipality reserved a slot at a public swimming pool once a month for trans people to be able to swim comfortably and safely wearing whatever swimwear they preferred. "We chat and we swim, it's a little bit like a café. You swim a bit, then you talk, then you throw around a ball. It's *gezellig*." It was perhaps also a place where no one asked him why he had changed his name, a discussion he disliked: "I said, 'well it suits me better,' I didn't want to explain it. [...] So, I thought, I will tell [them], and then [they] can spread it around! [laughs]".

Connecting with the neighborhood

"*Rien n'est parfait!*" [Nothing is perfect!] This is what Thelma had exclaimed when she had asked her downstairs neighbor, a young French man, whether he was gay and he had replied that he was not. Luckily, she said, he had laughed. For Thelma, it was important to be able to make this kind of joke that reveal something about her in a funny way, because it meant she was getting on well with those in her environment - whatever their gender or sexuality. This is the kind of relationships more participants hoped to have within their

neighborhood, especially since most of them expected to age at home, as entry into care homes is being heavily restricted. It is not necessarily a simple matter, however. Annelies, for example, thought it would be made easier if more buildings had common areas, where neighbors could meet and sometimes enjoy a meal together. This is a reality in the Roze Hallen, a fourteen-apartment building reserved for *roze* co-living in a heavily gentrified area of Amsterdam, but most cannot afford it. Even if they could, one building is not enough, as Dr. Roos Pijpers, one of my key informants, put it:

“I love that place, I’ve been there, and I know how much they struggled in developing that project, getting a co-housing project off the ground in Amsterdam is still very difficult, but I don’t think that can be a realistic option for many older LGBT people. [...] So, I use that argument that it is a great project, but also a bit of a niche project, to underline the need to also do something with this topic in mainstream care providers, right? Because it’s just not going to happen that many people are going to live that way. [...] I mean, we’re talking about many, many thousands of people.”

So, there need to be other solutions. Annelies and Pauline tried one of them, joining the “regular” Stadsdorp and, in Annelies’ case, trying to organize joint activities with the RSD. “I don’t see why we always need to operate so apart,” she wondered. Although she did not question the benefits of having a *roze*-only group, she saw added value to having both and feeling more at home in her neighborhood. Bram, who had just moved outside Amsterdam with his partner, did the same. Prior to his move, he had reached out to the COC asking whether his new town was “a nice place to be gay” and had already met another gay couple there with whom they were thinking of setting up some kind of group as they were reaching a kind of *roze* critical mass. Next to that, he had also just joined the local kayak association. It was a good way of meeting people and getting integrated [*ingeburgerd*], he said.

For Lucas, it was also a sports group that created neighborhood cohesion. He had joined a municipality-run gym club for older people over a decade ago. At the beginning, there were two groups within the club, due to a demographic transition in the neighborhood, which now contained both the working-class people who had lived there all along and some higher educated people who had recently moved there. For the first few years, only the latter group had stayed behind to drink coffee after the class, but those barriers had slowly eroded over time. Now, everyone stayed for coffee. In the meantime, Lucas had also transitioned, becoming one of the only men in the mostly women’s club. He

kept going, without issues. Staying active thanks to the group, he said, might help him reach his goal: to live to one hundred.

Passing on the fight

“You should congratulate me! [...] Because I have a nephew who just came out, so I’m no longer alone in the family.” I had struck up conversation with a fellow audience member at a recent thematic meeting held by the Roze Stadsdorp, called “Young and Old in the Land of Gender”. It was a sunny Sunday afternoon, and the room was filled with about fifty people ready to enter into intergenerational dialogue for the next few hours. The event was co-organized between the Roze Stadsdorp and ASVGay, the University of Amsterdam’s LGBTQ+ student association. The seventy-something woman next to me, who was to write an account of the afternoon for the Roze Stadsdorp’s newsletter, counted the young people: sixteen in total. This seemed to confirm something Catharina had told me in her interview, “[Young people] are just not available!”. Yet, she, and the people present that afternoon, agreed: contact between generations of queer people is important, mostly because, as my first interlocutor had pointed out, it is not the kind of contact that is necessarily made in some of the typical intergenerational spaces, such as extended biological families. Younger people, however, it was argued at the meeting, are not so interested in groups. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to find out whether that statement can be backed up by empirical findings. However, I do want to analyze a few of the ways in which some of my participants did connect with younger queer people, and what that says about the ways in which they find relatedness.

One common way of thinking intergenerational relations is in terms of what the older generations have to offer the younger ones: experience, expertise, wisdom,... This is a mode of relationality I observed during the Young and Old meeting. One of the activities involved a panel with representatives from four different generations. One member of the panel was a thirty-something gay man, who described watching his sister get married and “move to Utrecht, in a house with a fence and beautiful children, an unbelievable number of children” and the confusion that made him feel: was he missing out? Upon hearing him, there were murmurs and laughter of recognition throughout the audience, and an older man called out, “But do you want to belong there?” No, the younger man had answered, he did not. Earlier in the day, when someone had mentioned identifying as queer because she could “never fulfill her role as a girl”, someone else in the audience had also called out, “But it’s great isn’t it, to be different?” This kind of reassurance, ascertaining that it is alright, and even enjoyable, to live your life differently and skew from the norms, seemed to resonate

well with both the younger and older people in the room. Paul also mentioned it as a way he connected with younger people:

“I don't think my advice would be like a phrase or something, I think it's much more in what I do, and in how I live my life, and that I can put an example as to how you can live differently. And I just know because I get that feedback from young people, that they find it inspiring, if they see, oh yeah, there are other ways of living.”

Milardo (2010, p. 185), in his study of relationships between aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews, also observed this type of relationality in which a - usually older - person shows someone else another way of living. He refers to it as “modeling alternatives lifestyles” and points to the importance of aunts and uncles - particularly childless ones, who were overrepresented in his study - being there to show different ways of doing things as compared to parents. Although I did not gather enough evidence of this in my sample to make a generalization, I hypothesize that modeling alternatives carries all the more meaning and importance for transgender young people. This is something I observed in Toon's relationship with a young trans man who he had made contact with through the COC some twenty years earlier. The man's parents did not accept his transition and often had nothing but criticism to offer about his life. For this reason, he turned to Toon, an older gay man, instead, calling him often for advice or encouragement.

Besides individual modeling of alternatives, intergenerational relationships also provide an opportunity to pass on more collective types of experiences and knowledge. Manon referred to this as one of the reasons she likes to meet younger people, “[I hope that] a group is created with militant younger and older people who are going to talk together and exchange things, [...] to pass the fight on.” She thought this to be important with regards to younger people because, “[you need to] know where you come from, what has been fought for, and that it wasn't all self-evident”, and was shocked that a younger lesbian she spoke to was unaware that, during Manon's youth, homosexuality had been illegal, nor did she know about the Gay Games and what that had meant to Dutch queer people. Passing on history is a mode of intergenerational relationality which is sometimes referred to as “generativity”. Coming from the field of developmental psychology, generativity is traditionally considered to be a phase of life occurring during middle-age wherein adults feel the need to participate in activities that will contribute their positive legacy out of concern for younger generations (Milardo, 2010, p. 15). It can be enacted as mentoring,

such as in the case of Toon, teaching as in the case Paul, or perpetuating stories of the past like Manon.

The definition of generativity, however, has been put into question and sometimes broadened to account for differing experiences of it. Kim et al. (2017) studied the concept from a life-course and pragmatic philosophical perspective, and redefined generativity to be about “contributing to and promoting lives of others and oneself” at any age. This echoes Milardo’s (2010) findings of multidirectional generativity amongst aunts and uncles and their nieces and nephews. The desire for and enactment of this kind of intergenerational generativity was also spoken about by my participants. Many of them advised other older *roze* adults to “stay open to new ideas”, “stay curious”, or “be open to diversity”, something they thought to be made easier through contact with younger people. The “new ideas” mentioned were sometimes very concrete, such as Robert keeping up with TV shows and social media trends via an ex-partner’s children, but could also be more philosophical, as in the case of Paul enjoying young people’s “energy of discovery” or Manon learning about their more fluid conceptions of gender and sexuality. In all cases, however, participants were keen to mention that they did not just seek to “[be] the old man [who] has advice for younger people” but that they wanted to be in discussion with them, to exchange and build together. On the other hand, several participants did also mention feeling more comfortable with people of their own generation, or having trouble meeting young people, who are in their eyes more individually-minded, busy and unavailable. Furthermore, Lucas, who did have opportunities to meet younger people through the Trans Amsterdam group but had not been able to do so in the last years due to concerns about contracting COVID-19, infection rates being consistently higher among younger people.

The ways in which these participants have built relationships with younger queer people illustrate the importance of modeling alternatives and (intergenerational) generativity to queer relationality. I argue that much like the more intragenerational types of relatedness done in *roze* groups by older adults, this intergenerational relatedness is built on flows of queer joy between the various parties. Passing down histories, sharing new knowledge and experiences of queerness, and validating each other’s ways of living differently are also all ways of thinking and building new, queer spaces.

Queer relatedness

Throughout this chapter, I have demonstrated the ways in which queer joy operates as a vector and metaphor for relatedness, forming networks which offer its members security in

a world that is often neither ready to accept them, nor care for them. These networks of relatedness, as Butler (2002) argued about kinship, transcend family. They can include family, as in the case of the woman whose nephew had recently come out, but are also much more than that, although they do function in a way that may be comparable to extended families, wherein “given ties may become blended with chosen ties” (Milardo, 2010, p. 172).

