

Jennifer Dahmen-Adkins

“Rainbow Between Meadows” Queer Life and Studying in Rural Areas



Jennifer is a social scientist who currently works at RWTH Aachen University in Germany. Her research focuses on gender studies, intersectionality, higher education, and organisational research, with a particular emphasis on linking theory and practice closely.

Introductory Note

This short theatrical script is based on a focus group discussion with members of a queer student group at a rural university somewhere in Germany. The scenes are inspired by real experiences, challenges, and reflections shared during the conversation. While the dialogue remains true to the themes¹ and tone of the original discussion, it does not represent a verbatim transcript. To protect the participants, their identities have been anonymised.

Presenting some of the discussion content as a theatrical script instead of a research paper was an attempt to connect the reader more emotionally to what has been said, while maintaining the students' vulnerability and resilience instead of losing these aspects in research analysis.

Characters

- **Jennifer (Interviewer):** Social scientist, lesbian, originally from a rural background
- **Charlie:** 5th semester, founder of the local queer student group, non-binary
- **Robin:** 3rd semester, non-binary
- **Marie:** 3rd semester, lesbian
- **Alex:** 5th semester, gay

Scene 1: Arrival and Introduction

The scene opens in a small seminar room at a university. Casual conversation, laughter.

¹ To identify the themes ChatGPT was used.

Jennifer: First of all, thanks for taking the time today. For me as a queer person, moving from the countryside to the city felt like liberation. That's why I'm so curious about how you live and study here.

Charlie: I can comprehend why it felt liberating. Because out here in the countryside, you're immediately visible, whether you want to be or not.

Robin: *(ironically)* Or invisible. Depends on who's looking. If you're lucky, they just ignore you.

Marie: You definitely become visible when you hang up a rainbow flag. And then the drama usually starts.

Alex: Exactly. That's when the reactions begin and not always in a good way.

Scene 2: Flag Wars

Alex: Our flat initially enjoyed just being visible. We hung up a flag, no big deal. But then things kicked off.

Jennifer: What do you mean by "kicked off"?

Alex: Our neighbor didn't find it funny. He responded with a German flag and, believe it or not, a Trump 2024 flag.

Robin: *(dryly)* Real peaceful neighborhood vibes.

Marie: One night, our flag was stolen. The neighbor claimed he knew nothing. Suddenly, our everyday life became political.

Charlie: We just wanted to show we exist. Instead, we were drawn into political arguments and conflicts.

Scene 3: Awareness Team

(Scene change. Sounds of a party in the background.)

Charlie: We had a booth at the summer festival that was our first awareness team experience.

Robin: Pretty intense. People kept asking, "What is this? What does queer even mean?" Sometimes it's honest interest, sometimes with suspicion.

Charlie: If you hand out stickers, flyers, gummy bears, that always helps. Usually.

Marie: Some even thought we were trying to convert them. *(Laughter)*

Alex: But that's not what we're there for. The idea behind the awareness team was to create a safer space for everyone, especially at these student parties where things can get out of hand.

Charlie: Yeah. We'd seen enough situations where queer people felt unsafe or excluded. We wanted to be a visible point of contact, someone to talk to if things got weird or uncomfortable.

Robin: We also work closely with security. Without them, honestly, we wouldn't have felt safe enough to do this.

Alex: But not everyone was kind. One guy tore up our flyers and threw things at us.

Jennifer: And what did you do?

Robin: Security stepped in. We handled it, but the night was pretty much over for us.

Marie: Still, it was worth it. At least we were visible. Some non-queer people came by later to say they appreciated it and offered support.

Scene 4: Institutional Barriers

(Back in the seminar room.)

Jennifer: How does the university support you? Do you feel backed?

Charlie: Supported? Well...

Marie: There's a gender-neutral restroom but hidden in the farthest corner of the oldest building.

Alex: Officially, we don't get funding. Booking rooms is a nightmare. We organize everything ourselves.

Robin: There is a diversity officer, but they're 200 kilometers away at the main campus.

Jennifer: So, what do you do?

Charlie: We improvise. A few professors are supportive – at least in spirit.

Robin: Would be nice if kind words came with actual resources.

Scene 5: Belonging – Monologues

(Spotlight on Charlie, speaking thoughtfully to the audience.)

Charlie: When we started the student group, we just wanted a safe space. But safety is relative. At parties, something gets thrown at you. At home, you ask yourself whether you should take down the flag before someone else does. Still, when I see our group or participate in our game nights, this is our quiet resistance. Our safe space on a patch of land originally not built for us.

(Spotlight shifts to Robin.)

Robin: Sometimes it feels like I have to prove I exist. Especially as a non-binary person. You keep explaining yourself until you're exhausted. Out here, people don't take it seriously. (pause) But with these people here (looking at their peers), I feel seen for who I really am. And that means everything.

(Spotlight shifts to Marie.)

Marie: Honestly, I was scared to move here. I thought I'd be alone. But then I found the queer student group. Suddenly I wasn't alone anymore. We became visible together. For some, it's just a flag. For me, it means I can feel at home.

(Spotlight shifts to Alex.)

Alex: Most people don't realize what it's like to be silently judged all the time. I just wanted to study, to live, to belong. The group helps.

Scene 6: Hopes and Wishes

(Scene begins in the seminar room. A short pause. The group sits in a reflective mood.)

Jennifer: If you could wish for something from the university, what would it be?

Charlie: Real support. Not just kind words and emails during Pride Month. We need funding, rooms, and structures we can rely on.

Robin: And people who actually show up. Our diversity officer has never even been on campus here.

Marie: It would help if we didn't have to fight for every single thing, every flyer, every event, every sign of visibility.

Alex: I'd like to see visible commitment. Posters, trainings, and gender-neutral bathrooms in more than one building.

Robin: And honestly? Some kind of safety net. Knowing we can turn to someone when stuff happens, not just hope for the best.

Charlie: A university that doesn't just tolerate us, but truly sees us as part of its community.

**(Brief silence. Then the characters step forward for a collective closing.)*

(All characters speak together to the audience.)

Robin: We don't want to be merely tolerated. We want to be accepted.

Marie: A university that doesn't just talk, but acts.

Alex: Safety not only in our minds but in our everyday lives.

Charlie: We're here. And we will stay visible.

(Lights slowly dim.)

Epilogue

(The soft light returns briefly and Jennifer steps forward alone.)

Jennifer: We listened. We have shared. We have remembered what it means to speak openly in spaces that are often silent. These stories are not unique, but all too often they go unheard.

What connects these voices is the courage to be visible, to demand change, and to create safety in unlikely places.

May this be the beginning, not the end, of conversations, questions, and solidarity.

Because every rainbow flag between the meadows and every gathering like this plant a seed. And every seed knows how to grow.

(The lights go out completely. The end.)