Queer and Asian: Examining Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ Individuals' intersectional Identity and Belonging at Pride Amsterdam

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Master' Thesis

Date: 18 June 2025

Abstract

This research explores how Eastern Asian queer migrants participating in Pride Amsterdam potentially influence their self-perception and community belonging in the Netherlands. Although Pride Amsterdam is often praised as a symbol of liberation and inclusion, this study reveals the nuanced ways in which queer migrants from Eastern Asia experience both empowerment and alienation within the Pride festival and broader Dutch society. Drawing on ten semi-structured interviews, this qualitative research is grounded in the theories of Crenshaw's intersectionality, gender performativity (Butler), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner), and Bourdieu's capital theory. The findings uncover that Pride Amsterdam provides queer migrants a sense of freedom and affirmation of their queer identity; however, the inclusivity is conditional and temporal. Many participants recounted a paradoxical feeling of being accepted by their queer identity while simultaneously being marginalised for their racial identity.

Furthermore, participants criticised the entertaining nature and the symbolic support of Pride for overlooking the protest and pursuit of social minority groups. In response, Eastern Asian migrants sought to join ethnic-specific queer communities or grassroots initiatives for deeper emotional connection and cultural resonance. Moreover, racism and discrimination were frequently imposed on Eastern Asian queer individuals beyond Pride, ranging from verbal harassment and authorities' indifferences, demonstrating the challenges these intersected groups faced were more often racialised than sexuality-based. These findings highlight that Dutch society is conditionally tolerant towards queer culture, which supports queer normalisation and multicultural inclusivity when it aligns with mainstream whiteness or heterosexual dominance of masculinity. This thesis contributes to broader academic and societal understandings of intersectional oppression and belonging by focusing on an underrepresented ethnic group in both queer migration and diaspora studies. It argues that true inclusivity within LGBTQIA+ spaces requires a critical interrogation of whiteness, commercialisation, and structural inequality. Recommendations are offered to promote more culturally responsive and racially inclusive practices in Pride events and LGBTQIA+ advocacy in this multicultural society.

KEYWORDS: Intersectionality, Queer identity, Sense of belonging, Discrimination, Pride, LGBTQIA+, Migration, Eastern Asian, Inclusion

Acknowledgement

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1. Introduction

In recent years, the global visibility and recognition of LGBTQIA+ have increased along with the worldwide host of LGBTQIA+ events (Outright International, 2023). Under this context, as one of the most prominent LGBTQIA+ events. Pride Amsterdam, an annual worldwide famous event celebrating diversity and inclusion, strives for the emancipation of the LGBTQIA+ community since 1996, during this Pride festival, it encompasses a variety of formats, including festivals, performances, gatherings, etc. (Pride Amsterdam, n.d.). Beyond the extravagant celebration, in fact, it reveals that diversity, inclusion, and equality still need to be promoted and reminded in today's Dutch society (Patterson & Leurs, 2019, p.92). This is because the heteronormativity remains dominant, positing a limited social equality and inclusion for the LGBTQIA+ community in the Netherlands (Van Lisdonk et al., 2018, pp.32-33). Yet, heteronormativity is not the only form of oppression perpetuating exclusion and marginalisation, it often intersects with other force, this intersectional framework introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991, p.1242) offers a critical lens to understand how multiple identities including race, gender, class, and sexuality combine to creating distinct and multi-layered experiences of discrimination.

Among those who suffer from societal marginalization, queer people of color (LGBTQ-POC) bear a dual social role as an ethnic minority and a sexual minority at the same time (Ghabrial, 2017, pp 42-43). In this sense, Eastern Asian queers share similar struggles as black queer group; although they both experience distress in a Western context, the intersectionality of Asian queers' identity confronts distinct oppression inherent in the nature of their positions (Patterson & Leurs, 2019, p.90-92), this includes in being stereotypically viewed as nerdy, hard-working and 'model minority' (Wong et al., 1998, p. 99-100). These perceived stereotypes may reinforce the feelings of exclusion for Eastern Asian queer individuals within both the LGBTQIA+ community and broader society. Thus, the way they participate in Pride Amsterdam, such LGBTQIA+ event, may potentially reflect how these intersecting identities shape their self-perceptions and sense of belonging. This study thus aims to discover the discourses on queerness intersected with racial identity, particularly focusing on Eastern Asians. The central research question is:

How does experiencing pride Amsterdam influence eastern Asian queer individuals' self-perception and community belonging in the Netherlands?

The purpose of this research is to explore the different ways of participation experiences in Pride Amsterdam, impact the self-perception and sense of community

belongingness of Eastern Asian Queers. This thesis aims to contribute to the general comprehension of ethnic and sexual orientation minorities in the Netherlands. First, Eastern Asians are generally seen as a well-educated and well-integrated social group in Western society (Kartosen & Tan, 2013, p.654). However, despite being perceived as the 'model group', 36% of people with (East) Asian backgrounds experienced discrimination in the Netherlands in 2023 (Feddes et al., 2024, p.6). This reality remains overlooked in both the public realm and the research field. While previous scholars have investigated queer narratives in ethnic cultural groups with strong religious beliefs, including Muslim-origin Turkish and Moroccan communities (Cense & Ganzevoort, 2017; Mepschen et al., 2010; Yildiz, 2017), no previous research has examined Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ in the Netherlands. This thesis thus attempts to bridge the gap in evaluating the distress as Eastern Asian encounter and their sociocultural distinctive identity as queers within the Dutch context.

This paper employs a qualitative approach, based on prior theories and theoretical frameworks on intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), queer theory (J. Butler, 1999), theory of capital (Bourdieu, 1986), and cultural identity theory, address the central question, a selection of samples will be drawn out from Eastern Asian queers who participated in this festival. Semi-structured interviews were carried out to obtain comprehensive insights from the participants, and the collected data were used for further thematic analysis. Thus, this thesis aims to facilitate attention for Eastern Asians and comprehension from society.

This paper addresses the academic gap in LGBTQ-POC and migration studies by delving into an underrepresented social group in both academic and broader social research, Eastern Asian queer, through their voice and perspectives to reach an attention for this social minority group resiting in a Western context. Prior studies have been centred in Muslim or Black queer migrants (e.g., Mepschen et al., 2010; Yildiz, 2017), Asian migrants and queers were often being overlooked and stereotyped through the concept of "model minority" myth. My research challenged this invisibility and incorporated intersectional frameworks through the lens of ethnicity, migration, gender alongside sexual orientation. Furthermore, this study highlights the navigation of experience and emotions of this ethnic-cultural identity community, which were often overlooked in the wider society and LGBTQIA+ realm. Underlining these perspectives proposes a more racially inclusive, more consciously diverse approach to Pride Amsterdam and LGBTQIA+ advocacy in a multicultural society.

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing works of literature to provide a framework for exploring the intersection of race and sexuality in a cross-cultural context. Firstly, to have a deeper understanding of Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+'s identity, this section provides academic guidance based on Crenshaw's critical contribution to intersectionality theory. Secondly, queer theory from Judith butler which critically influenced contemporary understanding of identity within queer theory were incorporated. Moreover, social identity theory from Tajfel & Turner and cultural identity theory from Stuart Hall (1990) were discussed to comprehend the complexed identity and situation of the Eastern Asian queer migrants. Lastly, the Dutch LGBTQIA+ context is was elaborated more extensively in understanding the interaction with Pride Amsterdam.

2.1 Intersectionality of Oppression as Migrant Queer Individuals

In the late 1980s, the term intersectionality was coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991), indicating how multiple social identities, including race, gender, and class, interact to produce unique experiences of discrimination or privilege for individuals and social groups. This theory offers a crucial lens in understanding the compounded marginalisation experienced by Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ individuals in a Western context. Empirical studies show that there is systemic inequality and discrimination, both implicit and explicit, from society towards the LGBTQIA+ community and individuals. In contrast, LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly those who contain racial and ethnic minority identities, are more likely to experience compounded discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991, pp.1245-1250). For instance, previous quantitative research conducted in the US reported that LGBTQIA+ individuals often encounter interpersonal discrimination, which includes slurs, microaggressions, sexual harassment, and violence (Casey et al., 2019, p.1465). Particularly, LGBTQIA+ individuals with a multitude of identities, specifically individuals of colour, often face compounded discrimination; this means that with the interplay of race and gender, ethnic minorities confront fiercer situations from both racism and homophobia (Casey et al., 2019, p.1464).

In this case, the intersectional of identities and factors demonstrates the multidimensional oppression, where Eastern Asians migrant as a social ethnic minority and who also identify themselves as queer are facing social struggles and oppressions because of this dual identity positions. On the contrary to the white or local queer individuals who may benefit from greater societal acceptance under homonormative frameworks, racialised

migrant queers are in the risk of being doubly marginalised. For instance, research has shown that LGBTQIA+ Asian migrants in the US experience more microaggressions and distress (Nadal et al., 2016, p.502). Similarly, a recent report of the Dutch society reveals that over one-third of individuals with East Asian backgrounds experienced discrimination in 2023, which has escalated post-COVID-19, often through racial name-calling, exclusion, and stereotyping (Feddes et al., 2024, p.6).

Although the Netherlands is known for its tolerance and acceptance, it comes with underlying racial and cultural hierarchies. Scholars (Yildiz, 2017, p.6) have pointed out that the normalisation of queer identities is particularly for white Dutch gays, while this perpetuates the marginalisation of Muslim and immigrant communities. A case study of the Turkish Boat in the Amsterdam Gay Pride Parade suggests the Dutch LGBTQ+ environment is a conditionally inclusive society. This Turkish boat showing on the canal parade exemplifies the conditional inclusion of minorities in the Dutch culture, which the public sees as progress but prolongs their stereotypes of Muslim and Turkish communities as inherently homophobic (Yildiz, 2017, p.8). Subsequently, this stereotype of Islam has led various scholars to study queer narratives among Muslim communities in the Netherlands (Cense & Ganzevoort, 2017; Mepschen et al., 2010).

Eastern Asian immigrants are often overlooked in this regard. Pervious scholars revealed that they are frequently described as "high-skilled immigrants" because they generally fit the profile of highly skilled immigrants encouraged by countries such as the Netherlands. Therefore, they are also known as 'model minority' with the impression of hardworking, academically and economically successful. However, this stereotype not only erases the diversity of Asian experiences but also contributes to their marginalization and silencing (Kartosen & Tan, 2013, p.654). Contrary to the assumption that Asians face fewer barriers in Dutch society, unprecedented recent research commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment investigated discrimination against residents of (South) East Asian background in the Netherlands, challenged that Asian communities face fewer barriers in the Netherlands, they are, in fact, subject to invisible and indirect forms of discrimination, which are frequently overlooked (Feddes et al., 2024, p.6-p.12). This study reveals that 36% of individuals in this group encountered discrimination in 2023. Discrimination has increased post-COVID-19 pandemic, particularly against those perceived as Chinese. Ethnic origin (75%) and skin colour (43%) were both the main discrimination grounds, often expressed through verbal abuse. The various discriminations, microaggressions and stereotypes in the society has negatively affects these migrant

individuals' mental and physical health and limits their social participation. These social minority have reported the emotional responses ranging from confusion and sadness to anger and frustration, illustrating the deep impact of being excluded while appearing included. Particularly after the outbreak and post COVID-19, stimulated a surge in anti-Asian sentiment, further challenges the fragility model minority myth (Feddes et al., 2024, p.6-p.12).

2.2 Sense of Belonging, Queers identity, and Community in LGBTQIA+ Realm

A sense of belonging plays a vital role influencing an individual's emotional attachment with a sense of feeling at home, safety, and security (Hahm et al., 2018, p.10). Furthermore, Yuval-Davis (2006, p.203) illustrates the importance of emotional belonging, which depends on affective attachment, such as through performative practices to reinforce ties, where people have shared experiences, values, languages, and are able to achieve a mutual recognition, to feel safe and accepted. This perspective is corresponds with Baumeister & Leary's (1995, p.497-499) concept of social being, people seek to define themselves by creating connections to their social environment to fulfil their nature of 'need to belong' as a fundamental human drive. Thus, the process of belonging is central to identity formation, involving not only individual but also group identity according to Tajfel & Turner (2004, p.267-287)' social identity theory, individuals classify themselves into different social categories in order to achieve self-definition within various social context For queer migrant, relocating in a new environment living at cultural and social margin, being racialised and sexualised individuals require navigation in both personal and collective engagement. As Yuval-Davis (2006, p.200) brought up the concept social location and social divisions, aligns with Krenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory where belongingness is shaped by the intersection of race, sexuality, gender, class etc. Thus, being an Eastern Asian queer as a racialised minority can face different level of perception and experiences, depending on one's social class, gender stage in life.

Research on Asian immigrants shows they are often stereotyped as hardworking and business-savvy (Zhang, 2010, p.22). However, this definition of "hardworking" is often negatively related to nerdy, shy, and lacking social and communication skills; this stereotype hinders their ability to establish cross-ethnic friendships (Zhang, 2010, p.33). This stereotype can also lead to significant pressures on Asian migrants, including stress, anxiety, and self-esteem problems (Park et al., 2021, p.97). The root of the stereotype lies in the inconsistency

between society's perception of personal identity and the individual's internal self-perception. Limited understanding of a social group perpetuates cognitive biases; this perceptual misalignment further reinforces societal stereotypes while ignoring individuals' diverse identity experiences and structural inequalities (Park et al., 2021.p.114).

In this context, it is more complex for Asian migrants to navigate with an additional layer of identity with queerness. Unlike the term 'LGBTQIA+', worked as more defined categorisation, 'Queer' is often adopted by those who refuse to label themselves, embracing a fluid identity that challenges hegemonic norms of sexuality (Callis, 2009, p.214). This concept of embracing fluid identity reflects the individual's struggle against fixed social identity labels, aligning with Butler's theory of gender performance. In her Gender Trouble, Butler (1999, pp.43-44) proposed the gender performativity theory, highlighting that gender is not a fixed and given existence, but through repetitive behaviour, gradually constituted in the process of gender norms. Similarly, in the realm of identity, Stuart Hall's (1990, p.222-236) Cultural Identity and Diaspora offers a strong theoretical foundation to a critically view the concept of identity and the experiences of diasporic queer migrants. Notably, he contends that cultural identity is not inherent or unchanging; the identity lies in process, always going through re-articulation and transformation.

Furthermore, to understand how Eastern Asian queer migrants negotiate their position in the Dutch queer spaces and the larger society, often at a structural disadvantage compared to local queer communities, this disadvantage stems from unequal access to both social and cultural capital，which significantly shapes their ability to integrate and feel a sense of belonging. This disparity is deeply intertwined with access to and leverage of **social and cultural capital** in Bourdieu's (1986, pp.17-21) capital theory. He outlined that social capital refers to the resources embedded in individuals' networks of relationships and social group affiliations. It encompasses social support and a mechanism for inclusion. Meanwhile, **cultural capital** refers to the acknowledgement of cultural knowledge, educational credentials, languages, and habits that are legitimately and socially valued. According to Bourdieu (1986, pp.21-26), social capital then plays a crucial role for migrants navigating in a new unfamiliar cultural environment. Due to reduced social and cultural resources, migrants are less advantaged compared to local queer individuals, this demonstrates in their often lack both forms of capital when they residing, they face language barriers, unfamiliarity with dominant culture and norms, and limited access to local social networks (Tecmen, 2020, pp.20-23).

