GIRLFAGS AND GUYDYKES

“TOO QUEER FOR STRAIGHTS, AND TOO STRAIGHT FOR QUEERS”

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Abstract

Aim. To highlight girlfags and guydykes’ own experience of the meaning behind the identity labels and how they describe the identities.

Background and previous studies. The sexual minority identity of girlfags and guydykes are sometimes perceived as provocative in their contradictory labels. There is little to no previous research on the identities and what is known is mostly presented on internet blogs and forums. The identities seemingly involve aspects on sexual orientation, gender and sexual practice. Research related to sexual minorities, non-normative sex, LGBT and the risk of ill-health with identifying as a sexual minority is presented.

Method. Semi-structured interviews in a method of choice was applied to this study so as to ease contact with a sexual minority group. Participants were sought through a Facebook forum, with a total of eleven interviews with two guydykes and nine girlfags, through video call (2), phone call (1), in person (1), email (6), email with sound files (1). The data was analysed with content analysis.

Results and analysis. The results were extensive and had to be delimited. The results were analysed in a sexual constructionist setting using the concept of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990) and the concepts of gender/sex sexuality and nurturance and eroticism presented in van Anders’ (2015) Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT). Three main categories were presented; A play on gender, Sexuality and Orientation, and Identity.

Conclusions. There is pride portrayed in the girlfag and guydykes identities. The identity breaks norms regarding gender and sexuality and even sexual orientation within an LGBT context. The results indicate that further research on transgender issues and relational and social aspects of the identities is needed.

Keywords: autoandrophilia, gender identity, genderqueer, girlfag, guydyke, homosexuality, LGBT, non-normative, sexual minorities, lesbian man, queer.
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Thank you.
1. INTRODUCTION

This is a study aiming to describe and explore the experiences of a sexual minority group labelled girlfags and guydykes. Discussing sexual minorities often triggers feelings and debate, and minority identities are often subjected to being presented and explained through the opinions and prejudice of others. Therefore, this study aims to originate from the words of the girlfags and guydykes themselves.

Today, the number of sexual identities is growing. Individuals and groups have started to define themselves within several aspects of sexuality under the LGBT umbrella (Kuper, Nussbaum, & Mustanski, 2011). Identities connected to gender, sexual practices and sexual orientation have multiplied the last decades and the number of queer identities is exploding. Queer identities could be described as covering two or more of these different aspects of sexuality within one identity marker. Queer identities are often described as fluid and inclusive but sometimes they are perceived as the opposite; being very strict subcultures with rules of inclusion (Ambjörnsson, 2016).

Girlfags and guydykes is a self-identification within sexual minorities. Information and community exist mainly online on forums, chat boards, websites and blogs. The identity is parted into girlfags, in short females, and guydykes, in short males. There are different definitions existing online on the significations of the identities. Some are wiki based, meaning anyone can change them, sometimes leading to derogatory definitions of the identity (Girlfag, 2014; Guydyke, 2014). The definitions are usually complex, adding exceptions in multiple steps. In the short version the identity describes people who feel homosexual but “in the wrong body”, e.g. a woman having a sexual orientation towards gay men and vice versa, most often adding a gender or queer element to the definitions.

Around the year of 2014 I came across the concept of girlfags and guydykes, the brave choice of words spikes interest, but more so the implied contradictory content. I was fascinated by the terms upon which the identity existed within the LGBTQ+ context and by the use of a binary concept in an increasingly genderqueer world. I decided to dedicate my master’s thesis to this invisible and seemingly often misunderstood and criticized identity. Leaving the explaining to eleven candid girlfags and guydykes to get a glimpse of what this might be all about.

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1 LGBTQ+ is a concept that represents Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer identities and other sexual minorities under one concept. The + stands for other minority identities, e.g. intersex, aromantic and asexual. LGBTQ+ will be used as a concept by the author throughout this study.
1.1 Problem
There seems to be a phenomenon describing individuals who feel, fantasise, sexualise or eroticise being another gender who has homosexual relations. The same or similar phenomena seem to be described both within academia and medicine as a differential diagnosis within gender dysphoria or regarded as a paraphilia. Then there is a well-established self-identified group of people in online communities. They share similar but not exact descriptions, of fantasies, sexual practices, sexual orientation and gender identity, wishing to be recognised as girlfags and guydykes. These individuals can be found within the LGBTQ+ community, trying to find their place. Descriptions of the identities girlfags and guydykes differ. It is unclear whether the concepts describe a sexual practice and/or gender identity, sexual orientation, fantasy - or any, either or all.

It is well known that LGBTQ+ people are at a greater risk of health issues, especially those associated with mental health (Wurm & Hanner, 2017). There is little to no previous academic research on the identities of girlfags and guydykes and there are implications of gender identity issues. It is of importance to be able to treat these minorities with respect and understanding, especially for healthcare professionals within sexual health and gender identity. If the experiences described by this group would imply gender identity issues this would imply a need for further research. This study therefore aspires to contribute to the knowledge base about the group girlfags and guydykes from their own perspective.

1.2 Aim
To highlight girlfags and guydykes’ own experience of the meaning behind the identity labels and how they describe the identities.

Objectives
- To highlight how the group girlfags and guydykes describe their identities
- To investigate girlfags’ and guydykes’ experiences of their identity and sexuality
- To explore a need for further studies regarding life and health issues for these groups

1.3 Concepts and disposition
When describing sexual minorities, it is difficult to do so without using a diverse range of concepts and terms regarding gender identity and sexuality. To facilitate understanding see the attached glossary (Appendix 1).

Disposition. This study begins with an introduction to provide a short background to the subject, followed by a description of the problem and aim of this study. Thence, a background to the identities and a short overview of previous research that relates to the girlfag and guydykes identities is presented. The section following will present the theoretical framework used in analysing the results. Thereunder the method of the study is explained. The results and analysis are presented in a joint section where the results are related to the theoretical framework as well as previous research. Finally, a summary and discussion of the results are presented together with implications for further research.
2. BACKGROUND

The Background will start with a short summary of contemporary phenomena relating to the identities. Due to this being a modern phenomenon with little previous research the introduction to the identities is to a large extent based on internet sources, e.g. blogs and wikis. The following chapter will present previous research on the subject and while these explicit identities are seemingly close to being academically unexplored, there is relevant research that will be presented under the heading Previous studies. This study does not aim to have a Swedish perspective but have not been able to avoid a Eurocentric perspective. The studies presented here are mostly accomplished within western context where all nations are relatively similar in political systems and general health standards, but more or less conservative in regard to their cultural views on sexuality. Academic papers in sexuality studies could still be considered a less conservative area of knowledge, regardless of the state of the country and thereby having a high degree of transferability in western contexts.

2.1 Girlfags and Guydykes

The biggest forums and websites started around the year of 2010 with one forum containing 428 members as of March 2019 (Girlfags and guydykes, n.d.). Most forums and sites are international and in English, with the exception of a few German blogs and forums. The term girlfag appeared in the late 1990’s according to Queen and Schimel (1997), though American sex educator and writer Janet Hardy claims the label girlfag was coined in an article in 2003 (Hardy, 2015). There are several texts that bear resemblance to what is known of the girlfag and guydyke identities. In 1987, the American psychologist Gilmartin wrote a book called “Love and Shyness”. This book explores, what Gilmartin refers to as, a type of heterosexuality where men feel they do not fit in with their gender role, e.g. regarding courtship. Gilmartin names one of his tool for evaluating shyness in the heterosexual male the so-called male lesbian. The tool describes men who are envious of the prerogatives of the female gender but do not wish to change their male bodies (Gilmartin, 1987).

