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The Ties That Bind Us: Integrating Male Homosexuality & Entrepreneurship

How can homosexuality influence and inform gay male entrepreneurs and their ventures?

By

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Abstract

In recent years, there has been an increase in the research of minority entrepreneurs, including ethnic minorities and women, but entrepreneurship amongst members of the LGBT community remains a subject rarely studied. Studies which have contributed to knowledge of gay professionals and entrepreneurs typically position homosexuality as an obstacle to be overcome. The aim of this study is to establish homosexuality as an asset for the entrepreneur. We investigate sexuality as a context in entrepreneurship, endeavoring to understand when, where, why, and how entrepreneurship begins and is carried out amongst gay male entrepreneurs. We also analyse the entrepreneur's connection to a local gay community and the effectiveness of this network by aiding the entrepreneur in the establishment and operation of his business, drawing parallels to the concept of mixed embeddedness previously established and applied in the study of ethnic entrepreneurship. We aim to broaden the current understanding of social capital by expressing the use of sexuality as social capital amongst this segment of entrepreneurs. To accomplish our aim, we have carried out a qualitative analysis of data collected from interviews with ten gay male entrepreneurs located in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. Due to the view in this paper of entrepreneurship as a heterogeneous discipline, this study relies on a broad definition of entrepreneurship to include freelancers and self-employed.

Keywords: entrepreneurship, gay, homosexuality, LGBT, identity, context, network, community, social capital, mixed embeddedness

16,953 words excluding footnotes and appendices.

Acknowledgements

Contents

1. Introduction

Entrepreneurship is a heterogenous discipline, one with a diversity of players and actors (Bögenhold et al. 2014; Davidsson, 2005; Delmar and Wennberg, 2010) and one that "has the power to provide opportunities and autonomy to marginalised groups" (Galloway, 2011, 890). Whilst there has been much research dedicated to the role of minorities in entrepreneurship, there remains room to explore the aspect of this field which deals with the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community (Galloway, 2011). Prior studies confirm that LGBT individuals are a "largely ignored segment of the entrepreneurial community" (Schindehutte, Morris, & Allen, 2005, 28). However, due to the role LGBT business owners have played in the regeneration of decaying neighbourhoods and their social environments, and therefore their impact on stimulating economic empowerment and growth, there is a need for research on entrepreneurship enacted by LGBT individuals (Varnell, 2001). In more recent times, research has begun to explore the dynamic between entrepreneurship and homosexuality (Schindehutte et al. 2005; Galloway, 2007 & 2011; Köllen, Bendl, & Steinbacher, 2012; Deutsch, Ming, Shea, & Sinton, 2016), but it still remains largely uncharted territory.

As with many research areas in a nascent stage, much of the work carried out in investigating LGBT entrepreneurship is limited to a specific part of the LGBT spectrum and to a location. Various researchers have looked into the role of the gay man in entrepreneurship (Galloway, 2011; Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009; Varnell, 2001; Willsdon, 2005) and others have explored it on a locational basis in the U.S and U.K (Deutsch et al. 2016, Galloway, 2011). Equally, the tendency has been to see sexuality as an obstacle in business and subsequently in part a motivator for starting one's own, rather than as a context that shapes, supports and empowers a venture. In Schindehutte et al's (2005) and Galloway's (2011) studies, the choice to pursue entrepreneurship is positioned as an answer to problems with heteronormative culture. However, how it articulates itself after the venture begins and whether it has the potential to become a positive ally has been left unanswered.

The purpose of this paper is to provide further insight into and open up a wider discussion on the gay entrepreneurial landscape, and investigate how homosexuality can assist the gay

entrepreneur in their venture. If we understand entrepreneurship to be a truly heterogeneous arena, more attention must be given to groups such as gay men to understand the unique contribution they make as entrepreneurs. Through research, we can shed light on the value that gay entrepreneurs can offer the field of entrepreneurship and how this value comes about. In an attempt to continue to expand on extant literature, we seek to understand how homosexuality can be positively employed into a venture and its creation.

This study, grounded in and supported by theories of context, seeks to emphasise the need to view entrepreneurship through a contextual lens - understanding when, where, why, and how gay entrepreneurship occurs and who becomes involved (Welter, 2010). As a result both homosexual and entrepreneurial identity are investigated in tandem with this, to show how the two relate to each other and the impact of identity in instigating entrepreneurial action.

This study also widens the geographic scope of current research of gay entrepreneurship, by looking into gay entrepreneurship in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, which previous research has not studied. We will interview a sample of 10 gay entrepreneurs in Amsterdam across lifestyle industries, ranging from a meditation coach to the head of a music school. With these samples, we attempt to show that, for gay men, entrepreneurship is a phenomenon which can be tied to their sexuality and to the gay community.

1.1 Thesis Structure

Following this introduction, where we have laid out the theoretical gap in the field of gay entrepreneurship, we continue with a theoretical framework established through an extensive review of available literature. Within the framework we begin with defining the entrepreneur, the role of identity and underlining the premise of context in entrepreneurship. We then examine the traditional model of homosexuality as an obstacle for the gay professional and entrepreneur. We then transition into a discussion on the theories of social capital and mixed embeddedness as they are currently understood within entrepreneurial research. We conclude with the question of how homosexuality can be positively integrated into a business - the gap in research which we seek to fill.

The next chapter presents our research methodology, explaining the rationale for our approach, the sample selection process, the interview procedure and guide, and the data collection and analysis process.

Finally, the subsequent chapters will analyse and review the data collected, and then discuss and draw conclusions from the information retrieved, as well as highlight the implications of this research and suggest potential future research.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the course of this framework, we introduce various building blocks of gay entrepreneurship and the entrepreneur in an effort to contextualise the salient elements of the field. Firstly, we define the entrepreneur and clarify the role of identity and homosexuality. Through an examination of the current research on gay entrepreneurs, we highlight where our research positions itself and reiterate the gap we seek to fill. From there, we outline the need for a contextual perspective when investigating gay entrepreneurship. More pertinently, we move to a discussion of the historic obstacle homosexuality has presented itself to be in the traditional workplace, and how this extends to an entrepreneurial environment. Finally, with a contextual lens in mind, we adapt the perspective of mixed embeddedness and the importance of a community - in this case for a gay entrepreneur - and expand on the inventory of social capital with which homosexuality equips the entrepreneur.

2.1 Defining the Entrepreneur

If entrepreneurship is indeed a discipline with a diversity of agents, then it calls for a broader definition of what an entrepreneur constitutes. This means moving away from what is conventionally considered - a grand narrative of entrepreneurship and the heroic entrepreneur (Berglund & Wigren, 2012) - to a more inclusive definition. The traditional grand narrative positions entrepreneurship as a weaponised tool for economic growth and the rise of new products and services, only able to be wielded by a larger than life individual - the stereotyped image of the entrepreneur (Berglund & Johansson, 2007, Berglund & Wigren, 2012). This not only excludes and suppresses businesses that are not capable of grand economic change and innovation, but idealises the term entrepreneur, mobilising it as a character that many cannot relate to (Berglund & Wigren, 2012).

For the purpose of this study, we will further conflate the overlapping areas of the self-employed, freelancers and entrepreneurs (Bögenhold, Heinonen, & Akola, 2014) and include them in our definition of entrepreneurship. Whilst some theory argues freelancers and the self-employed are unique economic agents (Burke, 2011), excluding them from being considered entrepreneurs only reinforces the narrow image the majority associate with

entrepreneurship. Defining entrepreneurship, however, is not what this study sets out to do. Rather, it seeks to inform and build upon current studies of entrepreneurship, by encouraging a wider view - in this case on gay entrepreneurs. We will presently take entrepreneurship to be a social construction, one with underlying social realities (Davidsson, 2005). As such we will frame this study with our definition of entrepreneurship as a discipline that includes aspects such as self-employment and small-business management into its meaning (Davidsson, 2005). Entrepreneurship is then "anything that concerns independently-owned (and often small) firms and their owner-managers" (Davidsson, 2005, 4).

2.2 Homosexual Identity and Entrepreneurial Identity

It is first worth understanding the role identity plays in the study's discussion in further justifying why gay entrepreneurship merits research. Homosexuality can be considered to mean a variety of things, but for the purpose of this study we attribute it as related to an individual's identity. As Cass (1984) describes, identity plays out over two levels - the self-identity level, how the individual views themselves, and the social level, how the individual represents themselves to others. Homosexual identity "evolves out of a clustering of self-images...of what characterizes someone as homosexual" (Cass, 1984, 110), and consequently from this we see homosexuals developing their own set of core beliefs and values as to what being one means. Their "understanding of reality reflects [their] past experiences, present social and psychological functions, and future aspirations…" (Cass, 1984, 109). Consequently, their experiences are unique to them as homosexuals. This is crucial when developing an entrepreneurial identity where "each person will likely confront his or her own internal dialogue about how the entrepreneurial identity fits with his or her social groups' expectations and demands" (Ollila, Middleton, and Donnellon, 2012, 9). For homosexuals, this becomes complicated as tensions exist within their homosexual identity, how they present themselves to the world; and their entrepreneurial identity, how do their ventures represent them.

Research confirms the importance of identity when beginning a venture (Morris, Neumeyer, Jang, and Kuratko, 2016), and gay entrepreneurs provide a unique example of the intermingling of identity roles (Morris et al. 2016). We argue that for gay entrepreneurs their identity is subsequently an intrinsic part of the venture creation process. Gay entrepreneurs

upset the status quo (Berglund, Gaddefors, and Lindgren, 2016), provide an example of a way to redefine the entrepreneur (Lindgren and Packendorff, 2009), and live out their identity and what they believe (Berglund et al. 2016), which all helps advance the where, when, why and how of Welter's (2010) theory of context.

2.3 Gay entrepreneurship as a research field

Gay entrepreneurship, a sub-segment of LGBT entrepreneurship, remains a developing field of research. For the current investigation, gay entrepreneurship is positioned as entrepreneurial activities and venture creation solely enacted by gay men. As to what 'gay' can mean, we will, as in a previous study on gay male business owners (Galloway, 2011, 895), define it as male individuals who "identify that their sexual and relationship orientation is strictly towards other men". With lesbians, bisexuals and transgender entrepreneurs, there exists a host of further issues for these individuals to navigate through on top of their sexuality related to gender. For instance, one study affirmed that women who identify as LGBT struggle to recruit external funding for their ventures, and when they do, it is significantly less than their male counterparts (Deutsch et al. 2013). Therefore, there is little basis to presume their experiences would be similar to those of gay men (Galloway, 2011), hence their exclusion from the current study.

There are a number of potential explanations as to why homosexuality in entrepreneurship has been a vastly overlooked area of research until recently. Questions of institutional policies and progression in society all contribute to the insurgent interest in matters that deal with the LGBT community. For instance, Arabsheibani, Marin, and Wadsworth (2005) have pointed out the difficulties in researching gay entrepreneurs as a minority group, given that often members of the community wish to hide their identification with the group for various reasons, including social stigma. They also note that the stigma of being associated with the gay community extends beyond entrepreneurs to academics themselves and this fear of stigmatization could help to explain resistance to conduct further research. However, recent legislation passed in countries around the world has enabled gay employees and entrepreneurs to be increasingly open and visible about their sexuality, and set in motion an incentive for employers and governments to encourage the growth of inclusive workforces and businesses (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2011).

Gay entrepreneurship is now a growing field in both research and practice - one that is becoming increasingly visible, prominent and important. With this comes new space for society's view of entrepreneurship to develop on a cultural and social level. Where it is often glamorised and dominated by the "idealisation of the heroic entrepreneur"(Galloway, 2011, 892), it can instead incorporate a wider spectrum of entrepreneurial players, painting a truer and more inclusive picture of what the entrepreneurial landscape should and does look like (Galloway, 2011).

2.4 Gay Entrepreneurship and Context

Context can be examined as a means to understand the articulation of entrepreneurship and how it comes about, where "context simultaneously provides individuals with entrepreneurial opportunities and sets boundaries for their actions; in other words, individuals may experience it as asset and liability" (Welter, 2010, 167). Whilst Welter's case for context discusses gender and ethnicity and their role within social and political contexts, sexuality has yet to be elaborated upon. Furthermore, regarding entrepreneurial opportunity recognition, there are various frameworks to suggest past experience (Shane, 2000) and certain patterned cognitive processes (Baron, 2006) play a role in seeing entrepreneurial opportunities, but these are "limited in their ability to account for why people enact opportunities in the way (and at the time) that they do in relation to broader societal, economic and political processes" (Fletcher, 2006, 425). Including sexuality into the fabric of context raises the possibility that experiences linked to being homosexual can not only help explain why entrepreneurship occurs, but also the type of entrepreneurial opportunity recognised. In doing so, it highlights the diversity of entrepreneurship and the understanding that its dynamics are, by nature, complex (Zahra, 2007, 451), reinforcing the necessity for a contextual perspective.