In this context, Participation in LGBTQIA+ events acts as an essential instrument in addressing these challenges, it provides the accessibility to reach both capital and community. A series of recent studies have aligned indications that LGBTQIA+ public events, including pride parades, rainbow weeks, advocate for wider social inclusivity, foster a sense of connection and belonging among sexual and gender minorities (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2020, p.3-5). "Pride Amsterdam" or other Pride initiatives allow individuals to be exposed to collective resources, emotional support, and leadership opportunities. Pride parades thus can provide marginalised individuals an environment with a sense of normality and connection within the realm of LGBTQIA+ and to the broader community where they can feel acknowledged and connected (Hahm et al., 2018; Ong et al., 2021;Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2021). These events create a festival space where people can communicate and share personal experiences with each other. They give attendees an effective bond with other attendees at the event level and collective self-esteem within the LGBTQIA+ community realm (Hahm et al., 2018, p.4). Therefore, positive experiences at these events encourage continued participation in the future and enhance attendee satisfaction and a sense of belonging. (Hahm et al., 2018, pp.3-4). Moreover, in the larger spectrum Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy (2021, p.16) have identified that, LGBTQIA+ events, such as drag queen performance challenges societal exclusion and stereotypical prejudices, foster queer individuals' well-being, and facilitate acceptance and cultural cohesion within the heteronormative traditions. Theorists such as Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy mentioned neo-tribal theory. They argued that such an event fosters temporary yet recurrent and potent "tribes" of LGBTQIA+ individuals and creates shared values, rituals, aesthetics, and collective solidarity. In this perspective, This neo-tribal sociality supports and complements Bourdieu's (1986 pp.15-17) theory of social capital, where pride festivals serve as an arena for building networks, support systems, and recognition, which is crucial for racialised queer migrants who lack institutionalised forms of capital, also vital in the face of intersecting forms of marginalisation (Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2020, p.3-5). Yet, it is noted that these previous studies typically overlook racial dynamics, assuming that queer solidarity is universal. In relation to this, Ong et al. (2020, p.3, p.13) critically examine how these spaces can simultaneously produce a sense of inclusion and exclusion—particularly through the perspectives of Social Dominance Theory (SDT)，highlighting that community events can reinforce hierarchical social structures that privilege dominant groups, also includes LGBTQIA+ sphere. SDT is used for understanding attitudes toward homosexuality because society often pressures people to accept certain

beliefs as the norm. In this context, in contemporary societies, blatant homophobia has been replaced by subtler forms of discrimination, which are more socially acceptable and difficult to challenge. This microagression is especially relevant in contexts like Pride events, which outwardly perform diversity and inclusion but may still reproduce dominance hierarchies based on race, gender, and class (Ong et al., 2021, p.3). To further comprehend how Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ migrants experience unique distress in the Dutch society, through the lens of A Phenomenology of Whiteness, Ahmed (2007, p.156) highlights that whiteness is not simply a racial identity but a habitual structure that shapes what actions are applicable. She conceptualises whiteness as an invisible and inherited background. This spatial and institutional norm allows specific identities, namely white, Western, and cisgender, to move through public spaces with comfort and privilege while rendering others "out of place." Ahmed's insights also respond to Bourdieu's (1986, p.18) theory of habitus, exemplifying how actions are a repetitive and inherited privilege. Accordingly, these theorists suggest that migrants or social minority experiences discomfort and being in a disadvantaged position in Western society is not a matter of personal incompatibility but the result of structural exclusion and cultural norms together, with the unequal possession of their cultural and social capital (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.17-21).

2.3 The Dutch LGBTQIA+ Context and Conditional Inclusion

Existing studies have established that the Netherlands took precedence in sexual emancipation; legally, homosexual and heterosexual individuals have had the same rights since 2001. The country legalised same-sex marriage as the first liberal nation in the world, emerged as a significant milestone for LGBTQIA+ equal rights progress. Dutch society has experienced a drastic transformation since the 1960s, evolving to more progressive and openness norms (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p.625). Even in the immigration exam, questions were asked about the opinion Dutch view homosexuality; thus, in recent years, society and the public have valued social tolerance and acceptance of homosexuality and consider it to be a societal norm (Hekma & Duyvendak 2011; Van Lisdonk et al., 2018). Nevertheless, these scholars argue that legal equality does not equal social equality for these marginalised individuals; they questioned the depth of this acceptance and claimed that the apparent societal approval of homosexuality is often conditional and superficial, and heteronormative remains in the dominant position (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p.626-627). For instance, public displays of affection between two men are still widely stigmatized by the

public, revealing a conditioned tolerance that depends on the context and invisibility. Particularly, people accept gay men only on the condition that they are not transgressing heteronormative standards of masculinity or become too extravagantly sexually expressive(Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p.626-627). Similarly, another research explored how Dutch societies perceive homosexuality as determined by the concept of 'normalisation', where acceptance exists when it does not challenge heteronormative as the mainstream standards. It is observed that public displays of intimacy between homosexual couples are still commonly encountered with discomfort compared to heterosexual couples (Van Lisdonk et al., 2018, p.7). This specification is not exclusive to ethnic minorities but applied among white Dutch populations as well, who implicitly demand the invisibility of homosexuality: "We accept you as long as we don't have to see that you exist or have to see what you do" (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p.626-627). Moreover, Lesbians, in this case, remain absent from the public sphere and media representation, demonstrating the gendered dimensions of LGBTQIA+ marginalisation (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, p.626-627). Furthermore, a qualitative study conducted interviews with young gay migrants in the Netherlands challenges the Dutch realm as a universally gay-friendly space. This research further suggests that the Dutch LGBTQIA+ context is multifaceted and complex, illustrating compound sociocultural categories interplay in young queer migrants' identity and experiences, bringing them unique challenges and struggles (Patterson & Leurs, 2019, p.92).

In summary, Drawing on the reviewed literature and theories provides a comprehensive and multi-layered framework to explore how Eastern Asian queer migrants, as a particular social group, negotiate and navigate their identity and belonging in the Dutch LGBTQIA+ context. As a migrated queer individual, Crenshaw's intersectionality and Bourdieu's theory of capital were grounded in elaborating on their marginalised experiences that are shaped by compounded aspects, including race, sexuality, gender, and status. In relation to this, Butler's performativity, Hall's cultural identity and Tajfel & Turner's social identity theory offer insights into how these racialised queer individuals constantly rearticulate their behaviours and identities in a new social and cultural context. Moreover, Ahmed's theory of phenomenology of whiteness helps to explain how racialised individuals may still feel alienation when dominant norms reflect whiteness and Westernness in a space that is claimed to be inclusive. Yuval-Davis's notion of emotional belonging further clarifies how this symbolic inclusion does not translate to emotional and cultural resonance. These perspectives guide the analysis of how Eastern Asian queer migrants express their sense of

(non)belonging at Amsterdam Pride and how it reflects the broader structures of inclusion or exclusion in contemporary Dutch society.

3. Methodology

Building on the established literature reviews of queer theory, intersectionality, and social identity theory outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter elaborate on the research design for this study. The first section of this chapter outlines the methodological choice of approach for data collection and the data analysis procedures. Secondly, the detailed operationalisation of concepts were explained, then, the process of sampling the data and data analysis were presented. Lastly, it concludes with a reflection on validity and reflexivity.

This research focuses on how Eastern Asian queer participating Pride Amsterdam in different ways potentially influence their self-perception and community belongingness in the Netherlands, particularly focused on the social challenges they are facing with the intersectionality of their dual identity, ethnic and sexual as both ethnic minority and sexual minority under heteronormative sexuality discourse in Western context. The central question was broken down into two sub questions:

1. **How do Eastern Asian queer individuals experience Amsterdam Gay Pride?**
2. **In what ways does participation in Amsterdam Gay Pride change their self-perception and community belongingness?**

3.1 Method: Semi-structured Interviews

To address these questions, this study employed a qualitative research method based on interpretivism to explore an in-depth insight and understand participants' perspectives. Qualitative approach is particularly effective for this study, as it explores experiences, gain comprehensive insights and perceptions for a particular social group enabling the for exploratory analysis of collected data (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p.245). Furthermore, scholars frequently conduct qualitative methods in understanding of the complexity of intersecting identities and socially constructed experiences and differences (Misra et al., 2021, p.14).

Specifically, data collection was conducted based on semi-structured interviews, as it is considered to be most appropriate method to obtain individual's opinions and leave enough rooms for the interviewees to elicit their opinions and discussions freely (Grønmo, 2019, p.370). In the data collection process, I selected ten participants to conduct semi-structured interviews, depending on the interviewees' availability, the interviews were conducted in both face-to face and via online meetings.

Before the interviews, an interview guide was created to have a list of with open-ended questions to navigate the general structure of the interviews while providing flexibility for the interviewees to elaborate freely (Grønmo, 2019, pp.370-372). The interview guide mapped out five sections, the first section beginning to gain participant's general demographic information and the second section focused on the personal experience in Pride Amsterdam. For example, questions such as "Can you describe how did you participated in Pride Amsterdam Pride? What motivated you to participate in Amsterdam?" were asked in the interviews to obtain the participant's detailed experiences and reflections from the Pride. The subsequent sections were the three main operationalised topics closely related to the theoretical frameworks, delved into the intersectionality of ethnicity, sexuality and gender identity.

3.2 Operationalisation

Based on the operationalisation of the theoretical frameworks into practice, this study focused on three topics, including identity's intersectionality and marginalisation, self-perception, and lastly, sense of belonging and community engagement. These topics explored the various perspectives, identified challenges, and potential alteration that Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ individuals has recognised since participated in Pride Amsterdam.

To answer this first subquestion: How do Eastern Asian queer individuals experience Amsterdam Gay Pride? The first discussed concept was not only limited in explore what they have done but how they feel through the perspective of understanding their intersected identity. According to existing literature, intersectionality theory was conceptualised and operationalised, this study seek to understand with various components of one's identity, including how race and sexual orientation identity interact to create unique experiences of privilege or oppression within power structure, any aspect of identities can alter its significance depending on the situational context and time (Narváez et al., 2009, p.64). This study thus interested in how Asian as minorities and as queers facing marginalisation and possible distress during and after the Pride. Considering the inherent nature of intersectionality of Eastern Asian queer migrants, this theory helps to understand how these individuals have navigated their intersecting identities in Amsterdam' LGBTQIA+ scene. I inquired the interviewees how their ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and immigration status work together to influence their experience and whether they have encountered any discrimination, microaggression during the Pride festival and in daily life. Here, the questions are designed to

inquire about the participants' interactions and experiences as a minority. I asked my participants to describe their experiences and whether they relate to discrimination from the perspective of being social minority. Interview questions, for example: Can you firstly describe your experience at Amsterdam Pride? Then, I delved into their ethnic background as a social minority with the extended stereotype and or discrimination confronted in Dutch society in a broader sense. Questions such as: how it feels being Asian in queer community. Does it bring any kind of challenges or specificity? This question aims to elicit participants to reflect on their experiences of discrimination regarding their intersectional identity as a minority. Participants were asked about the engagement with various communities. For example, 'how close are you feeling within Dutch LGBTQIA+ and Asian LGBTQIA+ community?" This question aimed to discover how identities influences one's interaction with different communities within the LGBTQIA+scene.

To address the second sub-question: In what ways does participation in Pride Amsterdam change their self-perception and community belongingness? The second concept was subject to self-perception. I firstly addressed this question delving into the participant's personal insights, mainly focused on how participants view and identify their identity in this particular social group (Bem, 1972), in particular, how proud and confident for them to identify themselves as a queer person. Moreover, this thesis aimed discover a transition to elicit a comparison between the queer environment from their home of origin, comparing with the Netherlands macro environment, to discover the reason behind their immigration and how this continuously influenced their perception towards their identities and surroundings. Lastly, to understand the position of the participants, this research tried to discover their personal narratives in terms of a sense of inclusion and connection within the LGBTQIA+ community and to other Eastern Asian queer individuals in the broader Dutch society. Thus, the third concept is sense of belonging and community engagement. This topic operationalised sense of belonging and conceptualised it into two concepts, inclusion and connection. I inquired whether and how does the participants' sense of inclusion and connection separately. Questions such as: 'As an Asian queer, what does "inclusion" mean to you? Was there a moment that you felt being accepted or included during the Pride?' Furthermore, I also wondered based on the various ways participation in the pride festival, did it affect how they operate their life and perception towards the Pride. Therefore, questions posed about positive and negative experiences in the pride Amsterdam. And questions were asked, such as "Do you think participating in Amsterdam Pride somehow influenced how you would do things differently in the future?"

3.3 Sampling and Data Collection

For this research, I have recruited ten participants as samples using non-probability sampling techniques to direct the data collection process. This number of samples ensures the depth of data while maintaining feasibility to gain representative findings reflecting the larger population (Grønmo, 2019, p.495). In particular, the samples selected by purposeful sampling following a specific list of criteria. This approach is beneficial to identify participants who met the criteria that can optimise the understanding and relevance of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2022, p. 229). Firstly, to address the research question, the first criteria sets as the participants should the residents in the Netherlands, they were either newcomer and immigrants with Eastern Asian ethnicity. Secondly, the interviewees were in forehand self-identified as LGBTQIA+ /Queer individuals. Thirdly, the person has participated in Pride Amsterdam at least once within the previous 5 years. Considering the flexibility of sampling for qualitative studies, I have combined snowball sampling with purposive sampling strategy to reach sufficient sample size in the short term (Grønmo, 2019, p.535-537). At the beginning stage, I initially approached five interviewees from my networks who fit the three aforementioned criteria; after this initial contact, I leverage these participants' network by inviting them to recommend more prospective participants who meet these characteristics. Accordingly, combining these two sampling strategies was the most appropriate, practical and efficient for this qualitative approach. The final sample contains ten participants, with four males and six females to reach a relatively balance in terms of gender, 8 of them were from mainland China, one Taiwanese and one Malaysian. Data collection and analysis were conducted and completed in the period of March to May in 2025. This research used pseudonyms for all the participants in order to protect their privacy.

