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Special Topic: Place Exploration

How do the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces: A case study of Street 66, Dublin.

Third Year Special Topic Research Project

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Image 1. Street 66- “A place is a unique spot in the universe” (Gieryn 2000: 466).

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Abstract

This research examines how the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces in Dublin City. This project provides a case study of Street 66 in Dublin and used a qualitative approach to gain insights into how this bar is understood. This study used semi-structured interviews, photo representation and visual ethnography to provide an understanding of how this queer space is interpreted and used. This study challenges the assertion that queer spaces are no longer necessary in contemporary western societies due to the acceptance and tolerance of queer culture. Key findings of this research highlighted the need for queer spaces for the LGBTQ+ community to have a place to belong, meet like-minded people, feel comfortable to express and perform their identities. However, this research highlights the nuances of queer spaces by stating they are not utopias and issues occur here too such as race and class boundaries and the dilution of queerness with influx of heterosexual groups. This research discusses both the complexities and significances of queer spaces in Dublin.

Chapter One: Introduction

Bell and Binnie (2004) discuss that the mainstreaming, increasing visibility and acceptance of gay culture has enabled gay individuals to use non-queer spaces. The marriage referendum in 2015 was a significant milestone for gay rights in Ireland however this does not automatically translate to an acceptance of queerness. With the tragic murders of Michael Snee and Aidan Moffitt in Sligo in April 2022 and further homophobic attacks in Dublin city, LGBTQ+ members highlight that there remains a homophobic issue in Ireland and raised safety concerns (Fanucci 2022). Slimm, member of the Labour Party in Kerry argues that “LGBTQ people are still not safe in Irish society, and I don’t think we will ever feel safe, not for a long, long time” (Fanucci 2022). Browne (2007) found that ‘gay cities’ like Dublin are more tolerable of the LGBTQ+ community however media reports and respondents from this research highlight the insecurities experienced by queer individuals in public spaces. Holland (2022) highlights that without hate crime legislation there is no official reporting of hate crimes in Ireland thus the number of hate related assaults is unknown, but LGBTQ+ helplines reported an increase in phone calls. The momentous decriminalising of homosexuality in 1992 in Ireland and the passing of the same-sex referendum in 2015 highlight significant progression in Irish society. However, homophobia and transphobia continue to exist highlighting the need for LGBTQ+ spaces for queer individuals to have a place to belong and feel safe to be themselves.

Thus, this research project provides an understanding of how queer spaces in Dublin are understood, experienced and viewed by the LGBTQ+ community using the case study of Street 66. To carry out this research, this study will set out to explore how is a sense of place established in the bar, is there a sense of belonging and community here and does this place enable the performance and expression of queer identity. The key themes to explore these research questions and sub questions include place, third place, queer spaces, identity and

community. This research was carried out using a qualitative approach with a range of methods such as semi-structured interviews, visual ethnographic interviews and photographic representation.

This introduction provides an outline of this research project followed by a setting the scene section which will contextualize Street 66 bar. Chapter Two will provide a review of the literature on the themes in this research which includes an analysis of existing key theoretical arguments and empirical research. Chapter Three discusses the methodological approach of this research paper, alongside an analysis of the qualitative approach and discussion of ethics, data analysis and issues of positionality. Chapter Four explores the findings from the research project that has been analysed with the theoretical arguments and case studies discussed in Chapter Two. Finally, Chapter Five will provide the project with a conclusion of the key arguments, reflections of the project and recommendations for future research.

(1.1) Setting the Scene

“Tucked away in the heart of a trendy south Dublin on Parliament Street close to Dublin castle and City Hall, Street 66 is a live musical bar with a fun function room” (Street 66 N.d.). Street 66 opened the 1st of December 2016 by Siobhan Conmy and Cirs Ilarena, after replacing the Front Lounge. Street 66 is one of 5 gay nightlife venues in Dublin the others being the George, Pantibar, Pennylane, Mother and Jack Nealon’s. Other queer events that take place include Mother in Lost Lane and Spinster in the Grand Social.

As well as being a gay bar, Street 66 is a dog-friendly café and nightclub, which allows for a range of people to enjoy this space based on their interests. The bar opens seven days a week mostly from 3pm. The nightclub opens 2 days a week, Friday and Saturday and closes at 2:30am. Weekend afternoons are the most popular time to bring dogs to the bar. The bar consists of the front bar that has a 150 person capacity and the back bar that has a 350 person

capacity with a DJ booth and where most of the dancing takes place (The Rainbow Umbrella 2021). The interior design of the bar is described as a “large living room” due to the collection of eclectic furniture and art such as handmade lamps and second-hand furniture from convents (The Rainbow Umbrella 2021: 5:53). Much of the interior art is of queer icons such as Andy Warhol, Frida Kahlo, David Bowie.



*Image 3. “Andy Warhol looks a scream
Hang him on my wall” Bowie (1971).*

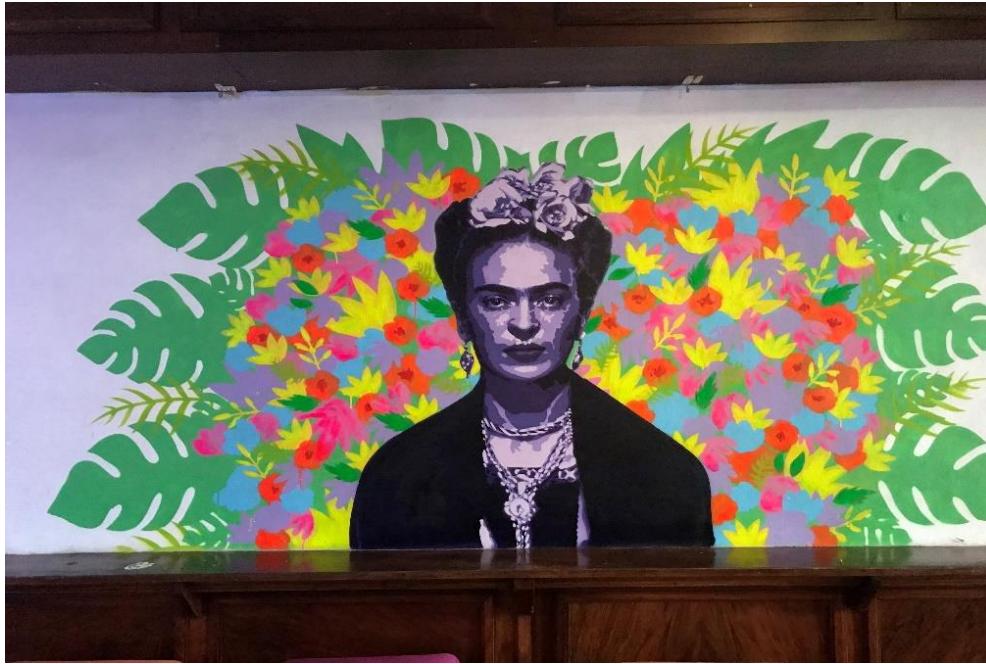


Image 2. Frida Kahlo, queer representation and art

The owner considers the bar a community centre and safe space for the LGBTQ+ community where they can use this space for hosting events or hanging out. The owner acknowledges that the bar is for profit as herself and staff have to make a living from it, but it is a space for the LGBTQ+ community, “it’s all about the community, we obviously do make a living from it but it’s so important that it’s for the community, it’s a relaxed homely atmosphere” (The Rainbow Umbrella 2021: 4.58)

The bar was named after the reggae song by Linton Kwesi Johnson due to the owners’ love for reggae, funk, soul and jazz. The owners wanted to incorporate these genres into the bar to provide a diversity of music and type of events being held at a gay bar “more than a synthesis of tastes, Street 66 is meant to be both a second home and an homage to the metamorphosis of globalised venues everywhere” (Street 66 N.d.). As well as having a mix of music here, the bar hosts a range of events for the queer community; Pride Poetry night once a month, games nights, Vinyl Thursdays, Drag and Draw, burlesque, queer market, comedy night, live music and so on. For their 5th anniversary, the bar held events that co-ordinated with the reopening

of the bar after several COVID-19 lockdowns in 2021 and Dublin Winter Pride. Events included Wilde poetry night to celebrate the work of Oscar Wilde, Pride afternoon tea with Mr Pussy, a donation event for the Annual Collection for the Needy and Homeless and a queer Christmas market. Prior to the pandemic, the bar held a weekly market on Saturdays from 12-5 with approximately 13 stalls. The bar also provides a space for the LGBTQ+ to celebrate International Women's Day, Paddy's Day, Pride or watch sport events like six nations.

33-34 Parliament Street has transformed immensely since the 90s when it accidentally became gay bar in the 1990s. Formerly known as the Front Lounge, the LGBTQ+ community began coming here after The Turk's Head began implementing a 'no gay' door policy after new ownership. The community instead started going to the Front Lounge, irrespective of being a gay bar or not, and place-making began taking place as they were known for mixing in the back lounge while straight customers stuck to the front. Eventually the bar "came one of the most popular gay venues in the city" because of the clientele and events they had such as drag shows or gay quizzes (The-Outmost 2016). The bar was put up for sale and bought by the co-owners in 2016 who had experience in managing bars and DJing. There were issues revolving around the opening of Street 66 as there were rumours it was to be a straight, reggae bar, but it remains to be a LGBTQ+ space and plays range of music, from 'Woman' by Doja Cat to 'Proud Mary' by Tina Turner to an entire evening of The Smiths.

I chose to do my research project on Street 66 due to wanting to understand the importance of Irish queer spaces and understand what Street 66 offers the LGBTQ+ community. Street 66 is my local queer bar and aided in the discovery of my sexuality, thus I wanted to discover how others have experienced this space and uplift the perspectives and stories by other queer people.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

(2.1) Introduction

This research project examines place exploration within the LGBTQ+ community by examining how they view, understand and experience queer spaces with a focus on the gay bar Street 66. This literature review provides an understanding of the existing literature, theories and studies on the themes that relate to this research. The themes in this section are all tied to place exploration and infuse this research project with sociological knowledge with the themes on place, third place, queer spaces, the historical context of Irish queer spaces, community and identity.

This literature review begins with an exploration of the theme on place as Gieryn (2000) discusses the sociological significance of place and its importance in people's lives for place attachment, place making and social interactions. Within the theme on place, this review will examine the literature around third place and the importance of having a place outside the home and work to unwind, have fun and socialise. Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) discuss that taverns are third place therefore gay bars can act as a third place for the LGBTQ+ community as they act as sites for socialising, dating, dancing without judgement. Place and queer spaces also facilitate the construction and expression of sexual and gender identities due being amongst like-minded people. This review will explore literature on how identities can shift depending on the context or certain places contain habitus that can be exclusionary to those who do not fit in. Finally, this chapter will analyse the theme on community and the nuances involved such as the definition of the concept including both the similarities of members and the differentiation from other groups; the inclusion and exclusion of certain individuals or groups.

(2.2) Place

Under the special topic's theme of place exploration, this literature review will begin by providing an understanding of place; its importance and its nuances. Gieryn (2000) provides three defining features of place; it has a geographic location, it has a material form and is embedded with meaning and value. The significance of place can be seen by the meanings invested in it and the social processes that take place. Giddens (1984, cited in Gieryn 2000:467) argues that "places are made through human practices and institutions even as they help to make those practices and institutions." This statement reveals a cyclical effect whereby place and meaning are constantly reinforcing and recreating one another. Gieryn (2000: 472) highlights that "places are made as people ascribe qualities to the material and social stuff gathered there." The material culture and social processes that exist in places are more than objects and conversation, they are embedded with meaning, ritual making and forming connections. The bonds fused from the 'material and social stuff' are intertwined with place making and attachment.

Embedding places with meaning is significant as it distinguishes a place from a space in the world. Gieryn (2000: 465) argues that space is more associated with the physical perimeters of a site whereas "place is space filled up by people, practices, objects and representations." Place making occurs when spaces are filled in with meaning, opinions, interpretations and memories as Gieryn (2000: 471) argues that place is "an unwindable spiral of material form and interpretative understandings or experiences". Gieryn (2000:479) states that "place is imbricated in moral judgments and deviant practices as well" which illustrates interpretations of place can change depending on cultural, social factors and change over time. Gieryn (2000) provides an example of how openly gay behaviour is expected and disapproved in different locations in America. This highlights that there are multiple understandings of queer spaces and different behaviours performed depending on location and time. This

research will examine how understandings and behaviours have changed from the Front Lounge to Street 66 as Ireland has undergone immense societal changes since the 1990s. This also highlights that findings of this case study on Street 66 cannot be generalised for all queer spaces as attitudes shift across cultures and times. The subjectivity of place creates nuances as contrasting interpretations of the same place exists. Gieryn (2000:476) further argues this as urban places can be described as loci of both “diversity, tolerance” and “detachment, loneliness.” Place is multifaced to the point that multiple understandings of the same place can be juxtaposed, but these are the nuances of place that this research seeks to understand. Corcoran’s (2002) research on place attachment in marginalised neighbourhood in European cities provides this literature review with an understanding of how place making occurs and how significant place is in people’s lives. Similar to Gieryn, Corcoran (2002:203) agrees that place is constructed by the ascription of meanings but provides further details of what this meaning consists of “memory, sentiment, tradition and identification with a spatial location.” With increasing globalisation and gentrification in European cities, Corcoran (2002:217) found that place is “unstable, ambiguous, and contested” and place attachment occurs due to emotional rootedness to the area. Furthermore, this case study discussed that newcomers in neighbourhoods find integrating and developing a sense of attachment challenging due to not sharing historical pasts with the rest of the community. This highlights the connection between place making and attachment with historical and collective memories however gentrification challenges present connections to place.

Watson (2009) discovered in her research on UK marketplaces that despite the decline in markets globally and the lack of academic research on the topic, marketplaces continue to be significant sites for various social interactions and connections. The case study discovered that some of the social bonds formed in marketplaces go beyond a dynamic of trader and buyer as this place acts “as a space for informal care of others” by traders checking in on

regular shoppers (Watson 2009:1584, 1589). Watson (2009) found that social interactions in marketplaces take form in social inclusion, performances, mediating differences and rubbing along. Rubbing along is an interesting form of interaction that Watson (2009: 1581) describes as “a form of limited encounter between social subjects where recognition of different others through a glance or gaze, seeing and being seen, sharing embodied spaces, in talk or silence.” The social interactions at marketplaces are so meaningful that the closure of a long-established meeting place at Ridley Arms pub in a market was deeply mourned by traders, shoppers and visitors (Watson 2009: 1586). The grieving caused by the loss of place highlights the importance of place in peoples’ and communities’ lives and links to this research due to the closure of the Front Lounge and the Street 66 closures during COVID-19 lockdowns. Additionally, Watson (2009) found that marketplaces can both be sites for mediating differences by learning about other cultural customs. Simultaneously, they can be sites of reinforcing differences for example working class and middle class individuals sticking to markets that link to their class. This further highlights the nuances and boundaries that exist in places.

Wessels (2009) uses visual and flaneur methods to investigate how meaning, identity formation and cultural practices are carried out in changing cities with a focus on Sheffield. Wessels found that despite the deindustrialisation and detraditionalization of Sheffield, the city’s identity and culture have not been erased but are being reshaped to adapt to globalisation and societal changes. Wessel (2006) states that some locals view “their traditions dissolving and their common cultural expectations melting into air.” Wessels (2006) argues that from walking through the city “traces of Sheffield's history are found in official monuments and sculptures, and by walking through one sees recent history inscribed in its buildings” illustrating that the history and culture remain in material form while the city undergoes reshaping. Wessels (2006) found this may seem juxtaposed that the history and

contemporary reinventions are coexisting but highlights that this mirrors the various narratives of the city as she states “the spatialisation of the City is allowing several narratives to emerge from its collective history”. Sheffield city has not lost its meaning or identity due to postmodernity, it has adapted to vast societal changes and reshaped through material culture seen through the public art displays and galleries. This case study is relevant to this research as it seeks to explore how queer spaces are understood in the cityscape as Dublin has undergone immense societal changes regarding gay rights and gentrification. Furthermore the loss of place is relevant to this research due to the closure of the Front Lounge and reopening of Street 66.

These case studies illustrate that despite rapid globalisation and societal changes that accompany gentrified neighbourhoods, changing cities and the decline of markets, placemaking continues to be important to individuals' lives. Watson (2009) discusses how there are beliefs that marketplaces are not necessary due to the introduction of shopping centres yet discovers in her research that they are embedded with meaning and importance. This research thus seeks to understand how important place is for the queer community and the significance of having queer spaces in changing cityscapes and societies. Corcoran (2002) illuminates that creating memories and traditions creates attachment to neighbourhoods thus this research seeks to explore how placemaking is created in Street 66. The marketplace and places in the city like bars are important to people's lives due to having a place to belong to and visit outside of the home and work.