In the 1990’s Sedgwick (1993), a queer and critical theorist, wrote about her self-identification as a gay male person and Nagle (1997), a bisexual activist and author, similarly depicted feelings of attraction towards gay men by imagining herself as partaking as a gay man (Nagle, 1997). A German essay with a queer theoretical perspective has found similar phenomena described in prose as early as 40-104 A.D. and presents several cultural and pop-cultural phenomena that link to the identity of girlfags (Meyer, 2007).

The identity has increased in popularity and taken up more space in media these last ten to fifteen years. Even while the identities of girlfags and guydykes are mainly discussed on the internet some mentions have occurred on TV. On American TV, the talk show “The Tyra Banks Show” in 2006 interviewed two women identifying as girlfags on the theme “Women Who Love Gay Men”. Though censuring the actual name of the identity, the show described it closely (Banks, 2006). There are several video clips online with people who discuss the identities. In the TV-series Shameless, in an episode broadcasted in 2016, with LGBTQ+ character Ian, a person identifying as a girlfag uses the word out loud (Wells, Abbot & Rossum, 2016). The author and sex educator Janet Hardy has produced an autobiographical book called “Girlfag - a life told in sex and musicals” in 2012. Hardy, self-identifying as a girlfag, describes her life story and attraction towards gay men (Hardy, 2012). The girlfag identity label is in some ways similar to that of a fag hag, which describes a straight woman who associates with gay men (Moon, 1995) but differs in ways of sexual and romantic attraction towards gay men. Recently,
Jennifer von Schuckmann released the German movie Mimicry; “About the sexual and spiritual self-discovery of the protagonist Mimi, who identifies as a gay\(^2\) girl” (von Schuckmann, 2018). Even though the girlfag and guydyke identities are always pronounced as one identity label, the guydykes are much less visible and underrepresented when scanning the small range of relevant forums and blogs. Although, possibly similar to the identity of guydykes, the TV-series “L-word” presented Lisa, a lesbian-identified man, as early as 2004 (Chaiken, 2004-2009).

Today a growing group of people identify as girlfags and guydykes (Girlfags and Guydykes, n.d.; Girlfags & Guydykes - GF/GD, n.d.). The identities girlfags and guydykes are not marked by appearance but are self-proclaimed identities. The definitions of the identities involve a person acting as another gender or imagining themselves as another gender, foremost during sexual situations and fantasies. In short, a girlfag or a guydyke is a person perceiving him or herself as homosexual but “in the wrong body”, which may also be reflected in sexual activity (Girlfags & Guydykes - GF/GD, n.d.; Hardy, 2015).

3. PREVIOUS RESEARCH

3.1 Orientating orientation

Sexual orientation is considered a major, if not the major, part of a person’s sexual identity. The concept is split between an essentialist view of sexual orientation as an unchangeable inborn part of oneself and a social constructionist fluid approach to sexual orientation. Researchers have not been able to conciliate to one definition but often refer to four dimensions that encompass a sexual orientation. Firstly, your inner perception of your sexual identity, e.g. straight or gay. Secondly, erotic and sexual fantasies. Third, with or towards whom your sexual activity is enacted and lastly to whom you feel emotionally attracted (Nilsson Schönnesson, 2012). Sexual orientation is usually discussed on the basis of sex or gender. Gender can be seen as based on another four principles. First and foremost, you have your inner gender identity, i.e. your sense of self. Then you have your gender expression, e.g. masculine or feminine, your juridical identity and your biological sex. Gender is traditionally presented within a binary option, i.e. man or woman. If your gender expression matches your biological sex, juridical identity and inner gender identity you can identify as cis or cisgender. If you differ in any of these, you can identify as a trans or be transgender. If you do not conform to the binary setting of man or woman you may also refer to yourself as non-binary or queer in your gender identity (Wurm, 2017).

Mereish, Katz-Wise and Woulfe (2017) have compared women who identify as bisexual and women who identify as queer in regard to how their sexual orientation may differ. They used several questionnaires based on the four dimensions of sexual orientation above, adding the measure of fluidity and changeability over time. Interestingly, due to the indicated fluidity of a queer identity, queer women were more likely to report being mostly attracted to one gender or “other” genders. Bisexual women in this study reported to a higher degree being equally attracted to women/transwomen and men/transmen. The findings also suggest the queer identification to be experienced as more positive than the bisexual identity, in terms of the women’s sense of self. The research suggests differentiating these two sexual minority groups in further research on sexual minorities, the identities are related but distinct identities and have unique health risks (Mereish, et al., 2017).

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\(^2\) Gay in this context referring to the concept of a gay man.
3.2 Sexual identity labels

Current research within the area of LGBTQ+ identities has found that monosexual people, e.g. lesbian or gay, tend to use fewer sexual identity labels than plurisexual people, e.g. queer, fluid, bisexual, pansexual. The plurisexual more often provide secondary sexual identities than the monosexual. This research suggests that non-normative identities, i.e. transgender and plurisexual, were more likely to provide several sexual identity labels and adding additional context to their labels than individuals with normative identities, i.e. cisgender and monosexual (Galupo, Mitchell, & Davies, 2015). Research shows a link between plurisexual identities and personality types. In one study it was found that bisexual individuals as a group had a higher tendency for elevated sexual sensation seeking for both plurisexual women and men. Women also showed elevated levels of sexual excitability (Stief, Rieger, & Savin-Williams, 2014).

Research has also shown the importance of self-defining your sexual orientation and identity. The queer concept is an example of this, which concerns owning a word and giving it a new meaning (Ambjörnsson, 2016). Research further shows that people find comfort and experience and improved health if they are part of a group identity of their choice (Wurm & Hanner, 2017; Ekdahl, 2017). The transgender and queer identities are multiplying, and people connect through social media all around the world finding a sense of belonging in shared identities (Kuper, Nussbaum, & Mustanski, 2012).

A queer identity label can further be described as a persons’ choice to place themselves outside the heteronormative system or define themselves beyond the gender binaries, i.e. man or woman. A few examples of identity labels within queer are genderqueer, genderfluid and simply, queer. A gender-neutral pronoun can be used to question the binary model of gender or identify in between or beyond these binaries. A queer identity can in some contexts refer to any norm breaking person within the LGBTQ+ umbrella. A queer identity can be liberating for the individual and increase their control over their identity and making it possible for them to fill it with their personal content instead of adjusting to established identity labels. But, there are also concerns placed by more conservative parts of the gay liberation movement, fearing that the emphasis on the social construct of gender in the queer-movement will make binary gender based, traditional identities e.g. homosexual, disappear (Schei Jessen, 2017).

3.3 Homosexual fantasies and non-normative sex

It is widely known that men sometimes choose to watch pornography which is displayed as lesbian, involving two or more women having sex. Less accepted and less known is the fact people who identify as women often enjoys gay male porn and erotica. Neville (2018) presents various aspects of this phenomena in the book “Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys”, presenting different varieties of erotica and women’s stories. In this Neville discusses the male gaze, as has previously been discussed in feminist studies on social constructionism and pornography and the making of pornography from a man’s perspective but discussing it further. Some scholars present the idea of a woman owning a male gaze as coping by masquerading, e.g. ‘to look sexually at men I must masquerade as a gay man, i.e. provisionally borrow a male gaze’. Marks (1996, p. 130, in Neville, 2018, p. 64). Neville further discusses the possibilities different forms of fiction gives women, imagining themselves as something or someone else. Neville brings up the girlfag phenomena, mostly relating it to women with fantasies that involve being a gay man in sexual situations with other men, identifying as gay men at the same time as identifying as women. Neville touches on the subject of gender in this but does not expand on it (Neville, 2018).
There is a modern phenomenon within Japanese hentai (i.e. animated or manga pornography) called yaoi or Boy’s Love (BL) that resonates with the girlfag phenomenon. Yaoi is a homoerotic anime genre, mostly written by women for women, about gay men or boys with a varying degree of sex from romantic to hardcore BDSM (Bondage and Discipline, Dominance and Submission, Sadism and Masochism). The yaoi/Boy’s Love phenomenon allows girls, women and queer-identified people to fantasise and be sexually aroused by both feelings of love and lust between gay men (Zsila, et al., 2018). Meyer (2010) presents this as world where there are no boundaries of gender and sexual orientation discussing girlfags as being a part of this culture (Meyer, 2010).