By highlighting the role of flows of queer joy in creating networks of relatedness, I make an argument to consider queer joy as an example of metaphorical con-substantiality. Like the substances discussed by Carsten (2011), queer joy is often borne out of situations in which emotions run high – think for example of the wonder participants associated with the Gay Games. Additionally, just like money as a substance creating relatedness can be considered to have animating properties comparable to that of blood (which literally gives life) because it is “generative” (Carsten, 2011, p. 28), so too can this be said of queer joy, which I have shown to be involved in relations of generativity between generations. Furthermore, thinking queer relatedness through queer joy lends additional weight to choosing the word network over family to describe it. Indeed, much like Willem pointed out that he does not “feel” gay, other participants indicated that they did not “feel” as though they were part of a *roze* family. Queer joy, however, is a doing – the act of creating a temporary, utopian space together – with the power of creating fluid and mutable networks of relatedness. In the following chapter, I look at how participants negotiated the transformation of these wider networks into personal networks.

Chapter 3

No network without kin work: Negotiating norms and doing practical kinship

Catharina's interview took place in her sunny penthouse kitchen. Her partner of forty years, Lotte, also lived there and was home but I did not meet her when I came in. They each had their own home office, Catharina explained, because they needed their own space. For the first twenty years of their relationship, they had ensured this by living in separate but joint houses to avoid the lesbian stereotype that, "after seeing each other twice, you rent a U-Haul to move in together and sort of cuddle each other to death only to hop! burst apart again". Seven years ago, they had finally decided to really move in together, and it was going well. Still, they very much had their own lives. I eventually briefly met Lotte when she came in before leaving for the day to coordinate schedules with Catharina and give her a quick kiss. "That was Lotte," Catharina said simply.

Now that they lived together, sharing their space (apart from their offices) and their lives, it may seem as though Catharina and Lotte were a typical, settled couple in their seventies. They had been married for over twenty years; every Friday afternoon, they took care of their nephew's two small children; they played tennis; they took care of their garden at their country house outside the city. Being highly educated – they had met doing the same study at university – and having earned relatively high salaries throughout their lives had enabled them to be comfortable in their retirement.

Dig a little bit under the surface, however, and it becomes clear that their relationship might not be best described as "typical". They had never wanted to be married – in fact, Catharina quickly recalled that they did not actually get married, they had a registered partnership – but this did not matter to her because the whole affair was an administrative matter anyway. They had gotten it over with in a matter of minutes at the municipality on a Monday morning, with a nephew and a niece as witnesses. She called their registered partnership a *moetje*, or "had-to" (literally), the Dutch term formerly used for shotgun weddings when the bride became pregnant. In their case, they had "had to" go through with it to be able to inherit from one another as they had not been living at the same address. What's more, although relatives took up some space in their lives in the form of nephews and nieces, they dedicated more time to friendships and organizations. Catharina, who had once dreamt of living with her friends in a group of houses in the woods, had initiated the Roze Stadsdorp in 2014 to create more bonds between LGBT+ elders in Amsterdam neighborhoods. They had met many of their current friends during the

organization of the Gay Games in Amsterdam in 1998, for which Lotte had volunteered for nearly two years. Without this, Catharina said, their lives would have been very different. They also regularly kept in touch with an exchange student they had hosted twenty years ago and would have loved to host young people in their home once again, if only they had had the room.

Catharina and Lotte's story is not representative of all queer older adults in the Netherlands - living in separate but joint private housing, for example, is a luxury afforded only to few people in Amsterdam. However, this story is illustrative of the tensions existing in queer Dutch people's kinship relationships which, like queer kinship elsewhere in the world, "both disrupt and occupy normative and hegemonic kinship structures" (Brainer, 2019, p. 58). Additionally, it showcases the flexible and negotiated quality of (queer) kinship: Catharina and Lotte's relationships with kin are as influenced by interpersonal histories as by the wider sociocultural context (Yan, 2020). I therefore use their story as a starting point to explore the complexities of older queer adults' kinship networks in the Dutch context. By analyzing participants' own accounts of their kinship relationships, I expand on existing understandings of queer kinship in the Netherlands. For example, survey-based research showed over a decade ago that Dutch LGB older adults' families tended to be different from their heterosexual counterparts' - fewer had partners and they had less contact with their children and other relatives but more and closer contact with friends (Fokkema & Kuyper, 2009). In this chapter, I examine how this is both similar and more complex for my participants. By showing how the composition of their personal networks differs from normative family-making but still is able to fulfill their needs for close relatedness, I argue that queer older adults in the Netherlands perform a kind of practical kinship.

Complexities of contemporary Dutch kinship

"It's not like before, when you lived on your parents' farm for a long time, lived on the farm forever." - Robert, 58

[About cousins] "If I go there, I'm always welcome, but if you haven't seen each other for so long... You're only family. [...] It's not a friendship." - Robert, 58

The Netherlands is considered to be the first country to have undergone the nuclearization of family, occurring before industrialization, whereas the two transitions were concurrent in most other Western countries (van Daalen, 1988 as cited in DeVries, 2001). It was at this time, as early as the 17th century, that the word *gezin* came about, designating the nuclear

family unit (Clerkx & van Ijzendoorn, 2014). The importance of the home and the family within it was cemented, and prevailed until at least the 1960's. Since then, there have been more changes in the perception and importance of family in Dutch society. The extra-marital birthrate started increasing exponentially, while the total amount of births decreased steadily. However, this is also related to changes in marriage timing: Dutch couples started getting married later, often after having children, but getting married remained an important milestone until at least the early 2000's (Lesthaeghe & Surkyn, 2007). On the other hand, the number of Dutch young people leaving the parental home prior to marriage to live alone has also steadily increased, diminishing the importance of marriage as the step prompting departure from the original *gezin* (Beer & Deven, 2013, p. 8). What's more, the concurrent increase in divorce rates has also created many reconstituted families, in which relations between step-children and step-parents are built, often harmoniously (van Houdt, 2021). Taken together, these trends paint a complex picture of contemporary kinship in the Netherlands as simultaneously still traditional and normative, but also creating opportunities for kinship beyond the norms of the nuclear family. This poses the question of how older queer adults relate to these contemporary kinship norms.

Marriage: the good, the bad, and the administrative

"My impression is always that 9 out of 10 straight people get married and have children." For Bram (54), marriage and children remained very much heterosexual constructs and norms. He had a partner of fourteen years with whom he owned a house and planned to grow old side by side, but marriage had never been on the table. This was a mindset shared by several other participants: a popular word for describing marriage was "nonsense" [*onzin*]. This is an ideology stemming from their time in feminist and other activist movements, or, as Catharina put it, "that's part of our generation, marriage is very bourgeois, we don't do that". Paul explained the reasoning behind it as "for me, being gay is an invitation, let's rethink human relationships, and why copy the model of heterosexual contractual partnership I guess?" The history of queer people with marriage also plays a role. Although the Netherlands was the first country to legalize same-sex marriage, gay couples were not allowed to marry until 2001 or have a registered partnership until 1991 (Bos, 2020), well into most participants' middle-age or at least adulthood. As a result, most of them never expected to get married growing up, like Bram (54), "I knew very young that I was gay, [...] I think that I was 6 [...] so I grew up with the idea that I couldn't get married." Furthermore,

most participants staked a high price on independence¹¹ – also a product of their time, especially for some of the women having actively fought throughout their lives to convince women to take financial independence from their husbands. To them, marriage and shared assets were as much a liability as an opportunity.

Still, even those against marriage in principle saw its administrative advantages and had already considered getting married or even gone through with it. There was Catharina and Lotte and their “*moetje*”, but also Manon, who had gotten married when her partner came to live with her and she would have otherwise lost her right to her social housing, Annelies, who had married her younger partner so she would be able to inherit from her without extra costs, and Paul, who at one point considered marrying his partner to facilitate his acquisition of Dutch citizenship.

Aside from those who saw marriage as a thing of administrative convenience only, there are also the ones who truly believe in its meaning, and the equality it signifies:

“[Getting married] is still something I want. [...] I’ve always found it a nice dynamic, the party but also the meaning that the word has. [...] [For a time] I went in the direction of, oh, marriage is an infusion of the hetero norm. [...] But I find that the equality with a straight person – that if the straight people can get married, then as a gay person you can also get married, and as a lesbian, a non-binary person,...” – Robert (58)

Even for those who did not believe in marriage, like Gerard (74) – “I find marriage to be nonsense. [...] If that’s the happiest day of your life, I find that pretty sad.” – the equality it demonstrates and the intentions behind its legalization do have meaning. “The advantage is that in the Netherlands, the politics stand behind us now – it was different in the past. I find that to be a positive point.”

This last ambiguous opinion about marriage reflects well how my participants related to it. Their history with marriage has been rocky, from being excluded from it to rejecting it themselves for the sake of ideology, but also independence. Marriage is thus one of the areas in which they subvert heterosexual norms, but also a reminder for them of the increase in equality for queer people which has been achieved, and of what that means for their place in Dutch society. In the end, however, what prevails in practice is not their ideas about marriage, but the practical and administrative realities of marriage. Even as

¹¹ This is a characteristic also found in other studies of queer older adults such as (Cronin & King, 2014).

marriage rates in the Netherlands have declined, there remain clear advantages to marrying one's partner. Something difficult to overlook, especially for those in more precarious situations regarding housing or immigration status. So, when they had to choose, my participants and their partners picked survival, but also kept their ideological reservations and were not afraid to speak of them.

No children, no problem

"Not having children was important for me, because I really didn't want children, I realized, after I first thought that you *had* to get married and have children. So, at some point I thought, children, no, I really don't want children. [...] The man with whom I had been living [...] had two children [...] and I cared for them quite a bit, but [...] then I thought that I just don't want to care for children long-term, I just want to at every moment [...] be able to lead my own life, and you can't do that with children. So that was important for me." - Catharina, 74

For some of the participants, like Catharina, being rid of the pressure to have children as lesbians or gay men came as a relief. For others, it was something they occasionally questioned, but never too seriously and perhaps more from a philosophical or practical perspective than one of innate desire. For example, Paul, when his brothers had children, wondered "is that something I should be wanting?", and now that his mother was older, realized that "you also have kids to take care of you in old age". Others kept it as a thought in the back of their minds but never felt the need to act on it:

"I always had occasional fantasies about it, and it seemed nice. But when I was 37, it stopped. That came about because my mother was 37 when she had me, so it was a sort of boundary. And then after that, I didn't have a desire for it anymore, or anything like that." - Lucas, 77

As with marriage, however, these decisions and attitudes towards having children were also influenced by the complicated path to having children as someone not in a heterosexual relationship. Before even thinking of how to have children, they would have needed to think of whether it was even, as Paul put it, "something [they] should want", and what it would look like for them, as queer people, to be parents. Gerard, for example, wished to have a child and had at one point been in contact with a lesbian couple looking to partner with a gay man to have a child. His arrangement with them eventually fell through however, and he never got to have children. Still, he remained convinced that a lesbian couple having a child with a gay man was a beautiful thing, also beneficial for the child in terms of having

a relationship and memories with their father. He had successfully made reproduction thinkable for himself as a gay man (Smietana, 2018), but the practical means, still scantily available at the time, had put an end to his plans.