(2.2.1) Third Place

Ray Oldenburg describes 'first place' as the home, 'second place' as work and third place as “a person's social home away from home” (Oldenburg 1999, cited in Campbell 2015: 55). Oldenburg and Brissett (1982: 282) argue that in the USA people organise their lifestyle around the home, work and commuting causing a “narrowness of people's spheres of

involvement with others” as they do not fit in time for a third place. Oldenburg and Brissett (1982: 282) argue that third place is “is a crucial sphere of human experience” to let off steam, for well-being, socialising, engaging in experiences, creating a sense of freedom and wholeness. Third place is more than an escape from work and home obligations and instead, Oldenburg and Brissett (1982) argue that third places like taverns or coffeehouses are enabling sites for creating meaningful experiences in all spheres of the individual’s life. The diversity and unexpectedness of third place allow for a playful, learning environment which makes it distinct compared to the workplace and home which can be homogenous (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982). This sphere of differentiated individuals creates a “spectrum of interpersonal involvement” whereby individuals share experiences with people different to them and gain an insight into other people’s values, perspectives and stories (Oldenburg and Brissett 1982: 265). This tolerance and understanding of other individuals in a third place is reminiscent of Watson’s case study on marketplaces where this can be a site of mediating differences.

Mehta and Bosson (2010) investigated the differences between what makes a place a third place or just a regular business by conducting interviews and visual surveys on main streets in cities in Massachusetts. Mehta and Bosson (2010) add to the literature of third place by building upon Oldenburg’s work by stating that there are more physical traits to identify third place. Oldenburg theorized that third place can be described as welcoming, friendly, comfortable, lively, playful and full of life (Mehta and Bosson 2010; Campbell 2015). Mehta and Bosson (2010) found in their study that third places can be further identified by the quality of the seating and shelter provided by the business, particularly on the street space. The extension of the business out onto the streets with shelter supports social life by having active and passive social interactions, increases comfortability and encourages people to stay longer (Mehta and Bosson 2010). In addition to this, the authors found that the

personalization and permeability of buildings are significant to creating a third place.

Personalization of the front of the store by having window décor, having displays, signs as it adds a personal touch and provides sensory pleasure (Mehta and Bosson 2010). Permeating the street front allows for people outside to have a sense of what happens here by looking in and it creates a welcoming, open atmosphere. Thompson and Arsel (2004, cited in Campbell 2015: 58) argue that contemporary cafes such as Starbucks are sites of consumerism, not community engagement and what differentiates these franchises from third place is the lack of friendly, cosy atmospheres full of life and spirit.

Campbell (2015) investigated in her research whether the social spaces in a retirement community are third spaces in the US using surveys. Campbell contributes to the literature on third place by examining the need for third place for vulnerable communities like older and retired people. Individuals in this community are no longer in the workforce thus spend more time at home and need a third place for social interaction. Retirement communities have social spaces and Campbell (2015) found that the most used spaces were characteristic of being third place such as being more lively, playful and welcoming and were found to be more successful.

As Street 66 is a café and bar, I seek to explore whether it is viewed as a normal business or third place that provides queer individuals with a place outside of the home and work to engage with a diversity of individuals from the LGBTQ+ community. The characteristics of third place described by Oldenburg and Mehta and Bosson (2010) provide a framework for this research on how to view third place. Campbell's (2015) work on third space in retirement communities illustrates that certain communities require particular places outside of the home and work and have specific needs. This is applicable for other communities such as the LGBTQ+ who need a third place as some individuals are not accepted at home or conceal their identity in work.

(2.3) Queer Spaces

Ingram, Bouthillette and Retter (1997: 449) define queer spaces as “an expanding set of queer sites that function to destabilize heteronormative relations and thus provide more opportunities for homoerotic expression and related commonality.” This illustrates that queer spaces enable LGBTQ+ individuals to express themselves freely amongst like-minded people without the constraints of heterosexual assumption and gender conforming. Désert (1997) explains that “queer” was commonly used as a homophobic slur but has been appropriated, reclaimed and positively redefined as an umbrella term to describe anyone who does not identify as straight or cis gendered thus including gay, bisexual, lesbian, non-binary, trans people and other sexual minorities. Browne (2007) articulates that often queer is used as a shorthand for the LGQBT+ community and queer is used to critique heteronormativity and playfully challenge social boundaries.

Ingram (1997: 40) argues that “queer space has an inherent oppositional relationship to homophobic space” which is important for keeping members of the community safe from homophobia and hate crimes. Seidman (2004: 6) argues that despite greater tolerance and acceptance of gayness, contemporary gay life is defined as “they must still live and participate in a world where most institutions maintain heterosexual domination.” Similarly, Bell and Binnie (2004) discuss that the mainstreaming of gay culture has influenced the acceptance of queerness. However, this acceptance has had limitations as only aspects of gay culture deemed ‘appropriate’ have been accepted and has resulted in the “casting out of ‘queer unwanted’” which has been in the decline in leather gay bars (Bell and Binnie 2004: 1811). Duggan (2002, cited in Bell and Binnie 2004:1811) calls this “the new homonormativity” as undesirable expressions of sexuality are being pushed out and instead queer spaces are being gentrified to be more marketable for tourist spectacles. Browne's (2007) research on pride spaces in Dublin and Brighton highlighted that pride events have

moved from marches for rights to tourist spectacles. Bell and Binnie (2004: 1817) argue this is causing a “watering down of queerness.”

Additionally, Fanucci (2022) discusses that LGBTQ+ community members in Ireland believe that irrespective of the legalisation of same-sex marriage there remains a culture of homophobia. Labour Counsellor Conor Sheehan discusses that after the murder of two gay men in Sligo in April 2022 that societal issues remain in Ireland regarding the safety of LGBTQ+ individuals in public places, “we see it when people come up to people in public places, have slurs thrown at them, and have been physically attacked. So this is a wake-up call that this is something that we, as a society, are struggling with” (Fanucci 2022). This illustrates the continuous importance of queer spaces regardless of much gay culture has become mainstreamed as homophobia and transphobia continue to exist.

However, queer spaces are more than places of protection as they are also used as places for celebration, amusement and “zones of exploration” particularly for identity construction (Ingram 1997: 38). The findings from Browne’s research on pride spaces in Brighton and Dublin revealed that dominant reasons for LGBTQ+ individuals to attend pride spaces was for fun/party, political reasons, community, celebrate and meeting people. Furthermore, queer spaces enable individuals to feel comfortable and explore their sexuality due to being with other queer people as 24% of Dublin respondents said Pride allowed them the opportunity to express themselves (Browne 2007: 77). However, her research found that “in a ‘gay city’ there may not be a need to wait for ‘gay times’, you can both ‘kiss and hold hands’ and ‘be yourself’” which challenges the assertion that queer spaces act as respites from heterosexual spaces (Browne 2007: 77). Instead, Browne (2007) found that queer expression is just more concentrated in queer spaces but can exist outside of this in heterosexual spaces.

Queer spaces have provided a space for individuals to figure out their sexuality as Valentine and Skelton (2003) research how ‘the scene’ helps young gay and lesbian individuals explore

and navigate their sexuality and identities. Valentine and Skelton (2003) highlight that young gay individuals may struggle to construct their sexual identities based on living in predominately heterosexual homes and spaces. They have little to no access to gay culture or people like them and may find it confusing to figure out who they are. Thus 'the scene' in cities consist of queer spaces as well as support groups that provide information on gay culture, safe sex and create connections (Valentine and Skelton 2003). Valentine and Skelton (2003) furthermore argue that working-class gay individuals may need more support due to being in homes with traditional expectations particularly relating to gender roles. The study found,

“Clubs and bars provide spaces where people can lose themselves and their troubles in music, dance and sex. They are expressive, performative spaces where people can enjoy themselves together in ways that can be empowering” (Valentine and Skelton 2003: 855).

This case study illustrates the importance of queer spaces for empowering individuals and providing a place in the city for sexual liberation and support. However, this case study concludes that queer spaces are paradoxical as they can also be a site of danger, particularly spaces that involve alcohol and drugs. Furthermore, while these spaces enable self-expression and identity creation there remains a pressure to fit in as Valentine and Skelton (2003: 859) found “most conform because they already feel out of place in heterosexual society and so are desperate to feel that they belong to a gay community.”

From the literature several arguments are being brought forward; inauthenticity caused by producing queer spaces in the pursuit of profit making and the dilution of queer spaces by heterosexual individuals; queer individuals continuing to value and attend queer spaces for celebration and community. With the expansion of capitalism and mainstreaming of queer spaces, there are concerns that the authenticity of queer spaces is disappearing. However, from the case studies queer individuals continue to value queer spaces for celebration,

community, self-exploration, etc. This research project will explore the nuances that exist at Street 66 including the spectacle making of queer spaces, dilution of queerness versus the celebration of queerness.

(2.3.1) Establishing Queer Spaces in Ireland.

To understand queer space as a theme in this project, this section of the literature review will provide a context of the gay rights movement in Ireland that paved the way for the creation of public queer spaces, decriminalisation of homosexuality and the general acceptance of gayness in Ireland by society. Ryan (2006) discusses that the work of David Norris and his supporters fought for gay rights in Ireland through fighting legal battles for the decriminalisation of homosexuality which was won in 1988 in the European Court of Human Rights and brought into law in Ireland in 1993. David Norris was a key figure in fighting for gay rights in Ireland particularly as he founded many gay rights organisations like the Irish Gay Rights Movement (IGRM) in 1973 and the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (CHLR) in 1977. Tiernan (2020) argues that the gay rights movement was strengthened by the plethora of other organisations set up across the country like Cork IRGM, Liberation for Irish Lesbians, Cork Lesbian Collective, Galway Gay Collective. However, McDonagh (2017: 87) argues that the gay rights movement was not accomplished purely by changes in legislation and instead achieved by gay and lesbian individuals who publicly challenged misunderstandings of homosexuality through the use of media or taking to the streets to protest. Additionally, public discourse on homosexuality shifted due to gay and lesbian individuals openly living their lives through organising gay social lives in various venues in Ireland (McDonagh 2017).

Placemaking for gay and lesbian people was particularly important in this era as the common aim of gay and lesbian organisations during the gay rights movement in Ireland was “the creation of gay & lesbian spaces for Irish homosexuals to socialize in, without judgement,

ridicule or persecution” (McDonagh 2017: 69). The IRGM established the first recognised gay and lesbian centre in Ireland situated in Dublin called the Phoenix Club in 1979 and subsequently the Cork IRGM set up two centres in Cork City in the same year (McDonagh 2017). The National Gay Federation (NGF) established the Hirschfeld Centre in Dublin “which became the focal point of gay social life in Dublin for much of the 1980s. (McDonagh 2017: 70). These places hosted discos, theatre groups, hiking groups, poetry reading, and counselling services that were particularly important during the AIDS/HIV outbreak. McDonagh (2017) states that these places were significant for creating a sense of gay and lesbian community where they could meet other people like themselves. In towns where there were no gay and lesbian venues, local groups like Galway IGRM organised social events which McDonagh states, “played their own part in the shaping of a gay and lesbian identity in their respective regions and resisting heteronormativity.” The use of queer spaces during the gay rights movement in Ireland significantly contributed to creating community and social bonds amongst queer individuals that were not tolerated by society. By advertising events and venues for gay and lesbian individuals it contributed to “to gradually normalize such venues/groups in their localities and lay claim to their right to a space within Irish society for such a community” (McDonagh 2017: 75). This overview of the history of gay and lesbian spaces in Ireland during the 20th century illustrates the importance of having a place for gay and lesbian individuals for creating social bonds and meet like-minded people in the community. Gay and lesbian spaces have now been replaced with LGBTQIA+ spaces to cater for other members of the community and create more inclusivity.

Similar to place, queer spaces have a variety of meanings and interpretations but the case studies on queer spaces and the historical context of gay and lesbian spaces in Ireland illustrate their importance for the queer community and individuals. This research seeks to add to a body of literature on queer spaces by investigating the experiences of queer

individuals in Street 66 and discovering if this space is valuable for the queer community for placemaking. The literature presented on queer spaces argues in favour of their existence to aid queer identity construction, meet other LGBTQ+ individuals and find a sense of place and belonging in the world when their home or peer groups may not provide this. Through developing social connections and sharing knowledge such as the history of queer culture, unspoken and spoken rules of how to exist and behave in these spaces, queer spaces contribute to constructing self and collective identities.

(2.4) Identity

Identity can be interpreted in many ways however it can be broadly defined as “common identification with a collectively or social category” and “the meaning that persons attach to the multiple roles they typically play in highly differentiated contemporary societies.”

(Stryker and Burke 2000: 284). Seidman (2004: 9) defines identity as “the way we think of ourselves and the self image made we publicly project” and highlights that these identities alter throughout our lives. Similarly, to place, the concept of identity is complex as it can be paradoxical; identities can be formed through sameness in a collective or the difference between individuals; identities can be mutually exclusive such as being homosexual or heterosexual, while other identities intersect and cannot exist in isolation such as class, race, gender (Lawler 2008).

Woodward (2004: 6) argues that “we choose to identify with a particular identity or group. Sometimes we have more choice than others.” Our identities and how we perform them can be socialised from birth as Bourdieu argues that our habitus can influence our behaviours, values, opinions (Inglis and Thorpe 2019). However, habitus can provide advantages and disadvantages to excel in life such as the various tastes in different social classes (Inglis and Thorpe 2019). Additionally, our level of economic, social and material wealth may inhibit or

prohibit us from accessing other fields as we have substantial or inadequate habitus (Inglis and Thorpe 2019). Rooke (2007) illuminates from her research on lesbian spaces in London and Brighton that a lesbian habitus exists within queer spaces and defines it as “a visible expression of embodied lesbian cultural capital.” On the one hand, lesbian spaces can enable the expression of sexual identity however, the lesbian habitus can exclude those who have not acquired the right look or language (Rooke 2007).

Identity is an important sociological concept as the socialisation enables the learning of identities and the construction of our identities are also assisted by those around us. Lawler (2008: 19) explores how identities are socially constructed as she argues identities are “enmeshed in- and produced within- webs of social relations.” Our identities are constructed, produced and reinterpreted within social relationships and then embedded in everyday life (Lawler 2008). Lawler (2008: 11) highlights those memories, understandings, experiences, interpretations and narratives produce our identities because they help people make sense of the world, of others and ultimately of themselves. Storytelling contributes greatly for producing identities as it allows for individuals to gain an understand of themselves and the other social actors tied to those narratives as Lawler (2008: 30) states, “identity is produced through the interpretations people make out of the bits and pieces of their lives- interpretations that are put together to form an overall plot.” The production and construction of identities is fluid as we reinterpret our pasts and presents with new information (Lawler 2008: 19).

Additionally, the performance of identities is a social phenomenon as we can learn how to behave and perform based on those around us. Woodward (2004: 7) illuminates that “you feel a sense of recognition and of belonging when you identify with others” and we can identify with others based upon visual cues. This is discussed by Seidman (2004:11) who discusses that some gay individuals move from the family home to urban centres to meet likeminded

people and develop their sexual identities. Valentine and Skelton (2003:849) also argue that the city acts as a “magnet for queer migrants” due to the anonymity, an escape from small town communities and prejudice which facilitates sexual liberation. However, Seidman (2004) argues that gay individuals also moved to cities to avail of gay subcultures and fashion to construct and perform gay identities. Seidman (2004: 88) discusses that the performance of gay identities can be achieved through clothing and language as “they signal their exclusive group identification by somewhat distinctive self-presentational and communicative styles.” This illustrates that queer individuals sought out queer habitus in the cities to help construct their identities and also learn how to perform them.

Goffman (1956) argues that we perform to express our identities and roles to others through our appearance, body language, clothing, etc. Goffman (1956) discusses that we have different presentations depending on the setting and region the individual is in for example, the backstage is where the performer can relax and drop the performance. Valentine (1993) researched how lesbian women in Northern England negotiate multiple sexual identities throughout their life illustrating that identities are fluid. Valentine (1993) found that different sexual identities are performed depending on the place and time for example the lesbian women in her study felt more comfortable asserting their lesbian identity at home or in lesbian spaces. These spaces where individuals can express their sexual identities freely and be their authentic selves could be considered the backstage. Additionally, the study discovered that some lesbian women conceal their sexual identity in other spheres such as work or heterosexual dominated public spaces which would be the front stage (Valentine 1993).

The literature on identity and the case studies on sexual identities illuminate how complex and fluid identities are. This research aims to explore how identities are socially constructed and produced in Street 66 based on the social relations between queer individuals in the bar.

Social constructions of identities can take form in habitus or expectations to behave or look a certain way thus this research examines whether this exists in Street 66. This research seeks to explore how identities are expressed and performed and whether Street 66 enables a safe and non-judgemental space for the expression of queer identities. Furthermore, identities can be constructed individually but also collectively thus this literature review will examine how individuals connect with one another to form communities in place.

(2.5) Community

Day (2006: 2) defines community generally as “those things which people have in common, which bind them together and give them a sense of belonging with one another.” However, Day (2006) argues that defining community is complicated because of the intricacies of finding the common features within a community when such differentiating characteristics exist between members. On the one hand communities have people we can identify with and find a sense of solidarity. Community members form connections by having similar experiences or values, but we cannot identify with every person within communities nor can we look to everyone in the community for support (Day 2006: 1-2). Blackshaw (2010:11) argues that within communities we identify with the people in that group and place significant importance and commitment to the collective group and one another. Cohen (1985) explores that communities are made up of significant social meaning through constructing meaning about the community and its boundaries.