Crossdreaming, or crossdreamers is a term invented to describe “the phenomenon that some people get aroused by the idea of being the "other sex" (relative to their assigned sex at birth)” (Molay, 2014). The term is presented on a website about crossdreamers along with subjects and articles adherent to the phenomena. It explicitly opposes the transvestic fetishism diagnosis (see the following section on LGBTQ+ and health perspective) referring to it as transphobic. The term crossdreaming is used in a wider sense. It includes all aspects of gender identities though not explicitly expressing the binary coded aspect of homosexual attraction. The concept thereby possibly include girlfags and guydykes and articles and stories about these identities are shared on the webpage (crossdreamers.com, n.d.).

Sexual fantasies generally play an important role in people’s sex lives and being. Fantasies have “a significant role in forming and exerting influence over us as sexual beings” (Brander, p. 206, 2015). Carlström (2015) explains BDSM as a tool to live and experience your sexual fantasies. Further explaining the BDSM context as a medium making it possible to play with taboos on gender, race and power, making possible what is not in the lived everyday life (Carlström, 2015). Fetishes and so-called kinks are often associated with BDSM. Fetishism can be defined as “a form of sexual behaviour in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, activity, part of the body, etc.” (Fetishism, n.d.). A kink can be defined as a particular sexual activity or practice, often within BDSM, that a BDSM practitioner has a proclivity towards (Carlström, 2016). In regard to the girlfag and guydyke identities sometimes being associated with a sexual practice associated with gay sex, the act of pegging is brought up in internet discussions. Pegging explicitly refers to a woman using a strap-on dildo and performing anal sex on a man, in a heterosexual context. The phenomenon is discussed as straight people benefiting from the sexually norm breaking activities made by the LGBTQ+ community, expanding the definitions of straight sex (Aguilar, 2017).

**3.4 LGBTQ+ and health perspective**

Some of the existing descriptions of identities of girlfags and guydykes are similar to a diagnosis presented in several of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). It is part of the gender dysphoria diagnostic criteria and is called transvestic fetishism 302.3 (DSM-5; APA, 2013), further described as autogynephilia in male-to-female transsexualism. The diagnosis transvestic fetishism describes a heterosexual male finding sexual arousal in cross-dressing (Lawrence, 2017). Autogynephilia is a term founded by Blanchard describing a male's propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female (Blanchard, 1985). Autoandrophilia, which would be considered the opposite of autogynephilia, i.e. a female's propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of herself as a male has long been excluded by Blanchard.
(Cameron, 2013). The professor has first in the latest edition of the DSM-5 included autoandrophilia, “not to be accused of sexism”, though at the same time stating in an interview that; “I don’t think the phenomenon even exists” (Cameron, p. 2, 2013). Autogynephilia is criticized by the trans community because the phenomenon would imply a fetishism or paraphilia rather than a transgender identity and could be used to explain dysphoric feelings as a fetishism and thereby denying transgender people their identity and/or rights to sex confirming surgery (Lawrence, 2017). Criticism on autogynephilia is also expressed within academia (Moser, 2010; Serano, 2010). The transvestism diagnosis has been taken off the Swedish version of ICD-10 (diagnostic manual) based on the decisions of the National Board of Health and Welfare and is no longer classified as a disorder (Socialstyrelsen, 2018).

There is a significantly higher presence of mental ill-health within the LGBTQ+ community in comparison with the general population. Swedish statistics show there are higher levels of anxiety, stress and sleep-related issues in LGBTQ+ people than in others. The statistics on having suicidal thoughts is significantly higher in the same population, especially with people identifying as transgender (Malmquist, Lundberg & Wurm, 2017; Mohr & Kendra, 2011). Many of these ill-health problems implies issues with norm breaking identities and behaviours, society not adapting and discriminating, questioning and in some cases abusing LGBT people (Malmquist et al, 2017).

Further research on ill-health issues connected to LGBTQ+ identities are described by Wurm and Hanner (2017). They explain that, even if you feel relatively safe in your identity and in your community as LGBTQ+ there is minority stress affecting your everyday life. Minority stress is a concept made to describe stress that is evoked by people assuming all people are straight and cis. Forcing LGBTQ+ people to make the choice of coming out as LGBTQ+ several times a day or choosing not to and thereby denying their identity and getting perceived as something you are not. This causes an underlying stress that affect all LGBTQ+ people in varying degrees. People with gender identity issues and especially transsexuals may not visibly pass as the gender they identify with, thereby not even getting the choice to choose to come out or not and are projected to a varying degree of punishments from society on an everyday basis. There is also the problem of being invisible in your LGBTQ+ identity. Non-binary people can meet heteronormative and cis-normative expectations leading to a sense of not being seen or met in their identity by e.g. being mis-gendered. This can also lead to their relationships being dismissed as straight even though all the people in the relationship may identify as LGBTQ+. Being invisible in your identity can lead to feelings of frustration and a sense of not existing (Wurm & Hanner, 2017).

4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section will present concepts that will be used in analysing the results in this study. Firstly, a context to the chosen theory and concepts will be introduced, starting with Social Constructionism and continuing with Judith Butler's' theory of the Heterosexual Matrix (1990). Secondly, the concepts of Gender/Sex Sexuality and Eroticism and Nurturance from Sari van Anders Sexual Configurations Theory (2015) will be presented further, in order to complement and extend these theories to capture the meaning of girlfags and guydykes’ sexual identity.
Social constructionism. In Sexology studies there is an interdisciplinary approach to sexuality. This study is done within a social constructionism framework, supposing sexualities are dependent on their social and cultural context which changes over time. Social constructionism is a theory within sociology suggesting our lives exists as they do, due to social and interpersonal influences. This is a fundamental outlook to studying sexual identities and sexual orientation, with the interdisciplinary perspective sexology provides (Lundberg & Löfgren-Mårtenson, 2012), aware of possible bio-sexual factors’ influence on behaviour. Vivien Burr (2003) describes, in her book on Social Constructionism, how a person in their daily life creates meaning in what we and others do. She explains human behaviour as a function trying to predict social interactions. Burr further explains how our daily lives are characterized by the use of our so-called personality and questions whether our personality and traits can exist without variables within the specific culture we exist in, our historical background and relationships we are part of. Burr presents the idea of language and thought as inseparable, these two factors creating a system sorting our personal experiences and adding meaning to them. Language helps us describe ourselves, our experiences, other people and create meaning, thereby making us a product of our own language (Burr, 2003). With social constructionism as a set background, we look for more specific theories for studying sexual minorities.

This study touches upon areas of sexual identity, sexual orientation and sexual practice within sexual minorities actualizing thoughts on gay to straight scales close to the Kinsey Scale (Gagnon, 1990) and a scale verging from cis to trans. Queer theory tends to be the theory of choice when studying sexual minorities, non-normative sexual identities and sexual practices. This is due to its history of questioning heteronormativity as a basics of understanding, aiming to study the norm and not the deviates. Queer theory derives from studies of social constructionism, feminist and lesbian and gay studies. This critical theory started in the early 1990’s (Ambjörnsson, 2016). This, in part due to Judith Butler, creating one of the founding texts in Queer theory, Gender Trouble (1990). Butler builds on theories of gender as socially constructed but takes this even further. Butler presents gender as an act, a gender performance we continue playing from the norms we are presented with. This performance is acted out through gendered actions and speech and is constantly repeated, making us think these gender traits is an underlying essence though it is our constant repetition creating this illusion. An individual does not exist in a void and cannot simply choose their gender or change it by their own behaviour or their performance. We are born into an existing performance of gender, that continues beyond the individual. The individual can however make smaller changes from the set norms, which is done all the time. This, in itself, revealing the socially constructed ways of gender, according to Butler (1990).