2.5 Gay and Professional - the Personal/Professional Dilemma

In order to understand the need to view homosexuality as an asset, we must first illustrate how it has often been a cause for professional concern. For the gay professional, managing their personal and professional life can be a complex navigation. Gay men have long faced discrimination in the workplace and, while social shifts and legislation requiring employers to create a more inclusive workforce have occurred (Rumens, 2008), being 'open' remains a

carefully coded procedure in which to perform one's sexuality (Galloway, 2011). Unlike heterosexuals, homosexuals are faced with the decision to announce their sexual orientation, or allow for others to deduce it. With this, there is a perceived risk that disclosing one's sexuality could jeopardise professional credibility and career progression, and it is this fear and anticipation of discrimination that contributes to "how stigmatized individuals manage their invisible identity at work" (Nam Cam and Haertel, 2004, 630). As a result, there exists an identity dilemma for the gay man in the work environment, which manifests itself as a byproduct of the linkage between masculinity and professionalism (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009).

Heteronormativity is pervasive in employment cultures (Galloway, 2011), where the image of the professional man is presented as "the rational (male) individual who keeps his emotions in check and his personal matters out of the office" (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009, 769). Therefore the question as to whether one can make mention of one's sexuality and still be professional is considered. In organizational and professional discourses, men are coded to behave in a normative masculine fashion, and sustain values and beliefs that uphold the masculinity of the organisation (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009, 777). For the gay professional, this goes beyond simply not vocalising their homosexuality, but repositions the very construction of their sexuality. The gay man must conform to the "acceptable face of homosexuality" (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009, 774), which suggests mirroring his heterosexual counterpart - 'acting straight' and having a stable home life - and therefore moving away from the traditional stereotype of the gay man as a "hedonistic and licentious individual" (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009, 774). The acceptable or "normal gay" man (Seidman, 2002, 126) then does not challenge "heterosexual dominance" (Seidman, 2002, 12), and allows organisations to appear as tolerant (Galloway, 2011), even though active articulation of his sexuality is ultimately silenced. Consequently, regardless if the 'closet' is no longer a persistent place, if the individual does not fit this typecast, many gay professionals still selectively disclose their sexuality and often remain hesitant to do so (Seidman, 2002).

There have been powerful unconscious modes of thinking institutionalised and popularised within organisations, that demarcate homosexuality as an obstacle for the gay man to manage and mould. There exist "dominant ideas about what it is to be professional [which] are premised on the belief that professionalism and sexuality are mutually exclusive" (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009, 776). Theory confirms that the lines between personal and professional

have long been blurred for the gay man, reinforcing a negative framing and perception of homosexuality within business that is naturally embedded in the individual's mind.

2.6 The Gay Entrepreneur

Given the challenges that the workplace presents the gay man, where a heterosexual identity must be fabricated (Galloway, 2011) in order to suppress the homosexual one, entrepreneurship provides both an exit and potential stage to change this. Whilst studies have been conducted that suggest entrepreneurship is less of an answer to discrimination but rather a choice for freedom and concern over heteronormative workplaces (Willsdon, 2005; Schindehutte et al. 2005; Galloway, 2011), the gay entrepreneur may still face challenges when it comes to articulating their homosexuality. For instance, gay entrepreneurs have greater difficulty in recruiting external financing than their heterosexual counterparts (Deutsch et al. 2016).

However, for the entrepreneur, the importance of sexuality in their professional life and business lies in the degree to which their 'gay identity' is central to them (Schindehutte et al. 2005).[1] There exists the "gay entrepreneur" and the "entrepreneur who is gay", or as defined in Schindehutte et al. (2005), the "Identifiers" and "Independents". The "Identifiers" consider being gay as central to their personality and therefore place stock in the ability to express their sexuality in the workplace. Consequently, the "Identifier" entrepreneur is more likely to let his homosexuality manifest itself in the business (Schindehutte et al. 2005). The "Independents" are those that do not view their homosexuality as complementary or necessary to their identity as an entrepreneur, and are less likely to integrate it as a part of their professional life (Schindehutte et al. 2005). Independents are also less dispositioned to finding their sexuality as an obstacle in the workplace than Identifiers (Schindehutte et al. 2005).

Moreover, the gay identity for the entrepreneur can be quantified in regards to their community-relatedness, a phenomenon that is expected to be more prominent in the Identifier

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[1] In order to understand the definition of of gay identity, we will use the following explanation as outlined by Schindehutte et al. (2005): "The more openly a person identifies as gay or lesbian, the higher the importance of having an ability to express his or her sexual orientation both at and outside of work, while the more closeted person typically adheres to more traditional work values such as achievement, status and stability."

entrepreneurs (Köllen et al. 2012). Community relatedness in this instance is defined as the closeness, influence and interaction of the gay entrepreneur to the LGBT community and vice-versa (Köllen et al. 2012). The level of community relatedness can therefore be considered to be an illustration of the centrality of the individual's gay identity to them.

2.7 Mixed Embeddedness and Social Capital

An entrepreneur's gay identity can therefore be considered in part as a relational manifestation to the LGBT community. Consequently, how the community plays a role in an entrepreneur's venture and vice-versa, becomes a question which further informs how homosexuality can be integrated into the business. It is logical then to highlight the supporting medium of mixed embeddedness in the constellation of action between the gay venture, entrepreneur and community.

The concept of mixed embeddedness as it relates to entrepreneurship has previously been centered on the immigrant entrepreneur (Barrett et al. 2001; Kloosterman and Rath, 2001; Kloosterman et al. 1999; Portes and Sensenbrenner, 1993; Waldinger, 1995). In this case, the entrepreneur is both embedded in an immigrant community and the local socio-economic community of his settled country (Kloosterman et al. 1999). The entrepreneur is thus able to make use of his social capital in the form of his immigrant community (as well as a support community in his home country) in order to grow and finance the business (Kloosterman, 2010).

A recent extension of this perspective from immigrant entrepreneurs to female entrepreneurs[2] suggests that it may also be an appropriate lens through which to view gay entrepreneurship. Gay professionals have been cast as "invisible immigrants" (Kelly et al. 2014, 27), creating gay ghettos and helping develop and gentrify urban areas (Kelly et al. 2014). Viewing the entrepreneurs in our study as members of both the local LGBT community and the wider socio-economic community, we can hope to better understand how one is impacted by the

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[2] Langevang et al (2015) argued in their research of female Ghanaian entrepreneurs that the concept of mixed embeddedness is also applicable to understand "how female entrepreneurial activity is influenced by women's embeddedness in multiple and shifting institutional contexts" (Langevang et al. 2015,454). Through the mixed embeddedness perspective we can understand that there is a complex interplay between familial, social, religious, and political institutions that impacts entrepreneurs and upon which entrepreneurs can act.

environments he is embedded in, and how his sexual identity can assist one's business in the different communities in which the entrepreneur is embedded.

More broadly speaking, we can look at the gay epicenters in major cities to help illustrate the relevance of mixed embeddedness. As a historically marginalised and divergent group (Willsdon, 2005), gay individuals have naturally formed their own community and physical spheres, ones we now coin as gay villages (Nash and Gorman-Murray, 2014). The village has evidently developed mainstream and touristic appeal, yet it was ultimately created by and catered for gay individuals and is now transitioning from its historic purpose as a meeting point to, perhaps more importantly, a source of "support, solidarity and network building for members" (Kelly et al. 2014, 24). At their source, the villages exist as a physical manifestation of the constellation of connections within the gay network, illuminating one that ultimately transcends spatial boundaries (Kelly et al. 2014). The gay community can be considered to be a "socially close community which stretches over large distances" (Wellman and Leighton, 1979, 381), one that is reliant and rooted in social networks (Kelly et al. 2014). Ultimately then, membership to the gay network is achieved through being gay, not one's physical proximity to the community centre.

For gay entrepreneurs, this concept is key. Köllen et al. (2012) highlight the importance of this social and spatial notion that the gay community embodies, which they argue provides members with social capital resources. Whilst not all gay entrepreneurs regard the gay community as one of obvious importance to their business (Köllen et al. 2012), the network it provides, the understanding of shared values - prompted by shared experiences of societal marginalization - and "consequent solidarity implies a willingness to engage in a collective effort to create and sustain a caring society" (Swinney, 2008, 366), are crucial supporting contexts. By involving themselves in the community, business-owners and entrepreneurs are often given access to resources in the form of their fellow gay citizens.

It is then also important for us to understand the theory of social capital as it relates to entrepreneurs. Ethnic minority entrepreneurs often make use of their social capital, in the form of immigrant communities and connections in their home country, to support and grow their businesses. Several researchers have offered definitions of social capital (Adler & Kwon, 2002; Granovetter, 1973, 1985; Greve & Salaff, 2003), but we interpret 'social capital' as the tangible and intangible benefits and resources one obtains through interaction

with various networks and their reputation within those networks. Previous research has also paid close attention to the importance of networks in an entrepreneur's career and their embedded position in it (Johannisson, 1988; Aldrich & Zimmer, 1986), and the notion that "by making connections with others, with whom they share values, individuals are able to achieve more than if they acted alone" (Cope et al. 2007, 213). Al Mamun et al. (2016, 364) point out that, while many studies focus on the link between social capital and firm performance, it "cannot directly improve the performance, rather it effects the key factors [that] influence the performance through providing access to information, capital, and other resources."

Until the 1980s, entrepreneurial research was mostly centered on the entrepreneur as an individual, but more recently a contextual perspective has developed which understands the entrepreneur as an embedded member of society. Thus, the entrepreneur is able to develop social capital through the construction of networks which provide such resources as information, support, and expertise. (Cope et al. 2007). According to Cope et al. (2007, 214), "an entrepreneur's networks are likely to be based on experience, which not only determines the range of contacts, but may also influence perceptions of opportunities and courses of action."

Considering the connecting mechanism of the gay community and mixed embeddedness, community relatedness and its effect on social capital becomes another building block in investigating how one's gay identity can be employed in accessing business, as well as harnessing said business power. Equally, understanding the degree to which gay men value their gay identity that it crosses over into their professional sphere is an important informant when conducting the study in question. With these components in mind, the contextual tools are present to investigate and answer our purpose through our qualitative study.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

Our study seeks to understand how an entrepreneur's homosexuality can influence, inform and integrate itself positively in the building and implementation of a venture. The data as retrieved from the interviews will be analysed to understand the variables at play for this phenomenon to take place therefore contributing to a wider understanding of the field and consolidating it as worthy of further research.

This investigation adopts a qualitative analysis. Due to the nature of the study, a qualitative approach is most applicable as it allows for a wider consideration and capture of details, and the ability to ruminate on these - a study and design that is both flexible and reflexive (Maxwell, 2013). In order to better understand the phenomenon that is the influence of homosexuality on entrepreneurship, one must be flexible and continuously reassess the intent. In this sense, a quantitative study would simply not be able to articulate this as it functions on often predetermined starting points and linear processes (Maxwell, 2013). Similarly, in understanding how sexuality can be employed in a venture, narrative detail becomes a fundamental aspect of the data as it addresses questions such as how and why - reinforcing the appropriateness of a qualitative study.

To begin this study, we have undertaken an extensive review of extant literature related to the subject, the culmination of which can be found in Chapter 2 of this text. The remainder of this chapter will outline the methodological approach of our primary data collection and clarify how the interview process and sample selection was conducted.

3.2 Qualitative Study

This study will employ a qualitative analysis. The authors intend to make use of a multiple interview approach utilizing an interpretive narrative method to present the data and a thematic reading of these narratives (Fletcher, 2006) to provide insights regarding how gay entrepreneurs positively integrate their sexual identity into their business. The justification behind selecting a combination of approaches to present and analyse the data lies in the

assumption that the experiences relayed by the interviewees will be rich and textured in unique, contextual details, yet thematic commonalities between the interviewees will likely arise. Therefore, a combination of analyses that leverages the informant's power as a storyteller against a more concrete, tangible model to dissect this information, is necessary to lend the study due credibility.

In presenting the data, a narrative perspective has been adopted. Bamberg (2012) classifies narrative and the analysing of it, as a way of interpreting the actual narration of experiences by those in question, as one way of comprehending unique experiences. Understanding that the very telling of a story and history is a transformative experience is key, and that in doing so one is constructing a self and life narrative of themselves (Hunter, 2010). This is especially important for investigations such as this one, where interviewees are forced to articulate possibly unconscious actions in reflection. Therefore, the way they tell these experiences and how they interpret them retrospectively can offer insights into the purpose and roots of their actions.

3.3 Locational Context

The geographic context this study has chosen is the city of Amsterdam in The Netherlands. Due to both the personal nature of the study - investigating one's sexuality - and the specificity of the samples it requires, one urban location proved to be the most viable resource. As a uniquely cosmopolitan and international city, Amsterdam serves as an excellent example of an area that benefits from gay entrepreneurship. All entrepreneurs are based in Amsterdam, even if their venture works beyond the city.