On the other hand, this distinctiveness of certain communities to differentiate groups can act as a boundary and exclusionary practices can occur. Cohen (1985: 12) explores these nuances of community by first defining it as “a group of people (a) that have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes them in a significant way from the members of other putative groups. ‘Community’ thus seems to imply simultaneously both similarity and difference.” Community is thus often constructed when there is a boundary or distinction

between individuals and groups. Additionally, these boundaries are constructed between different communities but also within communities due to the difference in interests and opinions outside of the common characteristic. Cohen (1985:11) states that “the boundary encapsulates the identity of the community” which is important to the members, however within these boundaries they may also act as barriers to exclude groups in society. Day (2006: ix) discusses this further as “differences of religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation are used to define boundaries between groups, and often to locate them in particular places.” Creating queer spaces within predominately heteronormative cities creates boundaries that allow for the inclusion of LGQBT+ individuals to meet and keep out unwanted others. Often these unwanted others would be non-gay identifying but may also cause the exclusion of queer people based upon race, gender and class (Bell and Binnie 2004). Bell and Binnie (2004) argue further that there are class exclusionary practices and economic inequalities arising in the LGBTQ+ community. The authors found that wealth accumulated from gay culture is concentrated amongst a few while urban gay poor experience exclusions particularly from the gentrification of the city (Bell and Binnie 2004). Defining community is complex due to the juxtaposition of it meaning both the inclusive and exclusion of individuals, the belonging and expulsion of others.

Theorizing what community is or what connects individuals in societies has been around since the founding days and fathers of sociology. Emile Durkheim explored that social solidarity created social cohesion in society and this was achieved through individuals taking other individuals into account when making decisions (Dillon 2014). Durkheim argues that social cohesion occurs from the social bonds between individuals which creates a sense of belonging (Dillon 2014: 88). Durkheim theorised that traditional societies have mechanical solidarity whereby society is relatively homogenous due to the same culture, religion, labour. While modern societies have organic solidarity and bonds are formed through the

interdependence that is required through the highly specialized division of labour thus acknowledging the need for individualism (Dillon 2014). Day (2006) argues that these different types of solidarity and causes of social cohesion can be represented in communities being based on similarity or interdependence. Traditionally communities were defined as groups of people connected by how close they live and work to one another like in villages (Johnston and Longhurt 2010). Ferdinand Tönnies (cited in Day 2006) and Blackshaw (2010) argues that these types of communities are no longer possible in postmodernity and urban landscapes.

Day (2006) argues that viewing community only in a traditional sense has been critiqued for using nostalgia and memories of the past as it falsely romanticises past communities which are rare now. Johnston and Longhurt (2010:61) argue that contemporary communities have formed “based on common interests or beliefs rather than on geographical proximity.”

Furthermore, communities can even exist without physical geography at all as Benedict Anderson (1983, cited in Johnston and Longhurt 2010: 61) theorised ‘imagined communities’ whereby communities are “shared on mental constructs” such as identity. Zygmunt Bauman discusses in his theory of liquid modernity that postmodernity has brought about increased individuality and freedoms allowing individuals to choose their career paths and explore identities. However, this flexibility has caused a need for individuals to find a sense of belonging thus seeking for "modes of togetherness" in forms of communities (Day 2006: 23).

While some theorise, that communities are no longer possible in contemporary society, others explore the various reasons for why they continue to thrive and the reasons for why individuals continue to reproduce and maintain them. Leonard (2005) discusses in his case study on Irish communities in Coventry and Liverpool how communities are not confined to geography to be constructed and instead can thrive once there are groups of people to

reproduce and maintain the community. This maintenance and negotiation of Irish community for British born individuals can be seen through the production of cultural identity and social connections through Irish music and dance. The case study highlights the performance of cultural identities in communities, cultural activities, creating bonds through social interactions with other members contributing to creating collective identities and maintaining the community. Participants in the study felt that they did not need to prove their ethnic identity and position in the community based on how they sounded or their birthplace but instead through music and dance, “music is used to support or signify a sense of ethnic belonging” (Leonard 2005: 522). This case study illustrates that community in contemporary society is thriving despite the mobility and liquidity of individuals. Collective identities, creating bonds and social connections, creating rituals and participating in the key community activities all contribute to keeping communities alive. This community is tied to place but more importantly, it is tied to reinventing this place and evolving it for the generations of Irish-British initials.

Ingram et al. (1997: 449) define the queer community as “a full collection or select of subset of queer networks for a particular territory with relatively stable relationships that enhance interdependence, mutual support and protection.” They acknowledge that it can be problematic to call this a community as there are a variety of other identities and backgrounds that may not connect individuals at all such as gender, ethnicity, age, class, disability. Thus, this research seeks to investigate if there is a community here or if a sense of community exists in Street 66 as it is referred to as both a community centre and bar. This research acknowledges that the LGBTQ+ community is extensive and there may be exclusionary or inclusionary practices for all members and boundaries to keep certain groups out such as heterosexuals.

(2.6) Conclusion

This chapter examined key theoretical concepts within each theme and analysed their significance in the place exploration of Street 66. The literature review began with the fundamental theme of place and third place to highlight the importance of placemaking in people's lives particularly outside the home and work and in changing cityscapes like Dublin. A sense of belonging in a non-judgmental place is important to individuals and particularly for the LGBTQ+ community who may not find this in heteronormative spaces thus the need for an exploration of queer spaces and their historical context in Ireland. Place and queer spaces are important for the construction, expression and performance of individual and collective identities, particularly for queer identities where people can be around like-minded people to form this and feel comfortable to do so. Finally, this literature review explored how place, queer space and collective identities facilitates the formation and maintenance of communities and explored the nuances involved in boundaries and defining community. The themes discussed in this literature review provide an understanding for the analysis of the findings.

Chapter Three: Research Methods

3.1 Research Question

How do the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces: A case study of Street 66, Dublin.

- How are queer spaces viewed and understood in the wider cityscape?
- How is Street 66 bar and café viewed and understood – what does this space offer to the wider LGBTQ community?
- How is a sense of place developed in the bar?
- Does Street 66 provide a space to develop a sense of belonging and community and how is this negotiated and understood?
- How does this place enable the expression and performance of queer identities?
- How are social connections formed and maintained here?

The themes that arose from developing the literature review included; place, third place, queer spaces, identity and community. To gather an understanding of these questions and themes, a qualitative approach was used in order to collect a variety of experiences and perspectives in queer spaces in Dublin and on Street 66. The qualitative approach of using interviewing and visual methods enabled this research project to hear queer stories and experiences in this gay bar which developed an insight into how queer spaces are viewed.

3.2 The Qualitative Approach

This research carried out qualitative research using interviewing and visual methods with a constructivist and interpretivist framework. Marvasti (2004: 7) defines qualitative research as “detailed description and analysis of the quality or the substance of the human experience.” According to O’Leary (2017: 142) the qualitative approach “works at delving into social complexities in order to truly explore and understand the interactions, processes, lived experiences and belief systems.” The goal of qualitative research is to generate knowledge by

unpacking the meanings ascribed by individuals on groups, places, material objects, their social world, etc. (Leavy 2012). O’Leary (2004) argues that constructivism is the philosophical understanding that actors construct their own social realities and meanings, and these social constructions influence their perceptions and world. Interpretivism holds the assumption that there is no single or universal truth in the social world due to the many interpretations and understandings of individuals.

I chose this approach for my research because of the benefits involved in carrying out qualitative methods such as the close involvement I got with participants to truly understand the world through their own lenses and experiences (Bryman 2016). The qualitative approach valued in depth, rich information, as opposed to the numerical data involved in quantitative research, which provided this research with both context and experiences of Street 66 and queer spaces in Dublin. The literature only provides so much contextualizing, qualitative research allows for an understanding of individuals’ backgrounds, how they view their social world and how it impacts them. This approach is important to understanding how queer individuals their social world and specifically a space for them in Dublin. Qualitative approach allows for the exploration of nuances of human experiences (Marvasti 2004: 147) that would not be possible in quantitative where the interviewer is not the research instrument. Merriam (2002) discusses that the benefits of the research being the primary instrument of data collection allows for the research to include both verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as clarifying topics that arise during research to develop further understandings.

Merriam (2002) highlights the importance of reflexivity involved in being the primary research instrument by bringing awareness and monitor any subjectivities or biases. Holliday (2007) argues that the focus on objectivity in quantitative research is not possible as the findings can be misused or used subjectively thus argues the need for including subjectivity

in order to manage it. Pink (2013) discusses that by maintaining an awareness of our subjectivities and biases that we have learned from our social world and are engrained with our identities like race, gender, class, sexuality. The outcome of this project is not to generalise all queer understandings of queer spaces but instead develop a case study whereby the findings can be transferable. Using an interpretive framework, this project understands that there are multiple truths about Street 66 and Irish queer spaces thus the sample in this project are not representative of a population (Bryman 2016).

3.2.1 The Case Study Approach

Bryman (2012:67) argues that qualitative research pairs well with case studies due to the “intensive detailed examination of a case.” O’Leary (2017) defines a case study as “a method of studying elements of our social fabric through comprehensive description and analysis of a single situation or case.” O’Leary (2017: 215) highlights the benefits for choosing a case study for qualitative research is the holistic, intense examination of a case that enables increased rapport, enhances access and there is less travel and costs involved. Even though a researcher may focus on one case study, Given (2008) highlights that research is “not restricted to one observation” whereby the researcher can examine several social phenomenon and use several methods. This highlights that case studies are dynamic and adaptable to different discoveries made in the field. Key benefits of using the case study approach is “to maximise both relevance and practicality”, produce a case with “intrinsic value” or examine or challenge what is commonly accepted about a case (O’Leary 2017: 215). All these features of a case study complement my research project well as I am focusing on one place and gathering in-depth, intensive information of the bar. Using a qualitative case study as my methodology allowed for me to explore beyond the initial research questions to gather an understanding of the historical and social context of the bar. Furthermore, using a case study allowed for me to develop rapport and have prolonged

engagement with respondents but also with the bar to visit the field many times to develop an understanding of how it is viewed and used.

3.2.2 Interviewing

Interviewing is a method of data collection that comprises of the interviewer asking open-ended questions regarding a theme or topic and relies on the respondent's answers to provide "insider knowledge" on the topic (Marvasti 2004: 15). May (2011) discusses that "interviews yield rich insights into people's biographies, experiences, opinions, values, aspirations, attitudes and feelings" illustrating how qualitative and rich in meaningful data interviews can produce. This research project used semi-structured interviews which O'Leary (2017: 240) explains have interview questions prepared in advance but "will shift in order to follow the natural flow of conversation" and "deviate from the plan to pursue interesting tangents." O'Leary (2017) states the benefits of semi-structured interviews are the informality and conversation like style allows for rapport building and the flexibility of delving into relevant tangents reveals unexpected topics or information. The preparation for the interview provides the interview with a flow and allows for all the themes of the research to be addressed generating quality data (O'Leary 2017). May (2011) similarly discusses that this interview format gives the interviewee enough freedom to discuss the topic holistically but is probed by the interviewer to stay on track.

For this research project I conducted 5 in-depth interviews using questions that explored queer spaces in the city and specifically their experience and view of Street 66. I followed the flow of the conversation and probed beyond the interview guide that revealed further themes. The interviews lasted an hour long and were recorded using the voice recorder on my phone which were then transferred to a password protected file on my laptop. Three of the interviews took place in Street 66, two of which were a couple who frequent the bar for dates. The other participant had a coffee while we conducted the interview creating a comfortable,

leisurely atmosphere for discussing the topic. Attending the bar for the interviews was convenient to travel to and meet up with respondents. Meeting at the bar allowed for participants to reminisce on experiences in the bar. However, it was quite loud inside for recording the interviews. Thus, the other two interviews were held wherever suited the participants which was in Maynooth University which was convenient for both the participants and myself, as the interviews took place during breaks in between classes in familiar spots on campus. Participants were recruited based on snowball sampling which involves finding participants by referrals.

Table 3.1 Table of Interviews

Respondent	Age	Gender Identity	Sexual Identity
A	30-40	Man	Gay
B	20-30	Woman	Lesbian
C	20-30	Woman	Queer
D	20-30	Woman	Queer
E	50-60	Man	Gay

3.2.3 Photographic representation

Marvasti (2004) highlights that in sociology photographs can be used to complement written text and the stories shared in interviews. Similarly, Given (2008: 620) argues that images used in research “complement the spoken word and often enable a richer, more holistic understanding of research participants' worlds.” Given (2008) discusses that photos can be used where words cannot truly represent emotional meaning. Additionally, photographs can represent semiotics found in place constructed by individuals, which Marvasti (2004:74) discuss “allows researchers to move conceptually between what is evident on the surface of a photo and its deeper cultural symbolism and meaning.” While experiences are analysed and

discussed in this project, photographs aid as a visual tool to enhance these experiences as the imagery tells a story (Marvasti 2004). Becker (1995) that images used in research cannot be left ambiguous like contemporary art photography and that context is needed. Becker (1995: 8) argues that “context gives images meaning” and it is up to the researcher to contextualize the images to show the viewer what to interpret. Pink (2013: 75) discusses this further by stating photographs are “framed by the photographer’s subjectivity” and this subjectivity is brought to awareness when ascribing meaning to the photos used in research. Photographs used in this research project are all located outside and inside Street 66 to provide a visual of the bar at different times during the day and enhance the findings from the interviews. Photographs aided in visualizing the material culture, décor and aesthetic of the bar to complement how the participants feel about these. Furthermore, photographic representation was used to demonstrate the social interactions involved at the bar such as the poetry night or the dog friendliness.

3.2.4 Visual Ethnography

Given (2008: 935) states that visual ethnography “provide a means for recording, documenting, and explaining the social worlds and understandings of people” and “capturing and expressing perceptions and social realities of people.” Creating ethnographic films are beneficial for research projects due to their audio-visual aspect that picks up non-verbal, verbal communication, images, signs and symbols (Given 2008: 935). Pink (2013) discusses that the use of videography for research has been critiqued for not being scientific enough due to the editing of footage or behaviour being filmed is not authentic due to people knowing they are being filmed. Discourses about using visual methods and specifically visual ethnography was disputed as not objective due to the researcher’s choices in what to film and the editing process. Yet Pink (2013) argues that subjectivity in visual methods is certain and

should not be seen as unscientific and instead the method provides an opportunity to produce meaningful and rich understandings of a case study.

Marvasti (2004: 72) highlights that the visual methods used in ethnographic films “becomes part data, part illustration, and part analysis” which is appropriate for my qualitative research that provides a visualisation of how queer individuals understand Street 66 and queer spaces in Dublin. An anthropology student Ahlam Ahmed and I conducted a collaborative project called “Queer Spheres in Dublin City: An Ethnographic Film on Street 66.” I interviewed four individuals inside Street 66 while Ahlam recorded and edited the footage. The visual film thoroughly added to my research as it provided rich information on how young queer individuals view Street 66 and understand queer spaces in the city. As well as this data, the visual-audio aspect of the film allows for the viewer to gain an insight into how the bar is used and visualised by dancing, having drinks, playing board games, etc. Participants were recruited based on volunteer sampling which involved asking for volunteers via social media.

Table 3.2 Table of Filmed Interviews

Respondent	Age	Gender identity	Sexual Identity
Mariam	20-30	Non-binary	Lesbian
Rylie	20-30	Woman	Bisexual
Bronwen	20-30	Woman	Bisexual
Lara	20-30	Woman	Lesbian

3.3 Analysis of data

Figure 2.1:

An outline of the steps taken in this qualitative research project

Initial readings surrounding the topic of inquiry (PLACE EXPLORATION)



Developing an idea, research question, hypothesis. Formation of general research question and initial theoretical framework (this includes theories, literature surrounding the area of inquiry etc.)



Collection of relevant data – interviewing, participant observation, photographic representation, documentary analysis, etc. Finalising Literature review.



Interpretation of data / analysis of data



Conceptual and theoretical framework



Tighter specification of the research question

Write up findings/conclusions

(Figure adapted from Bryman 2004: 269)

The above figure represents the steps carried out to develop this research project. The research process began with the reading relevant literature on the topic of place exploration which assisted in the formation of a draft research question, sub-questions and themes. Further reading around the topic of place, queer spaces, community and identity aided in the development of research and sub-questions. This was followed up by collecting data through

semi-structured interviews, visual ethnographic interviews and photographic representation. Once the data collection was complete, the interviews were transcribed and the method of thematic coding was used to gain understandings of the themes being explored. Transcripts were colour coded based on the relevant theme and organized into different documents. Images taken were also organized based on the theme or concept they represented. Organizing and coding the data with colours and themes assisted in answering the research and sub questions as it provided the research respondents' experiences and understandings. The coded data was then analysed based on the theoretical arguments explored in the literature review or data revealed where there were gaps in the literature. The analysis of data assisted in reworking and finalizing the research questions and sub questions. Findings and conclusions were finally written up in thematically.