The heterosexual matrix. Butler (1990) presents the concept of the Heterosexual Matrix. Butler explains the heterosexual norm as compulsory and is used as a lens in how we categories people we meet in ways of gender, sex and sexuality. Butler purposes that even sex is performatively constructed, creating a distinction between individuals, which is held up through language and normative acts. This distinction has created a norm for sexual orientation and desire deriving from this invented connection between gender and biological sex, creating a binary, referred to by Butler as the law of heterosexual coherence. This law is part of the system of the heterosexual matrix. It can be further explained as a strict binary used to place people in the matrix, when from looking at a person we assume that e.g. people of the biological sex men are expected to have masculine gender traits and be sexually attracted towards women. Biological women are, vice versa, expected to be feminine and be attracted to men. Our only dealt options in the matrix are therefore male/female, masculine/feminine and attracted to women/men. Butler further describes this as “that grid of intelligibility through which bodies,
gender, and desires are naturalized” (Butler, 1999, p. 194). It is possible to break the binary though we are viewing this as exactly that, breaking it, and also usually within the binary options. Regarding this, Butler discusses drag, when an individual performs the so-called other gender, as a potentially subversive act. Butler questions the socially constructed matrix and that it does not allow identities outside of or in between the matrix to be allowed or seen as natural. Butler claims that the hegemonic heteronormativity is artificial and therefore has no claim of essentialism and can be challenged through alternative performative acts (Butler, 1990). Butler’s theory covers gender aspects and much more, but since it has been developed, the use of sexual orientation in a queerer setting calls for a complementing theory on sexual orientation for this study.

4.1 The Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT)

Studying the identities of girlfags and guydykes from the traditional concept of sexual orientation seems impossible, as the question of sexual orientation seemingly, after studying existing research, is a confusing component in the identities. The concept of sexual orientation is simply inadequate in describing the identities. With feminist and queer science as a backdrop in her studies, Sari van Anders (2015) suggests that sexual orientation is inadequate as a concept studying the complexity of sexual identities and proposes the use of what is discussed as the Sexual Configurations Theory. In this theory, concepts such as gender/sex sexuality, nurturance and eroticism are used. van Anders created The Sexual Configurations Theory to describe the complexities of people’s sexualities and their multiple sexual dimensions. It uses a 3D model in describing multiple sexual dimensions that relate to gender and sex and partner number. Orientation, behaviour and identity are seen as both related and distinct at the same time. The concept does not replace the term sexual orientation but enriches it, making it a broader, a more comprehensive base of understanding and describing diverse sexualities. Therefore, van Anders Sexual Configurations Theory has been applied in a wider sense during this study, taking into account the complexity of Sexual Configurations in individuals. Studying the girlfag and guydyke identities, the focus on love and lust, body and gender became apparent and van Anders concepts of Gender/Sex Sexuality and Nurturance and Eroticism was chosen to be used in the analysis to vary and broaden the concept of sexual orientation.

The primary way to describe a person’s sexuality tends to be describing their sexual orientation. van Anders (2015) argues that we understand sexual orientation from the perspective of gender, gender thereby being a foundation for categorizing sexuality. In fact, we need two genders to do this. The gender of the individual and the gender(s) of whom the individual is attracted to. But, van Anders (2015, p. 1177) asks; is it gender or sex? van Anders argues, extending thoughts on Butler’s (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix, that sex seems to be what both laymen and academics alike refer to in discussions of sexual orientation, e.g. biological, physical features related to maleness and femaleness, although this is not usually made explicit. Does this place gender as being irrelevant to sexual orientation? Gender refers to traits relating to masculinity and femininity and gender diversity, being socially and culturally learned. The confusion of gender and sex in regard to sexual orientation poses a lot of questions, e.g;

if one is sexually attracted to men, is one attracted to penises? Social identities? Body frames? Interactions? And, how is sexual orientation defined if one is attracted to masculinity regardless of the sex of the person presenting or embodying it? What about attractions to feminine men? (van Anders, 2015, p1177).
By posing these questions van Anders claims that the current use of sexual orientation in scientific research is insufficient and does not reflect lived experiences of many individuals (van Anders, 2015).

The Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) was presented by van Anders in 2015. Sari van Anders, a researcher and professor in psychology, gender studies and neurosciences in Queen’s University, Canada developed this theory to provide a greater understanding of sexualities and improve ways of describing these sexualities in fairness to their complexity. The theory derives from an interdisciplinary mixture of social constructionism, feminist studies and the bioscientific theory of a Sexual Diversity Lens and more (van Anders, 2015, p 1178). van Anders (2015) discusses different approaches to knowledge, e.g. thinking from the margins, where insight from marginalized groups are valued and it is felt that it is often important that the knowledge of a group is based on their own lives, through their insight, and not theorized by other dominant groups. Theorizing marginality is usually a starting point when conceptualizing sexuality, the groups themselves wanting to make sense in a context and for themselves. Researchers do this and study the difference from other major sexualities most often without studying the unnamed normative sexualities. A sexual diversity perspective, with its foundation in feminism and queer theory, is always trying to view the majority sexualities and the minority sexualities as interconnected and positioned relative in relation to other sexualities. van Anders use of configurations in the sexual configuration’s theory is deliberate and meant to represent a complexity rather than a strict definition, representing the multifaceted ways of sexuality, with a variety of components. The theory aims to regard sexuality as socially situated and can change over time and in different cultures but also changeable and evolving within the individual; a configuration may shift over context and age, i.e. it is situated within a social constructivist framework. The components of a person's sexuality may shift, leading to periods where the individual’s bisexuality is more prominent over one period of time and place and then shifts to an increase in partner number sexuality. The theory also includes an openness to future components of sexuality that do not yet exist, or are not yet named (van Anders, 2015).

Sexual orientation is considered to concern sexuality as in erotic pleasure and/or desires for genital contact. But, is the concept of sexual orientation only sexual? In many contexts it seems to represent also love. If sexual orientation is used to describe lust only, we potentially miss out on the intimacies people use it to describe. van Anders further questions how e.g. “a unitary lust conceptualization of sexual orientation accurately categorizes the sexuality of a person who is attracted to men and falls in love with women?” (van, Anders, 2015, p. 1178) but at the same time questioning whether a broad interpretation of the term, that would consider both lust and love, would reduce the precision and usefulness of the term, i.e. sexual orientation (van Anders, 2015).