3.4 Sample Selection

There are complex social factors that present challenges to the sampling process in this research. This specific topic requires identification of a group of entrepreneurs who often wish not to be identified (Galloway, 2007). For the current study, ten gay entrepreneurs were interviewed.[3] Whilst the initial two interviews were acquired through personal contacts, all subsequent interviews were organised via the snowball sampling method, which has been

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[3] Please see Appendix A for an introduction to the selected entrepreneurs.

widely used for individuals considered to exhibit "deviant" or hidden behaviour (Biernacki and Waldorf, 1981), and is therefore apt for targeting a demographic such as gay entrepreneurs who are not widely visible. The personal referrals made by one interviewee to others helped to build a sense of trust between the entrepreneur and the researchers. This study focuses on gay men as they represented the largest visible group of entrepreneurs within the LGBT community and face their own singular obstacles and experiences separate to those of lesbians and transgender individuals (Trau and Haertel, 2004). The gay men sampled were chosen because they are all openly gay, and therefore we speculate their homosexuality would more likely be expressed in their business. In this way, we can more clearly see the leverage homosexuality has in a positive light when it is pronounced. Aside from being gay, no overarching criteria was implemented when sourcing the samples, other than that they had to qualify as an entrepreneur as defined by our study.[4]

3.5 Interview Process

Data was gathered through an in-depth semi-structured interview process (Bryman and Bell, 2011) to allow for a breadth of data to be collected. Semi structured interviews were selected as the most appropriate format due to their flexibility and ability to cater to the interviewee on a case-by-case basis. The interviews were conducted by only one of the authors as this allowed for more personal and intimate conversations to be had. The justification for relying on one interviewer grew from understanding the social research method that is emancipatory research. Emancipatory research can be described as the "process of producing knowledge that can be of benefit to disadvantaged people and its key aim is to empower its research subjects" (Noel, 2016, 3). For our interviews, establishing an environment of trust and openness, that leveraged the power of the informant over the interviewer (Noel, 2016) was crucial. Having one interviewer lessened the assumption of the privilege of the interviewer (Noel, 2016), alongside the fact that the interviewer also identifies as gay. This was a conscious attempt to normalise the interview and promote an open and interactive dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee, where both could relate to the topics of discussion.

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[4] Those with small businesses, and the self-employed and freelancers, all qualified. Whilst defining control variables outside of location and sexuality was difficult, there was an effort to keep the selected samples within one industry, which transpired to be lifestyle and arts-related work spheres.

The interview guide, found in Appendix B, was predicated around the general themes of: the entrepreneur's general business history, how they came to recognise the opportunity, their personal experience as being gay and an entrepreneur, and their relation to the wider LGBT community. As explained by Bryman and Bell (2011), a loose set of questions, involving a broad tour of the interview guide themes, enabled the interviewee to pursue the path that fit their circumstances best which allowed for more personal, anecdotal and elaborate answers. Furthermore, throughout the interview process the interviewer "backtracked" to previous sessions (Gioia et al. 2013) in order to address prominent and salient points as identified by former interviewees.

The interviews lasted between 30-90 minutes. They took place primarily over Skype and were recorded and then later transcribed by the researchers. Each interview was prefaced with a brief explanation of the reasoning behind this study, in order to contextualise the issue and frame the subsequent questions for the interviewee. This was necessary due to the personal prying the interview format would take regarding questions of their sexuality and experiences. The interviewees were given no expectation of what their answers should include, rather an encouragement to detail their general experiences as gay men, entrepreneurs and business-owners.

3.6 Trust & Anonymity

Given the very personal nature of sexual identity, establishing trust between interviewer and interviewee is paramount. Every person interviewed has been offered anonymity as a condition of participating in this study (Gioia et al. 2013), and throughout every step of the research the authors have taken the utmost care to ensure each person's identity is protected. Equally, whilst we cannot confirm this is a factor, through what Rumens (2008) highlights as "mutual disaffected other status", interviewees opened up with personal anecdotes about their experiences when they knew the interviewer was gay. For instance one remarked "Let me tell you a story which I am sure you as a gay man can relate to". In the case of another interviewee, he mentioned explicitly that he would not have felt as comfortable as he did, had he not known the interviewer was gay and had it been a straight man instead. Furthermore, that the interviewer and interviewee had mutual friends, the latter claimed this comforted him as well.

3.7 Limitations

The limitations of this study can be found in both the sample set and the method used. In this study, we pursue one segment of the wider LGBT spectrum, specifically the gay male. The research conducted seeks to illustrate examples of specifically gay entrepreneurship, however there is an awareness that this is not necessarily indicative of the wider community of LGBT entrepreneurs. Equally, entrepreneurs within the transgender, bisexual and lesbian segments all face different and complex hurdles, and therefore the authors acknowledge the limitations of this research in being a blanket understanding of the LGBT community. Gay men were selected as they tended to be the most prominent and accessible individuals on the spectrum.

Our definition of an entrepreneur for this investigation employs a broader meaning and therefore can be considered to differ from its predecessors in the imagined scope it sets out to include. Freelancers and self-employed are both incorporated. Whilst there is room to suggest it is limiting for comparison's sake, it also provides wider insights and can be considered to reflect the changing phenomenon of entrepreneurship more faithfully.

Furthermore, the study is limited to selecting samples based in one location, Amsterdam, and is one example and a snapshot of the phenomenon in a modern European city. However due to legislation passed to ensure diversity in Dutch businesses[5], we acknowledge the observations of experiences in Amsterdam cannot be taken as necessarily representative of a wider phenomenon. We argue instead that the location can serve as an example and marker of the positive examples of gay entrepreneurship when institutional policies and social sentiment convene, which allow these ventures to flourish.

In assessing our interview process, there are limitations in only opting for one interviewer. Whilst we maintain that such an an approach works in favour of the interviewee and the study, we concede it allows for a greater level of bias on behalf of the interviewer, and increases the possibility that certain salient points may be missed or not followed up - something a second interviewer can help prevent.

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[5] Ministry of Education, Culture and Science (2013). *Dutch gender and LGBT-equality policy*. The Hague: Ministry of Education, Culture and Science.
https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168045ae0e

Finally, due to the nature of our empirical data and the reams of rich narratives, there will naturally be an ambiguity of understanding in the discussion. What we may interpret as a key theme, others may view differently. Whilst this can be considered to be true for various qualitative studies, it is especially true for inherently fluid and ambiguous topics such as homosexuality. We have attempted to reduce and manage this ambiguity of understanding by providing a structure for our data, underpinning it with a theoretical model. We have ordered the data using Welter's (2010) theory of context - the who, the why, the where, the when and the how - so as to offer the reader a sense of commonality and ground the data in theory.

3.8 Data Analysis Process

After the completion of the interviews, the ten cases were split between the two authors of this study and transcribed. This gave the author who conducted the interviews the chance to revisit the data for a second occasion prior to the official analysis stage which allowed for early interpretations of themes and patterns (Evansluong, 2016). However, in order to ensure an original analysis and avoid an unconscious bias on behalf of the interviewer, both authors initially reviewed the transcripts independently. This provided parity and balance to the analysis, and opened up the possibilities for a variety of interpretations and bolster assumptions about certain findings (Gioi et al. 2013).

Following this, both authors met in person to discuss their findings. We constructed a detailed narrative for each sample that provided an overview of the entrepreneur, his business and the various circumstances in which his entrepreneurial identity and homosexual identity convened. Drawing on former studies, our strategy of content analysis was a combination of a basic thematic analysis from the narratives created and overlaying established theoretical perspectives onto these in order to unpack some of the emergent theories (Fletcher, 2006; Evansluong, 2016). We identified both primary and secondary themes - primary themes were commonalities amongst a majority of our sample set, and secondary themes were experiences that only some of the samples acknowledged and yet were prominent enough to merit suggestion of further study. These themes were then dissected through the interspersing of interviewee quotes (Galloway, 2011; Fletcher, 2006) with theoretical concepts in order to

adequately illustrate the experience in question. This fluidity between theory and data (Gioi et al. 2013; Evansluong, 2016) was a key aspect of our analysis.

4. Empirical Data

4.1 Overview of Our Entrepreneurs

This section includes a narrative description of five of the ten entrepreneurs interviewed. We have chosen these five as they illustrate the breadth of experience and salient elements of the analysis. Due to depth of information provided and length constraints of this paper, all narratives can be found in Appendix C and the major points of the remaining five entrepreneurs is included in this chapter in Table 4.1. In every case, a narrative form has been applied to provide the reader with a robust understanding of the entrepreneur, their business and how their homosexuality has informed the way they have conducted both themselves and their work. We have ordered the narratives according to Welter's (2010) theory of context in order to give the narratives both a common coherence and theoretical backbone. For five cases, a summary is provided on who they are, where they work, what their business is and does, how they came to recognise their opportunity, when it came to fruition - through looking at the interplay between their personal and professional lives, their financing and customers (if applicable), their gay network and their relationship to the gay community - and why they pursued it.

Interviewees	Business	Gay Customers	Use of Gay Network
Tim	Nepalese Music School & Property Development	Not targeting gay customers	Established business with partner.
Julian	Carpenter	Not specifically, but prefers LGBT clients where possible	Network of gay friends to connect with potential clients
Liam	DJ/Serial Entrepreneur	DJ in gay bars; creating a board game specifically for the gay community	Finds DJ gigs through fellow gay DJ's

Lucas	Elderly LGBT housing & care	Customers exclusively elderly LGBT	Uses network to build and market his business
Benjamin	Gay Bar	Specifically targets LGBT community	Former romantic partner now business partner; business integrated into gay community
Noah	Mindfulness School	Not targeting gay customers	Use of gay friends to market business, advertisements on Facebook pages for gay expatriates
Sam	Freelance Journalist & Podcast Host	Mostly gay podcast audience	Gained work through LGBT network
Jesse	Record Label	Not targeting gay customers	Not specifically
Nick	Yoga Schools	Not targeting gay customers	Startup loan from former sexual partner
Finn	Freelance Film & Television Composer	Not targeting gay clients	Networking in gay bars, often connected with jobs through gay friends

Table 4.1

4.2 Presentation of Narratives

Entrepreneur 1: Tim - Arts/Music School & Property Development Business

Tim is a Dutch national in his late 30s, based in Amsterdam. His background is in music education, previously working as a high school music teacher. Ten years ago, he decided it was time for a change and an 'adventure'. With that he found a vacancy for a piano teaching job in Nepal, "sold [his] house, [his] car and left". After years in this position, he realised that

there was a severe lack of inclusivity at his school. With its primary audience being the children of the elite, he felt so many students were being unfacilitated and left behind. So in 2012, he started his own business. Aware that there were already a handful of NGOs pumping money into the economy but not actually providing work for the people there, he decided to start a social business - an arts school that employed only local Nepalese people, and worked with paying students, whose money was channeled into social projects. After starting up, tragedy struck with the earthquake in Nepal and destroyed the school building. Recognising that after such a disaster there was a need to pivot and rethink the school as "nobody was thinking about ballet class..that's not really the first need", Tim and his co-workers went to the camps and provided music therapy for the kids who had been traumatised by the earthquakes. Soon the realisation came that there was a need to cater to those who needed an arts education to forget the trauma of the earthquake. Tim raised external funds from investors in The Netherlands, and changed from a social business to a model funded by money from the Netherlands, which was necessary after the collapse of the Nepalese economy.

Tim grew up in a conservative area of the Netherlands known as the "Bible Belt" and was raised in a "very orthodox Christian reformed family" but also a very entrepreneurial one. Eventually he moved to Rotterdam to study at the music conservatory, a very "gay dominated space" which he says was a relief and somewhere he could finally be himself. He believes he thrives in diverse and artistic workspaces as it was one way to "foster his homosexuality". He believes that at many stages his homosexuality has come into play, to inform and assist him in his entrepreneurial endeavours. On arriving in Nepal, Tim claims his homosexuality played into a form of cultural exchange, where the local Nepalese media depicted him and his partner as celebrities, and embraced and endorsed it as a symbol of "modernity". This gave them an "in" with the local elite and opportunities to network and further promote themselves. When interviewing with magazines, the reporters were most interested in portraying Tim and his partner as two homosexual owners of an art school.

Tim claims he is consistent in being open about his homosexuality in his arts related work and plays on it through his body language, yet never explicitly mentions it. At the arts school, it has encouraged an understanding of diversity within his team. He cites one example of its role, where in a country like Nepal that leaves many gay individuals left silenced and miserable, a man saw him on a gay dating app, and messaged saying "you're the one with

that music school. I want to work for you - can I send you my CV?". He maintains that his sexuality and the forums it manifests itself in contributed in this sense to marketing his work and the jobs he needed done.

Working with the gay community and establishing a gay network is one thing Tim feels is important to him. He is of the mind that wherever you go as a gay man or woman, the LGBT community is your family. As a result of this, he says he feels a sense of obligation to work with the community and support gay individuals and their wider LGBT counterparts. With his school in Nepal, one of his biggest projects was working with the Blue Diamond Society supporting the rights of the gay community, offering them a choir and stage for events. Conversely Tim also runs a property development business he and his partner set up, involving renovating and then selling properties, and it is here where he claims his gay personality is stifled somewhat. In the transactional world of real estate, he claims he is more heterosexual acting. Tim finds that he self censors his behaviour in front of what he perceives as typical heterosexual guys, saying that his bodily behaviour becomes more rigid. For instance, he is very aware of making himself bigger, also ensuring that he does not give a weak handshake. This is down to an apprehension of appearing vulnerable and "giving himself away". This exists in contrast to his business in the arts, where he believes his communication and empathy skills are encouraged and consolidated by his homosexuality.

Entrepreneur 2: Julian - Carpentry Business

Julian is an Australian national in his late 20s, living in various countries abroad throughout the year, but has been primarily based in Amsterdam since 2012. His background is in the circus and acrobatics, having also studied at a trade school in Australia to learn the craft of carpentry. After facing a lack of job opportunities as a circus teacher, it was suggested that he start a business working as a carpenter, which consists of him doing small-to-large jobs around Amsterdam. According to Julian, in a city like Amsterdam, whilst the majority of the population are very intellectual, often "no one knows how to put up a shelf".