3.4 Data Analysis

There were ten interviews conducted and completed within a month between April to May 2025. The duration of all the interviews lasted around 40 minutes to one hour. The demographics of all the interviews was listed and presented in Table 1 (see in Appendix A). Among all interviews, 4 of them were conducted in mandarin Chinese language as the requested from interviewees, and other 6 interviews employed in English. All the interviews were recorded with prior informed consent through audio recording app on my phone and later be transcribed, exported as Microsoft Word documents in English and Chinese. I began with clean up all the transcripts, translating the four Chinese interviews into English to

maintain consistency across the dataset. Then, thematic analysis was applied on software Atlas.ti. According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p.4-28), Thematic analysis is useful to identify relevant themes and insights. I firstly began with familiarise the transcripts. The procedure officially started with open coding on each interview's transcription to identify useful excerpts, reoccurring concepts and patterns. During analysis, the codes were developed inductively during reading of the transcripts. After that, these codes were grouped into several relevant themes and insights through axial coding. Lastly, the themes and subthemes were reviewed and refined to address the central question aligning with theoretical frameworks and reach a meaningful discussion and conclusion. Among the most frequently recurring codes were sense of freedom and encountering racism, which drawn the attention and reflected the ambivalent nature of the Dutch society as both liberating and exclusionary. Thematic coding resulted in four main themes, encompassing the transformation of self-perceptions, sense of ambivalence towards inclusion in Pride, response to the symbolic inclusion and to pursue sense of belonging, and the encounter of racial exclusion in the broader society, which were critical to the development of the core analysis.

3.5 Ethical Consideration and Reflexivity:

Ethical considerations were fully informed to the interviewees, including a consent that was signed by the participants before the interviews regarding their personal information's anonymity, the right to withdraw at any time, as well as the research and analysis purpose for the audio recording and the confidentiality (Grønmo, 2019).

Acknowledging my personal experiences and reflecting on my positionality is critical to this study. Personally, as an Eastern Asian newcomer immigrant who has resided in the Netherlands for ten years, I have witnessed and experienced a series of struggles and challenges, encompassing encountering micro-aggression and discrimination, the most frequent being name-calling on the street. Particularly, as an ethnic minority in a macro environment, I deeply cared about other minorities experiences, this including queer communities, and in this case, Eastern Asian queer migrants, experiencing compound layered of inequality. I contend that my background, experiences, languages with Chinese-speaking participants, and cultural resonance with this social minority group allow me to relate and share similar challenges and distress they are facing, to contribute to a better future of their well-being in Dutch society. Ultimately, I was able to build rapport with my interviewees

throughout the interviews, and I recognised their personal stories and empathised with their distress.

Nevertheless, it was noted that my familiarity and emotion with their narratives could lead to assumptions and posing leading opinions during the interviews. Acknowledging this, I aimed to avoid assumptions by allowing the interviews to elaborate freely and accurately present their insights. This way, I ensured research findings contain no subjectivity, but are theoretically informative.

4. Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the ten interviews, and four main themes were identified. First, Pride is prevalently validated as a space of emotional and physical emancipation and empowerment of identity, especially in contrast with the migrants' home countries. Moreover, this sense of belonging is temporal and conditional, and they noted a lack of deeper and long-lasting connection with Dutch LGBTQIA+ personnel and context due to language and cultural differences; therefore, most of them sought to join Asian ethnic-oriented queer communities to form networks. Thirdly, the commercialisation and symbolic inclusion in Pride Amsterdam were criticised by my participants as "pinkwashing" and superficial representations. Beyond Pride, pursued resilience by creating support systems, such as grassroots communities, to provide a safe and culturally resonant space for authentic belonging among fellow queer migrants within the diaspora. The last theme identified that the queer identity maybe legally and culturally included in Dutch society, while the racial crime persists. Participants noted that racism was more prevalent than homophobia for these gender-conforming queer individuals, whose appearance or behaviour did not overtly challenge heteronormative expectations.from their experiences, add nuanced perspective to the Dutch popular image as a tolerant society.

4.1 Theme 1: Self-perception Transformation and Validation Through Pride Participation

Based on all the interviewee's reflections about their participation in Pride Amsterdam, it was noted that the pride canal parades had a significant impact on most of the Eastern Asian queer individuals. According to the participants, there was a generally profound transformation in their self-perception regarding their identity and expression. For many interviewees, Pride Amsterdam creates a utopia realm that acts not merely as an event for entertainment and celebration but as a milestone for self-affirmation and identity validation. The following subthemes were clustered within this overarching theme.

4.1.1 Pride as Empowerment and Confidence Liberation

For a majority of the participants, 9 out of 10 interviewees stated that by participating in Pride Amsterdam simply by walking along with the canal parade, observing the crowds, or participating on the boat, the way people act and dress freely led to a powerful sense of personal empowerment, particularly from the first time attending. However, all of the

participants reflected on themselves at this moment with no trouble to identify and validate their identities as a queer/ LGBTQIA+ person. They recognised that during Pride Amsterdam, particularly on the date of the canal boat parade, they were able to experience significant liberation and immerse themselves in a scene where they could openly express their queer identities in public; they have found a sense of connection in this inclusive and supportive environment. As one participant reflected : *"After the first time I was on the Pride boat, I had a self-awakening moment. It's very empowering."*. Moreover, Joe, who attended the pride with great expectations emphasised:

I've always thought that Europe is very open, but when I was at the Pride for the first

time, I saw people show their sexuality and gender in an extraordinary way. It seems like

you see all those things in the movies, and everyone seems to be dressed up to be very

cool and very self-expressed. I can feel that recognition and authenticity are essential to

feeling proud of being yourself. This feeling feels like it's only in a movie or a dream, and

this can be achieved in 2023. (Interviewee Joe, April 2025)

Several participants described Amsterdam Pride as an "eye-opening" and "liberating" experience that taught them to express themselves more openly in their daily lives after attending the event. Another participant, Xixi, currently a PhD candidate, emphasised her participation and observation of other's expression enabled her to confront internal fear: "It felt like everyone was just themselves — nobody cared, it was just so free. I realised it's okay to be who I am.". Likewise, Jason, who went twice on his company boat spoke of how attending pride enables him to express himself in an aspect which he usually would not present, described the experience positively:

Last year at the Canal Parade. My company sponsored the ship during the Amsterdam

Canal Pride, so I got the honor of getting in the boat to join the Amsterdam Pride. And it

was so much fun because we started our boat from the beginning to the end, which took

around five or six hours or something. And it was so much fun because you can see

completely different things or you can have completely different views because you're on

the boat, and then people are just screaming, saying hi to you. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

Jason's narrative reflected the view that these public events can serve as symbolic capital, thereby enhancing the recognition and legitimacy (Bourdieu, 1986, pp.18-21). For some participants in this festival, being included and interacting with their co-workers may serve as an important form of validation, signifying access to institutional support and visibility, while increasing their connection with others results in the accumulation of social capital.

He continued explaining the investments and support of the corporate boat, and his validation of this increases the involvement and influence of LGBTQIA+:

> The company hired some professional dancers and models to dance on the boats, and as employees, we mainly just danced freestyle. I think the Amsterdam ones are so famous and have more influence among the people, whether they are visitors or just local residents. Hence, I think going to these kinds of big, famous events would contribute more to the LGBTQ community. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

He particularly noted how dancing on boats and feeling embraced by the celebratory atmosphere, as well as interacting with everyone, affected his choice and helped him embrace his self-confidence.

> I picked a very flamboyant outfit in a way that I find very expressive myself, and that's also probably the only chance in a year for me to wear such a flamboyant outfit just because I'm not that flamboyant person most of the time just after that pride parade is a very good opportunity for me to explore a different side of me(Interviewee Joe, 2025)

The findings mirror with the theoretical perspectives on Butler's (1999, pp.44, xv) gender performativity, underscoring that gender is not an innate identity but rather emerges through repeated social acts shaped by social norms. In this case, Pride Amsterdam has turned into a performative arena where habitual constraints around sexuality, expression, and cultural expectations are temporarily lifted from the social norms.

4.1.2 Contrast with repression in home countries

For Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ migrants, many of whom grew up in environments where deviating from heteronormative scripts was discouraged or penalised, the Pride set enables them to engage in sensational gender and sexual expressions. For example, Chi from

Malaysian elaborated on the restrictions of Malaysian life-threatening risks faced by homosexual individuals under strict religious context:

> Malaysia is a Muslim country, so homosexuality is basically equivalent to breaking the law and then being hanged, death penalty, or beaten. I still remember that there was a kind of news before; there was a student in Malaysia who was gay, and then he seemed to be stoned to death. (Interviewee Chi, 2025)

She then added: "here, everyone was very accepting of you, so I think it was a strong sense of belonging that day. I just felt like I was going to be forgiven for whatever I did.".

In particular, the narrative of Jason's choice to wear a flamboyant outfit and express aspects of himself feeling a sense of safety and empowerment, dancing on boats to being seen and embraced, highlights how public visibility functions as a moment of becoming, affirming the Dutch society's normalisation of homosexuality, more progress compares to China and Malaysia (Van Lisdonk et al., 2018, p.7). Moreover, Butler (2009, p.1) noted, "there is no gender without this reproduction of norms that risks undoing or redoing the norm in unexpected ways." Drawing on this perspective, the affective power of the Pride parade creates the festive atmosphere that delineates this expansion of expressive possibilities and reimagining of identities, reflecting Butler's notion that gender expressions are not expressions of a pre-existing identity, but acts that constitute identity through their performance under particular social norms. Regarding this, the act of dressing flamboyantly and expressively, dancing, and interacting in a friendly and open manner during Pride enables these migrant queers to embody a new version of themselves that they have not discovered, overlooked, or suppressed in their previous life trajectory. This further mirrors with Yuval-Davis's (2006, pp.202-203) perspective on belongingness, which suggests that repetitive, performative practices of identity during Pride highlight the emotional and identificatory dimensions of belonging. For Eastern Asian queer individuals, participating in Pride and expressing themselves freely provides them a brand-new opportunity to embody themselves, stimulating their validation within a new LGBTQIA+ community and social context.

Fay, a gay man from a small town in China, described how even minor expressions can be dangerous and challenging: "Back home, just holding a rainbow flag in public would cause trouble. In Amsterdam, nobody cares, it's so free.", he further shared how Pride influenced his mindsets and internalised biases overtime

I got so much inspired by that because I think that's the sort of like a dream country, dream world that I like; I mean, you're here, you can see that different people, no matter how old they are, sometimes I honestly I have to sort of like stereotype against Muslim people, but the more I go to this kind of events I can know that oh I should not have any stereotype to anyone so no matter where they're from how they look they always have the freedom they have the right to do the things that they want. (Interviewee Fay, 2025)

The narrative of Fay can be interpreted through the lens of structural intersectionality, as outlined by Crenshaw (1991, pp.1245-1252), which examines not only about identity labels, but about overlapping systems of power, including race, gender, sexuality, and migration status that interaction to shape experiences of marginalisation. Participants sense of empowerment at the Pride not merely about affirming one's sexual orientation but also about internal reflection and personal growth. Similarly, drawing on Yuval-Davis's (2006, pp. 199-202) intersectional perspective, underscoring that identities are shaped not only by race and gender but also through social locations, emotional attachment, and that belongingness is mutually constructive by these factors. Thus, by sharing multiple layers of identity and diversity, in this case, it includes race, social location, and migration. Fay's perspective of overcoming internalised stereotypes about different communities delineates how participation in Pride fosters consciousness with the renegotiation of both self-perception and reconsideration toward other social groups. His perspective highlights how these structural forces shaped his worldview, Wei & Liu (2019, pp.5-21) conducted a national survey of LGBTQIA+ students in Mainland China, revealing a dominant heteronormative values country discouraged expressions of queerness. The results show that the general public continues to hold highly negative views of same-sex attraction,

Furthermore, Fay's experience exemplified his changing through navigating and resisting islamophobia in both Dutch society and China's suppression upbringing. His admission of initially holding stereotypes against Muslims is not a simple personal bias but a systemic discrimination that was influenced by the broader society's values Scholars like Yildiz (2017, pp.6-8) argued that although the Netherlands performs inclusivity and liberation, here, the tolerance is often conditional and racialised; Dutch society is also structured with nationalism that often frames Muslims as incompatible with liberal values, including LGBTQIA+ rights, thereby marginalises Muslim communities. In this context, his experience at Pride Amsterdam becomes a unique moment where intersecting identities are

validated rather than marginalised, not only in terms of queer visibility but in the way he relates to other social groups. It became a space where both Chinese and Dutch frameworks of exclusion were critically and temporarily suspended.

4.1.3 Pride as Temporary Normalisation of Queer Identity

Another subtheme emerging from participants' experiences at Pride Amsterdam was the normalisation of queer identity. Many interviewees described this event provides an impactful, yet temporary environment where being queer was not an exception but an expected and celebrated norm, although only on that particular date. For participants, Pride Amsterdam contrasted sharply with their everyday lives, both in the Netherlands and back in their countries of origin.

Several individuals reflected that during Pride, inclusion was the major scene, where expressions of queerness through outlooks or public behaviour were accepted without judgment or surprise. One participant expressed: "At Pride, nobody asks if you are straight or gay. It just doesn't matter. It's like breathing; it's natural there.". Yuli, another participant, shared a similar sentiment: "We just wore some small rainbow things, nothing too much; everyone around us was wearing these things; I didn't feel 'different' anymore."

Nonetheless, participants remained aware that this normalisation seemd ephemeral, it was only situated on the specific Canal Parade day. Most of the participants point out that outside of the Pride event, in daily life, they witnessed and experienced societal exclusion, encompassing racial and heteronormative discrimination and microaggression. These encounters constantly remind them of their multi-layered minority status in society. As Jason, who moved to Amsterdam for seven years, elaborated:

A lot of racist slurs come towards me; in Amsterdam, it's not really a good Asian friend in the city, I would say that way. There are always occasionally racist attacks and also not enough representations anywhere. It's more of an issue for the city; it's not an issue for me. Fortunately, for me, the inclusion of Amsterdam Pride means that my queer side is 100% included and inclusive during the Amsterdam Pride events. In the past, I even have conflicts with myself. But throughout the events, I gradually fully reconcile with myself, and I feel like I am welcomed and included in the whole city. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

This finding corresponds with Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy' (2020, p.3-5) research on LGBTQIA+ events, which argues that these events bring a sense of belonging, connection, and normalisation among these marginalised queer individuals. Nevertheless, the temporary experience of being fully accepted and feeling included during Pride Amsterdam provided a critical emotional boost, reinforced participants' self-recognition of accepting their queerness and inner identity. As Fay's experiences also correspond to Jason's self-growth, he added how he confronted his identity and transformed his perception into 'ordinary' in real life after attending Pride:

> When I just came here, I still felt a bit nervous expressing myself to tell people that I am
>
> LGBTQ. I can clearly remember that, I think, during one of the first few classes I did at
>
> university, my teammates asked me, do you have a girlfriend? And I was struggling a bit,
>
> should I tell them that I'm gay or should I make that a story? But in the end, I told them
>
> that I am gay. I was so nervous about it the whole time, telling them that I'm gay. And then
>
> they said, oh, do you have a boyfriend? I guess, they didn't really care about my sexuality.
>
> Just like what I've seen during pride, it's just normal here. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

What can be seen from Fay's transformation is that he has turned from being self-doubting to embracing self-acceptance and open expression.This change resonates with Hall's (1990, p.225) conceptualisation of cultural identity as it is the mechanism of process and constantly changing rather than being fixed or rooted in one's origin, through social interactions, recognitions the contextual shifts, and diverse cultural contexts. In this sense, Fay's experience after pride functions as a crucial moment where performance and queerness are 'normal', which enables him to feel a sense of self and to rearticulate his identity and perception further. This personal progress further reflects Hall's (1990, pp. 228, 235) theories that diasporic identity negotiates their identities across different cultural landscapes, they navigate displacement, difference, and transformation, as "necessary heterogeneity and diversity". Fay's trajectory as a migrant from a rural village in China, where queerness is often silenced or stigmatised, relocating to a relatively more affirming Dutch environment exemplifies this diasporic identity. His initial anxiety and hesitation to disclose his sexuality stemmed from the prior social context where LGBTQIA+ identities were often erased. In line with findings from Wei and Liu's (2019, pp.5-21) research on queer students in China, reveals that Chinese educational institutions barely offer legal protections against

discrimination, with the pressure from traditional Confucian family values that prioritise marriage and reproduction, as well as institutional repression towards NGOs and schools, resulting queer youth face widespread social stigma and mental trauma.