The Sexual Configurations Theory is a new theory within the sexuality field of research. It builds onto Butler’s (1990) theory of the heterosexual matrix with 25 years in between them. Since the theory is relatively new, a concern might be that the whole theory has not been tested enough. This paper does not attempt to test the theory’s validity, that purpose does not align with the aim of this study, but to use these new concepts of describing sexuality where there seem to be a need for just that, new concepts of describing sexuality. The chosen concepts are presented below.
4.2 Core concepts in the SCT: Gender/Sex Sexuality & Nurturance and Eroticism

**Gender/Sex Sexuality.** van Anders (2015) presents the concept of Gender/Sex by firstly exemplifying the non-including ways of the concept of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation based on sex is highly limited and unclear on whether the attraction lies in being attracted to vulvas, breasts and penises or the perceived female or male body. A focus on sex also has a hard time sidestepping from binaries. Gender generally gives more options as a base for orientation though the concept of sexual orientation fails to make sense of these options. It fails to describe a person being attracted to women regardless of sex vs people being aroused by vaginas and breasts regardless of gender. A sole focus on sex within sexual orientation excludes the sexualities of some genderqueer and transgender people and their partners, thereby demanding a new perspective on sexual orientation. van Anders employs the term gender/sex sexuality instead of sexual orientation to include the gender aspect which is often lost when talking about sexual orientation. van Anders presents a table depicting examples and definitions of gender, sex and gender/sex as to create an understanding of how the categories may differ and merge;

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labels</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>masculine, feminine, genderqueer, femme, trans, butch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects of masculinity, femininity and gender-diversity that are situated as socialized, learned and cultural (e.g. appearance, behavior, presentation). May refer to one’s sense of one’s self, culture, roles, other’s beliefs about one’s self, structures and systems etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>male, female, trans, transsexual, intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aspects of femaleness, maleness, and sex-related bodily features that are situated as biological, bodily, evolved, physical, and/or innate (e.g. penises, vulvas, breasts and shape of the body). May also refer to one’s internal sense of one’s self.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender/sex</td>
<td>woman, man, trans man, trans woman, ciswoman, cisman, genderqueer, intersex</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Whole people/identities and/or aspects of women, men, and people that relate to identity and/or cannot really be sourced specifically to gender or sex.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Showing definitions of gender, sex and gender/sex according to van Anders (2015, p. 1181).

van Anders (2015) promotes the need to see gender/sex sexuality as the key organizer of all sexuality. The theory claims sexuality must be understood as reflecting aspects of gender/sex even when it is not explicitly named in that context (van Anders, 2015). The concept of gender/sex sexuality will be used in the analysis in this study as to further comprehend the result and thoughts on sexual orientation.

**Nurturance and Eroticism.** In van Anders (2015) model and Sexual Configurations Theory, love and lust are replaced by the concepts of Nurturance and Eroticism. Drawing from Diamonds (2003b in van Anders, 2015, p. 1183) compelling question “What does sexual orientation orient?” describing how it explicitly orients lust and attraction but implicitly also love.

Love is a big word. Containing implications of a deep emotional connection of importance. Nurturance is not synonymous but containing a potentially committed connection, though foremost a loving, warm and supportive feeling or relation. Nurturance differs from love in that it does not describe an intensity or infatuation. Neither love nor nurturance is exclusive to
romantic or sexual relationships and can be used to describe a number of relationships, e.g. between family and friends. Instead of lust van Anders (2015) chooses to use the term eroticism. This term describing sexuality that applies to bodily experiences such as arousal, tantalization, orgasms, pleasure and more. van Anders means that lust on the other hand, describes sexual desire, motivation or wanting. Eroticism describe “phenomena that are sexually tantalizing, evokes one’s sexual interests or thoughts, are sexually arousing in that they elicit psychological or physiological responses (whether desired or not), or are related to features tied to sexuality. Eroticism is useful because it does not necessitate the same kind of need/desire for release that lust does, even while it can invoke it.” (van Anders, 2015, p. 1181). Eroticism and nurturance can be clearly differentiated from one another. A person may feel one without the other, though sometimes in partnered sexuality they both occur simultaneously (van Anders, 2015). The concepts of nurturance and eroticism will be used in the analysis in this study as to further comprehend the result and thoughts on attraction, sexuality and orientation.

4.3 Significance of the study

Relevance and need for the project. The queer concept is growing and the tendencies to identify within a spectrum of gender instead of a binary concept of identity, sex and orientation has broadened the LGBTQ+ group in society. Research is clear on LGBTQ+ identified people being at a greater risk of health issues, especially a decrease in mental health. So-called minority stress when seeking health care and living your everyday life is one of the reasons for this (Wurm & Hanner, 2017). It is therefore of importance, especially for healthcare professionals, to be able to treat these minorities with respect and knowledge. Some LGBTQ+ groups have an even greater risk of psychiatric health problems, e.g. transgender people have a high risk of suicide attempts and thoughts (Ekdahl, 2017), which imply a further need to make them feel welcome in seeking professional care. The group identifying as girlfags and guydykes is not well known and there are implications of gender identity issues within the group which would imply a need to further investigate this group, as well as its experiences and health issues.

Outcomes and impact. This study aims to contribute to increased knowledge of the girlfag and guydyke identities and queer sexual practices for an improvement in treatment by professionals within healthcare. This thesis attempts to illustrate the concepts of girlfags and guydykes from the groups’ own perspective and with these results be able to recognize the group and, if possible, somewhat define the group and associated life and health issues.

Target groups and communication. The main target group for outcomes of the study is firstly the group itself – providing them with an opportunity to express their identity to be heard. Secondly, it seeks to provide health care professionals, especially within sexual health and gender identity, further information on the identity. Lastly, it seeks to publicly educate and possibly work as a stepping stone for further studies within the field. It will be presented as a master’s thesis in Sexology at Malmö University.

5. METHOD

The following section will account for the chosen research design, data collection, sample of participants, interviews and recruitment to the study. It will also raise ethical considerations on the implementations of this study and discuss pre-understanding of the subject. Limitations and merits of the chosen method will be discussed throughout this section.
This study has chosen the minority perspective in accordance with van Anders (2015) emphasis on studying marginalized groups from their own perspective. This has led to some specific choices in method. In accordance with the aim of his study, to explore girlfags’ and guydykes’ experiences from their own perspective, this has been done by e.g. letting the respondents have a choice in how the interview would be carried out. The internet-based methods of Cheng (2017), published by Sage Research Methods, has been chosen for this study, hence these methods focus on reaching marginalized groups with an online activity (Cheng, 2017).

**Previous research.** Research related to or about the identities girlfags and guydykes that is presented under Previous research has been searched via the main scientific and academic search engines, e.g. PubMed, Scopus etc. The library _summon_ function via Malmö University, covering several research archives and anthologies in sexology research, has also been used, as well as Google Scholar, in order to get an overview of published research on girlfags and guydykes.

**5.1 Research design**
To be able to highlight the experiences of girlfags and guydykes a descriptive qualitative method is applied to this study. To reach out to this sexual minority group the study is done in English and through internet-based methods. Semi-structured interviews in the participant’s method of choice were conducted, in person, through video call, phone call or email, using an interview guide. Collected qualitative data was analysed using content analysis in accordance with Elo and Kyngäs (2008) methods. A qualitative approach was chosen to be able to capture the participants’ own experiences and to be able to use their words in describing themselves which is of importance in a not well studied phenomenon concerning self-identification. Qualitative research investigates human behaviour, aiming to understand a social phenomenon through lived experiences (Cheng, 2017).

**5.2 Pre-understanding and openness**
Being a nurse (RN), Midwife (one-year master) and sexologist, the health aspect is natural for me in anything I do academically. Having three years of full-time studies in sexology with different specializations over the last six years I have a pre-understanding of LGBTQ+ issues. According to Dahlberg (2014) a researcher’s pre-understanding can be helpful, by contributing to the understanding of the phenomena that is being examined but it can also close doors on critical questioning. By bearing this knowledge in mind throughout the analytic process I tried to actively make aware my pre-understanding so as not to sort out facts that did not align with my possible preconception of the subject. This could be to e.g. distance myself from a pathologizing medical perspective and actively study the material from the more open and interdisciplinary perspective that sexology studies entail. Dahlberg further describes pre-understanding and differs between newly usurped knowledge on a subject, e.g. a recent course at the University, and a basic point of view that was incorporated early in life. This latter constitutive view is harder to put aside in the analytic process and risks posing a bigger problem because of the difficulty in reflecting over fundamental preconceptions (Dahlberg, 2014). My recently accumulated knowledge of LGBTQ+ through the master’s program in sexology at Malmö University has been easier to identify as pre-understanding. My more fundamental view

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3 F. K Cheng, researcher at the Department of Social Work at the University of Hongkong.
4 Sage Research Methods is an online academic research method library specialised on research in social sciences. The database presents peer-reviewed research method cases with pedagogical tools (SAGE, 2019).
on SRHR\(^5\) and basic human rights is harder to distance myself from and after consideration I rather use it as an asset than not at all. I believe this perspective may be helpful in e.g. meeting people with an open mind and hopefully with an ability not to let negative reactions slip out or exoticizing during interviews when interacting with people of a sexual minority.