In assessing the carpentry and tradesperson industry, he says that it is often dominated by tradespeople who are "consuming of space, very heterosexual and very dominant sort of men". For many customers looking to hire someone, he provides an alternative to this

personality, and believes he is often more welcome in the home, especially when the work is more long-term and requires him to consistently be around somebody's house.

Julian is open about his sexuality with his clients, which comes into conversation on occasion, he still says there is a hint of self-censorship. However, one should note that Julian identifies this as stemming from the polyamorous nature of his relationship, rather than his homosexuality. In this sense, Julian says that occasionally there is an active effort on his part to gloss over the gender of his partners, so much so that he structures his wording intentionally to be deceptive and avoid outing himself. Whilst he does not regard talking about being gay as unprofessional, he notes there was a period early on when starting his relationship with his boyfriends of being tentative to speak about it, and in turn led to feeling "a self-effacing guilt at being closeted again". Similarly, one job when working with a team of tradespeople who all fit the dominant tradesperson stereotype, he mentions he was definitely monitoring his behaviour; at one stage, they threw a party where they invited strippers and he said in this "heterosexual male environment...I did feel very out of place…[aware] that I'm not being outwardly gay".

In regards to his network and the wider gay community, Julian gets most of his work through personal networks. Initially, all his work came through his boyfriends and people he had had sexual relations with. For instance, he says that after having sexual relations with one man, they spoke about what the other does for work and somebody has said "oh I need someone [to do] that" in regards to a household job. He also considered advertising on a few gay dating apps, pitching himself as a sexy carpenter but believes these spaces to be strictly sexual not professional. Julian considers the fact that he is "mention-worthy" - being gay and having two boyfriends - is something a client will bring up as a story and often help him get "re-mentioned". He notes "it is helpful that I'm a bit more unique than the standard heterosexual man".

Julian explains that he feels a strong bond to other members of the LGBT community, saying that he "feels much closer to a Lebanese gay person" than a Dutch or Australian heterosexual man. Due to this, he also prefers to buy from and work with fellow members of the LGBT community where possible, but explains that in The Netherlands, because being gay is so mainstream, he says it's less of a special thing and so there is little to no infrastructure around promoting gay businesses and that network. Julian would prefer to work for clients who are

LGBT and says, "if I had to choose a client, I would choose one that was LGBT, although it often goes both ways". He draws parallels with immigrant communities, like the Italian community back home in Australia, saying it is an "in-community thing". Describing how for many gay and fellow LGBT individuals, experiencing a loss of family is common and therefore when they lose that family, "they find somebody else to be family with". Therefore, the community is like a family and for Julian he says that if he goes to a gay bar, it is "an embassy" for the community.

Julian also describes that for gay entrepreneurs, they often exist on the outside of this "white man's club" and there are lost opportunities. However, he claims that being gay takes precedence over being an entrepreneur and it is important to be aware of the bigger picture and how as a gay man he interacts with society.

Entrepreneur 3: Liam - Finance Business & DJ

Liam is a British national in his 30s, now based in Amsterdam. In the past, he has worked setting up his own businesses with fellow entrepreneurs, but now works primarily as a product manager at an IT company, whilst also working as a DJ around the city. According to Liam, his current position is the least entrepreneurial position he has been in for the last fifteen years of his life. He is also currently creating his own board game that is set in a gay sauna.

His first startup experience came back in the UK in the south-west and subsequently London, where he helped co-found a financial technology startup. It is an online platform and one that is still active today and widely regarded in Europe and in the UK as a major player in the lending industry. Liam says the inspiration behind this service was the realisation that banks were getting too powerful and that "too much risk was taken on behalf of the individual". Concurrent with this was the development of technology and the opportunity to use the internet to connect the relevant players in the market.

Liam was taken aback upon first meeting one of his colleagues, before he joined the founding team, when she suggested they meet in a gay bar. This alarmed him, thinking she already knew he was gay, but later discovered she often chose a gay bar for a first meeting with

potential colleagues, as she believed it "immediately set the standard of what was acceptable." This is something he has carried forward into later work in the startup. In one instance, an employee made homophobic comments, to which Liam responded, "before you say anything else, I have to tell you that I'm gay". Whilst it took some time for him to acknowledge this, he said the necessity to be professional ultimately outweighed anything, but cites this case as one of the first experiences where being gay was a challenge. He claims it helped encourage him to foster an environment of tolerance and openness at work. In this sense, he considers being gay an advantage in that it let him tread the workplace line as he was not perceived as a threat to the senior management, often male, and he could easily bond with the female staff.

Liam says that he rarely modifies his behaviour or hides his homosexuality. Only in an interview would he hide elements of his personality. However he says he is quick to assert that fact that he is gay and open in a bid to avoid people who aren't ok with that and communicate it's something "[he is] not going to back away from".

In his blossoming endeavor as a DJ, Liam believes his homosexuality presents a networking opportunity. In securing regular gigs he references being gay as conducive to that, as often at his level it is a case of the job going to the person the venue likes most. He says that as he is not at the level of truly professional DJ, "being relaxed, open and able to have open conversations really helps". He views his network of gay friends as an advantage, explaining that often when somebody cannot make the gig, his friends will reach out and ask if he can cover for them and vice-versa, "and there really isn't much [they] have in common apart from the fact that [they are] gay and DJs". Similarly he often only works and gets hired at gay venues - bars, clubs and Pride events, and as a result his music is catered to a commercial gay audience.

Furthering his experience of his homosexuality being a networking advantage, when setting up another startup a couple of years ago, it was his gay network he reached out to for things such as copywriters and legal assistance, as he says there is always much more breadth and a willingness to help, and "he can find pretty much anybody through 1-2-3 degrees of separation".

Regarding the game he is currently developing, Liam says this is where looking for a gay investor could be critical as they will most likely be able to understand and relate to the premise and setting of the game. Whilst he does not consider it necessary usually, he believes that in this case it is relevant. That said, where possible he would prefer as an entrepreneur to work with fellow gay businesses and gay network as "[he] could kind of guarantee [he] had some connection already and a foot in the door".

Entrepreneur 4: Lucas - Gay Housing Service for the Elderly

Lucas is a Dutch national in his mid-50s, based in Amsterdam but originally from a smaller town in The Netherlands. Lucas has started more than one company in his time and formerly worked in the police force and as a Managing Director for a business in the Bible Belt in the south of the country. His last two business ventures have been focused on providing care and living accommodation for elderly LGBT individuals. His idea for these stemmed from his personal experiences and a consideration of what he would want for himself. He explains that recent cuts in funding for adult care services in The Netherlands have left more responsibility on an individual's friends and family. However, many elderly LGBT people never had children and therefore lack the support from family. What's more, according to Lucas, many elderly LGBT people struggle with discrimination and seclusion within the current elderly community. Even considering these factors, Lucas says his primary motivations for establishing an elderly LGBT home were positive. He says, "people choose the ones they live with for their entire life...and I would like to continue that when I'm old". Citing a survey in the Netherlands that found out 20% of the LGBT community would like to have the choice to live with other LGBT people and were in favour of such an environment, this further consolidated his decision.

Lucas credits his being gay to recognising specific opportunities. In talking about and explaining his venture, he's often found that other gay and LGBT individuals tend to be much more receptive to his business and can easily see why it is necessary. Regarding financing, he says it initially took some time to find the right investors who saw the need and potential, but ultimately, "getting the money has been absolutely no problem." He made a choice not to go to gay investors as the sample pool was too small with insufficient funds, and he wanted the specialist knowledge of investors more than anything.

Lucas maintains that throughout his career, he has never changed his behaviour depending on his work environment - even working within the police force and a highly religious and conservative area of the country. Claiming that it only furthers the potential to discriminate, he has never had an issue being openly gay within his work.

For Lucas, his current and previous business have led him to work extensively with the wider gay community. He says it is "an essential part of [his] work to be part of the community" and is a great believer in building gay communities. The community represents friends and family, in replacement of ones that gay individuals may have lost in their regular communities. He says that most, if not all of his network are gay and he has leveraged the offering of resources they provide. For Lucas, he believes that whilst sexual preference is an odd basis for forming a network, "it's easier to get people from all sorts of businesses and sides of society to meet", than if your social network was purely based on work or study. To build and market his business, Lucas often visits gay bars and hubs that cater to older individuals, to spread awareness amongst the age group. One of the biggest challenges he has faced is that this generation of elderly LGBT people are often still fearful of discrimination and in some places, it exists, so creating a house that is gay "but not too openly gay" is crucial.

Entrepreneur 5: Benjamin - Gay Bar

Benjamin is a 40-year-old Dutch national who co-owns a gay bar in Amsterdam. After finishing a degree in commercial economics, he began his career working for a large Dutch retail company. One aspect of his job that he did like was that his office was majority female, which made him feel more comfortable being openly gay, since it was a less "masculine culture." At a certain point however, he participated in a company career session and realized he did not like the idea of the things he would have to do and the person he would have to be in order to grow within the company. This is when he started to consider alternative career paths, which is also when he met (in a romantic context) the man who eventually became co-owner of the bar. From an initial light-hearted suggestion that they could start a gay bar, this idea grew to become more serious.

With no experience or idea of where to proceed, they began talking to entrepreneurs they knew and banks, to figure out if it was possible and how to proceed. They spent a year developing their business plan, and then working to find the right location, doing it cautiously because of the high closure rates among bars. Now, they have been running the bar for 10 years. Benjamin believes his idea grew from a mix of simply wanting his own bar, and recognizing as a gay man that the gay bars in Amsterdam were not fulfilling what he wanted to experience in a gay bar, since they often felt segregated based on different gay stereotypes.

As to the question whether he believes that being gay is an advantage as an entrepreneur, Benjamin believes it may be, explaining:

> As a gay person, you're already a bit outside of the normal environment you grow up in. So you're pretty different from the start of it, you already start taking decisions that are not laid out for you...and that helps you to create your own [path]...for a lot of gay people they can...more easily take the steps to create their business because they're not really bothered by norm[s]...[such as] you need to do this, and have a stable job...

For Benjamin, having an open working environment where he can be openly gay is very important, because he does not see a way for him to truly separate his personal and professional lives, explaining that "people tell you all the time what they did last night and you know about their husband and children, so it can't be separate." Even when approaching banks for financing, Benjamin and his partner never made any effort to change their behavior or downplay that they were starting a gay bar, although at times they did sense that banks did not want to be associated with a gay business.

Benjamin says his bar has become part of the gay community in Amsterdam because of the "homely feel" they have created, which makes it feel like more of a community place than a commercial bar.

5. Analysis & Discussion

This chapter presents how our findings on how homosexuality can inform and enable an entrepreneur and their venture, and offers insight into why investigating gay entrepreneurs can shed light on the unique contributions they make to the field of entrepreneurship. Using a thematic analysis that dissects the entrepreneurs' narratives through theoretical perspectives, we endeavour to ensure both richness and rigor.

The chapter is structured into both primary and secondary themes. In each theme quotes from the entrepreneurs are used to supplement and consolidate the analysis, and we link back to our theoretical framework in order to show how this creates and widens dialogues on the matter of gay entrepreneurship. In introducing the discussion, it is worth reiterating the social context and the role of supporting policies in favour of promoting equality as in The Netherlands.[6]

5.1 Primary theme I: Homosexuality as a self-organizing network tool

One way homosexuality manifests itself in the experiences of gay entrepreneurs is its effect on how they perceive and work with the wider gay community. Amongst a majority of the samples, often the commonality of being gay can supersede and eclipse traditional obstacles and therefore act as a facilitator for entrepreneurial action whilst also offering a suggestion as to how and why certain business relationships come about. Being gay enables a provision of networks, but it also fuels the mentality to go out and foster these. For instance, Tim, the owner of the music school, stresses that he positioned his business as a champion and supporter of the LGBT community because they represent family.

> *I feel that everywhere you go as a gay man or woman, they are also your family. So I felt almost as if I owed them.*

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[6] Often, the gay men involved operate with a certain degree of cultural capital and societal status (Light and Dana, 2013) meaning the social capital they bring to each entrepreneurial occasion is a result of the embedded progressive society they live in. Equally the physical places they can meet and nurture their connections are further indicative of the liberal context that gives rise to these instances, therefore it is a context that must always accompany the analysis of these entrepreneurs.

There is a prevalent notion amongst the entrepreneurs sampled that being gay unites and binds them together. Julian mentions that in his business, he would prefer to work for clients who are gay because he feels a closeness to them, much like immigrant societies do within their own circles.

> *I imagine that in Australia, in the Italian community, if they can employ somebody that's Italian they would. My identification as a member of the LGBT as a community means I have a certain degree of innate nepotism towards that family...*

This notion of buying and working within the community is further indicative of the embedded culture gay entrepreneurs work within, much like the ones traditionally associated with immigrants (Kloosterman et al. 1999). Furthermore, Julian says that gay men and lesbians often come together with only their non-heterosexuality as a commonality. This corroborates Liam's explanation that being gay is a form of transcendental force.