For Manon, who did have a daughter, making a baby had been the easy part – she had done so with her ex-partner, a man – but making being a queer parent thinkable and doable had required much behind-the-scenes work. In the end, it took her becoming active in the feminist movement, helping pioneer the concept of co-parenting, and convincing her ex-partner to take on half their daughter’s care for parenting to become a possibility for her. In comparison, Toon, who was married to a woman when they had their two children, did not recall ever actively thinking about whether he wanted children. “I think that I actually never thought about it so consciously. [...] It happened. But it was also that the moment they came, they meant a lot to me.”

Not having children was for many participants both a rebellion and the easier choice. For those of them in same-sex relationships, having children would have been a long road in terms of practical arrangements as well as with regards to the more philosophical aspects of it. At the same time, many – but especially the women among them – had grown up with the certainty that childbearing and rearing would be a part of their lives. Being faced with the opportunity to deviate from this ready-made path opened up a world of possibilities they had never dared to imagine before. The ones who did choose to have children, like Manon and Pauline, did not take the decision lightly and did not go about it in what might be considered a normative manner. Having children came with careful considerations regarding co-parenting, division of labor, and what it meant to be a parent to a child. This is a very different path to parenthood than that of Toon who, having had children before he explored his homosexuality, had had them more as a matter of course than as the result of a thought out decision process. I argue that this illustrates the major difference between queer and heterosexual, cisgender people of my participants’ generation when it comes to having children: for queer people, not having children was the default. It is logical that, should one not care too much either way, they would opt for the default option, as both Lucas and Toon did – but the difference, of course, lies in the outcome. Whether this will remain an obvious distinction between queer and non-queer kinship, however, remains to be seen, as reproduction becomes steadily more accessible to queer people and the overall birth rate continues to decline.

Alone, together

“And you, are you alone?” The question was, unexpectedly, directed at me by Willem during his interview. He had just described his breakup with a long-term partner three years earlier as well his more recent struggles with online dating (too impersonal, according to him, he would rather meet people spontaneously, in real life). The question was clearly meant to ask about whether I had a partner, not necessarily implying that not having one meant being completely alone. It does, however, prompt the question of what does determine whether one is alone or not?

Many studies have shown that queer older adults have a lower chance of being in a committed relationship, having children, and being in contact with their nuclear family of origin (e.g. Kuyper & van Lisdonk, 2015) while simultaneously being close to and relying more on other loved ones such as friends, neighbors, extended family and ex-partners (e.g. Dewaele, 2008). The widest study of this kind done in the Netherlands (to my knowledge), however, showed that other relationships on average did not make up for the lack of partner in terms of loneliness, for both heterosexual and lesbian, gay and bisexual older people (Fokkema & Kuyper, 2009). While this effect is likely not to have changed entirely since this study, I did find strong counterexamples in my own research. In this section, I thus want to show how, under certain circumstances, queer older adults can construct kinship as to not be alone outside the normative structure of the *gezin*. I present several types of relationships which were important to my participants but were neither with (current) partners nor with children.

To get a picture of my participants' personal networks, I asked them about everyone they had seen over the last seven days, then whether there was anyone important to them who they had not seen in this period. The answers were varied¹²: partners and children, for those who had them, but also many friends, siblings, ex-partners, parents, colleagues, and neighbors. The things they did together with these kin to maintain their relationships – kin work (Milardo, 2010, pp. 138-139) – were also varied. A good example of this variation is Paul' relationships with three of his exes, who he named as his best friends:

¹² I include here only people I interpret as being part of their personal, and not just social, networks. Excluded are thus those not mentioned by name or precise role in their lives (e.g. “I saw a customer”, “I saw the cashier at the store”, “I saw some people at my museum group”), whereas anyone with whom they could describe their relationship and activities with more in depth was included.

“I’m sure I saw Diego, but [...] online. [...] Diego lives [abroad] so I only see him there. [...] He is much younger and he was urging me to go on Instagram, so I’m on there.”

“Arthur lived in this house, and so he still has the key to it, and sometimes he still comes in, he wants to see what's in the fridge. To have a bit of something and... So that's very informal and he's not at all the person you would want to put at a table to have a conversation, that's not how Arthur works, that makes him nervous, this Dutch insistence on: now let's have a conversation. [...] Yeah, the *afspraak*, exactly. So I'm very happy that he just, comes stumbling in every once in a while.”

“And Joep, I see him when he's not travelling, I see him every week, at least for a long walk, on Sundays and, and sometimes in between. [...]”

The type of kin work depends on the individual history and circumstances of every relationship. As such, many participants explained how they kept in touch with kin living too far away to visit regularly (abroad but sometimes also just in more distant Dutch cities) through phone calls, emails, messaging apps and occasional but often regularly planned visits. There, technology allowed them to avoid the fact that distance often dilutes kin relationships (Hughes & Kentlyn, 2011), apart from relationships with nieces and nephews, which were often much closer if they were able to see each other somewhat regularly during their childhood. With nieces and nephews, what seemed to matter also was establishing their own relationships, independent of those with the children’s parents (i.e. the participants’ siblings or siblings-in-law). This points once again to how important the dimensions of individuality and choice are to these kin relationships: these are not relationships sustained out of norm, obligation, or a distant biological relatedness.

Doing this kind of kinship requires constant work, and it is this work which clearly sets apart personal networks from broader social networks. Making weekly phone calls, having a monthly lunch, going on holidays together, or visiting friends abroad were all examples of kin work given to me by participants. Kin work is at its most apparent though when it comes to relationships with ex-partners. In the focus group, it was agreed that it is not easy work: it takes effort and patience to wait for “the love to transform”. For Willem, it had become more important with age:

“It was a pretty sad separation. And so, at the time, I said, we can fight about the separation, or we can stay friends, that’s a choice we make. And he said, well I

don't feel the need to fight, but if you want to... we can also fight. I said, but aren't we two adults, two grown men? We're not... I mean, when you're young, then you say things: get lost, I never want to see you again... And then maybe you see each other by accident again years later, but... No, I can get along just fine, so that's it. That's what it is."

Willem was far from the only participant to be friends with his ex: all of them mentioned trying to remain in friendly contact with at least one of their exes, although with varying results. For some, it had not worked out, and contact remained sporadic and difficult - Manon mentioned it as the one thing she wished could change about her relationships with loved ones. For others, there had been difficult moments, but things had eventually smoothed over, like for Annelies who still shared a countryside garden and shed with her ex-partner and had had a hard time watching her new girlfriend "sit in my garden [...], my garden, my place, my bike, my chairs... [...] but that lasted a few years, and then I got over it."

Kin from early in life were also very important to some participants. Bram, for example, was still close friends with several of his old classmates, including the woman who had been his "fiancée" in kindergarten: "If call and I get [her husband] on the line, I say, 'Can I speak with my fiancée?' and we still always find that a funny joke." Yvonne, a focus group participant, found value in these long-standing relationships because she recognized parts of her upbringing in the people she had known for so long (in her case, her siblings). But there again, histories made a difference: for those with complicated childhoods, marked by absent or abusive parents, for example, it had been difficult to form strong or lasting relationships early in their lives. Most of their kin, then, had entered their lives later, or they had had to rebuild relationships anew. This was the case of Gerard, who had two sisters, both lesbians, with whom he had had only little contact with during his adult life since leaving home at age sixteen. In their older years, they had patched up their relationship and were now important figures in each other's lives. Both of their older brothers, however, had passed away without reestablishing contact.

Just like Gerard and his sisters needed time and space to get away from their pasts and build new histories together, other participants remarked on how certain circumstances are needed or at least help kin relationships flourish. Bram, for example, noticed that almost all his friends - including the straight ones - were not married and did not have children (but did have partners), just like him. Annelies, too, made the association between her own singlehood and her friends'. Whereas around couples, she felt the odd one out, being single

gave her time, energy and attention to give to other modes of socializing, where she found her own place and contentment:

“[There are] activities you don’t do if you live alone. But that’s kind of my thing. I don’t need a partner, because I join a lot of clubs and things, and if I don’t find the right club, then I organize it myself and I say, ‘who’s joining?’”

From this commitment to bringing (single) people together has come out an annual biking trip and regular camping trips within the Netherlands, as well as a constant stream of new friendships.

This overview of my participants’ personal networks, differing from the normative structure of the *gezin*, shows how varied and complex kinship can be. I could not pinpoint one or more typical personal networks from these examples, also due to the small sample size, but I can say based on this analysis that kinship is negotiated and flexible. Negotiated, in the sense that each relationship is based upon a personal, cultural and political history, whether it concerns a relationship between siblings having shared a difficult childhood or the decision to get married when you have thought your entire life this would not be a possibility, but now face the administrative necessity to do so. Flexible, as well, because the kinship relationships I analyzed and presented here are not fixed, they change over time, for example in the transition from lovers to friends, but sometimes also end, leaving space for new relationships. The relationships I examined are also seldom based on norms, hinging instead on the choice to maintain it through kin work. These are all characteristics of practical kinship (Yan, 2020), which I argue is what enables my participants to not be alone even when they have little in ways of normative kinship.