3.4 Ethics

According to Marvasti (2004) the key ethical components for social research include voluntary participation, protection of the research participants and confidentiality. This can be ensured through using an informed consent model whereby both verbal and written descriptions of the research are provided for the participants and they are made aware of any harms or benefits associated (Marvasti 2004: 139). To ensure a high ethical standard for this research, I followed ethical guidelines by NUIM (2010) which ensured informed consent, confidentiality and anonymity of research participants involved in the semi-structured interviews. I provided an information sheet and a consent form to all participants being interviewed or photographed to guarantee informed consent. Participants were informed that the interview and photographs are completely voluntary, they have the right to leave, refuse to answer any question and take a break if needed at all. Conveying this information to respondents is necessary as the content being shared may be sensitive and overwhelming. The interview data was safely stored in a password-protected file on my laptop where all names

and locations will be given pseudonyms. Anonymity and confidentiality are significantly important for my research as discussions surrounding sexuality to avoid revealing the sexualities of anyone involved that may not want this information released.

Participants involved in the ethnographic film were thoroughly informed of the purposes and description of the research and method used. Participants were given verbal and written information sheets, consent forms and release forms for the footage. Gaining consent for this method was particularly important as confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed due to the audio-visual nature of the method, however participants were made well aware of this and consented to the use and release of footage for research. To ensure a level of privacy for participants, the YouTube video has been unlisted thus can only be accessed by having a link for it. Thus, only those who we provide the link to can see the footage including the participants involved. All participants were informed that they can see the film, transcriptions and the final thesis at their request. Finally in order to gain access to filming, interviewing and photographing Street 66, Ahlam and I were granted permission by the owner of the bar via email.

3.5 Issues of positionality

Merriam (2002) and Bryman (2016) explore the importance of reflecting on the researcher's position due to the implication it may have on the research process and analysis.

Acknowledging possible issues of positionality is particularly important when carrying out qualitative research due to using the respondents' perspectives and worldviews as opposed to the researcher's (Bryman 2016). The qualitative approach asserts that biases are inevitable in the interpretation of data thus these biases and values must be monitored. For this research project there are issues of positionality due to Street 66 being my local queer bar and being a queer woman. I acknowledge that I already have assumptions of the bar and community however the data findings and analysis will not comprise of personal beliefs. By already

experiencing Street 66 as a social queer site prior to the research I understand that this has benefited the researching process by already having an understanding of how the bar is used by others and having connections for interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

(4.1) Introduction

This chapter will explore the findings and analysis of this research project which sought to examine how the LGBTQ+ community view, experience and understand queer space with a focus on Street 66. The findings of this research project found that respondents believe that there are not enough queer spaces in the city and that they are vital and valuable for the community. This research found that Street 66 was a significant place for queer individuals because it is a safe space to be queer, date, socialise, celebrate and have fun. A complex story emerged regarding place making and a sense of community in the bar following the reopening of the bar as Street 66 due to the loss of previous clientele and changes in the aesthetic and style. Respondents had to renegotiate how they used this space, process the loss of place and recreate place attachment. A sense of place and community was achieved at this queer space due to the traditions made and memories made through the events that often take place. Additionally, this research found that queer individuals coming from heteronormative households, work or school can avail of queer spaces as a third, safe place where they can find a sense of belonging. Furthermore, Street 66 assisted the construction, exploration and expression of queer identities as individuals immersed themselves into queer culture and surrounded themselves with like-minded people. This research found that social connections were formed here due to recognising familiar faces and ‘rubbing along’ with others (Watson 2009). This research project explores the both the findings and nuances that answer the research questions using sociological analysis.

(4.2) Place

Gieryn (2000) argues that place making and attachment are created and maintained by individuals ascribing meaning to social processes and material objects in the space. A sense

of place forms as people make certain places a part of their daily lives and develop rituals here. This was demonstrated through the respondents discussing how they often carry out the same social practices and activities in Street 66 and have a preferred seat every time they go,

That corner seat over there or where we are sitting now! Sometimes it gets really busy and people are walking by so we just like to get away and talk and enjoy the atmosphere, play Uno (Respondent B 2022).

Yeah I literally have it in my bag right now. I'm like Street 66? Uno! (Respondent C 2022).

Respondents B and C illustrate how this place is used as their local spot for dates and have developed their own rituals with the place in their relationship. The couple have formed an attachment with this place by having their spot in the bar, a place to belong and a place to connect with one another.



Image 4. Pride Poetry Night

Image 4 represents place making that exists in the bar due to the many events that are beginning to take place in Street 66. The Pride Poetry night had the back of the bar filled wall to wall with an incredible atmosphere of queer people coming together to laugh and clap in amazement of the queer poetry recited. Both professional and amateur poets took to the microphone to share their poetry including 30+ audience members taking to the open microphone. Corcoran (2002:202) argues that “place is frequently construed through a repository of shared memories and traditions” and the findings of this project highlight this due to the memories and traditions created at Street 66. This is further illustrated as Respondent A discusses how he often does the same things at the bar but these change depending on the time of day,

Yeah, so and yeah the last few weeks I've been coming here like a Saturday afternoon for a coffee, just to read or whatever. And yeah, came here for a dance and Pixi Woo does the DJ stuff. Yeah I kind of do the same things (Respondent A 2022).

Respondent A's ritual of doing the same thing in the bar illustrates the place making that occurs at Street 66 and also how meaning of place changes through time as the processes shift from coffee and reading to dancing. The many experiences enmeshed with Street 66 by the respondents reveals how a sense of place is created in the bar and highlights the significance of meaning in the creation of place making as argued by Gieryn (2000) and Corcoran (2002).

Place attachment is so strong to the point often individuals can find it hard to adapt to changes such a gentrification or the loss of place (Corcoran 2002). Corcoran (2002) illuminates that locals in a community develop “a strong sense of emotional rootedness” to place due to the historical past and nostalgia and this shapes individuals outlook and perceptions. Similarly, a complex story emerged in this research whereby respondents who frequented the previous bar Front Lounge, had to renegotiate how they understood the bar and place making to Street 66 with the new ownership, material stuff and clientele.

Respondent A had to negotiate his past understandings of this bar with new understandings.

Throughout the interview the respondent discusses how his opinion of Street 66 changed throughout the years and only recently has he accepted Street 66,

And yeah, for a few years Street 66 was just kind of eclectic to me, I guess, you know, like I definitely preferred the Front Lounge (Respondent A 2022).

Yeah, I do remember like I hated that they just filled in it and haven't even said what it is. Like, we're just gonna erase this and not figure out what we are (Respondent A 2022).

And yeah I do like it and you do have to let go of what it was.... I think its actually more of a café culture, yeah that's where it kind of fits for me (Respondent A 2022).

Respondent A was critical of Street 66 at the beginning due to the changes made by the owners and he had to navigate filling this space with meaning again to create a sense of place for himself. This was seen with Respondent E who has not returned back to Street 66 after the changing of ownership. Respondent E created immense ties and connections to the Front Lounge,

I became one of the bar flies... I was properly a regular yeah. A disgraceful regular. Yeah I'd just get a lot of weed and have a lot of drinks and shit like that. I remember it was a place you could go to for conversations rather than just carousing and boozing. Id often go in there and have coffee and tea (Respondent E 2022).

However, alongside the change of ownership, memories of Front Lounge have prevented the respondent from returning to the bar. The good experiences of the bar have prevented the respondent from returning because the place has changed, but the traumatizing memories of the bar has also created a hesitancy to return due to the following “hangovers”,

So the murder. It was during karaoke, Panti's karaoke, karaoke on a Tuesday night. I think it was 2004 maybe. I finished work and I was working with a woman and having a hoot so we said we'd go Front lounge, have a rake of pints and it'd be the craic... And then all of a sudden young guys came along coved in blood and turns out it was a man Frank had been killed (Respondent E 2022).

I can name about six people who would've been there very regularly, either along the bar, who just died of either AIDs or cancer or something like that. Like there's all

sorts of reasons that that place is tainted in some ways (Respondent E 2022).

Respondent E discusses tragic experiences from Street 66 including the murder of Frank McCann in 2004 in the bar and the tragic deaths of friends over the years due to AIDS and cancer. Respondent E has an emotional attachment to the Front Lounge which is shown in the above quotes and links to Corcoran's argument that "embedded within the concept of place are layers of sedimented meaning derived from memory, sentiment, tradition and identification with a spatial location."

Wessels (2009) highlights that the loss of place in the city left Sheffield locals feeling the loss of traditions, culture and identity also. Additionally, Watson (2009) highlights the closure of the pub in one of the marketplaces in her research left individuals mourning for the place. In the case of Street 66, even though the physical building was not removed, individuals still felt a sense of loss due to their strong attachment to the Front Lounge. However, as the literature discusses, the loss of place is not gone forever and instead it can simultaneously still exist through material from and individual's understandings and uses of places are reshaped (Wessels 2009). This can be seen as Street 66 still has the remnants of the Front Lounge in place with the shadowing of the old Front Lounge sign under the lights and the old Back Lounge sign remaining with new art that represents Street 66,



Image 5. Shadows of the past



Image 6. Intertwining the past and the present place.

A sense of place making in Street 66 has been a convoluted journey due to its reopening and the negotiations of recreating place that occurred. However, Street 66 provides the LGBTQ+

community a place to create memories and traditions with their café, bar, dog-friendliness, nightclub and events that take place. Street 66 for many respondents is their local bar and acts as a significant place for them for socialisation outside of the home, work and education.

(4.2.1) Third place

This research project found that Street 66 does provide the queer community with a third place as it links with Oldenburg and Brissett's argument of a place separate from homelife and workplace obligations (1982). Respondents discussed how they use this space as a respite from work to socialise,

We come here during the week because I work on the weekends I have no life (Respondent B 2022).

I'd often meet somebody late in the day like I have friends who are working from home and they're living in town now or a walk from town and they'd come out for lunch, and either side of it I'd get a bit of reading done (Respondent D 2022).

Respondent A illuminates the importance of third places to escape work obligations that have left her feeling like she has no life when in work. Respondent B highlights that the bar is a significant third place for socializing with friends and acts as break from work life for her friends. Oldenburg and Brissett (1982: 269) argue that "the tavern, or bar, is without doubt the dominant third place in our society" and discuss that third places are significant sites for experiences and relationships.

Mehta and Bosson (2010) describe further characteristics of third place which were described by the respondents such as personalization, provision of outdoor seating and permeability of Street 66. Street 66's interior design and music has created the personalization of this space into a third place,



Image 7. *“Something I have noticed walking past is the mopeds jutting out above this part of the ceiling” (Respondent A 2022).*

I always associate the dance floor here with 'Proud Mary' by Tina Turner (Respondent A 2022).

Respondent A discusses the unique moped on the wall and how Tina Turner’s music is tied to memories of the dance floor in Street 66 have created specific personalization. This personalization of the bar distinguishes it from other queer spaces in the city and assists in creating third place. Respondent A discusses how he can spot these mopeds just from walking past Street 66 due to the permeability of the bar with the large, windowed doors. Mehta and Bosson (2010: 781) argue that this permeability is what distinguishes third places from any other business as it allows for “people on the street are able to sense what is going on and understand the activities inside the buildings.”

I just keep looking at the windows because they had such a practical affect but also so inviting to first come in here and it has to do with the ambience (Respondent A 2022).

Respondents in Mehta and Bosson (2010) and Respondent A both discuss that permeability of the street front create an inviting atmosphere further illustrating how both a sense of place and third place occurs. The transparency between the inside and outside is significant for a queer space as other gay bars in the city either have no windows like the George or are dim lighted like Pantibar. Respondent A and E suggests that the large, windowed doors of Street 66 is symbolic of greater acceptance and legal rights for the LGBTQ+ community,

That's another thing about Nealons and Street 66 have in common is there's so much glass in the front like which is like obviously different from the George, which historically blocked up...It could be a comment on progress you know what I mean? (Respondent A 2022).

It had those doors at the front, so it didn't have that kind of oppressive, it was the change (Respondent E 2022).



Image 8. Permeability of a queer space.

Finally, the bar has outdoor seating which Mehta and Bosson (2010: 803) argue enhances social life and extends the social practices onto the street which “creates valuable human activity.”

There was a really tremendous outdoor drinking culture here during the summer as you may know... Like for someone who has walked up and down here for so many years, it was so transformative (Respondent A 2022).

Street 66 is on parliament Street and that got pedestrianized so we could sit outside and I enjoyed those days so much (Respondent D).

This was particularly important for maintaining third places when indoor dining closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Individuals could continue attending queer spaces because Dublin City Council pedestrianized Parliament Street in summer of 2021 in the evenings at the weekend to provide extra seating and to support social life.

Campbell (2015) critiqued Oldenberg for not examining the need for third place for the wellbeing of vulnerable communities. Campbell (2015) argues that by having third places in places like retirement communities can create social activities and in turn promote wellbeing for residents. This research contributes to the literature by highlighting the importance of third place for queer individuals. Respondent D illustrates the decline of her health, prevented her from attending queer spaces for years and during the pandemic was living in a heterosexual dominated household,

Alongside with losing myself with my mental health, I lost connection to queer spaces and queer people because I wasn't well enough to go see my friends (Respondent D 2022).

A place outside of the home and work are crucial for individual's wellbeing. While the respondent's health declined due to other reasons, the inability to go queer spaces and be with her community caused her to lose a part of her identity.

Although this research finds that Street 66 acts as a third place for queer individuals, the research findings contrast the owner's assertion that the bar is a community centre. Although the owner acknowledges that it is a for profit business and earns a living from it, the owner argues that it is for the community due to holding events and meetings here. Majority of respondents appreciated that the bar holds events for the community but argue that as long as it is a for profit business it cannot be a community centre,

Like, from my knowledge, I don't think they're doing anything for the queer community necessarily, like, all I know is that they've had that poetry night but even then, like you're still coming to a business where you feel like you're going to have to buy a drink. In order to consider yourself like a community centre, you have to be doing something for the community (Respondent B 2022).

Yeah I know a lot of businesses say things like that. At the end of the day, a business is a business. However she has hosted meetings without charging and things like that. So I'd give more weight to what she says there because that's where you're putting no money where your mouth is ya know? By letting people in. So yeah I'm a little bit reluctant because actual community spaces where there are free or subsidized refreshments are so important and Street 66 is a for profit business, like nationalize Street 66! (Respondent D 2022).

Despite the bar not being considered a community centre by the respondents, Street 66 is still a valuable place for respondents to relax and socialize. Queer third places are important for the LGBTQ+ community to have place to belong separate to home, education and work life that may be restrictive.

(4.3) Queer Spaces

Browne (2007) discovered that Pride spaces were used for fun, celebration, meet other queer people, feel comfortable and explore their sexuality. This research found that respondents also attended Street 66 and queer spaces for these reasons. On top of this respondents found a place to belong here due finally being with people like them when surrounded with heterosexual spaces,

It definitely just gave me a sense of belonging and that I wasn't alone, I wasn't the only person who's gay or who just wanted somewhere that wasn't a straight place. I needed something more than a straight place to have that like a sense of belonging, (Respondent C 2022).

Queer spaces provided Respondent C and queer individuals the space and support to develop their sexuality and explore queerness as Ingram (1997:38) described these places as “zones of exploration”. Valentine and Skelton (2003: 853) discuss that queer spaces “offer a range of information and advice about everything from lesbian and gay culture/ history, and social/political rights, to safe sex information and details about club venue/ events.” such as Respondent A,

It was where I first read like GCN. Like it was where I first realized like "omg there's like a whole civil rights movement".

Browne (2007) found that non-heterosexual intimate displays of affection exist out of pride spaces due to the tolerance of ‘gay cities’. However, respondents felt most comfortable to be themselves and safe to date in queer spaces and Street 66 particularly respondents B and C who experienced homophobia when dating in public or heterosexual spaces.

When you're here, it's like, you can be yourself, like, I can hold my girlfriend's hand, and I can kiss my girlfriend, and be comfortable with that. Whereas like, if we went anywhere else, I know, if I was like this, people would be staring at us, people already stare at us anyway (Respondent B 2022).

Anytime we go anywhere, anybody that passes by. Its rare for someone to walk by without looking. Our first kiss we got screamed at (Respondent C 2022).

Like at the start of the relationship there wasn't a day we'd be together and didn't get shouted at (Respondent B 2022).

While respondents did not feel comfortable enough to express their sexual identity in heterosexual spaces, there has been a general increase in the acceptance and tolerance of queerness in Ireland as Browne (2007) discussed which Respondent D attributes to the marriage referendum:

I think there's been like a real huge sudden change in attitudes towards queer people. Probably like has something to do with the marriage equality referendum and people being more involved in activism with repeal. I definitely see it more in town, I'd see more men and women holding hands and stuff (Respondent D 2022).

This tolerance of queerness has also had the consequence of queer spaces becoming spectacles for heterosexual people. Bell and Binnie (2004) discussed that queer spaces are being diluted due to the expulsion of certain types of queerness because of the mainstreaming of queer culture. Respondent E found that the same-sex marriage referendum facilitated this dilution of queer spaces as he believes that because straight people voted for gay rights, they now have an entitlement to attend their spaces,

There's an element of 'we've been given permission. We voted for you now don't do that in public but we want everything... We need to be allowed our space, we need to be allowed to be queer again, its not something we've to give away just because we're allowed to be legal, or have the same rights as people (Respondent E 2022).