> *[It's] something that unifies people that crosses all other boundaries. So if I look at my friend as a D.J. where between us we help each other and where if one of us can't make a gig, normally we ask each other - "hey can you fill in for me?", and there really isn't much we have in common apart from the fact that we're gay and we're DJs.*

This supports the notion that gay identity transcends physical boundaries (Wellman and Leighton, 1979) and the community provides a level of shared values and a combined effort to create a forum that is caring and supportive (Swinney, 2008). Gay identity therefore helps encourage a supportive network and environment, a further example of a trait previous studies have mainly attributed to embedded immigrant communities (Kloosterman, 2010). Being gay acts as a sufficient thread to link Liam to another professional in his field, and provide him with work. As for Sam, he claims that sharing a homosexual identity with somebody he might be interviewing often acts as a bridge to opening them up. For many entrepreneurs then, homosexual identity is a more central identity than their entrepreneurial one. Equally, homosexuality can facilitate work opportunities. Liam claims that many of his DJ gigs are secured on the basis that he is gay - "being gay is very helpful in getting [the] position" - since for gay venues, this provides him and them with a commonality. This resonates with what Finn says regarding one instance where being gay triggered interest and subsequently formed the basis of a professional relationship:

I wanted to introduce myself, and [he was] not very interested, and then, halfway [through] our very shallow conversation, he said, "Yeah, I'm also looking for my boyfriend". I said, "Oh, mine couldn't make it tonight" and said it very naturally, and I didn't even think about it, but then, suddenly he turned from this very "whatever" guy, to looking at me for the first time in the conversation. And we had a conversation about me, about him, and about the project, but it was very obvious, like "Oh, you're gay! Oh, well now we can [talk]..."

Nick cites his tendency to help other gay men both generally and in a business context because of a bond of growing up differently. Furthermore, he claims that as he gets older as a gay man, this tie grows stronger.

I think especially as I get older as a gay man, this sort of paternal-ness comes out in me, but to other gay men... because sometimes it's nice to know that you have a support network, even if that's the only thing that binds you together.

For many of the entrepreneurs, one's gay identity can help stimulate proactive approaches to reaching out for work or simply recruiting assistance. Benjamin notes that this very idea of shared identity was the premise of his gay bar and why it has been successful because it helps facilitate friends and professional networks amongst the gay community, saying:

All of a sudden when people see we have a lot in common, because they're gay they're already in a sub-culture so there is no need to be in a sub subculture.

Lucas echoes this sentiment saying the gay community is a form of surrogate family, suggesting that it often "represents friends and family, in replace of ones that gay individuals may have lost in their regular communities". This mentality of connecting and supporting one another with one's homosexuality as the bridge, is a further example of the co-operative mentality the concept of mixed embeddedness promotes (Kloosterman, 2010).

5.2 Primary theme II: Homosexuality embeds and equips the entrepreneur with a broad network

Almost unanimously, the sample set of entrepreneurs described having a gay network as a crucial tool in the building and implementation of their businesses. Both Noah and Liam describe the foundations of their businesses laid down by their gay network. For Noah, his school relied specifically on his gay network as it tapped into a broader range of skills and professions, saying "so with building our website, shooting a video, designing our website and its images or logo, all of those were gay people". Noah also mentions that it is an explicitly creative network, and that being gay has given him access to "a community of people that work in creative directions". Similarly, Liam emphasises that his gay network is his default resource when starting up a business, namely for its scope and coverage of cross-disciplinary skills.

Every time I needed [people] like designers and then copywriters, or legal assistants, it was my gay network I reached out to. Because my kind of professional network is in finance and IT... I go to my gay network and there it's much easier to find people who are really willing to help. And there is such a big pool of resources. Without much effort, I can find pretty much anybody, through 1-2-3 degrees of separation.

Evidently, homosexuality situates the entrepreneur within a broad network of connections that operates outside of simply physical boundaries, arguably equipping the individual with a diverse range of contacts. This draws on the concept of mixed embeddedness and immigrant communities - where immigrants make use of their social capital within the embedded community and their one back home (Kloosterman, 2010), gay entrepreneurs conduct business over two network levels as well - their local or professional network, and the gay community. The respondents' experiences also suggest that gay entrepreneurs have highly dense networks, meaning a high interconnectedness of members within the network (Swinney, 2008). Julian cites his partners as the ones who linked him with much of his early business, being very well connected themselves, and Lucas explains that with his gay network "it's easier to get people from all sorts of businesses and sides of society to meet", which differs from his strictly work-related network. This suggests homosexuality functions as an umbrella that links individuals together, and a commonality that facilitates the

harnessing of various talents and skills. Within entrepreneurship, this is an important advantage as it provides the gay entrepreneur with diversity in their network which research suggests helps entrepreneurs capitalise on opportunities (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986). These social networks are key in enabling and restraining entrepreneurial activities and therefore the social context that provides entrepreneurs with a network, in this case their homosexuality, must be considered (Aldrich and Zimmer, 1986).

5.3 Primary theme III: Homosexuality creates unique physical forums for network creation and expansion

Another prominent theme was the focus given to the unique spaces where gay entrepreneurial experiences and networks occurred and stemmed from. Gay male entrepreneurs create and develop their networks through unconventional forums and ways, ultimately signalling for a reinterpretation of social capital. In the case of Nick, the owner of the yoga school, he met the man who would later provide him with the funds to begin his business through a gay dating app and subsequently developed a sexual relationship before ultimately having a professional one. For Tim, he describes having somebody approach him for an interview for his school through a gay dating app as well, and Julian described landing many of his clients as a result of the sexual relations he had with them, describing that afterwards he often explains his work and the man will say "oh I need someone to do that". Like the example Tim describes, Julian also considered using a gay dating app to look for work, saying he wanted to capitalise on his appeal as a gay carpenter, however he claims he did not pursue this as much as he could have. This supports the theory that networks (and subsequently social capital) are based on experience (Cope et al. 2007) and that context is key in understanding where and how entrepreneurial action comes about (Welter, 2010). However these examples suggest inclusion of sexuality into the fold, where they are unique to gay entrepreneurs and where sexual spaces become forums for instigating business transactions.

Aside from a digital gay space, homosexuality creates physical frontiers such as gay bars, which provide further territory to establish connections. Creating networks acted as one of the founding ideas of Benjamin's gay bar - he says he positioned the bar as less of a sexual space,

but a place where people could meet. Describing that gay bars tend to be predicated on a live version of a dating app, he says:

> *It's part of our philosophy for the bar to be a place for everybody...it's a bar where gay people feel comfortable, but also means they can bring their straight friends, and sometimes there will be children running around...[as a result] we are more of a community place.*

This mentality and emphasis on a meeting space resonates amongst many of the entrepreneurs. Liam met the women who would co-found a business with him in a gay bar, whilst for Lucas, he uses gay bars as a hub for getting clients for his business - "I mainly go to bars where elderly gay men and women are, and this is my marketing tool". Conversely, Finn describes being on the receiving end of work:

> *I worked with a gay director, who I met in a gay bar, and at the start there was, "Oh, we really should work together" whilst being half drunk, and then half a year later I had a project.*

Consequently, these gay institutions and forums represent more than social outposts and meeting points (Kelly et al. 2014). They can be seen as a convergence of both professional and personal motivations, including the now prominent digital arenas. Whilst there undoubtedly exist alternative places for heterosexual entrepreneurs to meet, for gay entrepreneurs, they have unique and autonomous spaces that only they can truly capitalise on.

5.4 Secondary theme I: Gay entrepreneurs make use of their own gender capital

A frequent point of discourse was the way the entrepreneurs perform their sexuality and whether this runs into how they conduct themselves as an entrepreneur and their business. We can see that their (mostly) refusal to subscribe to heteronormative behavioural codes[7] and

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[7] Of all the entrepreneurs, Lucas claims that whilst he prefers not to talk in gendered terms, he gives stock to certain "masculine" skills in entrepreneurship. Whilst he credits his homosexuality with helping recognise opportunities and establishing a broad network, he says:
"You need certain qualities and characteristics if you want to be an entrepreneur. You have got to take risks...and do things without certainty that people will follow.... And I don't think in masculine and feminine characteristics, but if you consider these sorts of things as masculine then entrepreneurship is masculine"

dilute their homosexuality means they provide an example of how autonomy over behaviour, instead of careful coding due to pervasive professional heteronormative structures (Galloway, 2011), can be an asset to the entrepreneur.

Whilst Tim, Julian and Sam are the cluster of samples who describe having self-censored their behaviour, they also describe how their "gay" behaviour benefits them. For instance, Tim plays on his homosexuality through his body language, especially in his arts related work, where he perceives people as being receptive to it, and this has encouraged an environment of tolerance and openness within his team. Julian cites that his homosexuality and subsequent behaviour functions as an antidote to the prevalent macho persona in the carpentry industry, men who are "consuming of space, very heterosexual and very dominant". He provides an alternative to this and consequently considers being gay a "selling point".

Furthermore, the use and mention of "soft skills" was featured prominently in some of the discussions, often attributed by the interviewees as a skillset that is honed by one's identity as a gay man and regarded as one that has proved useful in their entrepreneurial careers. Soft skills in this context were defined as the ability to converse easily, be relatable and approachable, skills often married to and interpreted as "feminine skills" (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010). For Sam, much like Julian, he works in an industry where "there's a lot of machismo" and on the surface, it is not an immediate "quality" or an advantage to be gay. However, he says that when conducting interviews as a presenter, "[he] has a sort of feeling that [he] is able to get to the audience in a way", suggesting it might be some kind of natural "flamboyance...that maybe straight presenters do not necessarily have". Liam claims that when working in his startup "I particularly found, and I don't know whether this is directly because I'm gay, but I found my soft skills were better than most people expected from a male". This meant that "a lot of the women and girls that I work with really enjoyed working with me...and I had a very equal opportunities approach." Soft or feminine skills, as well as a focus on equal opportunities, have previously been associated with women, acting as a type of female embodied capital in organizational and management contexts (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010) that assists them in the workplace. Evidently, these findings suggest gay men, and in this case entrepreneurs, are equipped with a similar form of capital. However, notably, many of the gay entrepreneurs suggest that regardless of the benefits of this, there are still times where they change themselves, yet this is a more physical change. Tim says he changes

within his real estate business which is often a case of working with "typical heterosexual guys".

> *If I gave them a weak handshake or am a bit feminine, I feel like I give myself away. And not that I feel they will prey on me, but I feel vulnerable. I want to look stronger and more like them.*

He cites that this business is much more about money, whereas in his arts work he feels "there is a more layered involvement, communication and emotion". Therefore, there is a need to draw from these soft skills to communicate, versus in his real estate environment, which is more typically masculine and transactional. Similarly, Julian notes that in the carpentry industry when he has had to work with fellow professionals, he is always "checking himself that [he is] not being outwardly gay". As women find their feminine skills to be a double-edged sword with both benefits and limitations (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010), gay men face similar obstacles, often caught in assessing the context their soft skills and physical mannerisms can work well within. Consequently, none of the entrepreneurs sampled were willing to consider their homosexuality and the soft skills they are given as an outright asset (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010).

Whilst entrepreneurship has been predicated around a masculine and heroic narrative of the entrepreneur (Berglund and Wigren, 2012), homosexuality evidently provides a bridge between masculine and feminine, affording these softer skills with a greater currency (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010).

5.5 Secondary theme II: Gay entrepreneurs recognise unique opportunities

Many of the interviewees have businesses stemming from personal passions, which they do not directly attribute to the fact that they are gay. However, it is clear that many of the opportunities they recognize stem from their personal experience of being gay. For Lucas, his idea for gay elderly accommodation grew directly from what he wanted for himself, and a realization that this need was not currently being met.

> *For me, my entire environment consists of mostly gay men, and this is the way I*
> *organize my life. And I'm happy with that. And I would like to continue that, also*
> *when I'm older…. I think [about] the atmosphere I created for myself …But I thought*
> *if I want that, a lot of people want that.*

Thus, by recognizing what was missing from the society for him personally, he has been able to offer a new housing option for elderly LGBT. For Benjamin, his gay bar developed from his personal experience of a need that was left unfulfilled.

> *We were going out a lot and we went to a lot of parties but we didn't really like any of*
> *the bars…. And just a bit randomly we started fantasising about like "oh how would*
> *you do it [a bar]?", "what would the place look like?"*

This corroborates what research suggests is the ability to employ one's entrepreneurial action as an expression of their identity, and a way to live out what one believes (Berglund et al. 2016) - both entrepreneurs saw something that was missing from their lives and therefore took action to create it. Also at play is the notion of the knowledge corridor (Shane, 2000). For Lucas, his elderly accommodation service comes from not just his gay knowledge but his experience more generally of business and living in the Netherlands, whilst for Benjamin the creation of his bar comes after arguably a "corridor" of experiencing bars and a nightlife that was not fulfilling.

For others among the interviewees, as well, their experience of being gay has influenced their work. Within his record label, Jesse manages a dance boy band that has cycled through six generations of band members, and attributes his ability to continue to successfully choose new members and manage the band to his sexuality, claiming, "we know how to pick the boys. I don't think straight people can do that." For Sam, he has worked on a number of projects related to the LGBT community.[8] He explains that often, the journalistic stories he tells stem from his experience:

> *Talking about sexuality, mixing it with your work… That sort of comes naturally when*
> *you're a journalist. There's a big tendency, especially in documentaries, that you tell*

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[8] This includes including two radio documentaries, a front-page story in a local newspaper, and his podcast that he has run for more than a year, which is given from a gay man's perspective.

stories from first person…And then you sort of, well you have to tell one or two things about sexuality.