To be able to be true to one’s material and be able to implement an analysis without letting the pre-understanding colour or guide the result Dahlberg (2014) underlines the student’s ability to be open and adaptable and willing to take part of the respondent’s lifeworld (Dahlberg, 2014). I am using my fundamental pre-understanding to do just that, an example being awareness of the importance of respecting chosen pronouns. During analysis discrepant results were always sorted out especially and compared to that of my pre-understanding of the subject, checking these results over and over from different point of views as to gain a greater and less coloured understanding of the results. Dahlberg also gives prominence to the fact that as a student, you have to accept not getting all of your questions answered and therefore resist the impulse and temptation to ascribe meaning to data that was not explicitly expressed by the respondent (Dahlberg, 2014). This was something which I found challenging from time to time.

### 5.3 Sample of participants

To recruit respondents for this study a strategic sample was sought. Respondents were sought in the Facebook © forum called Girlfags and Guydykes, seeking members that identify fully or partly as girlfags and guydykes. At the time, i.e. September 2018, the group consisted of 431 members. The group is closed, and you have to apply for permission to gain access. The group info explains *This is a group for those who identify as girlfags or guydykes, or who think they might - and for their lovers.* The inclusion criteria stipulated: people who fully or partly identify as girlfags or guydykes. Exclusion criteria: no underage participants (18 years or older according to Swedish legislation). The letter of information states that the interviews will be in English or Swedish, but no language skill level was asked for. Participants from all identity markers\(^6\) were sought with a variation in assigned gender\(^7\), this aspect of gender was presented as to underline a wish to interview both girlfags and guydykes.

The duration of the verbal interviews ranged from between 40 min – 1h 45 min. Around ten participants were anticipated, however; the objective was a minimum of eight participants. The purpose of this study was to seek respondents that were relevant to the objectives of this study, and not to reach empirical saturation. The number of interviews was therefore delimited in relevance to the size of this study, in line with Bryman (2018), on studies in social sciences. Eleven respondents partook, which was expected to generate enough data that could be properly processed within the time schedule. People interested in participating were asked to seek contact by email. If there was an excess of respondents, they would be divided into equal numbers of girlfags or guydykes. This is to ensure that a balanced perspective is achieved and may highlight contrasting issues between these parts of the group. Respondents would subsequently be selected based on the order in which their applications were received. Once all positions had been filled within the time frame, any additional applications were politely declined.

Respondents who partook in this study varied in age and identity. Nine self-identified girlfags and two self-identified guydykes from 26 to 69 years of age took part. Two guydykes and nine

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\(^5\) SRHR stands for the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, presented as a part of the Human Rights, defined for the first time at the UN Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994 (UNFPA, n.d.).

\(^6\) All identity markers meaning mono- or plurisexual labels and both girlfags and guydykes.

\(^7\) The gender you were assigned when born - even if it may not be your current, or irrelevant to, your gender identity.
girlfags seems an uneven number in reference to gender identities, which would indicate different experiences that might not be transferrable to the group as a whole. Though, it can be argued that it does replicate the online representation of the different parts of the identities. The identity is also named as one, which would indicate a similar perspective, but that must be investigated further for clarity. The widespread age differences can carry many meanings. The choice not to restrict the participants in anything but legal age was an active choice in order to reach out to as many as possible in an unknown sexual minority. Their experiences and views on e.g. sexual orientation ought to be affected by generational differences and other social contexts which may lead to inconsistencies in the empirical data.

5.4 Recruitment and interviews
In accordance with the internet-based methods of Cheng (2017), a letter of information⁸ (Appendix 2) was posted on the 2nd of November in the Facebook group girlfags and guydykes. The letter was written in a less academic language to promote a greater understanding of the purpose and design of the study to reach as many participants as possible. The letter of information was written in English and listed participants’ choice of interview method. The internet-based methods chosen for this study allow the participants to transcend geographical barriers and time zone issues, saving time and money and empowers respondents in sharing their lived experiences by choosing when and how to participate (Cheng 2017, Kazmer & Xie 2008, James 2007). According to Cheng these methods facilitate reaching out to e.g. sexual minorities, emphasizing how it is a suitable method pertaining sensitive inquiries and issues related to LGBT-people which examines their psychological well-being. Being in charge of the medium and when to answer questions will decrease stress and feeling uncomfortable in the presence of an interviewer. The method sometimes also relieves a novice interviewer of stress when asking questions about personal sexual experiences (Cheng, 2017). The letter of information stated that the respondent’s participation is voluntary and that they can stop participating at any time. It also states that the data will be anonymized and the respondents unidentifiable and individuals will not be able to link to the results of the study.

After the letter of information was posted in the Facebook © forum on the 2nd of November until the 31st of December 2019, thirteen people sought contact through the assigned email and showed their interest in the study. All but one answered the first contact with continued interest and thirteen people were eventually sent a letter of consent⁹ through email with the opportunity via email to consent by answering yes or no. Three participants wished to be interviewed through video call, though the internet connection did not allow more than a non-visual call in one case. This is a negative aspect of internet-based methods, where technology interferes with the choices of method, which may lead to an increased discomfort for the participants and through this have an effect on the empirical data. The respondents were encouraged to find a quiet and private spot for verbal interviews, for example, in their home or a private room in a library where they can speak privately. The interviewer, said student, was calling from a home environment where no one else was listening. Two opted to be interviewed in person, which the letter of information did not state as an option though at the same time the letter stated a

⁸ The letter listed the email gfgd2019@gmail.com for contact if informants were interested in participating. The email was especially made for the study and will be erased after the study has been published to protect the data and integrity of the participants.

⁹ A letter of consent includes contact information for the study and offer the informants to sign their consent to participate in the study. It stipulates that you have been informed about the study and read the accompanying written information. You are aware that your participation is voluntary and that you, at any time and without explanation or consequence, can withdraw your participation.
The openness towards choice of interview being rewarded with interested participants, in accordance with Cheng (2017). One of these interviews was practically possible to see through in person and one chose video call as their second option. The interviews were recorded with sound only and were on average 60 minutes in duration.

The rest (nine people) wanted to be interviewed via email, though two never answered the letter of consent or the first questions and one wanted the questions sent by email but wanted to send sound files in answer, which was granted. Many of the participants opted for email interviews in regard to their English language skills, getting more time to express themselves the way they wished to. On the other hand, language skills such as spelling, or grammar is often shown in writing as well. According to Kazmer and Xie (2008) well thought through answers is one benefit with email interviewing, the drawback being that the researcher can miss out on the thought process which can provide interesting clues (Kazmer & Xie, 2008). Questions were sent approximately five at a time with around four to five emails in correspondence. The pace of the email interviews varied from being done in a week to up to three months. Delayed answers and variations in length of interviews is a disadvantage of email interviews according to Kazmer and Xie, and demands an effort to follow-up on the ongoing interviews (Kazmer & Xie, 2008; Cheng, 2017). In summary: video call (2), phone call (1), in person (1), email (6), email with sound files (1), with a total of eleven interviews out of thirteen that showed interest.