The practice and work of queering kinship

“Queering” has often come to mean “subverting”. However, the importance nuance in this term is that subverting does not necessarily mean going against norms for the sake of it. Rather, it consists in relating to normative concepts by seeing whether they fit into one’s life, and if not, modifying them until they do or letting go of them completely. This is how I saw my participants negotiate kinship, taking normative concepts and parts of families (like partners, marriage, children, remaining in touch with older family members) and fitting them into their lives where possible, along with other many other relationships with kin of all kinds.

In this chapter, I deliberately used the word kin to position it with regards to family and relatedness: I find kin in this instance to indeed be broader than family (Butler, 2002),

but also to be narrower than relatedness. This narrowing down from social networks to personal network, and from relatedness to kinship, occurs through the medium of kin work - all the small and not-so-small actions people take to maintain relationships that are ongoing and personal (Milardo, 2010, pp. 138-139). The existence of kin work gives further meaning to practical kinship, showing how building relationships anchored by an element of choice requires a commitment to the practice of upholding those relationships. In the next chapter, I examine how care is a specific type of kin work and practical kinship which can further reestablish, maintain and create kinship.

Chapter 4

Relational histories and the negotiation of care, commitment and kinship

In previous chapters, I described and analyzed the composition of my participants' kin networks and networks of relatedness. This established that my participants, being queer older adults for the most part involved in groups and organizations affiliated with the queer community and living in Amsterdam, have wide cast and flexible kinship relations which contrast with at least some of the wider Dutch population their age. The question is then whether and how these kinship relationships are themselves related to care, especially as participants grow older and care starts taking up more space in their lives.

Throughout the interviews, I found evidence of varied support and care patterns, differing quite largely from one participant to another, and even between the participants' own singular kin relationships. I show that this confirms and extends Finch and Mason's (2003) finding that care is the product of relational biographies that affect its constant negotiation, rather than the product solely of norms dictating care relationships (ibid, p.12). Though, whereas Finch and Mason's (2003) results were based solely on observations of kin relations between biological and legal kin, I argue that the negotiated nature of care exists between kin of all kinds. Furthermore, I found that the outcome of negotiations of care relationships, though themselves based on relational biographies, also have the power to confirm, maintain, or undo kinship bonds, as previously argued by Häberlein (2015) in her study of intergenerational care in rural Togo. In addition to her findings, however, I contend that this is true also for kinship not created through norms of biological relatedness, and that, since in relationships where no norms bind together the two parties, care can also be the element instigating kinship.

Types of care relationships among queer older adults

I observed several types of support and care relationships between my participants and their loved ones. Analyzing these types separately aids in noticing how personal histories, alongside norms, have a role in regulating each support and care relationship. Partners are often the first people older adults turn to for support and care (Hughes & Kentlyn, 2011). Only three of my participants had partners, but they were no exception to this rule. For them, care from partners was expected, not even questioned: when I asked Catharina who she expected to care for her when needed, she first answered, "Lotte [her partner] and I for each other, of course. Of course, of course." Oftentimes, this commitment extended to ex-partners when they chose to remain close.

"With [my ex] there's more caretaking also included in [our relationship]. [...] You take care of each other. And yeah, that's interesting. With the other two exes also.

So that notion of care, with friends I don't - of course I care about them - but taking care is something else." - Paul, 60

In this sense, choosing to keep on doing care is a continuation of choosing to "transform the love", as Paul also put it. Just like the strong element of choice in romantic relationships makes care between partners a given, the history of making the choice and putting in the work of keeping one another in their lives after a separation leads the way for care relationships between ex-partners. Possibly, the element of choice is even stronger among exes as relationships between partners do have a stronger normative frame: it is expected from partners that they would care for one another. In practice, however, it is not always so simple. Manon acknowledged this: "I don't have a partner, but for people who do, [...] care is not a certainty. I mean, if you love each other like that, then great, but in practice that can be quite disappointing in the older days." Indeed, illness can create "unbalances" in couples, making it difficult for partners to care for one another and maintain their romantic and sexual relationship (Rolland, 1994). Certainly, difficulties can emerge in care relationships between ex-partners as well, but in that case, they would not necessarily be expected to continue the care relationships, unlike current partners who are expected to be there for one another "in sickness and in health" (regardless of marital status).

Like care between partners, other types of care relationships are framed by a combination of choices and norms which affects both the expectations for these relationships and how care is organized within them. Caring for parents, was, for example, a care relationship with many normative expectations for my participants' generation. Negotiations regarding these relationships were thus often expressed in terms of guilt, "I would like to say I call [my mother] every week, but that doesn't happen, so it's more like once every one and a half, two weeks or something like that" (Bram, 54) or earned long explanations as to why the participant had chosen to end the care relationship. These normative expectations were not however transferred by my participants to their children or other young people in their lives. For example, Pauline, a focus group participant in her early sixties who had two children, expressed that she had not had children so they could take care of her in her olden days. It was important to her that her children not have the feel an obligation to care for her. As it was, however, she got along well with her children, now in their early twenties, and they had expressed without her asking that they would be there for her when she got older - something Pauline was not even sure she wanted. Relational

histories mattered there, as they did for Catharina and her partner, who took care of both their nephews for their entire childhood. They “expected” care from one of the nephews but not from the other, with whom Catharina described their relationship as “more complex” even though they nowadays cared weekly for his own children.

With friends, support and care relationships were not the result of normative expectations and therefore, when care relationships developed, it was often progressively, with one thing leading to another. For example, Lucas described the process of taking on care responsibilities for a friend: “I already used to let her dog out while she was at work, [...]. So, the frequency increased, naturally. [...] It came by itself.” The process itself as well as the words used to describe it – “naturally”, “It came by itself” – indicate that it was experienced as a natural progression of things. Catharina had a similar experience with a friend:

“[...] One friend had cancer, [...] we went with her to hospital [...] and eventually were there when she died. [...] [Her partner] had dementia, which had already started when the girlfriend had cancer, and eventually it became clear that something had to be done.”

Over time, however, care relationships between friends, especially when they resulted in the creation of support and care networks – groups of people ready to step in for one another – did create expectations for care. Robert, for example, had a small circle of close friends which had remained much the same for over twenty years. One of them was currently undergoing treatment for breast cancer, during which he had been lending her support, and he was certain she would do the same for him if necessary.

Support and care relationship types can thus be differentiated in terms of the norms that apply to them, and what role personal histories then take in their negotiation. In the rest of the chapter, I use short case studies to demonstrate how negotiations of support and care relationships affect kinship relations and the type of support and/or care that is provided within the relationship.

Care among vertical kin: Negotiating obligations

Vertical kinship relations, between parents and their children, contain the strongest assumption of obligation. Indeed, most childless participants expressed unprompted their worry at having no one to care for them in old age. In practice, however, whether children

care for their parents depends on more than just obligation; personal histories also play a big role. I demonstrate that in this section using three short case studies.

The first case I bring up here is that of one of the participants who had children himself. Toon was 80 years old at the time of our interview and had two daughters in their fifties. He had raised them mostly as a single father after he and his wife divorced during the girls' early childhood. Recently, Toon had been in an accident which had intensified this contact: he had broken his hip, which had resulted in a lengthy stay in hospital, then in a revalidation facility. There, he explained, "your computer is at home, so you can't send emails [...], and your clothes, you have to make sure they get washed." During this time, his daughters visited him very frequently and helped him with laundry and other needs. To thank them for this, he had taken each of them out for lunch with their respective partners over the previous weekend.

It is clear from the way he told the story that Toon did not feel that his daughters had an obligation to commit to his care after his accident. He saw the potential for care to confirm their relationship and was glad that it did. This is a trend in more of Toon's relationships; having worked for a long time as a social worker in a medical setting and having helped many loved ones deal with mental and physical health issues, he prized care highly and used it to establish long-lasting relationships. Perhaps seeing him establish relationships this way and experiencing this kind of relationship with him is part of what influenced his daughters' negotiation of the commitment to his own care.

The second case is that of Robert, 58, and his mother. Robert was the son of two parents born outside of the Netherlands, one from Indonesia and the other from Hungary, who "raised [me] in a quite Christian way" [*redelijk Christelijk opgevoed*]. Both had passed away by the time I met him, but he described having had regular contact with them throughout most of his life prior to their passing, with two exceptions. The first was between the ages of 18 and 20, when he had just come out as gay and his parents needed time to get used to the idea. "My parents had to get used to [it]. But I'm an only child, so it's cut and choose¹³. They did always hope that after my [first] relationship ended I would become straight." The second exception was in the last five years of his mother's life, during which she suffered from dementia and lived in a nursing home. At that time, he said, his mother

¹³ "Cut and choose" is a procedure with Biblical origins used for fairly dividing goods wherein one person divides the good (e.g. a cake) and the other chooses on the part they want. In this case, it refers to the fact that since Peter is an only child, he got to choose who he was and his parents then had to take him as he was or choose not to have contact with their only child.

did not recognize him. She was taken good care of and, he felt, did not gain from seeing him as she did not recognize him. Additionally, Peter expressed several times during his interview that, while he recognized that medically, the care available now was vastly superior to ever before in history, he was dissatisfied with the changes in the Dutch care system, and particularly the diminished access to nursing homes. According to him, caregiving (in the physical sense) was a skill which most people, including him, were not trained for and do not have the right disposition to do. Leave the care to the professionals, he argued, and make sure they can work in good conditions with enough staff and adequate resources.

I interpret the lack of relationship between Robert and his mother in the last years of her life as an instance of undoing kinship, or de-kinning (Howell, 2002). It is more difficult, however, to discern whether de-kinning was established by choosing not to confirm the kinship via care. Robert saw that his mother received the care she needed. For him, the de-kinning happened when his mother no longer was able to recognize him: there was no longer a relationship to confirm, from his perspective. Not going to visit his mother was therefore not a matter of kinship, but one of perceived obligation, as he had explained to one of his colleagues in a similar situation:

“The expectation is there, but no one is really asking it [directly] from you. If she really doesn’t recognize you, you are putting that on yourself, on your [own] shoulders. No one is asking, it’s something you have in your head, but then don’t complain.”