Browne (2007) found that Pride spaces in Dublin were becoming tourist spectacles to maximize profits and caused by the influx of heterosexual individuals in these spaces. Almost all of respondents found that gay bars in Dublin have experienced this particularly the George:

I don't think they realize that they are like kind of turning queer culture into like a spectacle (Mariam 2022).

It kind of gets under my skin a bit a lot of the time straight people are there, they're enjoying the freedom of a queer space as this abstract thing.... I feel like its kind of a trip to the zoo for them (Respondent D 2022).

I think it's great for that when you're trying to kind of figure yourself out in the community. But I feel like it's just like a tourist attraction. You know, everyone goes there (Respondent B 2022).

Making queer spaces into spectacles also existed in Street 66 as respondents believed the interior design of the bar contributed to exoticizing queerness,

Because it went from being like this sleek, symmetrical space to like this space, full of detail, grand detail. You know my kind of reading what that is when pubs do that, like, you know, trying to create a spectacle (Respondent A 2022).

They were like this is really cool and they really made it sound like its this obscure place, like omg there's a disco ball and rainbows (Respondent B 2022).

However, respondents felt like the crowd in Street 66 is generally more queer and is a better mix of individuals than in the George or Pantibar which often have more men. Respondents felt like Street 66 was a safer bar also due to the fact it's not a nightclub every night, the staff being women created a safer feeling and the security at the door ensured safety,

Maybe because there are more women staff and women on the door, and I remember I was there the other week and a stag party tried to get in and they were just like no. Whereas I think that would have been allowed in the George. So maybe it's the monitoring at the door to make sure no loads of straight men are let in (Respondent D 2022).

This research adds to the literature on queer spaces by discussing what are key factors for ensuring safe spaces for the queer community. More research could be explored on this and on creating safe spaces for vulnerable communities in nightlife culture. However not everything is utopian about Street 66 as it is a bar and nightclub by the weekend it has its social issues too that respondents reported. Valentine and Skelton (2003) who discussed that queer spaces are paradoxical whereby queer spaces can be liberating and empowering but also sites of potential danger. Respondents discussed that there are risks associated with queer spaces being bars and nightclubs due to the culture of alcohol and drugs. Respondent E discussed the mixing of sex and drugs in the scene is extremely dangerous and has significantly increased in the last decade. Other respondents discussed that Street 66 try to create a safe drinking environment by providing a generous number of non-alcoholic beverages.

There were further issues that arose that did not exist in the literature such as misogyny and sexual harassment for queer women. Significant issues of misogyny and sexual harassment by men, both straight and gay, were discussed by majority of participants.

But like, no bar is safe. You're not going to like, nothing's not going to happen to you just because you walk into Street 66. Like things can happen here too (Respondent B 2022).

Respondents discussed that just because it is a gay bar does not mean they are exempt from experiencing sexism. Unfortunately for the women respondents pre-empting danger on a night out is a norm for them and no matter how safe the place is, they assume that nowhere is safe from potential assault. Some places were more known for this type of behaviour like the George, however all it took was one man to make respondent B and C uncomfortable to put their guard back up when going to Street 66.

And in the George, I think, to a higher extent than anywhere else. There like there's more of those kind of toxic, misogynist, kind of gay men that just want to grope you or talk about your boobs (Respondent C 2022).

Or like, they want to touch you. And they're like, I'm gay it doesn't count (Respondent B 2022).

So I think it's a big, big thing in the George actually. They just call you a bitch or slut or whore or any of these (Respondent C 2022).

A couple weeks ago we were sitting right there [in Street 66] and there was a man just staring at us for ages and we were like talking and kissing, and everytime I'd look over he was staring (Respondent C 2022).

Queer spaces are vital to the queer community as they act as rites of passages for individuals exploring their sexuality and a place to meet people like them. Queer individuals who come from heteronormative dominated households, work or education can be themselves without the fear of judgement or shame in Street 66. Street 66 allows the LGBTQ+ community to learn about their culture and history while also socializing. However, there are nuances with this queer space due to it being a bar and nightclub such as alcohol and drug misuse and potential for misogyny and harassment. However, respondents report that these issues are a

part of a broader issue in nightclub culture and in Irish society, but it does highlight that queer spaces are not utopias or oases free from societal issues.

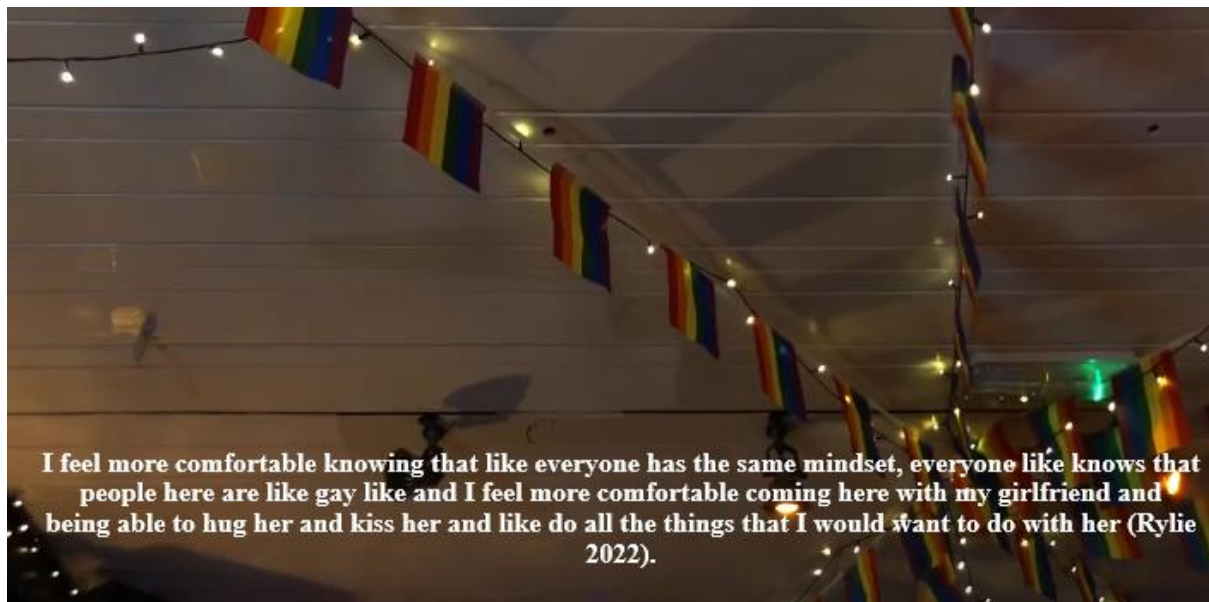
(4.4) Identity

Woodward (2004), Stryker and Burke (2000) argue that a sense of recognition is created through the identification with others. A sense of identification with others is highly important in queer spaces as it allows for queer individuals to feel comfortable and safe to be themselves and explore their identities further,

It feels judgement free and I feel safe in that way. I know that I can't always find a safe space but at least I can be here to be gay, because look around you everybody is gay too. It's not the weird thing to be gay here (Respondent C 2022).



Street 66 provides respondents with a place to be themselves and develop confidence around being queer because they are with other queer people, specifically other queer women. Queer spaces allow for the LGBTQ+ to feel comfortable being who they are and express their sexuality through dating and being intimate without the fear of being judged,



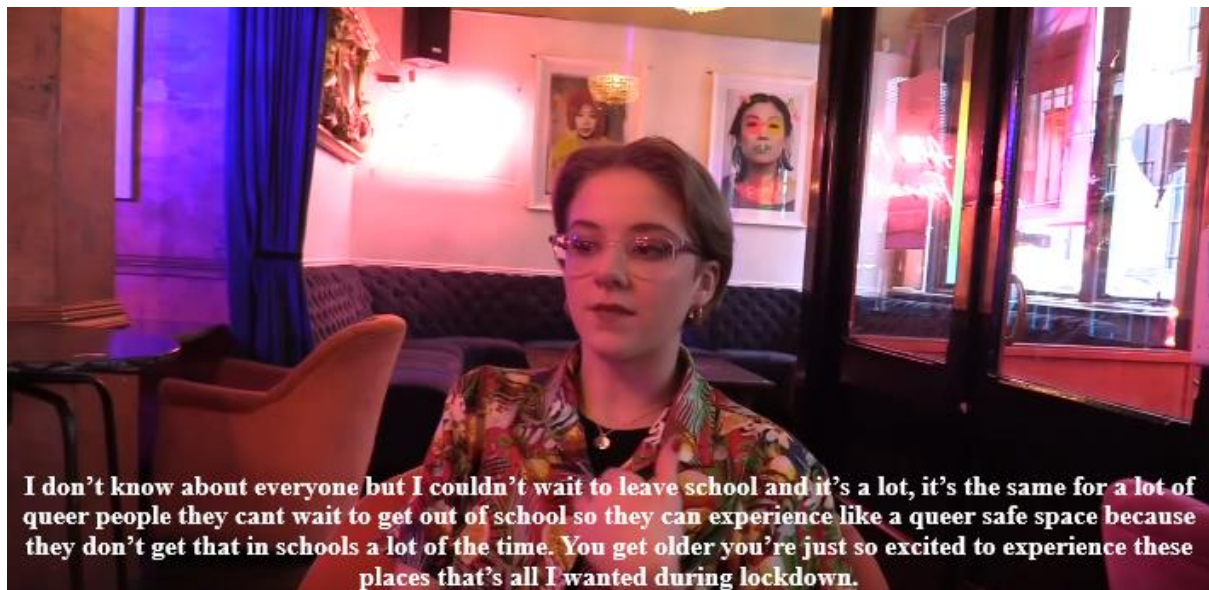
Some individuals do not have queer spaces near them due to living in rural areas thus the need to move to urban areas to develop their sexual identity by meeting other LGBTQ+ members (Seidman 2004). This case study has two individuals who come from rural Ireland and both experienced this need to move to the city to explore their sexualities and find themselves,

So I could go to gay bars. Everybody ran away. It's an interesting thing to look at. People had to run away. There was no other option, people came to the city and we made ourselves family as such (Respondent E 2022)

Respondent E highlights the need to move to the city to find his own family and to be in queer spaces. This adds to Valentine and Skelton's (2003:849) argument that the city acts as a "magnet for queer migrants" due to the anonymity, an escape from small town communities and prejudice which facilitates sexual liberation.

Valentine and Skelton (2003) discuss that 'the scene' provides queer individuals a space to explore and construct their sexual identity and learn about queer culture. This is particularly beneficial for individuals who live in heterosexual households that lack support and attended schools that excluded homosexuality in sex education (Valentine and Skelton 2003: 853).

Respondents reported that going to queer spaces were a rite of passage for them as they transitioned from school to adulthood where they could explore their sexuality,



Lara highlights how important queer spaces are for young queer people coming from school to explore their sexuality and be immersed with people just like them. Lara further discusses the significance of the city having queer spaces as many young people cannot avail of queer spaces in their areas.

Valentine (1993) discovered that lesbian women perform different sexual identities depending on the place and time for example at home versus in queer spaces. After 30 years later, this was evident in my research also as respondents felt like they could perform their true sexual identities in Street 66 as some performed as straight at home,

I remember just being really excited, properly felt like the main character you know what I mean? Like a Billy Elliot character, particularly because I wasn't out at home and it wouldn't be okay to come out at home. I was just outlandishly queer, I just chatted up anybody I could (Respondent D 2022).

For other respondents, how they express their sexual identity changes over time as they become more confident in who they are,

I think back then I was like, I have to fit in. I have to look like everybody else whereas now like, I don't care. Yeah like I just wear what I want and what I'm comfortable with and I think when you come to spaces like this, everyone is different. Everyone looks different in their different clothing (Respondent B 2022).

Goffman (1956) discusses that the performance of identities is carried out through body language, clothing, style etc. The provision of queer events in Street 66 allows for the performance of queer identities particularly the poetry nights through their spoken word and body movements while audiences displayed emotional responses to poems.

Rooke (2007) discusses the lesbian habitus whereby there are certain visual cues that may represent queerness. Rooke (2007) discusses how the lesbian habitus can exclude those who lack it and this was experienced by Respondent D as she discussed how beauty standards exist within the queer community,

But the pressure to look a certain way particular for women, there is a pressure to be androgynous in your body type and like minimal makeup but still attractive, minimal makeup but clear skin and dark defined eyebrows and all this... I think the beauty standards for queer women, there's some internal misogyny involved in relation to thinness as the ideal. No one has ever been like you fat bitch haha but like it's just something I've noticed. No one has been rude to me, but just like the reception that you get is different. So it's not a utopia. It's still part of the world, touched by the bad things in society (Respondent D 2022).

Respondent D discusses how there is a beauty standard regarding the aesthetic and body shape of queer women and describes how she has experienced social exclusion due to not fitting this standard. This has resulted in the respondent not feeling as comfortable in Street 66 and feels a pressure to dress a certain way. However, there are nuances involved in this pressure to look a certain way as respondents gave varying answers. Younger respondents who did not feel like they could express their identities in heteronormative institutes, now felt like they could finally perform it in Street 66 and felt a sense of belonging,

Before that there was no space like I didn't feel welcome in any other spaces d'ya know what I mean because you constantly feel like you're being looked at and you're like 'oh god maybe I don't fit in' but the queer spaces even here it just makes you, it gives you a sense of community that you don't normally get because sometimes you feel like the world or like society isn't made for you, it doesn't cater directly to you (Lara 2022).

Queer spaces and identity are interconnected as these places construct and maintain sexual identities and provide a space to perform and express them. Comfortability levels and levels of pressure to conform to queer habitus varied depending on the individual. Identities are formed and constructed with the help of being around like-minded people which can create a sense of belonging within a community.

(4.5) Community

Cohen (1985) and Leonard (2005) illustrates that creating bonds are facilitated through social activities which assist the construction and maintenance of communities. However, this is more complicated for Street 66 regarding the formation of a community as there have been two significant challenges to creating and maintaining a community. Firstly, respondents who frequented the Front Lounge reported that there was a loss of the regulars who went to the bar once it changed ownership. Respondent A reports that the bar was more of an afterwork crowd, the interior design was more sophisticated and Respondent D discusses she rarely

went as it was perceived as posh. The change in ownership to Street 66 was accompanied by a change in the interior design to more maximalist and eclectic and gathered a broader mix of people. Many respondents discussed how the after-work community has been replaced with a lesbian community and this can be traced to the owners having a lesbian clientele that joined them in the new bar,

I feel like street 66 is unofficially lesbian in that way where all like all the lesbians have decided it just belongs to them anyway (Mariam 2022).

This space has actually been creating and has its own things going for it and it clearly has regulars coming back. And, like, the only other thing then I guess is I don't know the owners at all but I do think they have, there is community in and around Street 66 and its definitely lesbians.... I don't know anything about it but like that's probably the kind of ties that the owners have created (Respondent A 2022).

Thus, the loss of the old community and construction of a new community in the bar has left respondents unsure whether a sense of community exists yet. Furthermore, the impact of the pandemic and closure of non-essential businesses has strained the formation of community and relationship due to the lack of events and gatherings taking place. Respondents B, C and D discussed they were not comfortable enough to dance at the bar due to the pandemic and closures prevented young queer adults from visiting queer spaces.

Currently Street 66 is hosting many events now that COVID-19 restrictions have lifted and queer individuals are returning to this queer space. Recent events have included the monthly poetry night, presentations by queer creators and innovators, a music, comedy and burlesque event. Social activities and interactions are restarting thus a sense of community is beginning for the queer women of the research.

Respondents discuss that Street 66 is unable to provide individuals with a space to form strong connections with one another due to being a bar and nightclub,

I don't think because you can't hear people, the music is really loud and you come here to drink (Respondent B 2022).

Like even if you have an interaction with someone, you'd just be like oh I made a friend. Like I think if they offered workshops or group things you could go to and you could actually interact with people (Respondent C 2022).

Do you mean like friends? No not really. One night stands yeah. But nothing I could say was a meaningful relationship but never say never (Respondent A 2022).

Respondent A knows that Street 66 is a good space for finding sexual connections and relationships with others. Irrespective of not making strong connections with other queer individuals at Street 66 there is still exists a connection between individuals as they recognise familiar faces and non-verbally communicate by smiling or dancing with them,



I think so because there's always regulars here like you can always recognize people like that have been here before and you're like we know each other. I think like mostly non-verbal just being able to like see each other and you're like alright you've been here before we know each other. Really friendly and very open to talking and chatting (Riley 2022).

These non-verbal communications with familiar faces that take place in Street 66 can be described as Watson's concept of 'rubbing along' due to the glancing, gazing, being seen, sharing spaces with or without conversation (2009: 1581). Respondents highlighted that because the queer community is relatively small in Dublin they are bound to run into someone they know in the bar or they can strike up conversation with other members of the

community. Additionally, respondents felt they could identify with other LGBTQ+ members at Street 66 from knowing them from social media. As Blackshaw (2010) argue that communities are no longer possible in postmodernity, this research highlights that advancement of technology can facilitate community making. Respondent A discussed how she recognises queer individuals from Twitter in Street 66 illustrating that an imagined community exists digitally, and which then can meet at queer spaces like Street 66 in person. Although it is argued that communities have been replaced with the individuality of liquid society, there is still a need to feel a sense of belonging to a community which guides queer individuals to Street 66,

We're all looking for the same thing, we all tend to congregate in the same area (Lara 2022).