Furthermore, Fay's narrative exemplifies how queer diasporic individuals continually produce and reproduce their identities through resistance and adaptation. In Dutch universities, he was asked directly by his peers regarding if he had a boyfriend, demonstrating the society's normalisation of same-gender relationships, where homosexuality is visible and valid, reassured him that his struggles and anxiety could be put away. Drawing on Hall's (pp.229,235) concepts of diaspora, this is a progress of "repositioning", how diasporic individuals reshape their identities in relation to new cultural norms and social climates.

Pride, then, acts as a performative and symbolic space, adding Goffman's (1956, pp.140-155) dramaturgical theory to explain this; Pride offers an open space for these participants to "act" their roles, empower, express their queer identity with performance where their authentic selves on this "stage", aligning with Pride days' theme of diversity, acceptance, and celebration. However, beyond the Pride festival, participants often feel more cautious about expressing or performing in their true selves, indicating that normalisation at Pride is profound but momentary; it is ephemeral rather than a permanent transformation. Thus, Amsterdam Pride acts as a temporary but transformative "stage" where Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ individuals can reframe, perform, and empower their self-image. his experience has the potential to strengthen their longer-term journeys of internalisation toward the normalisation of queer identity. However, such ephemeral freedom raises critical questions about conditional inclusion in the broader society. This phenomenon can be interpreted as part of Butler's (1999, p.178) theory of gender performativity, which highlights that identity is constituted through ongoing performance rather than singular performance. The temporality of Pride reveals the tension between momentary empowerment and real-life alienation. Beyond the festival, many participants report feeling more cautious about expressing themselves in terms of behaviours or appearances; this misalignment suggests that Pride's inclusive atmosphere is limited in duration and scope. This experience indicates that the visibility of this type of performance occurs within regulatory frameworks that are socially permissible. Thus, the Pride stage may empower visibility, but society still only allows queerness to be seen when it is politically safe and culturally sanctioned, exemplifying conditional inclusivity in Dutch society.

Similarly, this limited inclusivity is also shaped by broader structures of power. Ong et al. (2020, pp. 3, 13), drawing on Social Dominance Theory (SDT), argue that even within

LGBTQIA+ spaces, community events can reinforce hierarchical social structures that privilege dominant groups—such as white, cisgender, or Western participants—while marginalising others. SDT helps explain how attitudes toward homosexuality are shaped by societal pressures to conform to normative beliefs, where blatant homophobia is increasingly replaced by subtler and more socially sanctioned forms of exclusion. As a result, Pride can produce a dual experience of inclusion and exclusion, especially for racialised and migrant queer individuals. it becomes more complex to sustain the sense of belonging beyond the pride parade. The sense of inclusion within Pride spaces can be selective; it includes those who bear the identity of whiteness, cultural legibility, and affinity to Western norms. Thus, while Pride can foster moments of empowerment, it also demonstrates the conditionality and performativity of queer inclusion. There remains the societal reality of what remains structurally unchanged once the show comes to an end.

4.2 Theme 2: Navigating the Complexities and Conditional Community Belongingness

4.2.1 Emotional Belonging and Recognition in the Dutch Context through Pride

Throughout all the interviews, many interviewees repeatedly pointed out that attending Pride Amsterdam created a powerful moment of connection to the wider LGBTQIA+ community. This public space's scale, visibility, and collective energy brought them a distinctive and intense opportunity to experience a temporary sense of unity and acceptance, fostering a sense of solidarity in the city that was rare in their daily lives. Aligning with Hahm et al. (2018, p.4)'s findings, festivals like this offer attendees a collective mood. It fosters queer individuals' self-esteem by creating a festive space where people can openly communicate, share, and bond within the LGBTQIA+ community. As one respondent described: "When we all cheered together, I felt part of something bigger than myself for once.".

This finding corresponds to Yuval-Davis's (2006, pp.199-202) notion of emotional belonging, demonstrating that during Pride, there exhibits a temporary collective atmosphere and shared moments allow participants to feel emotionally and symbolically recognised and accepted regarding their queer identity and facilitate a sense of social belonging that transcended nationality and ethnicity in this wider social context. For those who grew up in East Asian societies with various cultural and societal expectations and stigmatisation, they have experienced marginalisation or repression in their own societies regarding queerness or

other layers of identities, the emancipation and celebration atmosphere of Pride Amsterdam provided a stark contrast, illustrating the possibilities of a more inclusive and diverse society.

For many participants who grew up in East Asian countries, queerness often intersects with deep-rooted cultural norms. These familial and religious constraints result in varying systemic stigmatization and profound repression. The atmosphere of emancipation and celebration at Pride Amsterdam provided a stark contrast, illustrating the possibilities of a more inclusive and diverse society. Notably, almost all participants from China and Malaysia in this study described marginalisation in their home origin. They recognised the profound liberation and freedom manifested in Pride Amsterdam and extended to broader Dutch society, comparing and concluding a sharp contrast with the experiences of suppression in their countries of origin, and even articulating the hostile environment in their home country.

For instance, Mico and Joe's accounts of LGBTQIA+ community closures in Guangzhou and Beijing underscore the tightening of state control in China, where queer sphere is increasingly tightened, driving underground, or even banned. Mico, who was formerly active in a queer community in Guangzhou, reflected on the increasing societal control of how the organisation was forced to closed and expressed her deeply concerns and risk of repression towards the society:

I felt that in China, the living space was gradually squeezed. At first, you might have the opportunity to do some underground activities anonymously, and then slowly, the activities could not be done. I joined the Rainbow Group in Guangzhou. But it was forced to cancel very early, it later turned into an underground group. I think it's actually getting worse and worse now, because, to tell the truth, I feel that it's the kind of sexual orientation correction. I don't know if it's because the Internet is too developed now. I feel that it appears more and more. You will see more and more that parents will send their abnormal children to schools like military training or even electric shock therapy. Lock them up and try to turn them into a so-called normal person. Then there will also be a lot of children because, for example, there was an incident before that was also because the boy's temperament may be a little more feminine, and then he was bullied and finally committed suicide. I think this kind of thing has been seen too much in China.

(Interviewee Mico, 2025)

In regards to this, Joe who used to be one of the organiser in a Beijing queer organisation expressed identical experiences, with the shutdown of the organization in recent years drove her to move to the Netherlands, and she was motivated to participate in Pride Amsterdam, she reflected on the escalating situation in Beijing : "In China, even if you work at an LGBTQIA+ NGO, you can't walk in the streets like this. Even small events risk being shut down. At Pride, it felt like living in a dream-like, stepping 100 years into the future.".

Shanghai, as a metropolitan city with a relatively tolerant environment, was admitted by Alex, the systemic restriction and suppression persists, she shared her previous experience in lesbian space when the authority came to interrupt the gathering:

At the lesbian bar have been strictly investigated in recent years. As far as I know, there was a small gathering in Jing'an Temple before. It had just opened for a short time, but the police began to come to check. They would sit there for half an hour. Yuli She further added that Shanghai has relatively higher acceptance towards queer culture: "Shanghai relatively speaking, but you can't spread it. They won't allow you to publicise it. You can have it, but you are not allowed to say it. You can't make a big show like Amsterdam pride, right?". (Interviewee Alex, 2025)

Participants also noted that family expectations and cultural heritage continued to influence emotional pressure, even as they embraced their queer identities openly in the Netherlands. Yuli mentioned: "My girlfriend and I live openly here, but when it comes to telling family back in China, it's still complicated. We have tried to come out, but it still will take many years for our parents to accept this totally". She further compared it to the Dutch officers, who gave her more affirmation to live in the Netherlands.

I would say I feel more welcome here in the Netherlands than in my original country, because, for example, when my partner and I registered for our long-term resident permit together in the city, The officer working in the municipalities showed his patience and understanding and congrats to us, think I feel very comfortable living here. (Interviewee Yuli, 2025)

Their narratives of surveillance, censorship, and punishment delineate Crenshaw's (1989,1245-1250) intersectionality: that being both queer and Asian in conservative societies, in this case, their home country, Asian countries compounds a specific and unique

vulnerability and struggles, which reduces their access to legal, social, and emotional resources. Aligning with what Cheo (2014, pp.6-8) emphasised how, Asian countries have often framed homosexuality as a Western intrusion, which is incompatible with "Asian values," Confucian traditions, and heteronormative expectations. In particular, China has seen an increased state control of same-sex relations due to nationalist moral regimes. With the multiple times mentioned queer NGOs were shut down by my interviewees, echoing Wei & Liu (2019, p.21)'s research that the LGBTQIA+ community are severely limited in recent years, the Chinese government often views these organisations as "illegitimate or sensitive," restricting their ability to formally register or operate openly, exemplifies a shrank civic space for queer existence.

In comparison to this, Pride Amsterdam thus serves as an empowerment instrument, and to an extent, Dutch society also illustrates a comparatively high acceptance towards queer life. It also acted as a mirror, reflecting the complex layers of negotiation that participants constantly navigated. These reflections and comparisons between their home country and the Netherlands build their motivation for migrating to the Netherlands, inviting the perspective of migration theory, particularly push-pull dynamics (Lee, 1966, pp.50-57) . In Lee's (1966) theory of migration, he explained international mobility as a mechanism of pressures from origin countries, including repression, discrimination, legal punishment, and the perceived freedoms of host countries. Yuli's case, where a Dutch municipal officer congratulated her, demonstrates the legal protection and institutional recognition in the host destination. In this case, the Netherlands offers societal and legal support, providing much higher LGBTQIA+ rights, resulting in safety, recognition, and visibility in queers' lives. On the other hand, the push factors seemed to be united with the conclusion of systemic hostility and shrinking civic space for queer individuals in their home countries, motivating their relocation to the Netherlands.

4.2.2 Ambivalent Belonging in Predominantly White Queer Context

While many interviewees recounted the moments of empowerment during Pride Amsterdam, they also described a sense of ambivalence, as it triggered internal conflicts and highlighted the ongoing negotiations that Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ individuals face in their personal journey. Some interviewees pointed out that the sense of connection with the broader LGBTQIA+ community is often phased and difficult to extend continuously in daily life.

Several participants described their attention to marginalisation and sense of discomfort within the predominantly white queer context during Pride. For instance, this insight is reflected in Jamy's criticisms of his experience at Pride, where he critiques the phenomenon of white dominance through his observations, experiencing a sense of alienation in terms of racial identity and belonging.

For me as an Asian, I found out Amsterdam Pride is so white. It is white supremacy applied to the pride... Like you couldn't see any POC people in there... That's the reason why I don't want to attend Amsterdam Pride. Because I don't feel belong to the white pride.I joined Amsterdam Pride once, I was with my friends, but honestly, it felt so white. I didn't really see people like me there. It made me think — yes, I'm free to be queer here, Let's be fair, like the majority, the society of Dutch people, a Dutch queer, which also apply the stereotype of the Dutch heterosexual society. I think, did you have a connection between those communities? So, that makes me feel that, oh, I don't feel counted, I don't belong here to the general queer pride. (Interviewee Jamy, 2025)

Moreover, participants like Alex and Mico articulated similar sentiments about feeling alienated. Alex, a master's student, moved to the Netherlands less than a year ago. She shared her feelings about being an observer or an outsider: "I didn't feel I had an identity within me during the whole process of participating in the parade. I felt like I was a tourist joining in the fun. I felt that Asians didn't seem to get much attention.".

Furthermore, another participant remarked short, "Amsterdam Pride feels so white. I hardly see people like me."

They remarked the distance and, momentarily, discomfort, sense of alienation, even in supposedly inclusive spaces, exemplifies an embedded longstanding ideology that ethnic minorities often feel different or hyper visible from white queer culture dominants LGBTQIA+ scene. This duality of feeling included and excluded can be critically explained through Sara Ahmed's (2007, pp. 156-162) concept of the "phenomenology of whiteness." Ahmed Ahmed refers to "being not white is to be not extended by the spaces you inhabit," , meaning that whiteness as in a white dominant society, is not merely a racial identity but a structural and spatial orientation, which results in discomfort and a sense of alienation to other social groups. As she illustrates her experience by being stopped at a U.S. airport because of her Muslim surname, despite holding a British passport, she then reflected that

racialised individuals are "strangers" who came from "somewhere else". In this white-oriented world, migrant individuals often find themselves "out of place" or constantly reminded of their difference (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 162-163).

Moreover Ahmed's (2014, pp. 10, 11, 89) concepts of "stickiness" reveals how emotions attached to specific racial groups can gradually become part of a socially constructed form of exclusion. In this study, Asian migrants are often overlooked within Western-centric society, and stereotypes such as being "quiet" or "different" tend to stick to Asian queer migrants as well. As a result, while their queerness may be fully accepted, their ethnic and migrant identities are frequently invisible. She argues that people's emotions emerged based on historical and repetitive cultural associations. As my interviews present, emotions like alienation or invisibility often adhere to Asian queer migrants, this is not only due to their actions, but stemmed from pre-existing social conditioned. Such as how the society often viewing them with stereotypes, or with discriminations. Their presence might be glued to the feelings of "difference" or "foreignness" that have already been culturally attached to Asian identities, especially in Western LGBTQIA+ narratives that is white centric.