The next case is based on Paul, a 60-year-old living in Amsterdam but originally from the South of the Netherlands, where he had grown up mostly with his mother and her partner as well as his two brothers. Their family was on good terms, and he described his brothers and mother as "very dear to me". They kept in touch regularly via WhatsApp, and when one of his brothers had been living on another continent with his wife and children, he had visited them regularly during holiday periods. As their mother had aged, the brothers - now all living in the Netherlands, albeit not in the same region as their mother - had gotten into the habit of visiting her frequently, so that at least one of them would see her in person every week. They were also able to help her with some administrative tasks from a distance, but her day-to-day care was ensured by home carers, who the brothers had helped arrange. The previous year, however, their mother's partner of many years had passed away, and Paul noticed that his mother “would like to see us more intensely, that is obvious, but that is a recent thing, because her husband died a year ago.” For him, however, this was not something that made sense given their existing relationship.

“We don’t flatten each other’s doors down [*we liepen niet de deur bij elkaar plat*]. We’re not that kind of family, [...] we were never like, ‘we have to see each other all the time, hang out all the time’. That was never... And the relations are really strong, full of love, so I don’t think we miss it.”

Throughout Paul’s life, he and his family had been close from a distance, never needing to see each other constantly to maintain a strong bond between them. During his childhood, he had also spent some time living with his father after his parents’ divorce before moving back with his mother. As the whole family had aged and technology had evolved, they had moved much of their communication online, allowing them to keep up with each other in an easy, casual manner. They also privileged this kind of very informal and sometimes even unspoken communication when it came to their mother’s increasing care needs. For example, “without having talked, I think we all agree that at least once a week, somebody of us should be there” and “now I see one - my oldest brother is very busy, so then we take over, that goes quite nicely, I have to say”. They had never been “that kind of family”, and this biographical pull now affected the negotiation of their mother’s care.

The final case is that of Manon, a 77-year-old with a daughter who realized this put her at an advantage as compared to other *roze* older adults she knew who “have no one”. Manon lived in social housing in Amsterdam, in a neighborhood she loved, but also owned a small country-side home in the village where her daughter resided. She spent about half her time there, which had allowed her to stay close to her daughter over the years and to see her grand-children almost every weekend when they were growing up. She and her daughter got on relatively well - “we can also fight, but we can roll around laughing, it’s great” - which meant she could imagine that, if it became necessary, she could move in with her daughter, who lived on a farm, and be cared for there. When I asked her whether she could also imagine being cared for by someone who was not her daughter, however, she responded, “Oh yes, preferably!”

Manon’s reaction was in part due to her apprehension with regards to leaving Amsterdam, where most of her network and her social and cultural activities were located. However, her reaction also showed that she did not feel care was necessary to confirm her kinship relation with her daughter. This also reflects the way she had raised her daughter. By splitting care tasks with her daughter’s father and making the conscious decision not to be the kind of mother who makes their child the absolute center of her world, Manon had built a relationship with her daughter wherein both of them knew how to rely on people who were not each other. Furthermore, Manon had cared for both her parents at the end of

their lives, a task which had proved very difficult, especially because her mother had expected so much from her as a carer. As with her daughter's upbringing, she did not want to repeat her mother's mistakes.

I chose the above case studies not because they are representative of many other stories of kinning or de-kinning I came across in the interviews, or because I think they are representative of wider trends. Rather, they reflect they give examples of the link between kinship and care in *gezinnen* (nuclear families) and how it can be shaped by social norms and personal histories. Furthermore, they show how both also shape the kind of support and care vertical kin provide to one another. While many participants evoked a sense of normative duty when it came to taking care of their parents, many of them also described earlier in the interview being extremely eager to leave home when coming of age. This created a history of independence taken early, especially from parents, and which was in some cases complicated and (temporarily) heightened by participants' concurring coming out. High levels of independence from one another thus became elements of many of the participants' relational biographies with their parents, something which seemed to affect negotiation of commitment, care and kinship later in life. This kind of independence was also reflected in their own expectations for care, such as for Manon, Toon, and Pauline, the three participants with children who, each in their own way, did not necessarily want or expect their children to take care of them as they aged.

It is worth mentioning here that participants spoke of vertical kin relationships mostly regarding the end of their lives, when they expected to no longer be able to live alone or perhaps even take decisions for themselves. In those cases, they feared having no one to advocate for them so that they could get access to (quality) professional care, especially because they expected their networks to get old simultaneously.

"Well, soon I'll be alone, I don't have any children who will take care of me. [...] I'm completely alone, so I'll be shut in a care home. No, but it might happen. That seems like a horrible situation to me. [...] If you are in a care home and you don't have any family, that's not a good situation. If you have family who still comes around and who says to the staff that you want this or that, who watches out for you... But [if you don't have family], you are handed over to the care, to the supervision, to the staff shortage, and well, it's not great. I hope that I don't have to deal with that." - Willem, 64

“Well, you’re never unique. If I’m getting older, so are my friends and acquaintances.” - Bram, 54

“Retirement homes don’t really exist anymore. I mean, in my mother’s generation [...] it was a kind of hotel. [...] Now, you need to be really disabled. [...] You only come in if you’re completely *gaga*, and in the meantime, they just let you break down.”

This shows that, although my participants prized independence and for the most part did not buy into the norms that bind children to care for their parents, they also had to contend with the fear that no one else would be there for them either. In the following section, I show how other types of kin are sometimes still able to provide care to one another.

Care between kin of all kinds: Confirming relationships

In this section, I examine how care plays a role in kinship relations with other types of kin, towards whom there are fewer assumptions about normative obligations of care. The first case I bring once again comes from Toon’s life. This example cements the active role of care in his life for establishing and maintaining relationships, and further explanations of how exactly he viewed this as happening.

Shortly after turning seventy, Toon had moved back to Amsterdam from a nearby city he had moved to after retiring, and into social housing designated for older adults. His new apartment was located in a building with a reception and café area downstairs where residents could eat and socialize with neighbors, although they each also had their own small kitchen and living room. Toon had moved in when the building was newly renovated. At the time, the COC had set up an initiative to try and make it an LGBT-friendly living place and had held a meeting for prospective LGBT residents. However, only Toon and one other person present at the meeting had eventually moved in and, seven years later, there were still only a few LGBT residents. About one year after moving in, however, Toon had met another gay man in the building who lived a few floors below him. He did not believe in becoming friends with other residents solely because they are neighbors but said there was a “click” with this particular man, Bart. Over the years, they had become friends until, one day, Toon had been standing at Bart’s door talking to him when Bart had suddenly stopped answering him. Toon called an ambulance and Bart turned out to have been experiencing a stroke. He accompanied him to the hospital and from there, he said, “if you experience something like that together, it creates a bond”. Bart eventually recovered from the stroke, but soon began to experience symptoms of dementia. Throughout the progression of his

symptoms, Toon stayed by his side, accompanying him to the dentist (he had neglected going for quite some time and needed heavy dental care), helping him with his administration and eventually finding him a spot in an LGBT-friendly nursing home. In the nursing home, Bart seemed to improve. He was well taken care of, and he and Toon were able to spend more time doing fun activities together, such as going out for coffee. After a while, however, his health deteriorated suddenly, and it became clear he would not live for much longer. Along with one of Bart's lifelong friends who Bart had designated as his health proxy and who had also helped with choosing the nursing home and moving him in, Toon took on the responsibility of ensuring a comfortable end to Bart's life and, eventually, his funeral.

In less than ten years, Toon had met a neighbor, become friends with him, helped during a medical emergency, started providing help with daily tasks, and finally become one of the two people responsible for all the arrangements surrounding the end of his life. There was no clear expectation or obligation for Toon, as a neighbor, to take on these roles, nor did Bart ever ask him to. There was also no distinct point at which Toon decided to take on a commitment to Bart's wellbeing, although he retroactively does identify the stroke as a moment which created a new kind of bond between them. This is an example of care being instrumental in creating kinship. Although Toon never called Bart his family, they clearly formed a strong bond of relatedness which extended to intimate and important aspects of their lives, culminating in Bart's end of life, an arrangement typically strongly associated with kin.

The second case is that of a 72-year-old woman, Annelies, who described herself as a very independent person, better suited for living alone, but also dedicated to helping her large extended family (for example with housing decisions as she had a career as a real estate agent) and her many friends. "If someone is in need, I help," she says, "I can't [not]." [*Ik kan niet anders*]. At the time of the interview, she had recently been involved in the care of at least three friends: one with broken ribs who she had gotten to know through the Roze Stadsdorp, an ex-boyfriend with a broken arm ("After his bicycle fall, I had to cut his biking clothes off. After two days, he hadn't gone to the hospital. He still had [...] all his biking clothes on."), and another friend who had just gotten out of hospital with a broken hip. She also assisted her sister, who struggled financially, with her administration. She did not need any care herself at that moment, but she was certain there would be someone to help when she did:

“I think they will even do it with pleasure. [...] I broke my ankle, and my friend [who now broke her hip] said, [...] ‘Annelies, I’m coming over!’ And then [...] she massaged my ankle. [...] And I also have sisters. I’m also ready to step up for them [*ik sta voor hun klaar*]. So, they are ready to step up for me.”

Annelies’s story is one of reciprocity, although not the more common intergenerational one. She and her loved ones negotiated reciprocal commitments in real time, intragenerationally for the most part. She made herself available to care for kin of all kinds because, “It’s nice to stand by someone and see how happy you can make someone that way. That’s nice. That you can make someone happy,” and they returned the favor. This is the kind of relational biography they were creating. Because she valued her independence, however, and because her and her loved ones seemed to belong to quite wide kin and care networks – her friend with the broken hip was getting assistance from a rotating roster of friends coming by to keep her company and cook daily – she also retained the ability to sometimes say no. When the same friend who broke her clavicle had broken her wrist and called Annelies, asking her to pick her up from the hospital, she had been able to tell her to call someone else as she had been busy at that moment. These wide networks – an example of a therapy network (Krause, 2008) – enabled Annelies and her loved ones to smoothly organize care for one another, without having to discuss it much and without having to give up their independence.