Questions were answered in full in all but two email interviews where the participant skipped a few questions without comment after being fully aware of their right to stop the interview, pause or skip questions. Their actions were not questioned to preserve integrity of the participant, though this (not asking about the missed questions) could cover up a possible misunderstanding of the questions asked. According to Cheng (2017), incomplete, blanks and short responses are to be expected in email interviews, possibly implying that the method is not suitable for the participant. This could be improved by reminding the respondent of their options and possibly change way of interviewing (Cheng, 2017), a reminder said student unfortunately forgot to provide these participants. Three of the participants shared extra information in their email interviews, which Cheng (2017) mentions as one of the benefits of email interviewing when done on the participant’s own initiative. They shared links to movies, videoclips, photos, definitions and blogs that were relevant to the study and deepened the understanding of the phenomena, some of which is presented in the Background of this study.

The interviews were semi-structured and based on an interview guide (Appendix 3). The guide worked as a reminder of areas of interest in connection to the aim of the study. The themes in the guide developed from studying research on sexual orientation, the SCT by van Anders (2015), and contemporary phenomena found when researching the existing knowledge of the identities online.

5.5 Data
The interviews were immediately transcribed verbatim upon the interview itself. The written answers (email) were collected in one document per interview before analysis, email interviews providing a relief from the time-consuming transcribing process (Cheng, 2017; Kazmer & Xie, 2008). During transcription or collection of data, the data was anonymized and nothing but age and identity (girlfag or guydyke) were attached to the data, e.g. GF29 or GD52. Several of the respondents underlined their need to be anonymous due to work related issues or personal information and relationships. To further accommodate these concerns the choice was made to change the age of the participants within three years of their actual age and avoided presenting any data on employment, ethnicity, nationality etc. All data was transcribed in English with a few exceptions where words from other languages were used by the participants and transcribed as were told. In all but one case were the words explained in English by the participant and used
in lack of finding the English word. Participants were never asked to name their country of origin, but the information emerged during the interviews when the participants introduced themselves or spoke of their culture regarding LGBTQ+ subjects. Most respondents originate from central Europe and North America, leading to a mainly westernised perspective.

Data was stored in accordance with the letter of information (Appendix 2). The transcriptions were used in content analysis and will be erased after the thesis has been examined, approved and published on the Malmö University Electronic Publishing (MUEP) database. During the transcription, recordings and analysed data was saved on a hard drive on a password protected computer inside a locked apartment and handled in accordance with GDPR. Neither computer nor audio recorder will be connected to a cloud unit. The email where respondents can make contact is password protected with a two-step authentication process and will be erased when the study is published. Due to the small number of participants with a big variation in age and identities that partook in this study, it is not possible to generalize the results and analysis, but that is not the purpose of the study. The study wishes only to bring forth the stories from the participants and make the identities visible, possibly using the discussion that arises from their words as a pointer towards some directions or themes that assumedly can be experiences by people of this identity.

5.6 Data analysis
Content analysis was chosen as the method for this study. Data was sought through semi-structured interviews. The transcribed and anonymized data was used as a base for content analysis within the study. For analysis of data the method of Elo and Kyngäš (2008) was chosen. Content analysis is a useful method when the data consist of written text, verbal communication or visually mediated messages. As an analytic method it provides the researcher a tool for a systematic review of the data. According to Elo and Kyngäš method the text is distilled, and units of meaning are identified. These units are condensed and put into categories where each category represent one of the texts’ essential themes. The method aims to generate knowledge as a base for understanding.

As a first step of the analysis an overall view of the data was formed to gain a sense of “what it is all about”. In this phase the material was read through repeatedly and extensively. According to Elo & Kyngäš (2008) this process is carried out in order to ensure that the researcher knows the text so that the overall feeling for the narrative can stay with the researcher throughout the process of analysis. In the next step of analysis open coding, construction of categories and abstraction was done according to Elo and Kyngäš description of the method. The data was read through and units of meaning were identified. The units of meaning were condensed to codes and transferred on paper notes which were marked with an identification label, i.e. GF42 or GD67, to be retractable. The transcriptions were processed repeatedly to empty the data of all essential content. More codes were transferred to paper notes as new content revealed itself. After going through the entire data, the creation of categories started by organizing the coded units in piles. This step in the content analysis is called open coding. Categories were formed freely without any category being valued as more or less significant than the other (Elo & Kyngäš, 2008). In the following step in the analytic process the categories were placed under main categories where similar categories were merged or reduced. The purpose of the analysis was always to answer the aim of the study and the analysis was continuously checked against the aim throughout the process.

GDPR stands for General Data Protection Regulation EU 2016/679 and is a regulation in EU law on data protection and privacy within the European Union.
5.7 Ethical considerations

To maintain a high ethical standard this paper has had its starting point in the guidelines from the Swedish Research Council regarding the four fundamental ethical principles for higher research involving humans. These are termed the information requirement, the claim of consent, the confidentiality requirement and the usefulness requirement (Swedish Research Council, n.d.). In this study the information requirement has been seen through by the letter of information and the verbal or written reminder of the letter of information at the start of each interview. A consideration of the claim of consent has been made through the emailed form of consent and the written or verbal reminder at the start of each interview, reminding the participant of their ability to stop, pause or withdraw their participation at any time without having to explain or justify such actions and without consequence. The confidentiality requirement has been heeded by not taking up any personal data except for age and girlfag or guydyke identity and by anonymising the data before analysis. Only the project manager, i.e. said student, has had access to the empirical data which will be destroyed after the publishing of the study. The data has only been used for the purpose and aim of the study in accordance with the usefulness requirement. The usefulness of the study could be a step for healthcare professionals, within sexuality and gender, to improve treatment and counselling and possibly lead onto creating guidelines for this purpose. In that way, LGBTQ+ people, including girlfags and guydykes, could subsequently access relevant knowledge and help.

The study does not fall under the Swedish law of ethics applications in research (Lagen om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor, SFS 2003:460) because the study is part of a higher education program. The ethics committee at Malmö University received the ethical considerations for this study with the research design in an application for ethical approval on the 23rd of October 2018. This action was taken because the study involves questions of sexuality and identity and therefore requires approval before start of the study, according to the rules of Malmö University. Approval was received on the 2nd of November through the ethics committee after adding the measure to contact the person/s responsible for the Facebook © forum and asking for permission before posting the letter of information. The main ethical considerations for this study firstly concern the anonymity of the participants, which is to a large extent covered under the previous sections of Recruitment and Interviews and Data. Secondly, it concerns the participants’ reactions to being interviewed about sensitive issues such as sexual- and gender identity. Some of these aspects were relieved by said students professional experience in sexual health counselling. These areas are covered extensively in Appendix 4, which presents segments of the ethics application and the considerations taken. Furthermore, an active choice has been made as to leave the empirical data uncommented regarding potential problematic discourse the respondents may provide. This to align with the aim of the study, to let the respondents use their own words on their own terms, to describe the identities without the results getting coloured by said students pre-understanding of e.g. stereotyping or transphobia.

5.8 Limitations of the study

This study sought to interview self-identified girlfags and guydykes, regardless of e.g. age of onset, relationship status or country of origin. This in line with the aim to describe the identities with little prior knowledge. The study is not designedly limited to e.g. a western context, though the use of the English language and method may implicitly result in this. The respondents were not restricted in participating in the study in anything but age (over 18 years of age). These choices were made so as to be able to reach out to a mostly unknown sexual minority.
6. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This section will present the results from the interviews presented in three themes that emerged during analysis. The results will be further analysed within the theoretical framework for this study. The result shows diversity within the group in some respects, as well as consensus in most aspects. The result derives from listening to the participants stories or reading their words when they describe their feelings, self-identification and different areas of life that connects to the identity. The quotes will be presented with the attached identity markers GF (girlfag) or GD (guydyke) and respective ages as the only markers in accordance with the wish for anonymity by the participants, e.g. GF26. The three most significant findings and subcategories are presented in table 1, below. A play on gender, portraying the gender aspect in identity and sexuality and Sexuality and orientation, describing orientation, attraction and sexual activity. Closing with presenting the question of Identity, regarding definitions, health and community for the girlfag and guydyke identities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>A play on gender</th>
<th>Sexuality and orientation</th>
<th>Identity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>• Not getting things straight</td>
<td>• Being gay, but…</td>
<td>• Definitions and labels Discusing the predicaments;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Drag queens and drag kings</td>
<td>• Orientation</td>
<td>• It is not a fetish!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• A gay gaze</td>
<td>• Attracted to gay people</td>
<td>• Why fag and dyke?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sexual (gender) role playing</td>
<td>• It is all in my head</td>
<td>Health and community;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• About dicks</td>
<td>• The practiced practice</td>
<td>• The trans aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Dominance and submission</td>
<td>• Sexual health aspect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Belonging to the LGBTQ+ community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Showing the results from this study, presented in three themes with respective subcategories.