Mico echoed with similar perspectives; she felt a sense of liberation by being recognised for her queer identity: "Today I can finally shout out that I am gay," while pointing out the festival is as being more of a superficial entertainment event than a political movement, resulting her simultaneously feeling disconnected and ambivalence:

It was in Amsterdam, a very traditional European nationalist country, so there is an intuitive feeling that it is quite white, to be honest, it is a little fast forward, but it is fun. In fact, I think his political nature and seriousness have been dispelled a lot, and on this day, it seems that everyone just wants to have fun and drink, and it doesn't seem to say to fight for something. (Interviewee Mico, 2025)

On the contrary, Thomas explained why he felt Pride Amsterdam provided him with a more advanced scale of inclusion and visibility as a public celebration, while also recognising its entertaining atmosphere. He participated in Taipei Pride many times and compared it with Amsterdam Pride; he validated Taiwan's openness as the first place in Asia that have legalised same-sex marriage:

I think Amsterdam Pride feels more like they've already done most of this stuff. They

legalised gay marriage about 20 years ago. They're quite far ahead in terms of this kind of

gender agenda. So I understand that the absent Pride was more like a party rather than

trying to make it not feel like a protest. The protest is a type of pride, it's like a different

thing I notice. (Interviewee Thomas, 2025)

Mico and Thomas expressed different opinions about Pride Amsterdam, reflecting the diverse perspectives of Eastern Asian migrant queer when facing mainstream LGBTQIA+ culture. In this case, Mico critiqued the parade's superficial and diminished political atmosphere; her observation of Pride as a depoliticisation and hedonistic environment aligns with (Bourcier, 2012, pp. 97-106) perspectives of queer life should be empowered through micropolitics, which is not only about the struggle against institutions through macropolitics but also exists in daily life, bodily practices, heterogeneous expressions, and resistance. She argued that it should not comply with the dominance of macropolitics agendas, as it prioritising spectacle, similar to the Pride Amsterdam parade presents. In this case, Mico's criticism thus became a micropolitical act, challenging Pride's superficial diversity and reclaiming it as a space for progressive engagement rather than merely for commodification and entertainment as a visual spectacle and commercial display. In comparison, Thomas's understanding of Pride is inclined to be a form of celebration of the equal rights that have been achieved. The celebratory atmosphere is a symbol of social progress, reflecting that the Netherlands has made significant progress in the legal levels, as an affirmation to macropolitics' achievement. In his words, Pride no longer needs strong protest or pursuits but functions as a joyful public event.

Nonetheless, Thomas also pointed out that outside of Pride events, linguistic barriers can sometimes lead him to a sense of exclusion in Dutch society:

I don't speak Dutch very well, so sometimes I feel like I'm not fully included. Even

among the queer community, I think probably because I don't speak Dutch that well. So it

makes me feel a bit of an outlier sometimes. And I think I don't have many Dutch friends,

so sometimes I feel like I'm not fully included in that sense. (Interviewee Thomas, 2025)

These tensions reflected by the interviewee exemplify racial exclusion rooted in deeper structural inequalities. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986, pp.15-21) theory of capital, it seems evident that compound factors, including lack of cultural, social, and symbolic capital,

influence this lack of sense of belonging for many East Asian queer in the broader Dutch society. To elaborate, these forms of capital leads to a lack of local cultural knowledge, language barriers, social connection and recognition, accordingly limiting their integration and constraining their ability to access and participate fully in queer public spaces in the Dutch context. As mentioned earlier, Pride serves as a space for temporary transformation and a stage of openness; nevertheless, many East Asian queer individuals still reported feeling marginalised to varying degrees during and outside of Pride, embedded in their limited accessibility to these forms of capital. Nonetheless, This suggests that the problem is not that immigrants are "under-integrated"; rather, the mainstream LGBTQIA+ spaces themselves are still constrained by Western, white-centric cultural expectations and norms.These expectations and insufficient ability to build social relations with the locals implicitly shape who can truly belong in this community.

Moreover, several participants, such as Jason, also noted that even though the Netherlands or Amsterdam is not perfect, it is relatively inclusive and open towards LGBTQIA+ migrants, and that was the underlying reason for them to relocate. As He elaborated: "In Amsterdam, it's not a good Asian friend in the city." "One of the reasons I find a living in Amsterdam is not as Amsterdam is such a queer-friendly city. No, it's more like it's very far from my parents".

Thus, Thomas and Jason's contribution underlines the varied experiences of Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ migrants, where legal rights in one's home country are a vital influence. However, they do not directly translate into one's sense of belonging in a new location. Their motivations for relocation also intersect with the concept of diasporic identity as a "positioning" and "repositioning" (Hall, 1990, pp. 229-230). The identity is constantly changing based on the space and social context. For queer migrants, this identity is shaped through contrast: what they could do at home and in the Netherlands also shifted; there are push factors to attract them to live here. However, they are also lacking cultural knowledge and resonance to function. This reality corresponds to Tecmen's (2020, pp. 20-23) research on the disadvantages faced by migrants, which encompasses a lack of language proficiency and cultural knowledge, as well as restricted access to inner networks.

Despite recalled moments of connection, such as seeing Asian-organised boats and interacting with Asian faces, underrepresentation was a recurring observation. This experience aligns with Cheng's (2011, p.540) concept of "metaphorical homelessness", suggesting that queer and Asian diasporic individuals often face double exclusion. From his research conducted in the U.S. focusing on gay Asian male, it was concluded that they were

excluded both from Western/white queer spaces due to racism and also marginalised from their Asian American communities, where heteronormativity dominates, and homophobia is sustained. He puts in, "We neither belong fully to the gay community that is overwhelmingly white nor do we belong fully to the overwhelmingly straight Asian American community.", highlighting intersectionality where double exclusion leads many to internalize shame. Thus, the feeling of difference from white participants, or the observation of seeing the majority of the white race, is not a personal opinion but emerges through intersectional structures of racial and cultural aspects, mirroring these racialised participants' internalised uncertainty and structural exclusion.

4.2.3 Pinkwashing and Performative Symbolic Inclusion

Among all the interviews, there were critical ambivalent opinions towards the role of corporate sponsorship and the increasing commercialisation at the Pride Amsterdam canal parade. Although some interviewees appreciated the companies' support in increasing visibility for LGBTQIA+ rights, others perceived corporate involvement as "pinkwashing," expressing their skeptical opinion towards the commercialisation of Pride Amsterdam. They regard this action as leveraging LGBTQIA+ support as a marketing strategy rather than an authentic commitment to making a change.

On the other hand, other interviewees expressed skepticism toward corporate representation at Pride, questioning the sincerity of companies' LGBTQIA+ commitments. Jamy commented on how companies sometimes use their political correctness while achieving their marketing goals and opportunistic branding; he put:

I don't like big companies putting their big logos in a rainbow version on their linking

profiles. Also, just a giant logo on their boat. I don't find it real. I'm questioning them. I

don't feel like you're really doing it. You just do it for show. You just do it for the

business. You just do it for the money. You are not really thinking about the queer

community itself. This is how I feel. (Interviewee Jamy, 2025)

Joe, reflecting on her experience organising the Asian Pride boat, emphasised the difference between grassroots authenticity and commercial spectacle:

Our boat didn't have much funding. We had to crowdfund, and we had volunteers making

costumes. I actually am still wondering how I can connect people in a less commercial

way? Is it possible to use less consumption to consume resources, commercialise, or pile up these things with money to maintain a community? (Interviewee Joe, April 2025)

In this case, Joe's forward-thinking in a way resonates with neo-tribal theory (Maffesoli, 1996; Vorobjovas-Pinta & Hardy, 2020), where ethnic-specific, grassroots, low-funding projects and communities serve not as a permanent space but as a temporary tribe. Even though it is temporary, it enables gathering and volunteer collaboration from people who share similar emotions and backgrounds, contributing their creativity and resilience to this new form of tribe. Furthermore, this ethnically community-based organisation demonstrates a contrast with financially well-funded corporate participation. Therefore, people work voluntarily and passionately to gain collaboration and increase representation. They are dedicated to recruiting more volunteers and seeking collaboration and funding to achieve better outcomes. On the contrary, company boats embody visibility and symbolic power; they are well-funded and resourceful. To explain from Bourdieu's (1986, pp.19-23) capital theory, grassroots communities have less access to economic and social capital. At the same time, with the passion of social volunteers, there is a possibility of gaining larger social and cultural capital, which can then be transformed into economic and symbolic capital, thereby earning prestige and recognition within the broader community.

4.2.4 Constraints of Social Capital and the Limits of Pride as a Community Building

Some respondents mentioned that they were able to form a deeper connection to the broader community and society during Pride Amsterdam. Particularly, those who attended the Pride on boats experienced stronger interactions and declared an inclusive and supportive scene. Joe, who joined the organisation of the Asian boat, recalled: "It can be seen that people on both sides of the streets also have various identities and backgrounds. Maybe some of them are straight, but they're also very supportive. It's like a big party, and then they'll cheer when you pass under the bridge". This corresponds with the potential of public events to provide moments of emotional belonging through shared visibility, celebration, and shared experiences (Yuval-Davis, 2006, pp.199-202).

However, some respondents noted that this sense of connection is often limited and temporary, existing only during the Pride Festival, and it is challenging to build serious relationships or establish a network after this event. As Jason, who joined the boat four times, recalled this limitation:

Unfortunately, I only made one friend. I think a lot of the reason is that it was very exhausting and very busy doing the whole ride, so it's very difficult to form any kind of communication out of the parade. Honestly, we always go with our own group of friends, so we're already exclusive to ourselves. Personally, I also don't like to join those communities, I find them vague. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

Thomas also made a similar conclusion to his participation pattern:

I think also the time we just like sort of hang out with our friends, usually if I just go along with my husband or with some other Taiwanese gay friends and we don't really feel like connected with others. We just talk to each other. I don't know why but I somehow feel enough. (Interviewee Thomas, 2025)

These reflections highlight a notable tension: Pride functions as an arena for the solidarity of LGBTQIA+; however, it does not necessarily translate into long-lasting social bonds or deeper connections. This contradiction can be explained by Bourdieu's (1986, pp.21-23) concept of social capital. Although Pride offers symbolic visibility and opportunities to expand social connections, it does not necessarily facilitate individuals to accumulate social capital; the resources are often gained through existing networks.

Even though, in this case, all participants possess sufficient English language skills, high education, or cultural resonance to engage with international LGBTQIA+ networks, they still often feel a lack of alignment or agency in those spaces. In this context, some participants noted that they prefer to stay within their cultural circles; this phenomenon demonstrates a deeper, structural sense of alienation. The preference is not only a matter of personal preference but also social group dynamics; with the misalignment of cultural norms with Western background communities, an informal power structure appears to remain in existence. As Alex remarked, "I did join the Pride and some queer community events from my university, but people just drink, and I can see mostly are white people talking to each other. I didn't know what to talk to them; in the end, I was talking to someone who's also from some Asian countries, so I didn't go often.".

In this sense, some implicit circles or boundaries have almost been established in people's networks, particularly the divergence of cultural norms that shape how people connect in a field. Drawing on Bourdieu's (1986, p.27) notion of habitus, one's cultural context and social upbringing shape one's expectations, communication styles, and social

behaviors. This can result in feeling incompatible with other individuals, even in shared queer spaces. Therefore, although Amsterdam Pride is effective in creating moments of freedom and visibility for queer individuals, it still has certain limitations in building a lasting sense of connection for East Asian queer individuals.

Moreover, this reluctance to join any international or Dutch queer events resonates with Yuval-Davis's (2006, p. 203) idea of emotional belonging, where mutual recognition, values, languages, and cultural affinity are compounded factors to shape one's sense of belonging, exemplifying a deeper level of emotional belonging rather than merely social or legal supports. Furthermore, in this context, the Dutch and international queer communities, as well as Pride events, often provide a space for people to connect and celebrate under the guise of diversity and inclusion. However, offers often overlook the needs of ethnic minority queer groups. Sometimes, the goals and discourses of these mainstream communities are already far ahead of what participants experienced in their countries of origin. Accordingly, it can lead to feelings of alienation and limited discursive agency of ethnic minorities, therefore resulting in a sense of a lack of understanding and support. This also reflects Baumeister and Leary's (1995, pp. 497–499) conceptualisation of the "need to belong" as a fundamental human need. People would try to build lasting relationships in a safe and understood environment and community.

In this context, an increasing number of people seek a more stable and profound sense of belonging in small communities with greater cultural resonance and shared experiences. This trend has given rise to ethnically linked queer communities, such as "Out and Abroad" and "wool sisters," which have become essential for them to construct self-identity and social networks in a foreign country. The following will further explore the belonging experience of East Asian queer individuals in ethnically specific queer communities.

4.3 Theme 3: Grassroots Leadership and Diasporic Community Building

4.3.1 Formation of Ethnic-Specific Queer Communities

While Amsterdam Pride provided a general celebratory and festive vibe to the broader LGBTQIA+ community, many Eastern Asian participants recognise the importance of forming and sustaining ethnic-specific queer communities to develop a deeper sense of belonging and emotional connection in the Netherlands. These groups, such as "Out and Abroad," one of the NGOs mentioned multiple times, offer Asian LGBTQIA+ participants a more inclusive space where they can feel culturally and linguistically familiar and express

both their queer and East Asian identities without fear of misunderstanding or marginalisation. Several interviewees described these spaces as essential to building deeper and more lasting relationships beyond the temporary celebrations of Pride. As one self-identified gay participant living in the Hague shared: "I also attended some events organised by some Asian LGBTQIA+ community or organisation... I think it's called Out and Abroad. Then, it became my real community, also maybe because we spoke the same language, we had similar backgrounds.".

These Participants noted that they learned about the group through friends, social media, or direct outreach during Pride events. As another explained, "Initially, I was introduced by a friend to Out and Abroad. I feel like after joining this community, I feel more belonging here.".

These movements of participating in smaller, ethnic-oriented groups reflect Vorobjovas-Pinta and Hardy's (2020, pp.4-5) notion notion of neo-tribe, in which individuals aim to find long-lasting affirmation through shared culture, languages, and even struggles. For Eastern Asian LGBTQIA+ migrants, such neo-tribes provide a space of belonging and grassroots supports systems.

Joe, a Chinese queer who joined an Asian boat organisation in 2024, shared her experience and perspective on how she felt Asian queers were more united.

Especially some of your Asian friends on the shore, they see that we're an Asian pride boat Party, I thought they were very happy, well, you can see a lot of Asian faces in this white culture among so many boats, um, I think it made me feel really good at the time, and then that boatload of people was basically Asian. The whole identity aspect is that you feel as if you're jumping out of the shell of Chinese, or from this shell of Chinese queerness, in this group, you're no longer a Chinese, but your current identity. It's more like an Asian. (Interviewee Joe, 2025)

Joe's perspective echoes with the concept of social beings from Baumeister & Leary (1995, p.497-499), in which these Asian queer migrants seek to create connections and build their networks to strengthen a sense of belonging. Within this action, they find a new way to redefine themselves.

Furthermore, Mico, who was critical of the extravagance and commercialisation of Pride Amsterdam, that is, elaborated on her motivation to a local Asian non-binary

community: "I mentioned the wool sisters, we will organise something that may be a little bit political. Or at least let you have a sense of a stronger community to consider those connections.".