The concept of community also includes boundaries as it differentiates one group from another. In the case of Street 66, all respondents discussed how the LGBTQ+ community need to have separate spaces from heterosexuals,



Bronwen demonstrates the boundaries that exist between queer and heterosexual groups and places as she prefers for them to remain separate and to prevent heterosexual people invading queer spaces.

Day (2006) argues that the similarities between individuals that creates a sense of community and identification with one another in a place, however it can also act as a boundary to keep others out. Boundary making by the owners or the community in Street 66 may not be intentional, however there are issues of representation within the community here. Although respondents discuss that there is a good mix of people that attend Street 66, majority of respondents were white and may overlook the realities of the space being predominately white. Mariam who is a black nonbinary individual discusses how they're aware of the lack of people of colour in queer spaces in Dublin,



This adds to the literature on boundaries within the queer community as Bell and Binnie (2004: 1810) discuss “many gay consumption spaces are bounded communities, where processes of exclusion operate for instance on the basis of race and gender.”

Respondents B, C and D discussed how the costs of associated with going out in Dublin placed financial burdens upon them as they cannot afford it. This is an issue across the board in Dublin and Ireland due to the rise in costs of good. However, Respondents B and C highlight that this has impacted queer spaces poorly due to there being cheaper places to drink in heterosexual dominated spaces, but queer individuals may not be comfortable dating

or drinking there. Furthermore, the other costs associated with socialising limited queer people's experience if they had low income which is the case for younger queer or working class queer individuals.

There are a lot of straight bars that would charge less for cocktails like €7 or €7.50, so for €12 here it builds up especially on two rounds (Respondent C 2022).

Yeah if you didn't have your bus fare. Ya'd be limited if you didn't have money, you couldn't go out all the time, none of us were working so it was kind of whoever had the money was buying the drink, mutual aid haha (Respondent D 2022).

Bell and Binnie (2004: 1817) discuss that “gays are now seen as strange attractors of global venture capital” and gay culture as become commodified all while some queer individuals with low financial resources are excluded from queer spaces.

Although Street 66 has had a challenging time developing a sense of community due to the changing of business and the pandemic physically separating people, a community has emerged here. The bar consists of the regulars and newcomers who both seek a sense of belonging and to socialise in a queer space while events often take place for the community. However, this research found that a sense of community does not equate to a utopian, inclusive community as exclusions exists regarding race and class in Street 66.

(4.6) Conclusion

The findings of this project complemented the existing literature on place as respondents in this case study discussed how Street 66 is a significant place in their lives through the rituals, traditions, memories and experiences made here. This case study illustrated the significance of place making for individuals as respondents who attended the Front Lounge found it difficult to adjust to the new business and negotiate developing a new sense of place. Additionally, the significance of this place was accentuated as it acts as a third place for queer individuals to have fun and be themselves away from possible heteronormative

households and work. The literature review discussed how queer spaces were significant during the gay right's movement in Ireland for finding likeminded people and expressing queerness without judgement (McDonagh 2017). This research found that four decades later, queer spaces continue to be important for queer individuals to socialise, express themselves without any shame and acts as a rite of passage for queer individuals exploring their sexuality. However, there are considerable nuances existing with this queer space that adds to the literature such as the sexual harassment and misogyny that exists in queer spaces. Street 66 assists in the constructions of identities due to being with similar people and a space to perform these identities. Findings from this research highlighted that sexuality identities are performed at different places such as at home versus in Street 66 which compliment Valentine's (1993) research. This research project sought to explore the existence of a community in Street 66 and it found a complicated narrative due to the loss of regular customers due to changing of ownership and the pandemic lockdowns. However, this research found that the community is growing in Street 66 and is categorised as a lesbian community. The hosting of events and social activities in Street 66 has facilitated social interactions allowing for a sense of belonging and community to form here.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Gieryn (2000: 471,483) describes place as remarkable and highlights its contribution to sociology as it has been touched by almost every topic in the subject. This research project explored the importance of place through researching how the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experiences queer spaces specifically Street 66 in Dublin. To develop an insight into this topic, this case study examined five key themes: place, third place, queer spaces, identity and community. An investigation of these themes in Street 66 would answer the research sub-questions of this project; how queer spaces in the wider cityscape are viewed, how is Street 66 itself viewed and understood, how is a sense of place created, how are identities constructed and performed here, how do queer individuals in this space interact and is there a sense of community in the bar.

Chapter one began with an introduction to the research project which included an explanation of why this project is significant due to the importance of having queer spaces in Ireland for queer Irish individuals to have a place to belong free of judgement, fear and shame. This chapter also set the scene by contextualizing Street 66 which opened in 2016 and provides the LGBTQ+ community with many services such as a café, bar, nightclub, space for meetings, poetry nights, queer markets, entertainment shows. Chapter two explored the existing literature, theoretical arguments and empirical case studies on each of the key themes.

Chapter three discussed how the methodological approach of this research project which was a qualitative case study using semi-structured interviews, photographic representation and visual ethnography. I believe the semi-structured interviews were the best method of data collection due to the rich in depth and intimate details of people's lives were shared and added greatly to this research. While the visual ethnography was an incredibly useful tool for data collection and analysis, the use of the camera and microphone without anonymity and confidentiality prevented respondents from opening up about their opinions and experiences.

This chapter also included ethical considerations, an overview of the steps carried out to collect and analyse the data and issues of positionality as I am a queer woman who also attends the bar.

The findings and analysis of the data was written up in chapter four and thoroughly addressed the research question and sub-questions. Corcoran (2002) discusses how significant tradition and memories are for place making which complements the findings on place in this research as sense of place here was achieved through the rituals and experiences made by respondents. Watson (2009) and Wessels (2009) discussed how the loss of place can have an impact on people's lives and this was found when the closure of the Front Lounge caused the loss of a community here. While the bar transitioned to Street 66, individuals had to renegotiate how they used and interpreted this space leaving some respondents not returning or returning years later. This highlights the strong connections individuals have to place and that place cannot be replicated so easily. Street 66 acts as a third place for the LGBTQ+ community due to the space being used to unwind and socialize outside of work, education and the home. The personalization, permeability and availability of outdoor seating further distinguishes the bar as a third place compared to other businesses (Mehta and Bosson 2010). However, respondents argue it is still a for profit business thus cannot be a community centre.

This research found that Street 66 is as a vital queer space for individuals to explore their sexuality and to feel safe and comfortable doing it here. This contrasts with the findings in Browne's (2007) research that argues 'gay cities' are more tolerant of queerness and queer individuals can be intimate in heterosexual spaces. This project found that there are not enough queer spaces in Ireland and for the few that exist here they are being diluted by heterosexual groups which is also discussed by Bell and Binnie (2004). Queer spaces are not utopias as further issues arose such as the misogyny and sexual harassment that exists in queer spaces. Further dilemmas that arose was the existence of beauty standards and queer

habitus that excludes those that do not fit in similar to Rooke's (2007) findings on the lesbian habitus. However, for others Street 66 was a judgement free space that allowed for them to explore their sexual identity and express it freely. Further nuances found in this research included the challenges facing the creation of community in the bar due to it changing ownership and losing its past clientele. Furthermore, boundaries were found in the queer space as there is a lack of representation of queer people of colour as well as class exclusions. However, this research found that a lesbian community thrives in the bar and a sense of community is forming with the increasing events being held here after months of pandemic lockdowns.

Further research on queer spaces could explore further the misogynistic practices that are ongoing in queer spaces or how queer spaces ensure a sense of safety and comfortability. This research adds to the literature on the significance of place and queer spaces in the lives of the LGBTQ+ community amidst rapidly changing societies. The queer community continue to need a place to belong and a place to be queer.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for interviews

/02/22

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our Research Project for my Special Topics BA Project at Maynooth University. Our research is designed to explore how the LGBTQ+ community experience and understand queer spaces with a focus on Street 66, Dublin.

The research seeks to understand how individuals view queer spaces, such as Street 66, within the wider context of Dublin predominately having heterosexual and cis gendered spaces. Thus, I am researching how queer individuals find a sense of place and belonging in cityscapes. I will explore this through examining how community and social connections are formed and how queer identities are expressed. This research seeks to understand how this queer space is used and how individuals form connections to one another. I seek to investigate the importance of queer spaces and what they offer the LGBTQ+ community.

This interview may take up to one hour and with your permission we would like to video and tape record the conversation. A copy of all the recordings will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear or watch it. We will store the tapes/notes of our conversation safely.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact us at

Tara Swinburne –

Participant Identification Number:

<p>CONSENT FORM</p> <p>How do the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces: A case study of Street 66, Dublin.</p>

Name of Researchers: Tara Swinburne

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 18/02/22 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

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

3. I understand my name will not appear in the final project

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix B

Consent Form for Visual Ethnography Film

/02/22

Thank you for agreeing to take part in our Research Project for Tara's Special Topics BA Project at Maynooth University and Ahlam's AN350 Student Ethnographic Film Project. Our research is designed to explore how the LGBTQ+ community experience and understand queer spaces with a focus on Street 66, Dublin.

The research seeks to understand how individuals view queer spaces, such as Street 66, within the wider context of Dublin predominately having heterosexual and cis gendered spaces. Thus, we are researching how queer individuals find a sense of place and belonging in cityscapes. We will explore this through examining how community and social connections are formed and how queer identities are expressed. This research seeks to understand how this queer space is used and how individuals form connections to one another. We seek to investigate the importance of queer spaces and what they offer the LGBTQ+ community.

This interview may take up to one hour and with your permission we would like to video and tape record the conversation. A copy of all the recordings will be made available to you afterwards if you wish to hear or watch it. We will store the tapes/notes of our conversation safely.

Your participation is voluntary. You are free to refuse to take part, and you may refuse to answer any questions or may stop at any time. You may also withdraw at any time up until the work is completed.

If you have any questions about the research, you may contact us at

Ahlam Ahmed –

Tara Swinburne –

Film and Photography/Audio Release Form

Title of Project: How do the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces:
A case study of Street 66, Dublin / AN350 Student Ethnographic Film Project

Researchers: Ahlam Ahmed and Tara Swinburne

We are very grateful that you have agreed to allow us to film you/reproduce your photographs, voice, for use within the publications of our project. These images will be used for promotional, research and educational purposes as part of the Maynooth University **AN350 Student Ethnographic Film Project and BA Special Topics Project** On request we will anonymize any colleagues or friends included as background to any such images.

By signing this form you agree to the reproduction of your film/photographs and social media postings, and that you cede all the necessary rights for the reproduction (under a Creative Commons licence CC BY-NC 4.0) exhibition and broadcast of these images with no temporal or geographical limits, by all means and on all media (whether available today or invented in the future), and without any obligations on our part to you. We have the right to edit your images according to our needs and are not obliged to include any or all of them in any resulting publication. Neither you, nor anyone associated with you, will receive a fee now or at any time in the future in connection with the use of these images.

CONSENT FORM

How do the LGBTQ+ community view, understand and experience queer spaces: A case study of Street 66, Dublin / AN350 Student Ethnographic Film Project.

Name of Researchers: Tara Swinburne and Ahlam Ahmed

Please tick the box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet dated 18/02/22 for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

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

3. I agree to participating in this research that uses video and recording devices that will be used for research purposes.

4. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant Date Signature

Researchers: _____

Date: _____

Signatures: _____

Appendix C

Transcription of interview 24th February 2022.

Interviewer: So what I'm looking at is, so it's my dissertation for my undergrad. So I doing interviews. So it's basically I'd like to see how the LGBTQ community experience queer spaces, like gay bars, and then my supervisor told me to choose one. So like Street 66, because my personal opinion is that the George it's a bit touristy, a lot of people come and go there like, just to see what it's about and stuff like that. Yeah. And then, yeah, and then the panty bar is a bit more male dominated. So I thought here, but it's funny, because I was like, I think here was more mixed and my supervisor was like of course you think that you're a woman you think it's mixed here, but I think it is. So basically, I'm looking at your opinion, your stories, your experiences, everything you have to say about queer spaces, and specifically the Street 66?

Respondent A: Yeah, so yeah, in like 2016 this venue went from being the front lounge to Street 66. And there was a lot of, you know, a concern and it was, there was concern about the changes to the venue at the time, but I think in the long run, it's kind of had its own sort of grand identity . So if you want, I can kind of start on the other side of the portal when it was the front lounge

Interviewer: I'd love that because I'm having issues, because a lot of people I'm interviewing were like 20. So they're like, I haven't really been here that much because of the pandemic, and then they're like, what's the first lounge? And I'm like, I know. So I have a couple of people that like, I think I need to get people who are like, in their late 20s or 30s plus for these interviews. I'm realising that, but it's been a good perspective but I'd love to hear what you have to say, bring me on a journey.

Respondent A: Yeah sure to me, it's sort of you know, it's a, it's a two parter, you know, because of the two different cohorts as far as events. So, yeah, so in 2011, I started going to gay bars, and I was living in Monastervin at the time at home. And I was listening into town regularly first to go to college. But I dropped out of that course. And I got a job instead and was getting to my work. And I come out in that year, 2011 and in 2011, like, the only way I can make sense of it is to kind of break it up, is to break the queer venues into groups. So if you're looking for somewhere that resembles the traditional Irish bar, like that you'd find anywhere down the country you'd probably go to Nealons, which is across the Grattan Bridge on the left hand side opposite Pantibar. And Nealons is it's definitely a gay bar, but it you know, it isn't as explicit as Pantibar where you'll find like, erotica, it's kind of a punk cabaret sorta vibe. It's like Nealons, you know, anyone could wander it off the street and realise, oh, this is like a gay bar. It kind of just has that ambiguity I suppose but it definitely has like gay men work there and like gay groups hold events upstairs. But it's also it's kind of a local neighbourhood joint as well.

Interviewer: And is it still open?

Respondent: Yeah it's still opened

Interviewer: I suppose its so ambiguous it might not be that well known or is it well known?

Respondent: Yeah I I think it's, I've always associated with slightly older so like, yeah, like in my early 20s I wouldn't have been able to easily drag people with me.

Interviewer: Did it kind of give you like local pub vibes did you like that kind of element of it.

Respondent A: Ehm I like the clientele which was you know, which is definitely like older male kind of type. You know, in the George its younger. But it's just like, [Nealons] was in the news few years ago because I think the ownership of the building changed but the

leaseholder remained the same. In the article it said like it's interior hasn't been touched since in 2004. But it is kind of your traditional bar like bar stools, high tables. It's the only gay bar that has a fireplace, and like in the winter it's a gorgeous spot, so that's kind of like, you know, your more mild kind of space. And then like, the front lounge was similar just targeted at a different group. So, it's hard to imagine but this was so different. And so when I came in here the front lounge it was painted blue at the front instead of the red and for me it was a kind of the, ambience was all about an afterwork kind of crowd. And it was a little bit more sophisticated, modern, expensive. So it was really minimalistic in comparison to this like, these [the walls] are all kind of empty, except for there will be an exhibition on all the time. So there'd be either large canvases or pictures and frames and the price tags beside them. And so like the emphasis was really on sort of just like lines and symmetry and kind of glamorous surfaces and whereas this is maximalism, but they kind of comparison. So, so. So the only thing that was kind of an extreme erotic about it is I think it's still there. If you go upstairs and turn left, look up on the left hand side there is a sculpture of like a naked, man. So yeah, to me, the front lounge was sort of afterwork crowds, sophisticated, modern. And I was reading that it was founded in the early mid 90s by a guy named Jay something, can't remember his name now

Interviewer: Do you know when it was the Parliament or maybe that was before you but I love the story when I was reading about it because the pub down in the street like stopped being like a gay bar, and they put up no gays in it. So they came here and I read that it accidentally became a gay bar.

Respondent A: Yeah, that's the kind of foundational story on it and your man, he's in the news lately as well, because he's like 15 million in debt. Yeah so Jay Bourke and a pal, they opened up a lot of exciting spaces in Dublin in the 90s. So they opened The Globe. Yeah, so this is real like Celtic Tiger. Yeah.

Interviewer: Isn't that mad all the bars and club that opened from the Celtic Tiger, where are they now?

Respondent A: I know. Yeah it's a good question. And they also opened the Odessa restaurant and that's the gone now it was off Exchequer Street. And that was a real like really classy old Georgian kind of place there and it was a really lovely restaurant bar. And I've heard of more than once that it a first-date spot. So but like, so Jay Bourke, didn't seem like didn't plan to open this as a gay bar. It was only in proximity to the protest, that the gays started using as their base but it sounded like he played ball and put up the rainbow flag and filled the condom dispensers.

Interviewer: He said Gay Rights.