The last case I present in this section is that of Willem. At 67 and single since a few years after his long-term relationship had ended, Willem was however still close with his ex-partner, both figuratively and literally: they lived in the same neighborhood, and, during Willem’s interview, his ex-partner rang the doorbell to ask him for some help with his smartphone. They also still went on holidays together. Staying friends was “a choice that we [made],” he said, and one that had also led Willem to lend his ex-partner assistance with several matters. It had started because his ex-partner, Jan, did not have a computer, and was unsure how to work with one. Willem had offered to do a few things online for him, such as making payments and applying for government subsidies. Since then, Willem had lent him support in other areas, but he said,

“He should not hear me say [that I take care of him], because he does not think it’s like that at all. He has memory issues, so I look out for him. I just make sure that... he takes his vitamins, that he eats well, and I set up household help for him. [...] He’s a bit older, but it’s not that he has dementia [...]. But he does need a little support.”

Willem's commitment to looking out for Jan is also not one he would have necessarily been expected to take on, although, compared for example to the case of Toon and his neighbor, there is more of a preexisting relationship there. Thus, by providing support to Jan (and by continuing to do other things together, like going on vacation), Willem confirmed their kin relation as ex-lovers having now explicitly chosen to remain in each other's lives after separating.

In this section, I presented three cases of care playing a role in building, maintaining and confirming kinship with different types of kin: neighbors, friends, siblings and ex-partners. Although there were clear examples of issues of care leading to de-kinning in the case of relationships between vertical kin, I did not find any instances of this when it came to other types of kin relations. I do not mean to argue with this that they do not exist but do want to point out that the relative lack of normative expectations for care between non-vertical (and non-biological) kin could play a role in this. The exception is perhaps ex-partners, as they constitute relationships which must be confirmed in their new form: care allows ex-partners to establish that they want to remain important figures in each other's lives.

What does come through strongly in these stories of care between kin are the biographical elements of relationships which influence their constant re-negotiation. It was clear for Annelies, for example, that her friends and sisters were there for her because she was there for them, with all parties having demonstrated this in the past (incidentally, Annelies also has brothers, but did not mention them in the context of care - perhaps evidence of an instance of de-kinning which was just not explored in depth). Toon as well had ended up being the one there for Bart at the end of his life because of a shared history and built-up relationship of care developed over several years. The same applied to Willem and Jan, whose history of choosing to remain close after separating had been further confirmed by their acts of care. Thus, in these cases, past histories had enabled care to happen, but care had simultaneously allowed these relationships to intensify.

Additionally, I found that participants were often ready to provide support to their loved ones, and that their loved ones would do the same for them, but that this became more complicated when it came to care. It is not that they deserted each other when one of them became in need of care, but more that they did not feel like they were the right person to take on that task. Thus, I argue that in those instances, support networks turned into care networks not in the sense that they would step in and do medical care, but rather in a sense similar to that of therapy networks (Krause, 2008), wherein they would experience the need

for care together and provide assistance during it, for example by picking someone up at the hospital, bringing them groceries, finding them a place in a queer-friendly care home, or planning their funeral.

Personal histories trump norms

In this chapter, I discussed the relationship between kinship and care and how it is mediated by the norms and personal histories surrounding each care relationship. I found that, in relationships with the highest normative expectations - vertical kin relationships between my participants and their parents - care was seen as important for confirming kinship, so that when participants did not provide care, it created tension in the relationship, or at least a need for justification. Of relationships between partners, which are influenced by a mix of norms and personal histories, I found that they often led to an expectation for care. Finally, kin relationships with the least normative expectations - those between friends, extended family, and ex-partners - I found to be the most influenced by shared histories. In these relationships, care expectations and tasks often built up over a period of time, going from a few months to entire decades. This last finding allows me to argue that, much like intergenerational care can confirm or undo kinship in the case of rural Togo (Häberlein, 2015) and of parent-children relations in the United Kingdom (Finch & Mason, 2003), so too can care between kin of all kinds help negotiate kinship. Furthermore, it confirms the aforementioned authors' argument that norms have only limited influence on care relationships. Personal histories serve as the main axis of negotiation for providing care, and stronger norms will often mean that more justification is needed to forego the care relationship but will not necessarily lead to more or better care.

Discussion and conclusion

I set out in this research with the aim of finding out how queer older adults in the Dutch context negotiate kinship, including through care, as they age. To answer this question, I structured my inquiry into three parts.

First, I looked at how queer older adults built networks of relatedness. I found that the context of the period in which this cohort had come of age affected the way they found kinship. They were the first generation where “everything was allowed”, enjoyed a booming gay nightlife, but also lived through an epidemic which disproportionately affected gay men. As a result, some looked inward to form connections with people as much alike as themselves as possible to find freedom from the expectations placed on them outside this group. Others struggled to form connections at all or lost them to illness. However, even connections which did not last shaped the ways in which they make connections now: they were the first generation to really be able to connect with like-minded people and to find freedom and a *roze* network in this way. As they grew older, this propensity to form groups around a common sexual orientation had persisted.

When I spoke with them, *roze* organizations still played an important role in my participants’ lives, giving them a place to feel at home, where they did not have to explain who they were or make decisions about hiding it. This echoes other studies of queer relatedness which have shown the benefits of queer networks for helping queer people find “a practical kind of happiness” (Miller, 2016, p. 58). However, it also shows the benefits of expanding solidarity. By broadening the scope and fluidity of what it means to be *roze*, the network had been able to expand to accept bisexual and trans people in their midst as well as allow more mingling between men and women, who had long lived in separate social worlds. What’s more, some participants had also expanded their networks outwards into their (straight) neighborhoods and to include younger queer people. The latter confirms previous findings about the importance of generativity at all stages of life (Milardo, 2010, p. 185). By exchanging with one another, younger and older queer people were able to pass on a sort of heritage, keep on adding to it together, and validate and advise each other in their ways they led their lives. Overall, the way participants did relatedness in their social networks spoke of queer joy (Muñoz, 2019): through connecting with one another, and with non-*roze* people who they felt safe with, they constructed pockets of time and space in which to enact the world as they would like it to be. It is this joy which weaved together their networks and created relatedness between them.

In the second chapter, about queer older adults' personal networks, I came back to the concept of kinship and demonstrated that my participants took a practical approach to doing it. When it came to marriage and children, they negotiated kinship and its norms and navigated historical and institutional contexts. Together with their convictions, this allowed them to make decisions that would best fit their lives and needs. For most participants, this meant they were neither married nor had children. However, I showed in the rest of the chapter that this did not mean they were alone. Instead, through kin work - commitment to making relationships work in very diverse manners - they had each built a personal network to their image. Although some did express the wish to find a new partner, none seemed to find it urgent, and many spoke of their long histories of friendships and the importance of these connections throughout their lives. This both confirms and perhaps completes findings by Kuyper and Fokkema (2010), who had found in their survey that LGB older adults had more close relationships with friends relative to heterosexual peers, but that these did not make up for the loneliness created by the lack of a partner. Concerning this type of loneliness, my sample is too small to speak conclusively on the matter. However, it is certainly interesting to note that, for some participants, friendships had taken central roles in their lives in the way romantic relationships are expected to. In those cases, they rarely reported feeling loneliness due to a lack of partner, because they never counted on such a relationship to be at the center of their lives in the first place. It is interesting to note as well the continuous investments of kin work into friendships made by those participants, and the ways they also worked to turn ex-partners into friends, "transforming the love".

Finally, I investigated how my participants, as Dutch older adults and as both occasionally caregivers and care receivers, negotiated care. I showed how personal histories, more than norms, influence care relationships, giving great power to care for confirming and undoing kinship, as argued by Häberlein's (2015) in her study of intergenerational support in rural Togo. Additionally, I argued that, in kin relationships where there is no normative framework at all for providing care, doing care anyway can be a strong basis for reinforcing kinship. This constitutes an extension of Häberlein's (2015) argument, showing it can be applied outside the context of biological kin. Furthermore, I demonstrated how support networks containing kin of all kinds are ill-adapted to providing hands-on medical care - not being trained in the matter and often already facing health issues themselves - but are willing to face health events together and provide other types of care, making them examples of therapy networks (Krause, 2008).

Methodological limitations, alternative interpretations, and recommendations for further research

This exploratory study was largely limited in scope: it studied only a very specific sample of a diverse population, took place over a short period of time, and consisted mostly of interviews rather than observations. Regarding the sample, my participants were for the most part involved in the RSD, from which their networks had already benefited. Furthermore, only a few of them required care in their lives, with the most part being only in the anticipation stage of care receiving, although most had already participated in caring for someone else. The sample also lacked diversity, which reflected the lack of diversity within the RSD, but certainly not within the queer population in the Netherlands as a whole. This is a consistent problem in research on queer populations (Kneale et al., 2021). Were I given the chance to extend the study, I would therefore aim to involve other organizations in the recruitment of participants, including some with an explicitly transgender and/or people-of-color member base. Additionally, recruitment of participants was facilitated by board members of the RSD who acted as key informants and gatekeepers to the participant pool. Their help was precious, and this study would not have been possible without their help. However, I also realized that contacts I made later on through observations at events allowed me to connect with a wider and more varied pool of people. This demonstrates the importance of participant observation and allowing time for snowballing of recruitment, which I recommend for further research on this topic. The findings of this research also suggest several policy recommendations (see Text Box 1), which would themselves be interesting to take up in further research.