These observations and participations correspond with the social identity mechanism introduced by Tajfel & Turner (2004, p.267-287)' s social identity theory, highlighting that individuals seek positive social identity through belonging to groups that affirm their self-conception faced with marginalisation in mainstream white-dominated LGBTQIA+ spaces, many participants were attracted to ethnically specific queer events and communities that able to provide greater cultural familiarity, emotional and social understanding. They gravitated toward Asian-specific communities as "ingroups", strengthening ingroup attachment, participants enhanced their self-esteem and collective pride. Thus, these findings show that while Pride Amsterdam offers a public space for visibility and exhibits diversity and inclusion, ethnic minorities, in this case, prefer to construct more lasting, relatable forms of belonging that stem from their shared experiences of status, including identities related to race, migration, and sexuality.

4.3.2 From Spectators to Organisers: Pride as a Platform for Leadership and Community Contribution

While almost all participants initially attended Pride Amsterdam as observers by walking along the canals and watching the canal parade, 8 out of 10 interviewees stated that they continued to participate several times. After the first experience, they felt a sense of excitement about participating more often. This finding aligns with previous research, which has identified that positive experiences at these festivals can encourage continued participation and foster a sense of belonging (Hahm et al., 2018, pp.3-4). Over time, several individuals transitioned into more active roles within the queer community. Two participants stated that they have volunteered at Pride Amsterdam and the Hague Pride. This transition from observer to organiser highlights how Pride not only influenced individuals on a personal level but also fostered a sense of awareness among East Asian queer migrants, enabling them to contribute to a better vision. For example, Joe, who previously volunteered at the Beijing LGBTQIA+ Center, initially participated in Amsterdam Pride as a spectator but later became involved in organizing an Asian Pride boat. She mentioned that she was referred by a friend to organise an Asian boat organised by "Out and Abroad" an Asian community, during Pride, as she recalled:

I went to Pride twice. The first time was the reason why I came to the Netherlands, when I

was an intern at the Beijing LGBTQIA+ Center, and then I met a group of very cool queer

friends at out and abroad. They were also relocated to the Netherlands before me during

the pandemic. So one of those people at the time, my friend, was a volunteer at Asian

Pride in the year 2023, and he encouraged me to buy a ferry ticket because he had a sales

target. And then, in 2024, my friend said, If you don't organise it, there will be no one to

do it, there will be no Asian pride, no boats this year, and no events. Then I decided to take

it; he encouraged the people around him to join him, So I was with him at the time to

prepare for this event, to recruit volunteers, and then, let's say, to fundraise, and then to

think, uh, what kind of activities can I participate, which venue can we use. (Interviewee

Joe, 2025)

Similarly, Yuli, who lives in the Hague with her girlfriend, created a safe space for
Chinese-speaking queer women recently, motivated by a desire to "give back", and the
motivation for this is to increase the connection and provide support for her fellow queer
Asian friends:

It's because I'm the people who get adventure from this community. Now that I have a

more stable life, I believe it's time for me to contribute to this community. So I think

that's the most encouraging thing: to make me voluntarily organise a party or an activity

for this community. (Interviewee Yuli, 2025)

These accounts illustrate that Pride was not simply an external celebration, but rather
part of these participants' journeys toward greater self-acceptance, which drove their actions.
These two narratives, from the organisers' perspectives, illustrate a broader pattern among
participants, where experiencing Pride's openness and inclusivity facilitates a deeper
engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community. They took on the role of proactively
contributing to the sustainability and expansion of visibility and well-being for East Asian
queer individuals within the Dutch Pride landscape rather than simply being attendees. This
shift toward active leadership delineates an emerging responsibility, solidarity, and
commitment to collective community bonding. Rather than remaining passive attendees, they
took the roles to proactively contributed to sustaining and expanding visibility and well-

beings for East Asian queer within the Dutch Pride landscape. This shift toward leadership and activism demonstrates an emerging responsibility, solidarity, and commitment to collective community bonding. This action can be elaborated in Tajfel's Social Identity Theory (2004, pp.267-287), in which individuals derive self-worth and identity from group membership. These individuals could affirm their identities and build new relationships and collective visibility by forming ethnic-specific LGBTQIA+ spaces and providing an emotionally safe and culturally welcoming context. Accordingly, these approaches strengthened ingroup attachment, enhancing self-esteem and collective Pride.

Furthermore, Joe and Yuli's proactive transition echoes with Bourdieu's (1986, pp.17-23) concept of social and cultural capital. He introduced social capital as the networks and connections that can offer individuals access to resources and support, while cultural capital is embedded in cultural knowledge, languages, and habits. In this case, organisers, represent strategic efforts to build and produce alternative forms of capital within their own community networks. They organise queer events and spaces by connecting individuals with similar backgrounds and minority identities to build community resources; this way, trust, mutual support, and networks are constructed for these disadvantaged social groups to sustain their well-being and achieve common solidarity. Their leadership leads to a form of recognition and legitimacy. It becomes a marker of credibility, positioning them as respected and crucial figures in the fight for the well-being of social minorities within diasporic social groups and the broader society.

In sum, these narratives demonstrate how Pride Amsterdam appeared not only as a moment of celebration but also as a means to facilitate progress and meaningful purpose in the intentions of some participants. This event thus became a milestone for some to become more aware of their social responsibility.

4.4 Theme 4: Prevalence of Racism over Homophobia in Liberal Dutch Society

As mentioned, Pride Amsterdam and Amsterdam itself is a symbol of diversity and inclusion. Nevertheless, almost all participants reported experiencing discrimination and marginalisation both in broader Dutch society and even within the queer community and during Pride events themselves. Participants described instances of racial discrimination, microaggression, and exclusion, highlighting the intersectional vulnerabilities of Eastern Asian and queer identity.

Most participants reported experiencing discrimination and discomfort in their daily lives in the Netherlands. The recurrent theme stemmed from almost all participants identifying that the discrimination was based on their ethnic identity rather than their sexual orientation. 8 out of 10 interviewees reported that they were frequently being approached inappropriately on the streets, such as name-calling being addressed by strangers in "Nihao" or "Konnichiwa", these phrases originally meant greetings in Asian languages, with ambiguous intent, collapsed diverse Asian identities into a single stereotype with disrespect, my participants perceive it is particularly related with their Asian appearance. All the female interviewees recalled more frequent name-calling on the street, whether in Chinatown or in general. In contrast, male interviewees stated that there seem to be fewer offensive cases due to their physical appearance. Mico, a Chinese law student, recounted her confusion and embarrassment when people called her 'Nihao' in her daily life:

Every time I hear someone say 'Nihao' to me, I can't tell whether they are friendly or unfriendly because when they speak Chinese, their tone is very strange. You don't know whether they are deliberately strange or if they are friendly. But every time I am embarrassed, I can only pretend I don't understand. Especially because I think even if you really want to say hello to me, when you see an Asian face, you think it's Chinese. I think it's a bit discriminatory for Chinese, Japanese, Koreans and other ethnic groups in Asia. So every time they say hello to me, I pretend that I don't understand. Especially once, when I was in the KFC store, I was waiting for my dinner. Then, because there were so few people, the meal was very fast. I didn't pay attention to the message at that time. Then I suddenly realized that my meal was ready. After I went to pick up the meal, I was ready to go out. As a result, I heard the two clerks in the back saying 'Nihao,' but I was about to leave anyway, and I pushed the door open, and I thought, Forget it. (Interviewee Mico, 2025)

Xixi, who moved in the Netherlands for two years had similar experiences, and noted how she react to this harassment, linking these behaviours to generalised racism against Asians rather than her queer identity:

I would say most of the time it's just because you are like Asian people, it's not about your sexual orientation, because I had two experiences about this discrimination, I just happened on the street, so basically it's like some, I don't want to point out, but it's like someone from Turkey or Morocco, like teenagers, they just ride with their bicycle and just, you use the like Tinchon words to like Chinese people or something like that. Yeah, I'm just using some curse words, just find it back. But anyways, that's my experience of discrimination. (Interviewee Xixi, 2025)

As Thomas recalled that time when he encountered this unpleasant experience where he heard children chanting racist words, and he ended up confused and uncomfortable, he stated:

I did have this kind of experience, for sure. And I think I remember being in a football court. And they just say, "I hear some kids saying some Chin Chang Chung, that kind of stuff." And I'm not sure what they're referring to me, but I just hear them saying this stuff, and they just left, and I felt quite uncomfortable back then. (Interviewee Thomas, 2025)

The most appalling case was from Jason, who shared his traumatic experience at the Pride march day within Pride Amsterdam when he was physically attacked by a group of teenagers at Dam Square. He elaborated on his narrative:

This happened not during the pride parade itself during the pride events I was right outside the damn square with my friends where the main stage, I get attacked by a group of teenagers while the police will stand right next to me with like one meter they witness everything. And I literally got a physical attack from lots of teenagers, but the police didn't do anything, and then the teenagers ran away. When I went to the police, they refused to communicate with me; instead, they communicated with my Dutch friends who speak Dutch. Still, I checked the police spoke perfect English, yeah and also this happened not to me alone, so the same group teenagers attacked another queer American couple on the side, it's horrible experience in a way. Hence, it also shows how ignoring the police in the case of a pride event right next to the big, big stage. They were not doing

anything, and on top of this. I will also categorize it as part of racism, uh, in fact, as they were not willing to communicate with the victim themselves, but rather with a white, straight Dutch person, who is my friend. It ruined my mood for sure. (Interviewee Jason, 2025)

Jason's experience highlights the problem in society, which exhibits not only interpersonal racism but also structural indifference and institutional failure to protect marginalised individuals. Jason's case resonates with Jamy's criticism of the performative nature of institutional involvement in canal parades; he particularly emphasised his remark about the police boat during the canal parade and expressed his opinion towards the superficial inclusion of these spectacle events.

He criticised the presence of police boats participating in the canal parade and the contrast of historical oppression of law enforcement towards queer community, citing the historical tensions between law enforcement and queer communities, particularly towards racialized groups. For some, the sight of police boats felt not empowering but alienating:

I just cannot stand in the cops partying in the Pride. That is the authority that 30 years ago was against queer people not only in America but also in the Netherlands; how dare they could join our Pride to celebrate?! It's so rude, it's so offensive. (Interviewee Jamy, April 2025)

He then shared his incidence of being racist within a queer volleyball club:

I joined a queer volleyball club in Rotterdam. Like two or three months ago, during a training, I was shouted at by a Brazilian gay man, he yelled at me, Go back to China. And no one stood out for me. It hurt me in that way. I couldn't imagine myself suffering such things in a queer volleyball team. For me, queer is all about inclusive. It's all about peace and love. It's about the minority suffering in the heterosexual patriarchal community. (Interviewee Jamy, 2025)

This evidence highlights that Pride offers temporary spaces for liberation. At the same time, even during this event and in queer-specific places, there is a broader societal structure of racism and exclusion embedded in the society and individuals towards Eastern Asian queers, challenging the notion of Pride as a safe, inclusive, open-minded space. This finding

thus corresponds to the qualitative research with young gay migrants in the Netherlands from Patterson & Leurs (2019), which concluded that the Dutch LGBTQIA+ is conditionally gay-friendly. Non-white, racialised queer migrants are experiencing unique distress and pressure brought by known as a liberal society.

Furthermore, these personal narratives correspond strongly to the empirical data from the recent report regarding Asian migrants who faced racism in the Netherlands in 2024,, including various microaggressions or discrimination. This study shows that almost all the Asian participants have been mistreated inappropriately in their daily lives, which is not an isolated case but a broader societal pattern. This inconsistency between the praised utopian Pride and the society illustrated by Jason's experience of police indifference, which reflects structural racism embedded in Dutch society and institutions, reveals that there is systemic exclusion, with institutional actors such as the policeman, reproducing anti-Asian or migrant discrimination, under the guise of tolerance and liberalism. As this report revealed (Feddes et al., 2024), people who encounter most frequently take the form of name-calling on the street, the anti-Asian sentiment became harsher during and after COVID-19. As Jason shared in correspondence with this finding:

A lot of racist slurs come towards me, not a lot, that was, I would say it's not very often, but it happens a lot considering I've been living here for seven years. It happens during COVID. It was awful. But I experienced it before COVID and probably more after it.

(Interviewee Jason, 2025)

He also points out how he would defend himself in these kinds of situations because he perceived himself as physically sufficient to address any follow-up aggressive act: "it's because I'm not afraid of it because I do boxing as well, so I know how to fight back, I'm strong enough to encounter any follow-up situation".

Unlike Jason, Alex noted how uncomfortable she felt rather than taking any action: "I had just finished dinner with my friends and went out for a walk. Then a man came over and said Nihao. Suddenly, I was very annoyed and uncomfortable that I didn't know what he wanted."

Theoretically, this experience can be explained through the lens of intersectionality, as proposed by Crenshaw (1991, 1242). She contends that individuals face various forms of marginalisation and distress based on their multi-layered identities, in this case, being both queer and Eastern Asian, bringing them unique forms of discrimination in both the society

and even queer-friendly space in the Netherlands. Yet, sometimes, gender further engages how this marginalisation is delivered, specifically, being female, adding an extra layer of vulnerability in this case. specifically, being female, adding an extra layer of vulnerability in this case. For instance, among the interviewees, female participants reported more frequent experiences of racial microaggressions such as name-calling on the street, while due to their physical vulnerability, they often avoid confrontation, choosing instead to ignore this situation while experiencing emotional distress and discomfort. Conversely, male participants, such as Jason and Thomas noted fewer public verbal assaults but instead described deeper discomfort linked to discrimination and institutional exclusion, including physical attacks. and masculine appearance resulted in him never having name-calling on the street in the Netherlands, demonstrating how embodied appearances intersect with gender and racial dynamics. These narratives reflected that society perpetuates racism even more explicitly and more severely than sexism against Asian ethnic minority groups. Furthermore, most of my interviewees highlighted that, from their experiences, racism was more prevalent than homophobia. This finding thus contradicts the ideology of positioning the Netherlands as a progressive and tolerant society.

This complexity is illustrated in Fay's story; he often wears makeup, which presents a more feminine expression. He recounted his experience of encountering discrimination:

> Most of the time, I wear makeup, and I look quite feminine, which may confuse people or
>
> catch people's attention. now I have to say that I have met more discrimination,
>
> honestly. I'm not sure if its against my Asian face or my LGBTQ. Yeah, or maybe both. I
>
> think I can feel that it gets more and more. (Interviewee Fay, 2025)

In Fay's narrative, race, gender expression, and sexuality are compounded layers of someone's identity. From the lens of Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (1999, pp. x-xii), his experience confirms that gender is not an innate and stable identity but constant, repetitive, and performative acts conforming to social expectations. In this case, Fay challenges binary thinking; he demonstrates an act of gender nonconformity, as gender is not fixed but can be reimaged. Nonetheless, when individuals like Fay deviate from normative gender norms, for instance, appearing more transgender or racialised individuals, those "who do not qualify as recognisable, readable" (p. xiii), they experience more vulnerability precarity, drawing public scrutiny and hostility in life. Furthermore Fay's encounter reflected prior research on the Dutch gay scene, which suggests that the perceived acceptance and

normalisation of homosexuality are often superficial. Although queer identity is tolerated and same-sex marriage is legalised, the public still implicitly and explicitly demands to remain invisible and silent about queerness. For instance, gay men should not exhibit femininity, as this way challenges their underlying normality of heterosexuality and ideals of masculinity (Hekma & Duyvendak, 2011, pp.626-627).