Respondent A: Yeah you know what he realised he had an audience, you know, and, of course, the gay community news, the magazine is stocked her aswell. So I'll just continue with the list of more venues before I start talking about Street 66. So then and then of course, you have somewhere like Pantibar, which is like, where it is kind of underground cabare. So like, it's deliberately dim lighting. There's that amazing lighting fixture when you walk in, like a headless woman on the stairs like just going down the stairs, that sort of like advertises the stairs, but like, it's really quite, like, cool. And Panti collaborated with Niall Sweeny who's a designer and he'd do a lot of the posters for a lot of Panti's events, which would always take like this sort of like, it wasn't really photographic posters, it would have been like old sci-fi posters and Panti would be this big space monster. So to wonder around Pantibar was sort of like "oh my God this is like crazy" and even downstairs a few years ago, they had this kind of random granny flat space with armchairs and a dresser and they've since changed that into more of a kind of more of a soviet, I don't know it's kind of like more like tables, like it's kind of more intimate or conspiratorial. They have these big red and black tiles, which are

kind of, I don't know, kind of like Germany like it's kind of a Berlin. So there's loads of ideas in that space. So and then finally the George.

Interviewer: The Classic haha.

Respondent A: Yeah but like the George just to look at it its a fortified space because like it doesn't even have windows because they weren't there at a time when your pub patrons had to be protected. They were under threat of exposure and everything else. So and

Interviewer: I wonder if they kept that feature kind of like to kind of show like, remind you of the roots because like they still don't have them and yeah I like that element of it.

Respondent A: Yeah, yeah and you know, and inside its really decadent with the giant statues on either side of the stage of people like having sex. The giant mirrors,

Interviewer: Yeah like I love how even when you do go you're dancing on the stage and stuff like that near naked, like Go Go dancers like behind you, and you really feel like you're involved.

Respondent A: Yeah very immersive haha. The only other one I mentioned there, its Bridies bar, which is kind of the old part of the George.

Interviewer: Yeah, I went in there with my friend because we were waiting for Street 66 to open. And we wanted to sit somewhere, and we went in and there was just like, oh, it was so intimidating and we left, have you ever sat in there?

Respondent A: Well, actually, I went with your friend and my ex boyfriend's there once and I do remember myself and my ex boyfriend being like, you know, we may have to protect your friend man, because like the men here can be like you know, they have a real casual sense of bodily, just like body space or universal space. And so yeah, I know what you mean but like that, to me, that's very close to Nealon just like, it's very casual. But like, at the same

time, it has like stained glass windows, you know? So, so yeah, when I first started going out in Dublin I chose the front lounge because I think, you know, in your early 20s, you're sort of like, you know, your peer group changes and now people have like professions and like money and like, you know, to go felt like being a part of this after work crowd and, and who knows who you're gonna run into. And you know, you're full of interesting people. And you know, who knows what party is gonna happen? Yeah, kind of, and, but like at the very beginning, and and it will usually be after finishing up college, like by lunchtime or something. And I come in here for lunch, and that

Interviewer: Yeah I didn't realise they use to do food

Respondent A: It's been a few attempts of that over the years.

Interviewer: Was it good?

Respondent A: Yeah from what I remember it was yeah, yeah. And yeah, like that was my kind of way of dipping my toe in the pond, it was sort of like I just come in here by myself. It was where I first read like GCN. Like it was where I first realised like "omg there's like a whole civil rights movement". And Shirley Temple Bar use to do this like surrealist comedy, sketch in an issue called 'Shirley Confidential' Like, transcripts of interviewing someone famous like Madonna and of course in real she hadn't gone anywhere near Madonna and it was all like crazy. And it's also where like, you know, we weren't friends or anything, but there was a waiter here who'd I'd see time and again, and he was friendly. And like, he come over and like to have a bit of a chat with you. And in a way he was kind of my first like, you know, not a kind of existing relationship or anything, but I just remember it was one of the early interactions of coming to the front lounge.

Interviewer: How did you feel coming here by yourself? Like, was it intimidating, or because of the place it was welcoming?

Respondent A: I would definitely like to go anywhere was intimidating It's, uh, yeah, I remember feeling intimidated here. I remember gay friends the same age as me and kind of on a similar like, timeline as myself but I didn't really know if he's really into the scene at all, but I remember him kind of like saying, like, I heard reports about "you know you go into the bar and there's two men snogging each other". I was like, "Oh I don't even know like what I would do if I saw two gay men" haha. And of course now its like whatever. So yeah, it was definitely intimidating. Oh, yeah like I remember some friends were really kind enough to put me up if I was meeting like a friend for a drink or if I was going on a date. But then I start coming here in the evening time. And like, you know, I had this suspicion when I came here for lunch like I wonder what its like at nighttime. And of course, it was great craic. Yeah, you know, and it was just like kind of buzzing with activity. And, you know, you'd have a drag queen do a karaoke show here and my neighbour named Frank with a surname I can't remember, but he was the DJ here.

Interviewer: Was this the dance floor here?

Respondent A: Yeah, I know what you mean, because there's an island up there so I think we just dance around it. And I think that's still what we do I was here a few weeks ago and we just dance around.

Interviewer: There's like a booth on this side and then loads of tables so they just move the tables so that you can dance on the floor, was it like that?

Respondent A: You know, the tables and chairs remain there and they still do it. You know, it's yeah, we kinda just find anywhere we can it's sort of

Interviewer: Like yous creating the space yourselves haha

Respondent A: Exactly haha we fit in or whatever. And I don't know if it was Frank or what DJ it was, but for some reason, I always associate the dance floor here with 'Proud Mary' by

Tina Turner. He would always get it and I just remember like, strangers rolling on a river *doing the dance move*. So yeah, so I start coming in the evening times and like it definitely was that kind of afterwork crowd. Yeah, like another memory I have is like I came here the morning of marriage equality referendum and watched the results there [Street 66] before meeting your sister in Pantibar.

Interviewer: Was it on the telly here or were you chatting away to people?

Respondent A: It was on the projector. Yeah. So the TV and the projector were here always. Like, yeah, we've a lot to talk about because this is all insane compared to, like its all different . And but yeah, I don't know if there's something else to say now though, like, when it was the Front Lounge.

Interviewer: I am often told that it was kind of like segregated in the bar, like, you know, the front was like, gay women and the back was gay men, was it actually like that?

Respondent A: Hmm yeah, so that's, uh, you know, I think more than one person would observe that. There's something of an unspoken rule. Yeah. And so. And so, from what I remember, like, Pantibar and Penny Lane like were always very male and Nealons as well. And yeah Front Lounge would always be more of a mix. Yeah and for some reason, and, you know, there were some unofficial rules that like women would sit here [the front] and then men would gather back there. Yeah and I kind of, like always took it as, like, some kind of grim comment on like, the relations that are in our community, like I know loads of gay men nowhere near feminists. Probably like gay women who don't want anything to do with men.

Interviewer: Yeah I've seen both sides. It's so funny like literally my friend who's a lesbian she's just like, when she comes in "why are men here?", because she's like gay men are so misogynistic, but at the same time that she's like "why are gay men here?". Its like a cycle for

her. Yeah so like when I go out with her I'm like do you wanna go Pantibar and she's like "why would I wanna go there, women don't go there?"

Respondent A: Right yeah yeah. You know, she probably has a legitimate claim, because I think we do take up a lot. I don't know why that is. I wonder if there's anything else to say about Front Lounge.

Interviewer: I read an article and heard from other people like there was a weird kinda era between the Front Lounge and when it became Street 66. There was a weird phase of the kind of transition. Do you remember any of that? Or did it just close and it was Street 66?

Respondent A: Yeah, I do remember there being drama. Yeah. And so again, it's Siobhan and Cynthia.

Interviewer: I think its Cristina

Respondent A: And Cristina. Right. And, yeah, so what I remember then is first of all, there was a kind of a period in the mid of the last decade where sort of, I was kind of in a relationship. The idea of a free night was a dinner as opposed to a gay bar. So I wasn't coming here kind of as much.

Interviewer: I wonder why that is because they were discussing there's a trope where like lesbians, they meet their partner here and then they don't really go out to the gay bars, was there any particular reason you wouldn't go to a gay bar?

Respondent A: I don't think so I would have loved to haha?

Interviewer: Oh okay I see why the relationship didn't maybe work out haha.

Respondent A: Maybe it has something to do with like you know these spaces are so rare to us like they become about meaning so much and part of that is like meaning you know, it's a

space where you get laid or meet someone but maybe when you're in a relationship that you know might be kind of a space where you are wary of your partner being there?

Interviewer: Yeah just like me reading about this dating is different for gay men and gay women, for gay men going out there's the hookup culture and for gay women its not the same thing, so maybe when they go out together they aren't thinking about hooking up, maybe?

Respondent A: That's an interesting difference, I hadn't heard that

Interviewer: Yeah it was interesting I was reading about it and they said like a women because they're so used to come like heteronormativity that the only type of relationships they know is like if you're with someone like you do official and then you move really quickly in a relationship so you know like you meet someone to get married have kids everything so when they go from like secondary school, straight into relationships then like, like they meet women in the bars, they come back to that same effect where like you move quite quickly, while gay men enter the scene and they'd have more of a hookup culture. So like my friend would always say, it's such stereotype when gay women move in together just like that. And they get married. And then they break up and I go to their best friend.

Respondent A: Oh, amazing fair play. Yeah, probably more. Yeah. I know. I do like casual sex though.

Interviewer: You're e affirming the theory that I'm reading about.

Respondent A: Oh, yeah, probably. Yeah. Yeah. I definitely know loads that came out and they just want to find a partner but yeah, I'm happy to go into the woods for a few years. So yeah, so then 2016 I'm trying to remember the time I remember the Irish Independent had a piece about there was gonna be a change in the lease. I think the original, I don't think Jay Bourke ever owned it, I think he was the leaseholder. Yeah and that ended.

Interviewer: Yeah I think the landlords were selling it and trying to find someone to take over the lease and he just gave up the lease.

Respondent A: And there might be a remainder of the period. They were trying to find someone to finish out the lease.

Interviewer: It's mad though that the referendum just happened like by 2015. And then this is just being sold like where are people gonna celebrate? You would think it would have kicked up business I suppose for celebration

Respondent A: I do remember people being confused and surprised. And because we lost the Dragon as well. I don't know if that was before.

Interviewer: Yeah like my friend she tells me about different like gay bars and clubs. I'm like, oh, no, that's gone

Respondent A: Let's yeah, so it might be important to mention the Dragon just in that timeline. I can't remember what year it closed in or anything. But basically, long story short yeah, the dragon was a few doors off from the George and it was a very random kind of space, like it was just kind of inherited I suppose. And it was really cavernous. And the only place they could fit a cramped dance floor was here and then back to the stage like ended up being built on scaffolding above the bar, which actually led to one of the most you know, like iconic pieces of local Gay mythology in Ireland and Dublin a YouTube video of a drag queen falling off the stage. It's kind of just like, you know, everyone watches it like "wow she fell" but also like it's crazy that the Dragon got away with the health and safety. Yeah, it was just a shock that that closed and it was very similar to George, like it was kind of young people in their 20s. Basically that closed and both it and the George were bought at the same time by the Mercantile group. The biggest pub owning groups in the country. And they turned the Dragon into a fusion bar restaurant called Opium [it became NoLita]. Or no that's down by

Whelan's. It's opposite George's Street anyways. That was lost aswell so that was just like, okay. We're losing thing. Then the referendum, you know, you could think that there was a difference with gay people wanting as part of their culture to go to queer venues but instead we started to lose them and they began to drop off. And so yeah, then this place was changing ownership. And then, like, you know, in typical sort of, like, you know, gay drama that fashion, is a staff member that worked in the Front Lounge like put up a Facebook post saying "just so you know this isn't going to be anything like the Front Lounge in fact its going to be a ska reggae straight bar." Which I think a lot of people were like, wow what?

Interviewer: Yeah especially it being the complete opposite music and all.

Respondent A: And, like, you know, I'm just thinking of, like, you know, the people who come with their, like, loosened top buttons and their like work blazers? I mean the opposite. So, that was the thing, and then I think there was such enough people to see that. I think, before it opened as you say Siobhan and Cristine, you're right. Yeah. And I think they even put up the statement saying just, you know,

Interviewer: Yeah they reported in GCN and like, actually, there they reported for everyone to calm down and it would be a gay bar.

Respondent A: But then I think afterwards they did an interview with Trinity College paper or another paper anyway, and like Siobhan did say like. So basically, they were music organisers, in Turk's Head and they did play reggae and ska. And the idea was to actually set up a live reggae venue. Which, you know, the interior kind of fits. You know, when I first came to Street 66 I think there were wooden barrels or kegs and it was more wooden than before. And like, there was something really sort of palm tree about it but maybe there was never a palm tree. There was something Carribean about it.

Interviewer: Maybe its the fact that Frida Kahlo seems to be like the logo and stuff like that

Respondent A: Is she a lesbian?

Interviewer: She's actually bisexual, Marxist from Mexico.

Respondent A: Okay. So I come here and I've been like why's Frida Kahlo everywhere at least that makes sense. Something I have noticed walking past is the mopeds jutting out above this part of the ceiling.

Interviewer: I think it's because I was listening to podcast with Siobhan and her and Cristina have collected stuff over the years. So they wanted to make it really like artsy and stuff, because a lot of stuff that they collected from different places, I think they've stuck in here. Siobhan says she's collected stuff from convents and stuff like that, so nice.

Respondent A: Wow okay yeah, because it went from being like this sleek, symmetrical space to like this space, full of detail, grand detail. You know my kind of reading what that is when pubs do that, like, you know, trying to create a spectacle. So, I mean, it's just the whole different approach. So, anyway, the one that she gave us people she said that they actually did you know,

Interviewer: Telling the gays something different all together.

Respondent A: Yeah, well as far as I know, that ambition was never realised. And well, yeah, I mean they did change the interior.

Interviewer: She says that she was trying to create more of a homely welcoming vibe, I'm thinking it gives us more than the minimalist thing. I wonder if its more welcoming than the afterwork crowd with men in suits.

Respondent A: It definitely is. Yeah, I'm trying to remember what the seating was before, the bottles definitely weren't there anyway.

Interviewer: Was it still a wooded area?

Respondent A: That's actually where the kitchen use to be.

It was like a hole in the wall there. And yeah, for a few years Street 66 was just kind of eclectic to me, I guess, you know, like I definitely preferred the Front Lounge. But like I do remember for a while I was like, and like I joined like a Queer Film Club and like we'd always come here afterwards. So, you know, it was a space for that that kind of cultural activity as well. And what, how it turned it around for me that like for a while I was thinking like, this is just random. Yeah, it's eclectic, you know.

Interviewer: I wonder since it changed so drastically. So surely they lost a lot of their usual like, their usual community that would come here you know?

Respondent A: Interesting, I know that I, well I wasn't really going out anyway but it wasn't on my list as it once was.

Interviewer: I wonder what caused that change like reading that article that came out that having like being reggae and jazz music and I wonder if it deterred people from going here then? Because like, maybe just the fallout from that people were like no, I'm not gonna spend my money there type of thing.

Respondent A: Yeah. Yeah. And like it, maybe it is and maybe like Nealons with its older kinda crowd, the Front Lounge was unfussily welcome. You can kind of just walk in without sort of, you know, wondering about what people think of you walking in, like, you know.

Interviewer: Do you wonder what people think about you now when you come to this place?

Respondent A: Yeah, it's gotten different like it, but I guess why wonder if that is like, the more simple the space more inviting it is, you know, whereas the more like, kind of grander detail it is, the more you know, it's a kind of something else. I don't know, maybe that's just a superficial reading. And, but what changed it for me was like, and, like in 2019. I remember a

few friends were home for a friend's wedding. And we were all going to be meet the day in Dublin and I was kind of struggling to get somewhere that would be open and they said here lets do Street 66. And so like I came here early, and like first of all had like a really nice coffee and realised it was sort of the only gay place that did coffee. I did see Pantibar has like coffee machine now but I've never tried it. And also I noticed that people with dogs. Which I think for gay people is really big because a lot of gay people don't have kids they have dogs.

Interviewer: Yeah. So I didn't realise, I was gonna ask Siobhan because I'm hoping to interview her. I was like, it's so random. But that makes so much sense now

Respondent A: Yeah, yeah, it was a nice kind of move.

Interviewer: I'd like to think its a community in itself. And like people have camaraderie between different dog owners. Because I think it's very popular at the weekend and stuff like that. And then, like me, my friends are sitting there petting a dog and having a drink.

Respondent A: For sure, yeah. That day you know, it's kind of like, like, this space has actually been creating and has its own things going for it and it clearly has regulars coming back. And, like, the only other thing then I guess is I don't know the owners at all but I do think they have, there is community in and around Street 66 and its definitely lesbians. You go to Pantibar and Pennylane and I see people from the theatre and you run into those people there. So, you know I know the kind of scene around that venue there whereas the sense I have around here is that definitely much more about the lesbian community here and even a week or two ago, on their social media, there was a woman who died and she was a film academic. And, and just from that, I was like, I'm just like oh my gosh there is a real kind of lesbian community in and around Street 66. I don't know anything about it but like that's probably the kind of ties that the owners have created. I'm not sure if that was here before with the previous owners. And so it's specific and important in that sort of way.

Interviewer: Would you say that due to the fact that there is like a lesbian community here that like do you think it's ever exclusionary in anyway?

Respondent A: I don't know about that now

Interviewer: Like for the gay men coming here or the other like members of the queer community like would you ever feel like that excludes other people newly coming in or anything like that?

Respondent A: I don't know, like are you saying

Interviewer: Like when you go into Pantibar like you like well maybe you're in the community there was like the theatre people or stuff like that like if you came here like would you kind of like know any familiar faces here or is it cliquy here?