Another point is of course my relationship to the Dutch language and context. It is possible that, being a young person, whose native language is not Dutch, I may have missed nuances in my participants' understandings and expressions of their identity and how these identities are linked to the historico-cultural context they find themselves in. I tried to mitigate this by verifying early findings in the focus group discussion. Further research, however, could also try to facilitate even more involvement of the participants themselves in the interpretation of data. In parallel, future research could attend to the comparative endeavor in anthropological research by studying this topic in other contexts, which could also have the benefit of highlighting the impacts of the Dutch context on the present research.

Conclusion

In the introduction of this study, I wondered what made the 1998 Amsterdam Gay Games so special for my participants and their generation. I hinted already that it had to do with the ways the electric energy of seeing themselves so visibly represented in their own city helped them connect to one another and with their non-queer friends, who were for the first time catching a glimpse of their experience of life as queer people. At the conclusion of this study, in which I explored the different ways in which queer relatedness and kinship are negotiated by older queer adults in the Netherlands, I can now say that what made this one week 23 years ago so special was queer joy.

Through my research, I have argued that the queer older adults I studied use flows of queer joy to establish relationality and keep kinship alive through kin work and demonstrable commitment to one another. This constitutes a novel utilization of the concept of queer joy within the social sciences: while it has been used under other names as a strategy for resilience (Hudson & Romanelli, 2020; Miller, 2016), I identified it here also as a means for relatedness. I studied a very specific subset of queer older adults, but their stories showed what it can be like to do kinship and care outside the nuclear family, and “make kin, not babies” (Haraway, 2015, p. 161). In addition, their *roze* networks - not families - lend support to Butler’s (2002) argument that kinship far exceeds the bounds of family. These networks - having been made and re-made several times, and strengthened or severed by the negotiation of practices of care - are also an example of the mutability of relatedness (Carsten, 2004).

What’s more, my study highlighted how difficult it is to pull at the strings of whether queer relatedness is biologically pre-determined or socially constructed, personal preference or part of a political project. Queer relatedness, because it is impossible to say whether biology or sociological forces draw queer people to one another and because it makes the personal political, tangles all of these concepts together - it is hybrid (Carsten, 2004). Boundaries between the social and the biological, and the personal and the political are blurred even further by the demonstration that queer relatedness, on top of intra- and intergenerational relationships based on queerness, can also contain relationships with family of origin or straight and cis-gender complete “outsiders”. While relatedness between queer and non-queer people has been observed before, I showed that what makes this relatedness possible is not queer people partly giving into heteronormativity. Rather, it is non-queer people’s willingness to do more than just tolerate their kin’s queerness, to try and embrace it to the best of their abilities. It is this and other types of kin work which hold

networks of relatedness together, even as individual relationships within them sometimes come and go.

Whatever individual conflicts arise, however (and they do, just because these networks are durable does not mean they are perfect), the networks remain because they provide security to those engaged in them. It was difficult at first to make sense of how to separate the three lines of inquiry in this study, because, in essence, care is also at the heart of the social and personal networks. Practical support, attending to each other's needs, and building care networks were all ways my participants built and confirmed kinship. What drove them to do this, however, was not normative obligation, but the desire and the necessity to build good presents and futures together. Queer joy is care, and it is essential. When they can share it, queer older adults can build relatedness with anyone.

Text box 1 - Policy recommendations

When they deployed the 2015 long-term care reform, the Dutch government hoped that entire communities would participate in supporting older adults as they aged. The stories I heard from my participants seem to confirm that this is possible but are also informative about the limitations of such expectations. Existing relations can facilitate care and care can strengthen existing relations, but in some cases both mechanisms are neither possible nor desirable. For example, cases in which a participant was able to lend support and care to both several of her friends as well as her siblings, and expect it from them in return, was only made possible by them all have multiple people around them ready to step in if needed. Additionally, cases in which care comes without a strong prior relationship, such as between neighbors, who are often mentioned regarding the long-term care reform, can only happen within specific circumstances. The best example of this was Toon's care relationship with his neighbor, made possible by the existence of social housing for older adults with room dedicated specifically to *roze* people. Understanding more about the factors that make these kinds of relationships possible and how to facilitate them is important if long-term care is to keep relying on them.

Furthermore, the findings of this study show how influential relational histories are for care and kinship at a later age. Participating in *roze* groups had been an important means for establishing relatedness throughout their lives for most participants. Making sure these can continue to exist is paramount to supporting queer kinship. For some, however, middle-age, after the time of participating heavily in nightlife or other activities

during their youth and before joining organizations such as the RSD after retirement, can be a time where they become buried in their work, not making many investments into their networks. Especially for those who are not out at work, this can create a disconnect from a *roze* network. Making sure the social needs of this age category are being addressed would likely lead to stronger kin relations later in life.

Even with strong kinship networks which translate well into support and care networks, however, there are limits to informal care. Participants felt strongly about this: they are willing to provide support and care to loved ones, especially when they are not solely responsible for it but part of a small network of carers, but they are not trained and do not have the resources to provide care beyond a certain point. At that point (often referred to as “washing butts”), professional care remains of the utmost importance.

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Appendix 1: Avenues of participant recruitment

Message posted in the RSD forum

Hoe is het om ouder te worden als queer persoon in Nederland?

Deelnemers gezocht voor interviews

Uit onderzoek blijkt het dat familie vaak een andere betekenis heeft voor queer mensen, en dat dit invloed heeft op veroudering. Daarom richt ik me in mijn masterscriptie in sociale wetenschappen op het onderwerp van 'queer veroudering en verwantschap in Nederland'. Wie zijn de naasten van queer mensen? Hoe zijn relaties met naasten gecreëerd en onderhouden? Hoe verandert dit als men ouder wordt? Dit zijn de vragen die ik onder andere ga onderzoeken.

Ik ben op zoek naar mensen van 55 of ouder die zichzelf identificeren als queer, lesbisch, homoseksueel, biseksueel en/of transgender, en die graag over bovenstaande onderwerpen willen praten. Een interview zal ongeveer 1 uur duren en kan online of offline plaatsvinden in de periode tussen 7 februari en 20 maart 2022. Alle informatie die u deelt zal uiteraard anoniem en confidencieel blijven, en wordt alleen gebruikt voor mijn scriptie (die later zou kunnen worden gepubliceerd).

Om deel te nemen, vragen te stellen of meer informatie te krijgen, reageer via deze rubriek op dit verzoek of bel me op +31684094989.

Alvast heel erg bedankt!

Lara Fizaine

List of desired participants sent to RSD board members

Over de deelnemers voor de volgende stap van mijn onderzoek: zoals jullie weten ben ik in het eerste instantie opzoek naar tien mensen. Als jullie nog steeds bereid zijn om mensen uit te zoeken zou ik het prima vinden om met de volgende soorten mensen te kunnen praten:

- Een mix van lesbiennes, homo mannen en bisexueel mensen
- Een mix van mensen met groter en kleiner netwerken
- Een mix van mensen van verschillende levensfasen
- Ten minste een persoon die voelt dat zij of hij een netwerk heeft gevonden binnen de Roze Stadsdorp
- Ten minste een persoon die één of meerdere kinderen heeft

Dan, als het mogelijk is, misschien ook:

- Iemand die niet cisgender mensen
- Iemand die niet hoog opgeleid is
- Iemand die buiten Amsterdam woont
- Iemand die in een woongroep woont

Appendix 2: Topic lists - Key informant interviews and participant interviews

Topic list - Key informant interviews

- Heel erg bedankt dat u hier bent, en dat u tijd uit uw dag neemt voor dit interview.
- (Is het voor u meer comfortabel als ik u of je gebruikt/als ik u tutoyeert of vousvooeert?)
- We hebben elkaar al gesproken over email, maar ik ga de onderzoek en mezelf nog een keer voorstellen. Ik ben Lara, onderzoeksmaster student in de sociale wetenschappen. Als u weet schrijf ik mijn scriptie over queer, of roze, veroudering en verwantschap. Om dit te doen wil ik eventueel met queer ouderen te praten over hun eigen ervaringen met veroudering en verwantschap, maar eerst wilde ik ook met "experts" praten om het onderwerp beter te leren kennen. Dus dat gaan we het over hebben vandaag, maar als jullie het willen doe ik graag met jullie andere interviews over jullie eigen ervaringen.
- Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren, maar als u wilt op elk moment stoppen, dat kan. Zoals u waarschijnlijk al gemerkt heeft is Nederlands niet mijn moedertaal, maar ik begrijp het wel en voor mij is het prima als we het interview in het Nederlands doen - alleen is het mogelijk dat ik u soms vraag om iets te herhalen, en natuurlijk kunt u hetzelfde doen als u niet begrijpt wat ik zeg. En als u het liever in Engels of Frans doet, of gedeeltelijk, dan kan dat ook, natuurlijk.
- Ik wil u er ook aan herinneren dat onze gesprek zal worden opgenomen, en ik ga ook wat notulen maken. Maar alles wat u zegt blijft anoniem en ik zal het niet delen met andere personen, behalve misschien mijn scriptiebegeleider en een mede-studente die gaat me helpen met vertaling van het Nederlands tot het Engels als het nodig is. En ik wil u er ook nog een keer aan herinneren dat als u bepaalde vragen niet wil beantwoorden, kan dat, en ook kunt u aangever als u helemaal wilt stoppen met het interview. CONSENT FORM
- Is alles duidelijk voor u, en heeft u vragen voor dat we beginnen? Natuurlijk mogen vragen ook altijd tijdens het interview.