5. Discussion

This study examined how Eastern Asian queer individuals navigate their intersectional identities in relation to attending Pride Amsterdam and living the Dutch society in a broader context. The findings reflect a complex perspective where the moments of empowerment with conditional inclusion relate to their layered identities in racial, sexual, and gender terms. This chapter critically elaborates on the interviewees' narratives and their extended implications, drawing on key theoretical perspectives.

5.1 The Paradox of Inclusion and Exclusion Within Pride and the Society

Although Pride Amsterdam has been promoted and understood as a celebration where inclusivity, diversity, and emancipation of the LGBTQIA+ community exist, nevertheless aligning with Yuval-Davis's (2006) notion of emotional belonging, as interviewees recounted the experience of creating a temporary utopian and inclusive arena, the realities often diverge from the goal in the festivals and the Dutch society. This study further affirms this paradoxical phenomenon and reveals a more nuanced and ambivalent reality: inclusivity during Pride is conditional and temporary. Taking the focus on Eastern Asian queer, in this case, experience a tension in feeling both empowerment and alienation at the same time during this extravagant event. The interviewees recounted pride provides emotional affirmation as a moment of temporary emancipation, particularly compared to their home of origins, validating it as a profound contrast with the suppression in many East Asian societies. In Amsterdam, Pride events allowed individuals to witness and express their queerness, thanks to the Netherlands' legal and cultural support.

Nevertheless, this liberation accounted as ephemeral and conditional; these migrant queer participants validated a friendly and festive atmosphere in relation to their sexual identity. However, racial identity remained underrepresented or stereotyped. Some participants remarked on the lack of Asian visibility, both on Pride boats and in broader scenes. The celebration appeared to be white and Western-dominated, revealing a gap between symbolic inclusion and actual representation. This misalignment thus supports what Yuval-Davis's (2006) notion about belonging that is related to embedded emotions more than embodied social inclusion. People with limited shared experiences, values, and languages often feel restricted from feeling a sense of belonging and acceptance within a community or society.

These findings thus challenge the prevalent image of Pride as an unproblematic celebration of diversity, highlighting that visibility without cultural resonance can reproduce exclusion. Although Pride was widely perceived as empowering and liberating, many participants described it as "too white" and too commercialised, including all the corporate boats and police boats, making this event more performative rather than transformative, witnessing limited Asian representation and symbolic gestures. Sara Ahmed's (2007) phenomenology of whiteness helps to explain this discomfort. Along with Pride, the spatial and cultural dominance of whiteness in Pride, as Ahmed argues that non-white Eastern Asian individuals are in a hypervisible role as "other." The Participants' comments, such as "Pride feels so white" and "I didn't feel like I belonged there," make them not included intrinsically in the scene, delineating that the white-dominated imagery and limited Asian representation, regardless of the way of attending Pride, underscoring this symbolic exclusion. These exclusive feelings are not incidental but rather reflect how emotions "stick" to racialised bodies internally through social and historical repetition (Ahmed, 2004, pp. 11–13). Therefore, this challenges the prevailing narrative of Pride as an unequivocally inclusive celebration.

This study reveals that there is a persistence of systemic racism embedded in Dutch society, both at an interpersonal level and at an institutional level. Participants frequently reported that the recognition they received as queer subjects was undermined by racism. Eastern Asian queer as part of Queer people of colour (LGBTQ-POC), falling within a role of duality, with both ethnic minority and the role bearing their sexuality (Ghabrial, 2017, p.50). In this context, narratives were shared by Asian queer migrants who experience racial discrimination within and beyond queer spaces, illustrating systemic racial discrimination and exclusion within the LGBTQIA+ communities and in the broader Dutch society. These experiences reflect what Cheng (2011) coined "metaphorical homelessness," where queer Asians face simultaneous exclusion from white LGBTQIA+ spaces.

These participants' narratives also reflect how structural exclusion, mostly racial aspects, extends beyond Pride into wider Dutch society. Beyond Pride, this study reveals a conditional inclusion in the wider society. Some participants, such as Jason and Jamy, recounted institutional inaction and racialised hierarchies within queer communities themselves. These personal experiences of my participants, therefore, confirm Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality theory that there is a compound layer of identities which includes race, sexual orientation, gender, and migration intersecting to create a specific precarious condition for them as social minorities in a white, Western context. Similarly, drawing on

Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital, the queer migrants accumulate limited cultural, social, and symbolic capital, exemplifying in insufficient language skills, different of cultural dispositions, restricted their full participation in queer Dutch society. Moreover, this study provides a nuanced understanding of Dutch inclusivity towards queer individuals, revealing that even though Dutch society is often perceived as progressive and welcoming, this inclusivity still exhibits societal hierarchies that privilege dominant identities, and social minorities often feel marginalised. The inclusivity in Dutch society often masks persistent racial hierarchies that privilege individuals with white, cisgender, and Dutch identities. The inclusivity in Dutch society usually disguises persistent racial hierarchies that privilege individuals with white, cisgender, and Dutch identities. This corresponds to what Ong et al. (2021) coined in Social Dominance Theory (SDT), that inclusion often sustains existing hierarchies and privileges dominant groups, particularly in LGBTQIA+ organisations; exclusivity can be overlooked and reproduce dominant hierarchies under the guise of diversity advocacy. In this context, Legal equality, protection, and symbolic gestures do not directly translate into affective belonging. Echoing Ghabrial's (2017, p.43) findings that society often reproduces structural exclusion through microaggression and discrimination, such as overlooking racialised queers and name-calling, even in today's gradual political correctness context.

5.2 Migration and Marginalisation of "Model Minority"

Furthermore, this finding challenges the context of Asian migrants often being stereotyped as the "model minority" or "non-problematic", who usually have stable social status and decent education and occupations ((Kartosen & Tan, 2013, Wong et al., 1998), this external misperception, shared not only by whites but also by other minority groups, and even internalised and evidenced by Asian migrants. Because they either fit the academically successful status and often claim they prefer no confrontation, or some perceptions related to emotions "stick" to their racialised bodies internally (Ahmed, 2004, p. 11). However, as some participants reflected, they are culturally invisible in Dutch LGBTQIA+ narratives. Their struggles are often overlooked in society and academia, as they are not causing any trouble. Combining with the perceived stereotypes such as Asian migrants are shy and hard to build friendship with other social groups (Zhang, 2010, p.22), brought up the question of how these Eastern Asian queers may be caught between expectations of silence and compliance and the

Pride context that encourages visibility and resistance, leading to a prolonged low sense of belonging with the Dutch society and interpersonal connections.

As this study investigated the target group who had migrant status, it was natural to compare how they perceived and behaved before and after coming to the Netherlands and Pride Amsterdam. From this study, Eastern Asian countries are not a homogeneous group of countries or cultures. As Hofstede's concept of cultural dimensions is analysed, each country has its specific cultural dimensions, as demonstrated by the majority population (Hofstede, 1983). Therefore, participants from different regions react differently. All of the Chinese participants reported a systemic, implicit, and explicit exclusion of queer culture in the society. However, big metropolitans were comparatively more welcoming, with relatively more events, initiatives, and space existing, even though compared to the openness and progressiveness of Pride Amsterdam, it was more reserved in the Chinese queer activism, in recent years, the society has shown a dramatically increasingly closed-up. These forms of repression synthesise authoritarian governance, together with "Asian values", or Confucian norms to legitimise anti-LGBTQIA+ policies (Cheo, 2014). Moreover, for Malaysian, due to their religious context in society, it was seen as a more direct distress and repression of freedom as queer individuals, which results in a more contrast of liberation for Malaysian.

In comparison, Taiwan, not too far from China, illustrates a much more progressive and inclusive social norm, with Gay pride having been implemented for longer than a decade and same-sex marriage having been legalised for several years. Thus, the difference between Pride Amsterdam and Taiwan shows a small gap for Taiwanese. The progressive phenomenon of Taiwan's queer rights is also tied to its international positioning, as it seeks recognition in contrast to China by aligning with global human rights norms (Cheo, 2014). Besides this, the findings further suggest that even for participants from an inclusive origin, relocating to another inclusive and diverse society still encountered subtle exclusions, structural barriers, and linguistic challenges.

This study adds the understanding that Dutch society was not devoid of racism. However, it is generally perceived as a relatively safe and liberal space for queer individuals to live and express themselves. For some migrants, Pride Amsterdam symbolised a temporary universal and public freedom, comparing to what they faced in their home countries, contrasting sharply with the institutional repression and social judgment. However, the experience is not only varied in the Dutch context, where they feel a sense of inclusion but also encounter exclusion; furthermore, while perceiving the general acceptance in the Dutch society, intensified their awareness of cultural and emotional dissonance, remaining silent

and be closeted to family, and seeing their activist efforts erased by authoritarian policies back home in line with what Wei & Liu researched in China (2019, pp. 5-21). In this case, Migration becomes a strategy of identity negotiation and survival rather than simple relocation. In line with Lee's (1966) migration theory, the push and pull factors were obvious, as Dutch society is considered more progressive and inclusive than most of the participant's home countries of origin. Nevertheless, migrant's identities are tied to many aspects; they continuously negotiate and navigate their perceptions and positions along their displacement. This transnational migration and comparison supports Hall's (1996) notion that cultural identity is not a fixed but a continuously negotiated process, shaped not only by one's origin but also by movement and encounters.

5.3 Policy Implications and Future Suggestions

Based on the findings and the previous discussion section of the current phenomenon relating to the unequal experiences of Eastern Asian queer migrants in the Netherlands. This study thus emphasises the necessity to expand performative and symbolic inclusion into a more nuanced, layered level within both Pride events and the broader Dutch society. Drawing on Judith Butler's (1999) theory of gender performativity, she argues that varied gender performances are not equally validated within dominant social and cultural frameworks. Butler highlights that gender is a performance through repeated acts that are constituted through repeated acts based on socially normative scripts, shaped by race, class, and sexuality. Therefore, even in queer space, certain performances of queerness are more accepted and celebrated, not all performances of queerness are equally valued. These typically align with dominant expectations: white, cisgender, masculine-presenting gay men are more visible and accepted in society. In contrast, non-normative performances, encompassing gender-nonconforming East Asian individuals, such as Fay, who publicly showed his feminine traits in public, this behaviour disrupt these hegemonic expectations and thus face increased discrimination under hypervisibility. Thus, it adds an understanding to Crenshaw's (1991) intersectionality of how race and performed gender intersect bring additional vulnerability or acceptability under the structural discrimination.

That is, even though the Dutch government and Pride itself advocate for inclusion and diversity, the reality clashes; only individuals with local, white, preferably gay men have the most privileged access to this equality and progressiveness. Other queer individuals who bare the identity as migrants or females still experience structural discrimination in society and

face relatively more direct and indirect discrimination in both their daily life and even during Pride. Therefore, this thesis advocates that initiatives in queer spaces should consider aspects beyond sexuality to explicitly address issues of race, ethnicity, migration, and gender. It is suggested that ethnic or migrant-oriented queer organisations should have easier access and collaboration with the official Pride organisers. Possibilities such as institutional fundings, co-production, discounts on boat rental, and assisting in publicise these migrant-led queer organisations (NGOs) on their page to foster a meaningful representation of the migrant-led queer not only in Pride but also in the society.

Thus, the Dutch government and institutions should advocate and implement anti-racism education within queer networks to increase the representation of LGBTQ-POC in the white-dominated environment. Ultimately, Pride Amsterdam can gradually evolve into a transformative space where the temporary emancipation and liberation reflect the actual society, demonstrating not only celebration but also authentic solidarity, embracing queer lives in a holistic perspective that includes race, ethnicity, and other intersecting identities.

6. Conclusion

This thesis set out exploration on participation in Pride Amsterdam potentially shape the Eastern Asian queer migrants in their sense of community belonging and self-perceptions in the Netherlands. Investigated in the multifaceted marginalised experiences of Eastern Asian queer individuals as an social minority group within the Pride itself and to the extended broader society. The central research question for this paper is: *"How does participating in Amsterdam Gay Pride influence Eastern Asian queer individuals?"* self-perception and sense of community belonging in the Netherlands?" , this was explored through two sub questions:

1. How do Eastern Asian queer individuals experience Amsterdam Gay Pride?

2. In what ways does participation in Amsterdam Gay Pride change their self-perception and community belongingness?

This paper primarily employed in-depth qualitative research through the lens of intersectionality theory from Crenshaw (1991), gender performativity (Butler, 1999), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 2004), cultural identity theory (Hall, 1996), Ahmed's (2007) theory of "phenomenology of whiteness,", Yuval-Davis's (2006) emotional belonging and Bourdieu's (1986) theory of capital. Eventually, ten semi-structured interviews were conducted, and four main themes and sub-themes emerged: (1)self-perception transformation and validation, (2) navigating the complexities of community belonging, (3) response to commercialisation and symbolic inclusion, (4) the paradox of queer inclusion and racial discrimination in liberal Dutch society.

Based on all interviews, this study has identified that Eastern Asian queer migrants engage with Pride Amsterdam in varied ways and times, ranging from parade observers to boat organisers. The majority of the participants participated more than one time, their modes of participation differed: some walked along the shore, others joined company boats or volunteered as organisers. Regardless of their approaches, the Pride canal parade served as a temporary empowerment and normalisation of queer identity for my participants. They perceived the pride as a utopian space to offer a celebratory, emancipatory arena which enable everyone to express their identity and sexuality, validating that this event became a milestone in their trajectory of self-expression, acceptance and integration, providing them opportunities to expressively experiment with performativity as Butler (1999) mentioned, and rearticulate their social and cultural identities in a different context.

Furthermore, my interviewees, as social minority individuals, described the sense of belonging and connections are partial and context dependent during the Pride. On the one

hand, some of them, recalled sense of connection and solidarity with the broader queer community. On the other hand, many of them highlighted the white and western-centric nature of the festival, demonstrating the experience of exclusive and invisibility as Eastern Asian queers. This reflects Ahmed's (2007) theory of "phenomenology of whiteness," which theory the "whiteness" structures shapes who feels "at home" and the others remains outsider even in a supposed safe spaces. This observation during pride further reflected to the broader societal context, where these participants constantly experienced racial discrimination in their daily life in the Netherlands. Crenshaw's (1991) notion of intersectionality helps articulate these distress experiences as structurally and systemically embedded rather than purely interpersonal. This misconduct targeting towards Asian, queer individuals varied from street harassment, microaggressions, and even physical assaults and institutional ignorance. Participants' marginalisation was shaped by the interaction of sexuality, race and gender. For instance, female participants reported more vulnerability in the Dutch society, suggesting that gender further compounds this exclusion. Additionally, within these unpleasant experiences, through the lens of Ahmed's notion of emotional stickiness (2014, p.11), explains how Asian queer individuals stick to certain emotional responses to their racialised identity and often internalised as an outsider in a white-dominated context, reinforcing cycle of marginalisation in the society.