This tendency to recognize opportunities based on one's sexuality and to utilize it in business, extends further to Liam's idea for a gay sauna board game, and Julian's idea to market himself as a break from the stereotypical macho carpenter, suggesting it naturally unfolds itself in one's work life as an entrepreneur.

6. Conclusion

In this study, we have attempted to provide insight into the experiences of gay male entrepreneurs and gay entrepreneurship as a discipline and in doing so assert the need for further research to be conducted on it. We have looked into an extreme group of entrepreneurs in investigating specifically homosexual entrepreneurs, individuals that can be considered outliers in the sphere of entrepreneurship. Within this group, we have attempted to provide multiplicity in experiences by interviewing entrepreneurs of diverse backgrounds and industries, and show the varying degrees that homosexuality can influence an entrepreneur and his venture. Moreover, where previous literature has positioned homosexuality as an obstacle in the corporate workplace and consequently in part a motivator for entering into entrepreneurship, we have given attention to how it informs and ultimately assists the gay entrepreneur in their career. We have shown that through various means such as social capital, gay identity and the behaviour it facilitates, gay entrepreneurs are able to access a large pool of resources and recognise unique opportunities. We have linked this to and patterned commonalities between the the concept of mixed embeddedness and ways immigrant entrepreneurs acquire and employ their own resources.

This study's findings have shown that homosexuality manifests itself in subtle ways in the entrepreneur. Gay entrepreneurs are equipped with broad networks and embed themselves in a bonded community formed on the basis of a shared sexual preference. Subsequently the connections they develop bypass traditional professional spheres, giving the entrepreneur access to a broader set of resources. Therefore, homosexuality functions as a self-organizing network tool. Moreover, the forums in which they develop these relationships are often unconventional and operate outside of what can be considered ordinary parameters. Sexual and social spaces such as bars function as a nexus for meeting, and professional relationships often grow from there.

This study has found that, where previously the fear of being perceived as gay in the workplace can trigger a form of self-censoring (Rumens and Kerfoot, 2009), entrepreneurs make use of their "gay" identity and the behavioural traits it equips them with to their advantage. In turn, they recognise unique opportunities, helped and facilitated by their

homosexual identity. Homosexuality is then an asset, and whilst many of the entrepreneurs sampled were hesitant to consider their homosexual identity as an advantage, it is evident it articulates itself in unconscious ways, rather than as a conscious "tool" to be employed.

This study and its findings then contribute to the field of entrepreneurship in various ways. Previous literature has suggested there is a need for more research to be made on gay entrepreneurs to understand the economic impact of the community and contribute to our understanding of entrepreneurship as a heterogenous phenomenon (Schindehutte et al. 2005; Galloway, 2007). In conducting this study, we have sought to give further insight into the diverse and multi-natured experiences of gay male entrepreneurs and to what extent their homosexuality has influenced their entrepreneurial experience, and therefore provide a wider perspective on identity as a steering influence in entrepreneurship. We have advocated for a need to view all entrepreneurial instances through a contextual lens by focusing on the who, the why, the where, the when and the how (Welter, 2010). For many of the entrepreneurs sampled, their homosexual identity as a context helps determine these variables. In doing so we have attempted to modify and create a new theory of context which currently lacks an inclusion and consideration of sexuality, and help cement the "recursive links between contexts and entrepreneurship" (Welter, 2010, 176). Our study has specifically focused on the 'who' of contextual theory, and the effects one's identity has on moderating the entrepreneurial experience. Homosexuals can be considered outliers, a group within entrepreneurship we may not often pay attention to or deem relevant, however we have demonstrated that this group of individuals "bring[s] their own context to the research site" (Welter, 2010, 178). It is thus our aim to show that it is pertinent to consider sexual identity as an important context in entrepreneurship. Similarly, our findings have shown that gay men recognise unique opportunities, often ones that are predicated around their homosexuality, and consequently sexual identity should be a consideration in contemporary theory on opportunity recognition. Research has been focused on an entrepreneur's previous career experience and prior knowledge of markets (Shane, 2000; Politis, 2005; Baron, 2006) but less attention has been given to how a context such as sexual identity can moderate and inform this process. We argue that the personal context is a natural informant into the professional sphere for the gay entrepreneur and therefore factors such as identity must be taken into account.

Furthermore, we have appropriated and applied the concept of mixed embeddedness outside its traditional framework of immigrant entrepreneurship and empirically tested it to see whether it functions beyond this. In doing so we have not only lifted the theory into a new context, we have also shown that it can and does apply to other minority groups that have yet to be considered. The notion of family through shared identity, the incentive to connect and the access to resources, all components of mixed embeddedness, are similarly all factors that influence gay entrepreneurs. Equally, gay entrepreneurs show that identity can often compress spatial boundaries meaning their network goes beyond the simply visible local communities immigrant entrepreneurs rely on (Kloosterman, 2010), illustrating their own more invisible take on mixed embeddedness. We have also argued for a new view of social capital, stressing that the gay subculture helps facilitate social capital and forge network ties. The density and interconnectedness of often small gay communities helps work in favour of the entrepreneur who comes more easily into contact with people from a variety of professions.

Moreover, we advocate for a view that gay men and entrepreneurs have their own form of what prior research has dubbed as gender capital (Ross-Smith and Huppatz, 2010). If women possess certain skills that they employ and consider an advantage, we have attempted to show that gay men are equipped with a skillset unique to them which includes their mannerisms and soft skills. Whilst the investigation corroborates "that entrepreneurship does not remove the disadvantages or negative experiences associated with being gay" (Galloway, 2011, 902) and prevent all entrepreneurs from self-censoring themselves, it has found that certain behavioural tendencies can instead prove to be assets.

6.1 Implications and Future Research

Understanding the linkages between homosexuality and entrepreneurship is a reflexive and rarely linear process, with entrepreneurs drawing from their identity in various ways. We have attempted to piece together a snapshot of this phenomenon and capitalise on the extant literature through an analysis of ten entrepreneurs based in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. In doing so, we have found that the city has provided both a pull and a platform for these entrepreneurs, and has ultimately served as an enabler for their homosexual identity to develop, therefore assisting them in their entrepreneurial career. In order to provide a more

well-rounded perspective, we re-iterate the need for research to be carried out in other locational settings with more entrepreneurs, so as to understand how much a progressive institutional context and cosmopolitan site facilitates the positive relationship between homosexuality and entrepreneurship. Similarly, we have within the city, specifically, certain frontiers and forums created for the gay man. Further research in entrepreneurship should look into not only whether this is only specific to an urban setting, but investigate if heterosexual entrepreneurs create forums specific to them. As our findings begin to suggest gay entrepreneurs are drawn to the city, more research should investigate this, comparing the experiences of urban and rural gay entrepreneurs and what motivates them to set up where they do. Drawing parallels with ethnic enclave theory, research might prove fruitful investigating whether gay entrepreneurs create their own enclave in certain settings.

We have attempted to show what gay male entrepreneurs can bring to the field of entrepreneurship, but research must now look to other groups such as lesbians and transgender people to fully understand how sexual identity assists. Equally, we have seen that gay men have wide access to networks and other entrepreneurial players, suggesting that they fit the typecast of the entrepreneur overwhelmingly well. Future research should attempt to further understand whether gay men are therefore more naturally entrepreneurial and consequently innovative, and if the same traits and assets they have access to carry over to lesbians and transgender individuals. We propose that future research must also consider the very notion of the gay entrepreneur, and how much these individuals consider themselves as "entrepreneurs". Brief commentaries were made by the current set of interviewees on the extent to which they see themselves as such and how important it is to have gay role models in entrepreneurship. We suggest that investigations should be conducted into the heteronormativity of the word "entrepreneur", and how loaded the term is with certain qualities that LGBT individuals can identify with.

Furthermore, this investigation found that the opportunities these gay entrepreneurs recognised were not all explicitly catered to the gay consumer, suggesting that their identity helped inform their own entrepreneurial actions differently. Future research including a larger and more diverse set of entrepreneurs is needed to investigate whether homosexuality need not be limited to benefiting just the gay consumer and entrepreneur, but instead work in favour of the wider community.

Ultimately on a broader scale, gay entrepreneurs are agents of change and their sexuality becomes part of their innovation capabilities. Therefore gay entrepreneurs as a group or "pack" (Van de Ven, 2005) are an important contingent in order to understand how we see opportunities and innovation come about. Entrepreneurs are often perceived to act alone, but this is rarely the case - hidden figures who help shape the institutional and regulatory contexts that enable entrepreneurship play equally vital roles (Van de Ven, 2005). This study has attempted to show that by illustrating examples of gay entrepreneurs and the contexts they succeed in, we see innovation as a consequence of an institutional and social framework. Entrepreneurial action and players are bound by invisible ties, and for gay entrepreneurs this is especially true. Considering their homosexual identity and how it binds and connects them is one way we can further illustrate the diverse phenomenon that is entrepreneurship and move toward a greater understanding of it as a whole.

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Appendix A – Sample Selection

Name	Age	Business[s]
Tim	30-39	Music School in Nepal & Property Development Business
Julian	20-29	Carpentry Business
Noah	30-39	Mindfulness School
Liam	30-39	Finance Startup & DJ
Sam	30-39	Journalist/Radio Show Host
Jesse	40-49	Record Label
Benjamin	40-49	Gay Bar
Finn	40-49	Music Composer
Nick	40-49	Yoga School
Lucas	50-59	Gay Housing Service for the Elderly

Table. Sample set

Appendix B - Interview Guide

1. Age
2. What is your business? Tell me briefly what you do as a business. How many employees? Do you operate in multiple countries? If so, where? Reasons for a specific location(s)?
3. What led you to start the business?
4. Do you think being gay influenced your decision to start the business, and type of business? Or the type of environment you started in?
5. Would you say being gay allows you to recognise specific opportunities?
6. Do consumers know that you are gay?
7. Did you see being gay as an advantage?
8. (If yes) Do you think it lends credibility to your enterprise? Why/why not?
9. (If no) Why not?
10. Do you think it matters to consumers to know you are gay?
11. Would you include any nod to this in marketing/PR material?
12. Do you believe being gay has helped/hindered or had no effect at all on your career as an entrepreneur?
13. Have you ever not mentioned your sexuality or considered not mentioning it (consumers, colleagues, business partners, investors)? Have you changed/self censored the way you act?
14. Would you say you have a personal identity and a professional one? (and does this include mention of being gay?)
15. How much do you believe you market your personality to consumers?
16. Does your business promote LGBT rights?
17. Do you collaborate with other gay-owned businesses? Why/why not?
18. Do you have a connection to the gay community in Amsterdam?
19. Do you think it is important to have visible gay entrepreneurs and 'gay' businesses?
20. Do you see yourself as an entrepreneur?

Appendix C – Complete Narratives of Interviewees

Tim - Music School

Tim is a Dutch national in his late 30s, based in Amsterdam. He openly identifies as gay. He grew up in a conservative area of the Netherlands known as the "Bible Belt" and was raised in a "very orthodox Christian reformed family" but also a very entrepreneurial one. Eventually he moved to Rotterdam to study at the music conservatory, a very "gay dominated space" which he says was a relief and somewhere he could finally be himself. He believes he thrives in diverse and artistic workspaces as it was one way to "foster his homosexuality". Up until ten years ago, Tim worked as a music teacher at a high-school, but disenfranchised with the routine and curriculum, decided it was time for a change and an 'adventure'. And with that he found a vacancy for a piano teaching job in Nepal, "sold [his] house, [his] car and left". From there he worked for a number of years as a piano teacher until realising he did not have "the cultural capacity" to work in the Nepalese school environment as long as he employed his own "Dutch punctuality". However, he says it was more his own recognition that there was a severe lack of inclusivity for the school he was teaching at - with its primary audience being the children of the elite, he felt so many students were being unfacilitated and left behind. So in 2012, he started his own business. Aware that there were already a handful of NGOs pumping money into the economy but not actually providing work for the people there, he decided to start a social business - an arts school that employed only local Nepalese people. He employed 12 people, initially paid out of his own investments, but cut that number down to 6 and away from a model that worked with paying students and their money being channeled into social projects. However after starting it up, tragedy struck with the earthquake in Nepal and destroyed the school building. Recognising that after such a disaster there was a need to pivot and rethink the school as "nobody was thinking about ballet class..that's not really the first need", Tim and his co-workers went to the camps and provided music therapy for the kids who had been traumatised by the earthquakes. Soon the realisation came that there was a need to cater to those who needed an arts education to forget the trauma of the earthquake. Tim raised external funds from investors in The Netherlands, and changed from a social business to a model funded by money from the Netherlands, which was necessary after the collapse of the Nepalese economy.