1. Informant	Wie bent u?
a. Background	Wat is uw achtergrond, qua studies, werk, interesses?
b. Organization	Vertel me over uw organisatie
c. Role	Wat is uw rol in uw organisatie?
d. Relationship to subject	Hoe is uw rol gerelateerd aan de onderwerp van queer verwantschap en verouderen?
2. Queer aging in NL	Wat zijn dingen dat u merkt in uw werk/rol over queer veroudering en die u belangrijk vindt om meer aandacht aan te geven?
a. Different groups (transgender, rural/urban, education, procreation,...)	Is verouderen hetzelfde voor alle queer mensen?
b. Difference with cis/het (children, care, gender, formal care, intergenerational)	Hoe is verouderen hetzelfde of anders voor queer mensen en cis, hetero mensen?

c. Histories (activism, HIV/AIDS, minority stress, policy/legislation, hetero/cis-normativity)	Als u denkt aan de geschiedenis van Nederland en van de queer gemeenschap in Nederland, wat voor soort impact heeft het op queer veroudering?
d. Important issues (sexuality, invisibility, loneliness, formal care,...)	Wat zijn onderwerpen die u belangrijk vindt als we over queer verouderen spreken?
3. Relatedness/kinship	Wie zijn de naasten van queer ouderen?
a. Who (origin/choice/procreation)	Wie zit erin?
b. What/why (care, company/loneliness, queer joy, resilience, sexuality, generativity)	Wat brengen deze verschillende relaties? Waarom hebben ze ze gecreëerd?
c. How (histories, LTC policy)	Hoe heft het verleden invloed op huidige relaties?
d. Absent?	U heeft xxx niet eerder vernoemd, wat rol spelen ze in de leven van queer ouderen?
4. What is being done	Wat bestaat die helpt queer ouderen?
a. Initiatives (legislation, policy, organizations, grassroots)	Initiatieven van queer ouderen zelf, of van organisaties. Of wetten.
b. Policies	Beleid
c. Research	Onderzoek
5. Additional	Wilt u nog over iets anders praten? Is er nog iets dat u wilt er over hebben?
a. Desk review	Documenten/verslagen die ik moet lezen?
b. Questions	Vragen die ik moet stellen?
c. People	Mensen met wie ik moet praten?

Participant Interview Topic Guide

Introductie

- Heel erg bedankt dat u hier bent, en dat u tijd uit uw dag neemt voor dit interview.
- (Is het voor u meer comfortabel als ik u of je gebruikt/als ik u tutoyeert of vovoyeert?)
- We hebben elkaar al gesproken over email, maar ik ga het onderzoek en mezelf nog een keer voorstellen. Ik ben Lara, onderzoeksmaster student in de sociale wetenschappen. Zoals u weet schrijf ik mijn scriptie over roze veroudering en verwantschap en om dit te doen uitvoer ik interviews met ouderen zoals u.
- Het interview zal ongeveer een uur duren, maar als u wilt op elk moment stoppen, dat kan. Zoals u waarschijnlijk al gemerkt heeft is Nederlands niet mijn moedertaal, maar ik begrijp het wel en voor mij is het prima als we het interview in het Nederlands doen - alleen is het mogelijk dat ik u soms vraag om iets te herhalen, en natuurlijk kunt u hetzelfde doen als u niet begrijpt wat ik zeg. En als u het liever in Engels of Frans doet, of gedeeltelijk, dan kan dat ook, natuurlijk.
- Ik wil u er ook aan herinneren dat onze gesprek zal worden opgenomen, en ik ga ook wat notulen maken. Maar alles wat u zegt blijft anoniem en ik zal het niet delen met andere personen, behalve misschien mijn scriptiebegeleider en een mede-studente die gaat me helpen met vertaling van het Nederlands tot het Engels als

het nodig is. En ik wil u er ook nog een keer aan herinneren dat als u bepaalde vragen niet wil beantwoorden, kan dat, en ook kunt u aangeven als u helemaal wilt stoppen met het interview.

- Is alles duidelijk voor u, en heeft u vragen voor dat we beginnen? Natuurlijk mogen vragen ook altijd tijdens het interview.

Levensverhaal

Voor dat we beginnen met praten over uw huidige leven wil ik graag even wat meer horen over u.

Kunt u uzelf even kort voorstellen? *Wat u belangrijk vindt dat ik weet.*

Kunt u me vertellen over hoe uw leven was toen u opgroeide?

- Waar geboren / gewoond
- Familie
- Studies
- Uit de kast te komen
- Vrienden
- Liefde
- Vrije tijd
- Droom/wilde worden

Naasten/verwantschap/verbinding/relaties/inner circle

Nu dat ik wat meer weet over u en uw verleden kunnen we over uw actueel leven praten.

Waar woont u? Met wie? Hoe lang? Waarom?

Kunt u me vertellen over de mensen die u heeft gezien over de laatste week?

- Wie?
- Wat?
- Waar?
- Zijn er - naast deze mensen - nog andere mensen die belangrijk voor u waren?

Kunt u me vertellen over hoe u heeft deze mensen leren kennen?

- Het "geheim" om deze relaties onder te houden?
- Verwachtingen van elkaar

Terukijkend, kunt u me vertellen wie uw naasten waren, viertig jaar geleden? Twintig jaar geleden?

- Veranderd: wat, wie, hoe?
- Voorbeeld(en)

Queer zijn in Nederland

Nu wil ik even praten over hoe het is voor u om een roze ouderen te zijn in Nederland.

Er wordt vaak gezegd dat Nederland een ruimdenkend land is qua LHBTI onderwerpen. Wat vindt u vandaan?

- Vroeger/op te groeien

- Veranderd
- Nu/ouder te worden

Contact met andere queer ouderen

Voor LHBT mensen is het vaak belangrijk om andere mensen uit de roze gemeenschap te bevrienden, dat wil ik ook graag over hebben.

Wat voor soort contact heeft u met andere mensen uit de roze gemeenschap?

- Waar, wat
- Wat vindt u het leukst aan/waar geniet u het minst van
- Is het typisch voor LHBT mensen om meer of minder contact met elkaar te hebben dan u?

Queerness en verwantschap

We hebben het gehad over uw naasten en over contact met mensen uit de roze gemeenschap en nu wil ik het graag hebben over andere manieren waarop queer zijn uw relaties met familie en partners beïnvloedt.

Hoe heeft u besloten om...

- Kinderen te krijgen of niet?
- Te trouwen of niet?

Hoe is uw relatie met...

- Het gezin waarmee je bent opgegroeid?
- Nichtjes/neefjes, tantes/ooms, grootouders?

Bent u tevreden met uw relaties met familie, vrienden, partners - naasten? Hoe zou het anders kunnen?

Gezin en zorg

Nu gaan we over zorg praten, want het een onderdeel van verouderen is, en over de rol van familie in en naasten in zorg.

Biedt u momenteel ondersteuning aan iemand met dagelijkse taken? Aan wie?

- Krijgt u ondersteuning? Waarvoor?
- Zorg? Waarvoor?
- Ervaring? Voldoende? Hoe zou het anders kunnen?
- Hoe is het besloten/hoe zal dit worden besloten?

Ziet u een rol voor iemand in uw familie in uw zorg, en voor uzelf in hun zorg?

- Wat voor rol?

Contact met jongeren

De interview komt bijna tot een slot, en we gaan het hebben over roze jongeren en advies over verouderen voor LHBTI mensen.

Heeft u contact met roze jongeren?

- Wie, waar, wat, hoe, waarom

Wat wilt u dat ze weten over verouderen als queer persoon? Advies voor andere roze ouderen?

Appendix 3: Information letter and consent form

Master scriptie onderzoek naar queer/roze veroudering en verwantschap

Mijn naam is Lara Fizaine en ik studeer Onderzoeksmaster Sociaal Wetenschappen aan de Universiteit van Amsterdam. Voor mijn scriptie doe ik kwalitatief onderzoek naar queer, of roze, verwantschap en veroudering onder toezicht van Dr. Trudie Gerrits. Ik wil bestuderen hoe queer oudere volwassenen verwantschapsbanden aangaan met verschillende soorten mensen en vragen antwoorden zoals:

Wie zijn de naasten van queer mensen?

Hoe zijn relaties met naasten gecreëerd en onderhouden?

Hoe verandert dit als men ouder wordt?

Daarom wil ik deze onderwerpen bespreken met mensen die zelf queer 55-plussers zijn. Het interview zal tussen 45 minuten en 1 uur duren en zal opgenomen worden als audio.

Belangrijke informatie:

- Het is niet verplicht om mee te doen met het interview.
- U mag altijd stoppen, zonder dat u hoeft te vertellen waarom.
- De informatie die u deelt is anoniem. De informatie zal met niemand worden gedeeld, behalve mijn promotor en een mede-studente die helpt me eventueel met vertaling van het Nederlands tot het Engels.
- In de scriptie worden alle identificerende details verwijderd om uw anonimiteit te beschermen.
- De scriptie zou later kunnen worden gepubliceerd.

Contact details:

Lara Fizaine

Lara.fizaine@student.uva.nl

+31684094989

Toestemmingsformulier

	Ja	Nee
Deelnemen in het onderzoek		
Ik heb de informatie brief gelezen of iemand heeft het voor mij gelezen. Ook kon ik vragen stellen en mijn vragen zijn beantwoord.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik beslis vrijwillig om deel te nemen in het onderzoek. Ik begrijp dat ik ervoor kan kiezen om een vraag niet te beantwoorden en dat ik altijd mag stoppen als ik niet meer mee wil doen.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat deelname aan het onderzoek bevat een interview die zal opgenomen worden als audio en zal geanalyseerd worden in tekst- of audiovorm.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gebruik van de informatie		
Ik begrijp dat de informatie die ik geef zal gebruikt worden in een master scriptie en mogelijk in een publicatie or presentatie in een later stadium.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik begrijp dat persoonlijke informatie die over mij is verzameld en die mij kan identificeren, zoals mijn naam, niet buiten het onderzoeksteam zal worden gedeeld en zal worden verwijderd of gewijzigd in het eindproduct om ervoor te zorgen dat ik niet kan worden geïdentificeerd.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Ik ga ermee akkoord dat mijn informatie kan worden geciteerd in onderzoeksresultaten.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Signatures

Naam deelnemer	Handtekening	Datum
----------------	--------------	-------

Ik heb het informatieblad nauwkeurig voorgelezen aan de potentiële deelnemer en heb er naar mijn beste vermogen voor gezorgd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar hij vrijwillig mee instemt.

Naam onderzoeker	Handtekening	Datum
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