Moreover, I was curious about how participating in Pride Amsterdam could potentially influence this social minority group's behaviour regarding community belonging, as shown that this event has inspired most of these individuals to engage in deeper community involvement. For instance, some has attended multiple LGBTQIA+ events not limited in Pride festivals, but also such as lectures and networking, some volunteered to organise Asian queer specific initiatives during Pride, some with higher sense of responsibility taking a progressive act contribute to create a culturally specific inclusive and safe space outside of Pride for fellow marginalised Eastern Asian queer personnels. These actions can be comprehended in Bourdieu's (1986) social capital theory, where Pride can stimulate the accumulation and circulation of social capital, while it also frame an invisible line of social alienation due to multicultural incompatibility. In this case, some participants distanced themselves from broader community formations due to feelings of incompatable socially and culturally.

This study contributes to multiple existing theoretical literatures. First, it expands the research on queer migration and diaspora studies, with a specific focus on Eastern Asian as a social minority group in the Netherlands, which was often underrepresented or overlooked in

both queer and migrant studies in the Dutch context. Secondly, it adds nuanced understandings of public queer events such as Pride hold a complexed identity, can leads to internalised emancipation and marginalisation, these findings highlight the need to critically re-examine the inclusivity of white-dominated queer spaces, particularly in Western Europe.

Moreover, the study offers practical insights in social aspect for policy makers, event organisers, and LGBTQIA+organisations. This study calls for a more comprehensive understanding for the complexity nature of ethnic minority queer's life. It advocates for a more structurally inclusive and culturally sensitive approach to queer space-making in the Netherlands. Pride should not only present as celebration particularly for the dominant groups, it must also be a space for critical reflection, resistance, and transformation, especially for racialised minorities and migrant queer communities. In this way, it aims to build a more accessible spaces which is beyond tokenistic inclusion to foster long-term emotional and social belonging.

6.1 Limitations

This paper aimed to gather comprehensive and representative insights from the appropriate participants within the research period. Nonetheless, several limitations have still been acknowledged. One of the notable limitations is that the sample consisted primarily of Chinese participants, although they are from various provinces spread across mainland China, bringing valuable localised and varied perspectives. However, there is less representation of other East Asian nationalities in this study. Secondly, most of the interviewees do not show an so-called extravagant or visibly non-normative sexual expression in their daily lives. Accordingly, their experiences may not fully represent the heightened vulnerability faced by more visibly gender-nonconforming or transgender individuals in the society. Thirdly, due to my networks, and through snowball sampling, leading all the eastern Asian migrants in this study contains high education credentials, varied from bachelor's degree to PhD candidates, leading the result that fit the "unproblematic" "well-integrated" stereotypes. Consequently, this research does not recruit the narrative of lower-educated, blue-collar groups Eastern Asian queer individuals, who may face different, compounded forms of exclusion.

For future research, this study advises recruiting a more diverse sample of nationalities from other eastern Asian countries to discover more possible intra-Asian differences. Furthermore, since all the interviewees in this study were identified as lesbian, gay, queer, it is recommended to recruit more sexual minority individuals such as trans,

asexual, etc. secondly, to a chieve a more diverse samples in representing of LGBTQIA+ groups. Thirdly, it would also achieve more nuanced understanding if recruiting methods could alter to recruit samples rather than from researcher's network but do a field study in a queer bar or the pride event, this might increase the possibilities to select interviewees from more diverse backgrounds with various education, occupations and living conditions, therefore, individuals from various classes could providing different insights. Methodologic wise, there is also a limitation by conducting semi-structured interviews, this might be behaviour differs or forgot to articulate during the interviews. As identities are formed in interactions, incorporating participant observation (Angrosino, 2007) during Pride or other queer public events, could provid deeper insight and dynamics into the embodied queer belonging. Additionally, it is also recommended to conduct a longitudinal study to monitor and observe how experiences evolve over time with these Eastern Asian queer migrant's sense of belonging and self-perceptions with continuously integration to Dutch society. Lastly, future studies can consider how different cultural, political, and religious context creates intra-Asian diversity to shape their trajectory of navigating in a Western context.

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Appendix A

Overview of the interviewees (anonymous)

Interviewee	Self-identified	Gender	Nationality	age	Education level
1 Alex	Lesbian	F	Chinese	28	Master student
2 Mico	Non-binary/ lesbian	F	Chinese	27	Master's degree
3 Xixi	lesbian	F	Chinese	28	Phd candidate
4 Yuli	lesbian	F	Chinese	28	Master's degree
5 Fay	Gay	M	Chinese	27	Master's degree
6 Jamy	Gay	M	Chinese	27	Master's degree
7 Chi	Lesbian	F	Malaysian	29	Master's degree
8 Joe	Non-binary/ lesbian	F	Chinese	31	Master's degree
9 Thomas	Gay	M	Taiwanese	32	Master's degree
10 Jason	Gay	M	Chinese	32	Master's degree

Appendix B Interview Guide

Interview guide

*How does experiencing pride Amsterdam influence Eastern Asian queer individuals'
self-perception and community belonging in the Netherlands?*

Section 1: Background and Personal Identity

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself? (e.g., age, ethnicity, married?
    , job,and how long you've been in the Netherlands.)
2. How do you identify yourself in terms of your sexual orientation and gender identity?
    (e.g., queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, non-binary, etc.)

Section 2: Experiences at Amsterdam Pride

3. How many times have you attended Amsterdam Pride?
4. What motivated you to participate in Amsterdam Pride?
5. Can you describe your experience at Amsterdam Pride? (e.g., how you participated,
    what activities you engaged in, and who you attended with，what were u wearing)
6. What were the interactions with other people, staff, artists etc. and with other Asian
    people?

Section 3: Intersectionality and Marginalisation

7. Have you experienced any form of discrimination or stereotyping, or microaggression
    in the Netherlands (related to your race, gender)?
8. How did you take from it?
9. specically sexual orientation, (considering your appearance)?
10. **how close are you feeling within Dutch lgbtqia+ and Asian lgbtqia+ community?**
11. Have you engaged with any Asian queer community or initiatives, and why?
12. how does it feel being Asian in queer community. Does it bring any kind of
    challenges or specificity? (in the Netherlands)

Section 4: Self-Perception and Identity

13. in regards of freedom to express your identity, how was it at the festival? Is there any difference from other spaces or queer spaces you've been before?

14. Did participating in Pride Amsterdam somehow influenced the way you perceive or express yourself as a queer person?

15. How is the acceptance of your upbringing cultural regarding your queer culture (family, society)? Can you elaborate it?

Section 5: Sense of belonging and Community Engagement

16. **(Identification of the identity)** How do you see the Asian (queer) identity when you were in the Amsterdam Pride?

17. **(Feeling of inclusion, safe, personal narratives)** As an Asian queer, what does "inclusion" mean to you? Was there a moment that you felt being accepted or included during the Pride? Elaborate why. (eg. you can say what you want to say, show your identity)

18. **(Feeling of connection, personal narratives)** As an Asian queer, what does "connection" mean to you? Was there a moment that you felt connected during the Pride? Elaborate why. (eg. formed any new friendships or support networks)

19. Were there any moments during the festival stood out to you either positively or negatively?

20. Do you think participating in Amsterdam Pride somehow influenced how you would do things differently in the future? (regarding to your identity)

21. Do you know Amsterdam pride last normally a week with various cultural events? If no, does this change your perception towards it?

22. Do you plan to participate in future LGBTQIA+ events, (not necessarily big event) Amsterdam pride?

23. What is your impression from the LGBTQIA+ events in the NL ?

Closing :

24. Is there anything else you'd like to share about your experience as an Eastern Asian queer individual in the Netherlands?

Appendix C The codebook

Theme	Subtheme	Codes	Description code	Description
Self-perception Transformation and Validation Through Pride Participation	Pride as Empowerment and Confidence / Liberation	Bodily empowerment through queerness	Participants felt empowered to express their sexual identities physically, without fear or shame.	Interviewees described how they felt liberated and more confident, emotionally and physically able to recognise their queer identity through expressive participation at Pride
		Expressions in Pride	Visibility at pride offers participants affirmation.	
		Observing visibility and safe space at Pride	Participants feeling sense of safety where their identity are accepted in public expression.	
		Emancipation feelings	Feeling of liberation and emancipation from heteronormative sociatal and cultural expecation.	
		expressive behaviour in Pride	Participants dressed flamboyant, expressive actions during Pride, contrasting to their typical behaviour in daily life.	
		Positive opinion on corporate boats experience	Corporate envolvment as a way to support personal expression, increased visibility and lgbtqia+ culture	
		Sense of safety in public queerness	Participants felt protected and safe during Pride as a public space	
		Festive energy in pride	Utopian, festival atmosphere at pride offers sense of joy	
	Contrast with repression in home countries	Chinese authorities suppression	increasing closeup, and censorship and suppression of LGBTQIA+ spaces and culture in China.	Especially in contrast with relatively repression and censorship in

Theme	Subtheme	Code	Description	Interpretation
		Malaysian religious repression	Islamic religious culture and institutional repression that constraining queer individuals.	home countries comparing with Legal and cultural support in the Netherlands
		discomfort in home countries' public space	Public expressions of queerness in home countries were with hostile and stigmatised.	
	Pride as Temporary Normalisation of Queer Identity	Feeling normal about being queer	Pride enables people to feel normal about their queerness	Pride in Dutch context offers temporary and conditional social acceptance of queer identity. Participants embrace more self-acceptance compare during and after Pride.
		Observing queer elements and expression in Pride	Observation of queer elements encouraged reflection and acceptance.	
		Opinions able to express queer identity after pride	Pride provides participants confidence boosts to be more open about their identity within and beyond the event.	
		Gaining support specifically on Canal Parade day, not in daily life	Supportive and inclusive experiences were limited to the pride parade day, it does not lasting in other days.	
		Amsterdam as conditional inclusive space to western/white identity	The misalignments between legal protection and how the society works with persistent social exclusion.	
		Transformation to accept own queerness	Participants accept their queer identity more fully compared to what they were before after attending Pride	
Navigating the Complexities of Community Belongingness	Emotional Belonging and Recognition	Feeling sense of belonging and accepted at pride	Participants felt emotionally connected and accepted to be part of a LGBTQIA+ community during Pride.	Pride creates a collective emotional bonding and sense of connection, particularly

		Suppression examples in home country reinforced the belongingness	A contrast with home country's systemic suppression reinforced the belongingness.	compares to their home town
		Limited family acceptance in Eastern Asian context	Many Asian queers who mostly accept their own identities, they struggles to coming out to be open with their family, as they live in a society with low acceptance as norm. however, they can feel relatively more supports in the Netherlands.	
		Validation from institutional and structural support in the Netherlands	Structural recognition and legal protection in the Netherlands affirmed their identity and queer life.	
	Ambivalent Belonging in Predominantly White Queer Context	feeling unable to communicate with white/western individuals	cultural differences became barriers that obstruct interactions and communications with Dutch or western LGBTQIA+ individuals.	Participants felt racially marginalised within predominantly white queer spaces, indicating conditional inclusivity in Dutch society and lack of deep belonging. The inclusivity is towards white/western identities.
		self-affirming to be different and not belong	Participants perceived themselves as different in white-dominated spaces.	
		sense of exclusion due to lack of language skills and cultural disresonance	Different cultural communication styles and language barrier perpetuate sense of exclusion and alienation	
	Pinkwashing and Performative Symbolic Inclusion	criticism to commercialisation and entertainments	Criticising commercialisation and entertaining trends in Pride rather than political and progressive statement.	Participants critiqued the corporate and entertainment-focused nature of Pride, contrasting it

		critical observation of company's intention to join pride	the motivation and sincerity of corporate participation in pride was questioned, many joined as a way of marketing.	with more authentic grassroots community initiatives.
		criticism to police boats presence	The presence of police boats was criticised as performative and inappropriate, causing some participants discomfort.	
		Contrasting low budget grassroots and wealth corporate	Participants valued grassroots, community-led initiatives with limited budgets, whereas corporates participation are often well-funded.	
	Constraints of Social Capital and the Limits of Pride as a Community Building	Cultural alienation in queer events	Feeling discomfort and disconnected in public queer space within white dominated context.	Interviewees noted difficulty building authentic connections and integration with white queer individuals, lack of language proficiency and cultural unfamiliarity to Dutch society.
		Criticism to queer events, feeling not included in cultural misalignments	Participants feel queer events here are white culture oriented, challenged to connect.	
		Unable to connect with white queers due to social and cultural differences	The sense of disconnection is shaped by implicitly social and cultural expectations and dispositions	
		difficulty in forming lasting bonds, staying in own ethnic groups	Participants recognise the difficulty to maintain a lasting friendship with others who met in Pride, they prefer to stay in ethnic-specific communities and groups.	
Grassroots Leadership and Diasporic	Formation of Ethnic-	Try to find deeper emotional connections	Interviewees tried to find more cultural resonated connections	Participants sought authentic

Community Building	Specific Queer Communities		with communities outside of Pride	emotional connection within communities that has shareed cultural, racial, backgrounds and language familiarity. Some joined or founded queer Asian groups
		try to form cultural resonated communty	Some participants volunteered in Asian ethnic specific initiatives and communities to increase the visibility for Asian queers.	
		prefer to connect with Asian queer with sense of understanding	When language and culture are affiliated, it is easier to connect and have sense of understand with other East Asian queers.	
	From Spectators to Organisers: Pride as a Platform for Leadership and Community Contribution	Creation of grassroots queer Asian spaces	Some participants founded grassroots Asian queer to provide a safer, with similar values and culture space for fellow eastern Asian queers.	Some participants pursued culturally resonant community, taking responsibilities and leadership skills to building efforts outside Pride structures for solidarity.
		saught work or volunteer for Asian groups	Some participants founded grassroots Asian queer to provide a safer, with similar values and culture space for fellow eastern Asian queers.	
		Sense of responsibility to build a safer space for asian queers	These participants feel sense of responsibility to create a more inclusive space after gaining sufficient social and cultural capital in the Netherlands.	
Prevalence of Racism over Homophobia in Liberal Dutch Society		discrimination in daily life	Racism were reported frequently from 9 out of 10 interviewees	Interviewees noted that racial discrimination was more prominent than homophobia in
		microaggression, name-calling,	Public spaces, name-calling and verbal insult were most frequent as microaggression.	

		verbal harassment on the streets	On the streets, name-calling and verbal insult were most frequent as microaggression.	the Netherlands, facing even for gender-conforming queer individuals.
		Racial discrimination in queer space.	Racism within the LGBTQIA+ community itself highlighted intersecting oppressions.	