Tim believes that at many stages his homosexuality has come into play, to inform and assist him in his entrepreneurial endeavours. On arriving in Nepal, Tim claims his homosexuality played into a form of cultural exchange, where the local Nepalese media depicted him and his partner as celebrities, and embraced and endorsed it as a symbol of "modernity". This gave them an "in" with the local elite and opportunities to network and further promote themselves. When interviewing with magazines, the reporters were most interested in portraying Tim and his partner as two homosexual owners of an art school. Tim claims he is consistent in being open about his homosexuality in his arts related work and plays on it through his body language, yet never explicitly mentions it. At the arts school, it has encouraged an understanding of diversity within his team, and whilst he maintains it shouldn't matter whether people know he is gay or not, it has played a role in facilitating certain things. He cites one example of its role, where in a country like Nepal that leaves many gay individuals left silenced and miserable, a man saw him on a gay dating app, and messaged saying "you're the one with that music school. I want to work for you - can I send you my CV?". He maintains that his sexuality and the forums it manifests itself in contributed in this sense to marketing his work and the jobs he needed done. Conversely Tim also runs a property development business he and his partner set up, involving renovating and then selling properties, and it is here where he claims his gay personality is stifled somewhat.

Unlike in the arts world where he believes his communication and empathy skills are encouraged and consolidated by his homosexuality, in the more transactional world of real estate, he claims he is more heterosexual acting. Tim self censors his behaviour in front of what he perceives as typical heterosexual guys, saying that his bodily behaviour becomes more rigid. For instance he is very aware of not crossing his legs and making himself bigger, equally ensuring that he does not give them a weak handshake. This is down to an apprehension of appearing vulnerable and "giving himself away".

Working with the gay community and establishing a gay network is one thing Tim feels is important to him. He is of the mind that wherever you go as a gay man or woman, the LGBT community is your family. As a result of this, he says he feels a sense of obligation to work with the community and support gay individuals and their wider LGBT counterparts. With his school in Nepal, one of his biggest projects was working with the Blue Diamond Society supporting the rights of the gay community, offering them a choir and stage for events.

Julian - Carpenter

Julian is an Australian national in his late 20s, living between Amsterdam and various countries abroad throughout the year, but has been based primarily in the Dutch capital since the end of 2012. Raised in Australia, Julian cites his mother's work building their house as the ethos that eventually assisted in developing his own craft as a carpenter. In growing up, he claims he had an easy time in regards to his homosexuality as he came out at a young age and was used to his mother having relationships with both men and women.

Julian runs his own carpentry business but is also a circus and acrobatics teacher when the work presents itself. In Amsterdam however, his carpentry work is his primary focus and consists of him doing small-to-large jobs around the city. He claims that in a city like Amsterdam, whilst the majority of the population are very intellectual, often "no one knows how to put up a shelf". In starting his business, it came about after facing a lack of job opportunities as a circus teacher. Having spent time back in Australia studying at a trade school and harbouring the dream of one day building his own house, he moved to Nepal prior to coming back to The Netherlands to build a house with his partners. It was only then on his return to Amsterdam that the suggestion to become a handyman came up and his business was born. Working as a handyman has benefited him in numerous ways - not only is it a flexible career path where he can arrange for jobs when he's in the city, it has also been one forum where his sexuality has assisted him. In assessing the carpentry and tradesperson industry, he says that it is often dominated by tradespeople who are "consuming of space, very heterosexual and very dominant sort of men". For many customers then looking for somebody to hire, he provides an alternative to this personality. He cites one example of a lesbian couple with kids, saying he believes that because he's gay, he is often more welcome in the home, especially when the work is more long-term and requires him to consistently be around somebody's house. Moreover, Julian continues that often a number of his clients he has got through friends, typically gay men or lesbians, and he often gets referrals along the lines of "here's a nice alternative to having the macho man". He notes that him being a friend further compounds the recommendation as people feel they can trust him, unlike many tradespeople which he believes people have a perception of as untrustworthy.

At work then, his sexuality comes into conversation, but more along the lines of getting to know one of his clients and them getting to know him in return. He is always open about himself, but initially was hesitant over introducing the fact that he has two boyfriends, and even when he does say it pluralised, "people [still] don't hear that". There is a slight hint of self-censorship but Julian considers it more due to the fact that whilst The Netherlands is an incredibly liberal country - "to the point where even if somebody was a bit homophobic they wouldn't dare say it" - polyamorous relationships are still very rare. He risks "being a bit too strange for [his customers] and it is a professional setting". In this sense, Julian says that occasionally there is an active effort on his part to gloss over the gender of his partners , so much so that he structures his wording intentionally to be deceptive and avoid outing himself.

Whilst he does not regard talking about being gay as unprofessional, he notes there was a period early on when starting his relationship with his boyfriends of being tentative to speak about it, and in turn led to feeling "a self-effacing guilt at being closeted again". Similarly, one job when working with a team of tradespeople who all fit the dominant tradesperson stereotype, he mentions he was definitely checking himself; at one stage they threw a party where they invited strippers and he said in this "heterosexual male environment...I did feel very out of place…[aware] that I'm not being outwardly gay". One of the benefits of being an entrepreneur for him however is the flexibility and time you have to yourself - there are jobs when he does not necessarily need to interact with clients. In a broader sense, he says he can imagine this flexibility being helpful and asset to working as an entrepreneur and being gay as it frees one from people making jokes and those structures.

In regards to his network and the wider gay community, Julian gets most of his work through personal networks. Initially, all his work came through his boyfriends and people he had had sexual relations with. For instance, he says that after having sexual relations with one man, they got talking about what the other does for work and somebody has said "oh I need someone [to do] that" in regards to a household job. He also considered advertising on a few gay dating apps, pitching himself as a sexy carpenter but believes that these spaces were strictly sexual not professional. Julian considers the fact that he is "mention-worthy" - being gay and having two boyfriends - is something a client will bring up as a story and often help him get "re-mentioned". He notes "it is helpful that I'm a bit more unique than the standard heterosexual man". Certainly, Julian says in regards to his own view and customers, there is a tendency as well to "buy within the community...if you can find somebody who is LGBT you

should". In The Netherlands, because being gay is so mainstream, he says it's less of a special thing and so there is little to no infrastructure around promoting gay businesses and that network. He says though that this is detrimental, as there is less of a feeling of togetherness. Julian would prefer to work for clients who are LGBT and says "if I had to choose a client, I would choose one that was LGBT, although it often goes both ways". He draws parallels with immigrant communities, like the Italian community back home in Australia, saying it is an "in-community thing". For example he has an "innate degree of nepotism towards [the gay community]" as a member of it. Describing how for many gay and fellow LGBT individuals, experiencing a loss of family is common and therefore when they lose that family, "they find somebody else to be family with". Therefore the community is like a family and for Julian he says that if he goes to a gay bar, it is "an embassy" and that he "feels much closer to a Lebanese gay person" than a Dutch or Australian straight person. Julian also describes that for gay entrepreneurs, they often exist on the outside of this "white man's club" and there are lost opportunities. However he claims that being gay takes precedence over being an entrepreneur and it is important to be aware of the bigger picture and how as a gay man you interact with society.

Liam- DJ

Liam is a British national in his 30s, based in Amsterdam. He is openly gay and has worked setting up his own businesses in the past with fellow entrepreneurs, and now works primarily as a product manager at an IT company, whilst also working as a DJ around the city. According to Liam, the current position he is in is the least entrepreneurial position he has been in for the last fifteen years of his life.

His first startup experience came back in the UK in the south-west and subsequently London, where he helped co-found a financial technology startup; a peer to peer finance company that helps match borrowers and investors on loans and cuts out the bank - the idea being that people lend money to other people and the repayments on loans go back to the original investor. It is an online platform and one that is still active today and widely regarded in Europe and in the UK as a major player in the lending industry. Liam says the inspiration behind this service was the realisation that banks were getting too powerful and that "too much risk was taken on behalf of the individual". Concurrent with this was the development

of technology and the opportunity to use the internet to connect the relevant players in the market.

Liam describes his informal meeting that kicked off the process of him becoming a part of the founding management team as slightly surreal. The interviewer, later to be a colleague, suggested they meet in a gay bar which alarmed him, as he said he became conscious she already knew he was gay. Conversely, he explains she liked to put the first meeting in a gay bar as it "immediately set the standard of what was acceptable". Liam says he took this forward into his own career and work in the startup as operations lead - when faced with one instance where an employee listed off some casual homophobia, he said "before you say anything else, I have to tell you that I'm gay". Whilst it took some time for him to acknowledge this, he said the necessity to be professional ultimately outweighed anything, but cites this case as one of the first experiences where being gay was a challenge. He claims it helped encourage him to foster an environment of tolerance and openness at work, and something he looked for in the people he employed that they could contribute to this. This he believes. was one of the reasons he employed a large number of women for team lead positions as he often bonded with them due to his soft skills and what he saw as a mutual trust. In this sense he considers being gay an advantage in that it let him tread the workplace line as he was not perceived as a threat to the senior often male management, and he could easily bond with the female staff.

Liam says that he rarely modifies his behaviour or hides his homosexuality, especially when he's working within an organization or running one. Only in an interview would he hide elements of his personality. However he says he is quick to assert that fact that he is gay and open in a bid to avoid people who aren't ok with that and communicate it's something "[he is] not going to back away from".

Regarding his work as a DJ, he sees being gay playing more of a networking role but equally attributes it with lending certain qualities to his personality, which is an advantage. In securing regular gigs he references being gay as conducive to that, as often at his level it is a case of the job going to the person the venue likes most. He says that as he is not at the level of truly professional DJ, "being relaxed, open and able to have open conversations really helps". For many of the venues he DJs at, Liam's friends are the owners but he says that having a network of gay friends really helps alongside this. Often when somebody cannot

make the gig, his friends will reach out and ask if he can cover for them and vice-versa, "and there really isn't much [they] have in common apart from the fact that [they are] gay and DJs". Similarly he often only works and gets hired at gay venues - bars, clubs and Pride events, and as a result his music is catered to a commercial gay audience.

Liam further cites his experience setting up another startup a couple of years ago where when he needed skills and resources, it was his gay network he reached out to for things such as copywriters and legal assistance, as he says there is always much more breadth and a willingness to help, and "he can find pretty much anybody through 1-2-3 degrees of separation".

Currently Liam is working on creating his own board game that is set in a gay sauna and says this is where looking for a gay investor could be critical as they will most likely be able to understand and relate to the premise and setting of the game. Whilst he does not consider it necessary usually, he believes that in this case it is relevant, though always sees the decision from a business perspective and what benefits the business most. That said, where possible he would prefer as an entrepreneur to work with fellow gay businesses and gay network as "[he] could kind of guarantee [he] had some connection already and a foot in the door".

Lucas - Gay Elderly Housing

Lucas is a Dutch national in his mid-50s, based in Amsterdam but originally from a smaller town in The Netherlands. He is openly gay. Lucas has started more than one company in his time and formerly worked in the police force and as a Managing Director for a business in the Bible Belt in the south of the country. His last two business ventures have been focused on providing care and living accommodation for elderly LGBT individuals. Describing how the process came about, Lucas says he was talking to friends about care services in The Netherlands and the cuts that have been made that mean there is much more responsibility on behalf of the individual and their friends and family. As most of his friends are gay, he started talking about what it would be like when they get older. Lucas says that for many gay and LGBT people, they don't often have children and therefore lack that safety net that family provides. As a result he set up his first business on this, which focused on providing both a nursing home and care for explicitly elderly LGBT individuals. He claims that for many

elderly LGBT people there is a level of discrimination and seclusion that comes with growing old and identifying as such within the current elderly community. However he stresses that his motivations were more fuelled by a positive perspective - when he thought about him and his friends growing old, he wanted to continue to live with the people he currently chooses too, which happens to be gay men. He says "people choose the ones they live with for their entire life...and I would like to continue that when I'm old". Citing a survey in the Netherlands that found out 20% of the LGBT community would like to have the choice to live with other LGBT people and were in favour of such an environment, this further consolidated his decision.

Having started this, he says he quickly realised that providing care and accommodation at the same time was initially too much of an undertaking, so he separated the two, creating a housing service without the care, strictly for elderly LGBT people.
Lucas credits his being gay to recognising specific opportunities. In talking about and explaining his venture, he's often found that other gay and LGBT individuals tend to be much more receptive to his business and can easily see why it is necessary. With heterosexual individuals, there is the need to explain the community, the situation and ultimately the needs, things that do not naturally come into their sphere of experience.

In building out his business and marketing it, he often resorts to going to gay bars and hubs to recruit potential elderly individuals who would be interested in living in the home. From there, they collaborate on the services it will provide and how it will look, keeping an open dialogue at all times. What he finds difficult to navigate is that this generation of elderly LGBT people are often still fearful of discrimination and in some places it exists, so creating a house that is gay "but not too openly gay" is crucial. He says finding a solution that mediates interaction with the outside world and fostering a gay community is the hard part. However, regarding the financing of his current business, he says whilst initially it took some time to find the right investors, "getting the money has been absolutely no problem", something Lucas says he found "remarkable". The regular real estate investors were very reluctant as they did not see the need or the market for elderly LGBT living, and Lucas says a lack of knowledge in regards to the LGBT community was a more powerful influence than any form of discrimination. He made a choice not to go to gay investors as the sample pool was too small with insufficient funds, and he wanted the specialist knowledge of investors more than anything.

Lucas maintains that throughout his career, he has never changed his behaviour depending on his work environment - even working within the police force and a highly religious and conservative area of the country. Claiming that it only furthers the potential to discriminate, he has never had an issue being openly gay within his work, though says he can imagine that outside of The Netherlands this could prove to be a problem.