Respondent A: Right okay yeah, no. I just don't care enough to like be like, Oh, everyone here already is friends. So um, no, I haven't really been aware of that like exclusion. Well, I'd love to know you know, I love to hear how trans people get on in these spaces and how people of colour have gone through these spaces because they're kind of very underrepresented.

Interviewer: Yeah

Respondent A: You know every gay person I know talks about this message of creating an inclusive space and never really hear from how they're actually getting on. Just the other thing that kind of added to the sort of raised eyebrows when it change but the rainbow flag disappears for a while.

Interviewer: Yeah my supervisor, looked into it and on the website it doesn't say its a gay bar. So I like I'm curious to know, like are they trying to make it that it's for everyone? Or like, what's the story there? What's your opinions on? Or what were the opinions on it?

Respondent A: And I think it's interesting because Nealons doesn't have a pride flag either, but I think it's because it never had it sort of, I don't know, I don't really need like, my gay venue to literally pin its flag, you know? And it's also it's like, you know, well, I suppose the thing is that they had a flag and then removed it and someone I know who is HIV activist, who would have had a hand in replenishing the condom dispenser, he said, he came up against delays, or like, just some kind of confusion over whether they wanted that back or not. So I think there was confusion in the change over.

Interviewer: Like, it's interesting how those all those details that you list is what made this, are slowly disappearing, those symbols. Yeah.

Respondent A: And they actually mean a lot to people. Yeah, you know what I mean? So,

Interviewer: Like, I wonder if those kind of lost the symbols as well. They kind of change people from coming here, because there's another person I'm interviewing, and he says he hasn't been since it's been here since its been Street 66.

Respondent A: Wow his eyeballs are going to explode. Be interesting to know what he remembers. The community have be very possessive, the community doesn't have a consensus at all you know.

Interviewer: Yeah like in my research proposal I was kind of romanticising the community that would be here and she was like Tara there might not be one here.

Respondent A: Yeah, and I know, yeah. Because like, Yeah, I know what you mean, like, I definitely do feel a sense of community. Like, you know, I care about it all but like also we have won all the fights we've had to fight. At the same time, I too, have a limited number of gay friends. So it's not like I'm actually here in a regularly here to create that community.

Interviewer: Are you happy enough just having a few gay friends or are you actively trying to find a community?

Respondent A: What I mean, it's sort of like, I don't have a social group that's sort of tied to a venue. Like maybe that sense of community would be more audible or visible.

Interviewer: So, let's go back to the time Street 66 was opening but you weren't really going but was there a time you returned back to here for a while? Has it been the same since you've gone to the Front Lounge?

Respondent A: So yeah, that kind of morning bank holiday weekend 2019 my friend's wedding. I was like, gosh, I just had a few realisations about the place and then I remember celebrating New Year's Eve here 2020 before everything changed yeah had a great time. And yeah I do like it and you do have to let go of what it was.

Interviewer: It's like people have to let go but on the one hand they still have the Back Lounge sign on the back, they haven't put up a Street 66 sign up the front.

Respondent A: Is there no Street 66 sign at all?

Interviewer: Not outside, if you have a look they have their flags that say Street 66 but where it said Front Lounge it has never been replaced. There's kind of the shadowing of the old name. So I wonder why they don't have the sign up, I know its a small detail but.

Respondent A: Yeah, I do remember like I hated that they just filled in it and haven't even said what it is. Like, we're just gonna erase this and not figure out what we are. .

Interviewer: I think it's interesting because like I'd love to know what happened to being reggae Because I feel like I don't know if it is that, do you get the sense of it being that?

Respondent A: I feel like this will be a kind of space that would play it but I don't know if they do play it. Maybe I have a very superficial idea of what a reggae bar is. But like, I kind of associated, I can't put my finger on it, but like, you know, I don't know why I keep thinking there's a palm tree in here but

Interviewer: Maybe its the painting of Frida

Respondent A: Yeah the palm leaves, they're here somewhere. It just seems Carribean in here.

Interviewer: Then just a general question like, whenever you are here like, what would you do? Like, would you ever have a dance? Or would you just sit down?

Respondent A: Yeah. So all of the above. Yeah, so and yeah the last few weeks I've been coming here like a Saturday afternoon for a coffee, just to read or whatever. And yeah, came here for a dance and Pixi Woo does the DJ stuff. Yeah I kind of do the same things.

Interviewer: It's interesting that the main reason you go is because after work and stuff like that, so it's interesting how even like now, are you still going after work?

Respondent A:

I know. And actually, they still have the after work crowd I am wondering as well. Yeah. I don't know. I feel like I'm in a post-lockdown coming out and being like, what is everything?

Interviewer: That's why I'm asking people like, Have you been to have any events? And they're like well, it's been close to us for two years. So I'm gonna try to go to as many events as possible now to get footage. Because they actually it's really interesting they have like a poetry rnight now the last Tuesday of every month. So it's interesting because Siobhan describes this as a Community Centre. So like what's your opinions on this being a community centre because you're saying before they had expeditions, have there been any in Street 66?

Respondent A: I don't think so. No, like the Brick-a-Brack replaced the exhibition wall space. It was definitely kind of like skated modern afterwork bar where we can also buy paintings, you know, like, that was kind of it with disco vibes and so like, to me, it's kind of the dog

owning culture, like the lesbian culture those things I've noticed, I haven't really attended and kind of more artistic events or you know, performance events or anything. And so yeah, like those two things that struck me anyway. Like saying that I don't know anyone who has a dog.

Interviewer: Yeah my supervisor was like do you have a dog and go with your dog to get chatting to people.

Respondent A: It will be really interesting points of view because there are a lot of venues to be gay or straight where you can bring a dog, Pantibar was dog friendly too but I never saw a dog there because its too dark. That's another thing about Nealons and Street 66 have in common is there's so much glass in the front like which is like obviously different from the George, which historically blocked up. And then Pantibar deliberately does the indoor darkness.

Interviewer: Even when it was Front Lounge was it open windows?

Respondent A: Yeah, these doors are fantastic, it was always these doors.

Interviewer: I wondered why there were so open maybe the era and eveyrthing that came about.

Respondent A: I wonder if it was part of this original building? I don't know. Yeah. It was always inviting, like, that's all I can say. And now when I go Nealons and sit by the fireplace with the big window and like it's just kind of nice look out, you know.

Interviewer: It'd be a nice kind of symbol like just ust a general acceptance of gayness in Ireland

Respondent A: It could be a comment on progress you know what I mean?

Interviewer: Because it's interesting that's the reason why I chose this research question because I was reading about there's a decline in like queer spaces and gay bars as you

probably know yourself. And people were theorising then that is because we're in a post gay era and that there's no need for gay spaces now because it's accepted. So that there's no reason to like segregate gay and straight people.

Respondent A: I think that's too simple minded to be honest, because like, queer people will, I think will yearn for congregation in a specific space more than others. Like I know gay people who like don't live anywhere near a gay bar, and don't necessarily feel the needs to kind of go to bars. But I think there will always be a need for it. But the viability of those spaces in this market is another thing like they have to survive financially as well. So I'm not as I don't really see the transformation in the venue's part of a postgay thing where gay people will just go to the straight bar instead, I see it more so as far as the trends that's happening in all capital cities, which is where queer venues are becoming like pop-up club events, as opposed to 24/7 venues. Then, like this shift in nightclub culture, like across the world, where new gay venues don't open up they become kind of the guerrilla warfare and pop up here and it's like they're gay, and then they come back this time next month kind of thing. And that's happening in London, New York, and here, and this is really great, New York Times piece about it last year. So if you, if you're only using a definition of a building that is like, here 24/7 Like, these are the queer venues we have, then you're kind of cutting yourself off from the the kind of enterprising work that club promoters who are actually working very hard to create, and to kind of take over other straight spaces, and make them gay twice a month or whatever. So, you know, Mother, Grace, Sweatbox, they're all like, extensions. But they wouldn't be pub culture they'd be more like nightclub culture.

Interviewer: Yeah it's interesting because when everything reopened no one could get in anywhere because there's so little, like clubs to go to. But it's interesting like I want to go out to Wigwam but I'm waiting for it to be an event because like it's a venue so you have to wait

for an event to be on there. So nightclubs spaces are becoming event orientated instead of just doing events themselves.

Respondent A: Yeah, definitely. Yeah, I think they are Yeah, and I think the model for like, you know, the promoter who puts on a gay night in Voodoo lounge once a month or whatever, like it's just way more viable, you're kind of taken too great risk to try and take over a large nightclub space and try to operate it every night of the week, because I think the costs of operations just gotten too very unviable. That's like, it's an evolution that's happening all over.

Interviewer: Yeah. I was interested because I don't think a lot of people know that about the events that they use to have in Street 66 before like before the lockdown and pandemic they use to have markets on every Saturday as well. So then, it was their fifth birthday in December and they had a Christmas queer market and I didn't get to go to it because I had COVID. Just like those little things like they're like introducing like poetry and market so definitely keep an eye out for the next.

Respondent A: Yeah, I had no idea. Wow, that was 2019?

Interviewer: Yeah, well, they had the Christmas market in 2021 there and then they was like, when everything opened up again it was the same week as some event for Oscar Wilde so they had a Wilde poetry night in here. But I wonder happened to the original story like the reggae and ska. Maybe they realised it didn't work for the gays.

Respondent A: Yeah because that actually is very, that's an interesting point to touch on. Because traditionally, queer culture and discos are the marriage. And like, if you're going to use a queer place to play the reggae if that is divorce? Historically that hasn't been the link between you know, so. I don't mean there is overlap between the community and that type of music? Well, I just thought was astonishing. Because Siobhan herself is queer so taking over

a long standing place and make it reggae like how could you not expect people to go crazy. I don't know maybe reggae is bigger in lesbian culture than gay men.

Interviewer: But it was nice like she was saying that like with repeal there was a great like atmosphere here for it as well because like people were out at like city hall so it's interesting how you know like, like with political stuff Street 66 is so close to the city hall and Dublin castle where a lot of like activism is happening and stuff like that. Yeah. So I wonder if I wonder if coincidental or?

Respondent A: Yeah, like I was saying there was a post marriage referendum viewing party here. And I remember being here like, after pride and it'd be an ecstatic kind of atmosphere

Interviewer: Oh what would it be like for Pride here?

Respondent A: Oh jammed, but I just remember "oh we're all day drinking" you know.

Everyone was in such great spirits, like it is a bash but like, I think a lot of people do undergo a bit of like, self love appreciation. So maybe that kind of adds to like the like, you know, we are all loving ourselves, or we're all seeing each other love ourselves. You know, I think that kind of creates energies that can be different on another Friday night. Yeah. And, and then your point about City Hall was there was a really tremendous outdoor drinking culture here during the summer as you may know.

Interviewer: Yeah people would be queuing up outside when it was time to pedestrianise the street and everyone waiting with their takeaway pints at 6 o'clock.

Respondent A: Like for someone who has walked up and down here for so many years, it was so transformative. It was only then walking down from Capel Street walking across the river that I realised oh yeah you can see City hall from here, you know it was a straight line. But you know, maybe because of all the Dublin buses in the way we never really see it. So it is interesting you mentioned the proximity to like City Hall because when there were no cars

here you could see City Hall. I know, I wish I was here it would be interesting to talk to someone who was canvassing for Repeal here.

Interviewer: Really curious, because you were talking about like, why you would go to the Front Lounge over other bars. But would you ever choose Street 66 now over other gay bars, or would you go into them all?

Respondent A: You know what, like, for me, it's kind of I think it's actually going back to the beginning again, because its now my daytime place. Like, if I was going out in the evening I'd just go to Pantibar the DJs quite good and I do like the underground cabaret vibe. But like, yeah, most times I come here now is the weekend to read or to meet someone. You know the Front Lounge was the sorta space where in broad daylight would be going to a gay bar and now it's a day place again, I think its actually more of a café culture, yeah that's where it kind of fits for me.

Interviewer: Yeah. Would you go but weekends and weekdays or?

Respondent A: Yeah mostly the weekend because of work and I try not to drink too much. Yeah and then I actually ended up here one evening but it had to do with the queue at the George. When you see the queue you backtrack and be like what's opened?

Interviewer: Have you been here on a Friday or Saturday recently?

Respondent A: Yeah. I was here like on a Friday like a month ago. Yeah, it was great. Yeah. Like, it's interesting to think or like, after I said, like the after work crowd, but like, no one's in the office anymore. Yeah, you're not gonna see maybe as many people showing up in their shirt and slacks or whatever. Yeah, but like, I'm also very conscious that anywhere I go now, like, people are younger than me. When I first came here it was sort of like, guys that are like late 20s or 30s or whatever like, like, you know, looking smart. And no I'm like, I'm one of them. Yeah, it's like, you know, Its now just those people younger than me, but that's just

part of the course you know. So yeah when I was here it was a lot of fun. The DJ was participating in the revaluation of Britney Spears.

Interviewer: Would you know any of the bar staff now?

Respondent A: I don't, no.

Interviewer: What happened to your man that you knew here?

Respondent A: So funny story actually. So a friend and I went to a play and went to grab a drink afterwards. And the bartender's name was Daniel and like brought us over our glass of wine and it was very, it was like remarkably casual. And oh, no, first of all, he brought us over like a free round and he said like, you guys are the only nice people here so here you go, I don't even know if he said this is my number but he just left his phone number on a piece of paper and I don't think anyone had ever flirted with me in my life by that stage. Like I just said to my friend oh my god and I didn't know Daniel in that way. But my friend was like, he bought you a drink so you better atleast text him. So I did end up meeting him for a coffee and he was a very nice guy but realized how different we are, he had a shoutout from Mel B from the radio and that's all he talked about. And now that I'm a big spice girls fan I would have appreciated that story, I was still living with my closeted self, I was like I'm not allowed like the Spice Girls!! But I think he went back to the UK.

Interviewer: Have you met anybody else here?

Respondent A: Do you mean like friends? No not really. One night stands yeah. But nothing I could say was a meaningful relationship but never say never

Interviewer: Do you think it's a good for dating and having one night stands? In comparison to other spaces?

Respondent A: Yeah. Its more or less the same, there's only a limited amount of spaces you can go so you're bound to run into someone haha.

Interviewer: And so does your friend still DJ here?

Respondent A: So this was actually I taught an interesting ironic epilogue. Because to me now, what has replaced the front lounge in terms of being a slick, sophisticated after workplace is Penny Lane.

Interviewer: I've only gone when it has been pedestrianized and we just sat out and had a drink but I think the prices were higher maybe because of the clientele going there? And it was more businessy men and wasn't Leo Varadker photographed there?

Respondent A: Oh, yeah I saw him go there before he likes to go there. Now this is all really anecdotal so I don't know but when I first heard the manager of Pantibar was going to open a second spot I had heard it had to do with creating a function space once marriage equality had been passed and they wanted to provide a venue for people to have their afters for the wedding. So I have never heard anyone validate that. But I think they ended up in a bit of trouble, pushing back the opening date and there was trouble with the fire safety. So it just ended up opening as a bar and now I do wonder if there's an upstairs part that could still be a function room. But what I'm curious about with that series of events is if you compare Pantibar and Penny Lane, Penny Lane is so sanitised you don't have the erotica of Pantibar, you don't have the dimmed lights, kind of underground cabaret. It's an elegant room, exposed brick and the tiles in the bathroom are very cool but like to me the appearance resembles more what the Front Lounge was, in that it was a niche, sophisticated modern kind of spot. So now Frank DJs in Penny Lane, hes like in his mid 50s and DJ'd for years and I think even in the Hirschfield centre when that was around the 70s. But he had a gig here on a Friday or something. And Frank would play Bowie, Tina Turner and whoever but another DJ

was on the rise around that time as well and it came to a point where the arrangement was that they would share the spot. But that in itself would be a funny visual like Frank is a small bear man with chains and then like other DJ is like young and you know what I mean. And Frank left on bitter terms because like he lost the gig, but he had his fans who liked the music he played, the old schooled music, while the other DJ was in their young 20s which represented a dividing of the regulars. Music is a really important thing for venues.

Interviewer: Yeah I absolutely agree like someone I was interviewing said they wish there were other queer spaces that catered to different music genres, like Techno, so instead she goes to straight bars to get the music she wants.

Respondent A: I was recently in the Kremlin the main gay club in Belfast and they have different floors like EDM on one floor and then unremixed pop music on the other, the OG. I gravitated towards the original melody, just being able to flow with it. But I agree with your friend it would be nice to see non-dancy music.

Interviewer: Just for my last question do you think there needs to be more queer spaces in Dublin or in Ireland in general?

Respondent A: Oh definitely yeah, I think there are problems in other cities, like I remember for a while Galway had a club and it had a pole in the middle of the dance floor and that's gone. So now Galway you can't find a queer nightclub and I think Cork still has Chambers. So yeah in terms of Ireland yeah we need more, and with a focus on diversification of spaces not just more of the same spaces, tailored towards other aspects of our community. I don't know what form that would be.

Interviewer: Do you have any final comments or anything to add? Any hopes.

Respondent A: Any hopes haha! I just keep looking at the windows because they had such a practical affect but also so inviting to first come in here and it has to do with the ambience.