For Lucas, his current and previous business have led him to work extensively with the wider gay community. He says it is "an essential part of [his] work to be part of the community" and is a great believer in building gay communities. The community represents friends and family, in replacement of ones that gay individuals may have lost in their regular communities, and it's important to make a point of these communities as a reminder of LGBT rights - ones Lucas considers lucky to have but is aware "could be taken away very easily". He says that most, if not all of his network are gay and he has leveraged the offering of resources they provide. For Lucas, he believes that whilst sexual preference is an odd basis for forming a network, "it's easier to get people from all sorts of businesses and sides of society to meet", than if your social network was purely based on work or study.

Benjamin - Gay Bar

Benjamin is a 40-year-old Dutch national who co-owns a gay bar in Amsterdam. After finishing a degree in commercial economics, he began his career working for a large Dutch retail company, where he says he enjoyed the actual work, but did not like the "politics" of a big company. One aspect of his job that he did like was that his office was majority female, which made him feel more comfortable being openly gay, since it was a less "masculine culture."

At a certain point, he participated in a company coaching where he mapped out his career progression within the company, and realized he did not like the idea of the things he would have to do and the person he would have to be in order to grow within the company. This is the point where he started to consider what else he might want to do, which is also when he met (in a romantic context) the man who eventually became co-owner of the bar. From an initial light-hearted suggestion that they could start a gay bar, this idea grew to become more serious.

With no experience or idea of where to proceed, they began talking to entrepreneurs they knew and banks, to figure out if it was possible and how to proceed. They spent a year developing their business plan, and then working to find the right location, working cautiously because of the high closure rates among bars. Now, they have been running the bar for 10 years.

Reflecting on how he recognized the opportunity, Benjamin believes it was a mix of simply wanting his own bar, and recognizing as a gay man that the gay bars in Amsterdam at the time were not totally fulfilling what he wanted to experience in a gay bar. He had previously started working for an organization that promotes gay rights and owns its own bars, but soon discovered that the bars felt segregated based on different gay stereotypes, so he thought that there needed to be something else available. At the same time, working in these bars helped him to see that it was something he enjoyed doing. As to the question whether he believes that being gay is an advantage as an entrepreneur, Benjamin believes it may be, explaining:

> *As a gay person, you're already a bit outside of the normal environment you grow up in. So you're pretty different from the start of it, you already start taking decisions that are not laid out for you...and that helps you to create your own [path]...because for a lot of gay people they can...more easily take the steps to create their business because they're not really bothered by norm[s]...[such as] you need to do this, and have a stable job…*

For Benjamin, having an open working environment where he is free to show that he is gay is very important, because he does not see a way for him to truly separate his personal and professional lives, explaining that "you still have conversations at work with colleagues and that's not always about work. People tell you all the time what they did last night and you know about their husband and children, so it can't be separate." Even when approaching banks for financing, Benjamin and his partner never made any effort to change their behavior or minimize that they were starting a gay bar, although at times they did sense that banks did not want to be associated with a gay business. All the same, they maintained the attitude that "it is what it is."

Benjamin says his bar has become part of the gay community in Amsterdam because of the "homely feel" they have created, which makes it feel like more of a community place than a

commercial bar. People will approach them for sponsorships for events or group because of this community feel, and they have worked groups as a key way to attract people to their bar.

Noah - Mindfulness School

Noah is a Dutch national in his thirties, living in Amsterdam. His main career path has been working as a psychologist and therapist until he set up his own side business alongside this teaching people the art of mindfulness. At a certain point, Noah started debating if he wanted to change career paths, and found himself discussing potential options with a friend. This is when the idea of establishing his own business came about. Noah realized that he had been informally teaching himself and his therapy patients the practice of mindfulness for a while, so he began to take classes and test the possibility of becoming an official trainer. A fellow therapist and friend joined his training and from there they decided to begin their own trainings and their Mindfulness school was born. The school offers eight week training courses in mindfulness and Noah explains it's a standard offering and has been known to help people who have anxiety disorders or depression. When setting up the school with his co-founder, they considered carving out their own niche in the mindfulness field by offering a program dedicated to gay people in Amsterdam, however they ended up not pursuing this for unknown reasons.

For Noah, he considers himself lucky to have worked as a psychologist because it's an environment "where people are relatively open", something he attributes to there being a high density of women in the workplace. He mentions he never hides his sexuality in his business, and says that he considers it possible that some of his female clients perceive him as more open and less threatening, because they know he is gay.

One of the things Noah cites as a key aspect of his gay entrepreneurial identity is the networks it gave him access to. When starting their business, they relied on their friends, coincidentally all gay men, to help do that. They also utilised Facebook pages for gay expatriates to gain awareness of their business. They had somebody to build their website, to design their logo and to shoot a promotional video. Noah says that his gay network specifically gives him access to a community of creative individuals. It also meant that for his business, this was particularly beneficial as no real funding was needed other than doing tasks

such as the website and marketing. With the mindfulness school however, Noah has little connection to the community.

Sam - Freelance Journalist & Radio Show Host

Sam is a Dutch national in his late 30's, originally from a rural area of The Netherlands but now located in Amsterdam. He has worked as a freelance journalist for eight years. About 1 ½ years ago, he also started his own podcast, which he is still running. Although he reports on a variety of topics, his stories often focus on arts and culture. He got into arts growing up when he started playing the guitar, which he used as a coping mechanism when he started discovering his homosexuality.

While Sam does not exclusively report on gay topics, he certainly does not shy away from the topic in his projects. Referring to his podcast, he says that "not everything is being sexualized or so, but it's there, and people know it." In the show, he has brought on a friend as co-host, who is also gay, and they mostly chat about things that happen in life, and often it is from a gay perspective. In addition, he has made two radio documentaries related to being gay, and is working on a third. According to him, when it comes to stories about being gay or LGBT topics, people tend to turn to him, since he is gay and, "living the gay life and know[s] quite a few gay people...so that slips into [his] work as well."

Sam believes that his life would be completely different, in every aspect, if he weren't gay, but does not think this is only an advantage, but that there are also any number of unknown missed opportunities and disadvantages due to his sexuality. One self- observation from Sam is that he believes his motivation to work hard comes from a feeling that he needs to prove himself, which, in his perspective, stems from his sexuality, saying, "Getting to this entrepreneurship of mine to work, was if I succeed in that, then the whole world will accept me."

Sam believes that journalism is quite a masculine profession, but notes stage presenting as one exception where he believes his sexuality is an advantage. He gets the sense that he has an advantage in this area because he is "able to get to the audience in a way."

On the topic of self-censorship, Sam does "tone down" depending on his interviewee, which he says is necessary because one of the most important things in interviews is to "level with...the person on the other end. And clothing tells a lot, about behavior as well," so he adjusts his clothing and mannerisms to fit the situation. On the other hand, he believes that in some circumstances, being open and explicit with an interviewee about his sexuality can create an atmosphere of trust and vulnerability that is beneficial to the interview process. Sam says that in journalism, the mixing of personal and professional "comes naturally when you're a journalist." He explains that, in documentaries, for example, the story is often told from first person, so he needs to draw from his personal experience and his sexuality. He also believes that he is able to recognize journalistic opportunities that his heterosexual counterparts might miss, saying: "As a gay person, you look at the world from a different angle than heterosexual people do....Other stuff springs to mind when looking at the world, and making this explicit can be, journalistically, very interesting." On the other hand, he is not always happy about mixing his sexuality and work, expressing his feelings as such: "It's just me. Why? Pick someone else! Why do I have to tell my story? Why not other people?" Even so, he concludes that "if it works, it works. It gets a message across, [so] why not?"

In his journalistic work, Sam has had several opportunities to report on LGBT issues, and has entrenched himself in the local LGBT community in Amsterdam, which has given him a network to get more work, for example in the summer of 2016 he was hired by a local paper to write an article about the terrorist attack in Orlando, which targeted a gay nightclub. This article ended up being a front page story, and consequently led to other jobs related to the LGBT community, such as participating on a panel discussion of acceptance of the LGBT community in The Netherlands.

For Sam, it is important to see a variety of gay entrepreneurs who represent the diversity among the gay community in general, and to connect with other entrepreneurs who do not fit into a "masculine" entrepreneurial stereotype.

Jesse - Record Label

Jesse is an American expatriate, originally from New York City, who has been in Amsterdam since the 1980's. He is the co-founder of a record company and shop specializing in dance

music. In 1987/88 he met the man who would become the other co-founder of the company. At the time, they recognized the opportunity to bring house music from New York City to Amsterdam.

Jesse believes that his sexuality does allow him to recognize opportunities that others miss, but also believes the reverse to be true, that a heterosexual man will be able to see opportunities that he does not recognize. For example, his company manages a boy band that has been running through six generations of members, and Jesse says he is very successful at picking the right boys to join the group, and [doesn't] think straight people can do that." Even so, he is very hesitant to say that he believes being gay is an advantage to him as an entrepreneur. Jesse is adamant that he maintains the same personality in his personal and professional lives, although he believes that this is a luxury that not all gay men have, recognizing that often there is a need to self-censor in work environments. Relatedly, he does appreciate the autonomy to express himself freely that owning his business has afforded him, but says if he had never had that autonomy, he does not think he would miss it.

Jesse says his record label does not make any effort to specifically work with other LGBT owned businesses, but the business does contribute donations to local organizations and charities.

Nick - Yoga Business

Nick is a 40-year-old American expatriate who has been living in The Netherlands for 12 years. He used to manage a small hotel, and eventually planned to purchase a hotel alongside the owners of the hotel he managed. After spending nearly a year planning this, one of the sellers backed out, which left him wondering what to do. At that point, he had never wanted to own a yoga business because he didn't see high earning potential. Nevertheless, he decided to devote just two weeks to focusing on developing a yoga business, and just seven days later, he had the keys to his first studio. Thus, the yoga school was born. From this, Nick has worked on several projects, including two books, a DVD, a 200-hour intensive course, a second school, and complementary activities offered in the two schools, such as life coaching, acupuncture, massage, and various forms of therapy.

Nick says that a major factor for him choosing entrepreneurship was that his parents were entrepreneurs. They instilled in him the belief that he could do whatever he wanted, and showed him the benefits of autonomy in work life. He believes that being gay has benefitted him as an entrepreneur: "I think that as gay men, we tend to help each other, because we have a bond based on growing up different. So, you do tend to help each other." He notes that the man who gave him his first and only business loan was originally a sexual partner, who became a friend, and eventually a creditor, which helped him to start his business. He says he would do the same for another gay man, out of a desire to help, especially younger gay men, which he calls a "sort of paternal-ness". He would do this "because sometimes it's nice to know that you have a support network, even if that's the only thing that binds you together." That being said, he admits that most of his network, both personal and professional, are not gay men, but rather close friends and like-minded people.

According to Nick, he never self-censors around clients, staff, or others in a professional setting, because he is not concerned with the opinions of others toward him. Instead, he says his personality remains the same between his personal and professional life.

Although as an individual Nick is connected to the gay community in Amsterdam, as an entrepreneur, he has not built theses ties in his business, although he did consider introducing a men's only class, but preferred not to segregate his classes.

Finn - Freelance Composer

Finn is a Dutch national in his late 30's. Finn studied at a film academy to become a director of photography. In the academy, there was no music education, it focused more on editing, directing, and sound. Music had been his hobby, with memories of playing with his parent's piano and his sound blaster. One day, he met a fellow director studying at the academy, who asked Finn to try to make music for a few movies he was directing, and this was the start of Finn's career as a composer. Even so, he spent four more years after finishing school doing a variety of work related to film, until in 2005, the same director asked him to do an official project for a television series. He put all his other work aside, started working as a freelance composer for film and television, and never went back. Since then, the old classmate has been

a steady contractor, and currently the two have begun working on their first Hollywood film project.

Most of Finn's clients come to him through word-of-mouth, through coming to know projects that he has worked on. Often, when in social situations, he makes an effort to network himself by telling people he meets about his work. In fact, he says that half of his job is social, by having a professional relationship with the producers and director, and being someone that's nice to be around. Finn notes that the soft skills to connect and empathize with others is a necessity for him, and though he had never connected this ability to his being gay, he believes this could play a role in his broader personality that includes these soft skills.

Finn says he would never tell a client he is gay out of nowhere, but doesn't make any effort to hide it. In fact, in some cases, a client being aware of his sexuality has actually helped him stick in the client's memory after they met, and has helped him get work insofar as people remember him and then consider him for a project. For example, he tells one story where he met a gay director, "in a gay bar, and the start there was 'Oh, we really should work together…' while being half drunk, and then half a year later he had a project." Regarding the issue of self-censorship, Finn says he is always himself, but when in social situations, he will try to get a sense of the group to decide if it will be a big deal that he is gay. That being said, he feels it is important for him to be himself at all times when meeting potential clients, since his personality is a big part of his cooperation with a director.

In regards to his connection to the gay community, there has been one particular instance when Finn specifically was offered and accepted a project because he knew the director as being a gay man, the project itself was a movie with a gay subject, and most of the crew were gay men. Generally, Finn believes his network, which his says is about 50% gay men, is important, since he is surrounded by people who will recommend him whenever they hear about a project.