6.1 A play on gender

Listening to the participants, or reading their words, they seem to agree on not fitting in to the heterosexual games and norms that are generally expected of them. Many describe seeing the world differently and have a hard time to understand what is expected of them as a woman or man in society and in sex and intimate relationships. Several describe acting and reacting as another gender and the valuing of qualities in other people much like another gender. As many respondents say, they are aware of stereotyping when trying to explain these feelings. In short, the respondents describe how; girlfags understand the minds of men (or gay men) better in general, also having a sexuality closer to that of men (e.g. enjoying a chase, being a top, less interest in foreplay). Guydykes claim to understand the minds of women (or lesbians) better in general, also having a sexuality closer to that which is perceived as lesbian (e.g. meeting on equal terms, giving pleasure, respecting bodies). These very stereotypical examples of behaviour are only used to clarify the differences in a short and pedagogical way.

Not getting things straight
All participants expressed feelings of not belonging in the heteronormative behaviours. Many described not fitting in with the femininities or masculinities that was expected by others from assessing their bodies and thereby expected gender belonging. Most participants describe an awareness of being judged through the lens of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). Many feel conflicted as others placed them within it when they themselves feel they do not belong, or
that they belong in two options at the same time, i.e. man and woman, or woman and masculine. The participants also gave many examples of other people perceiving them as male (girlfags) or female (guydykes) in line with their girlfag and guydyke identities. These aspects of gender, femininities and masculinities, are perceived as socialized, cultural and learned gender roles, a social constructionist setting in line with Burr (2003), Butler (1990) and van Anders (2015), but not matching the participants assigned gender and thereby breaking social norms. Many respondents explicitly expressed viewing sexuality and gender in a social constructionist setting, the guydyke, below, exemplifying this;

I’ve never considered the feminised or the feminine as less. In me. In me it’s the opposite really. In me men or straight men is a lesser, inferior version of humans. I’m not saying that they have to be, biologically, that doesn’t make a difference probably. But in the way things are, in the way we’ve been raising each other, if you think about emotional range and if you think about social skills and so on (GD42).

Most participants have early memories of not fitting in with their expected gender roles; “…but always noticed I didn’t relate to boys/men in the same way other women/girls did, and I also noticed I preferred feminine men” (GF43) describing both her own socialized behaviours (i.e. masculine behaviour) and also letting what attracts her involve a norm breaking gender performance with men presenting a feminine behaviour. Another girlfag further emphasizes crossing these lines on social gender roles both regarding her own behaviour as well as what attracts her in a partner;

I did not know how to flirt in a female role, I also loathed to behave like a typical woman. I wanted the guy to react like a girl, also to look like a girl, yet to be male, not transvestite/transgender. I wanted him to be shy (GF69).

The quotes above together with other stories from both girlfags and guydykes show similar patterns in e.g. women adopting a more masculine behaviour in combination with being attracted to men who adopt a more feminine behaviour. There are also examples of guydykes, men, adopting a more feminine behaviour being attracted to women performing a more masculine behaviour. These performances are in respect to Butlers (1990) heterosexual matrix a possible norm breaking act, a play on gender and a subversive act. Though it could also be seen as conforming to the matrix and its opposites in the binary, in all but gender performance, i.e. when oneself is performing masculinity one should be attracted to its opposite, the feminine, even while staying in the matrix regarding orientation and sex.

All the respondents described not fitting in with the gender binary regarding gender traits, the girlfags often refer to themselves as tomboys when growing up and many still apply this label to their identity as grown-ups. The participating girlfags have mostly male or gay male friends and guydykes describe mostly relating to their female friends, having a hard time to understand the minds and interests of men. The girlfag, below, describes these feelings of not understanding, not liking and not identifying with your own assigned gender role;

I know that sounds very sexist, but I often feel like women are communicating in a language I don’t understand. It’s just like…. okay, I see them talking, I see them acting but I don’t have a clue what’s going on. And it’s always easier for me with guys, and a lot of women who don’t like women too, like yes… to say I don’t like women, it’s so difficult. Because it’s not like I don’t like their gender, more the social thing is what I mean. So, I was always more of a guy’s girl I think (GF26).
Aligning with what the girlfag above states, most participants underline their gender norm breaking as social, sexual and relational behaviours and not about their looks and hobbies which, in the interviews, generally appeared more conventional or seen as traits they would have regardless of gender. The social, sexual and relational aspect of gender non-normative behaviours is what the participants describe they are attracted to in partners as well, often ascribing this to the preferred partners’ homosexual identity.

**Drag queens and drag kings**

Most of the respondents describe feeling comfortable in their assigned bodies and enjoying parts of the masculine and feminine behaviours or traits that are culturally and socially expected of them from their perceived gender roles. A few respondents discuss this as e.g. feminine behaviours they feel they would have even as a man, that these traits are not dependent on their sex, this supported by Butlers’ (1990) theory on even sex being a social construct. A guydyke describes masculine expressions as the practical choice, not representing his true self; “The male clothes feel more like a uniform, more practical, but not the one who will express myself. If I want to show who I am I have to wear women clothes” (GD45). Some of the respondents identifying as girlfags described feeling as drag queens when they enjoy their feminine expression, like a show they put on with attention they might enjoy but it still feeling like a facade:

*I had troubles to identify as something other than cis-female because I thought I had to be masculine but yeah I discovered that my femininity is not necessarily, uhm... a female thing, it’s also kind of yeah... Sometimes I feel like a drag queen when I dress up, so it’s not necessarily a cis-female thing. So this is why I identify as bi-gender and present feminine* (GF28).

The girlfag above, in a way, describe a feeling of drag as a subversive act, as described by Butler (1990), by recognizing it as not as a cis-female performance, by recognizing the feeling of drag in what would be perceived as feminine woman from the lens of the heterosexual matrix. Still, Butler (1990) described drag as a potentially subversive act, indicating it could also only be conforming to the existing matrix and reinforcing the binary. This could, even if presenting a queer gender label, be seconded by the bi-gender concept. Another girlfag explains the feeling of drag by further emphasizing that her femininity is not related to her sex; “I knew that my femme wasn’t about cis femininity - before I found community and language I would compare myself to a drag queen” (GF43). This, in the same way could be seen as a subversive act but in the same time expressed within the framework of the heterosexual matrix, described by Butler (1990), and thereby reinforcing it.

These feelings of dragshowing describe complex feelings towards femininities and masculinities and also a high awareness of genders roles by some of the respondents. It could possibly represent a conscious disregard to the importance of gender manifestations in regard to their inner gender identity, i.e. knowing their true identity is more important than others perceiving it. The perceived comfort (or close to comfort) in their assigned bodied expression differs from Wurm and Hanners’ (2017) description of *minority stress* felt by many transgender people in not passing as their identified gender. From this perspective the girlfag and guydyke identities are rather made invisible, also described by Wurm and Hanner as creating frustrating feelings of non-existing. Along this line of thinking, the sense of drag when presenting your body could be seen as a coping strategy, a mental persuasion, where the positive act of drag hides the true identities of the respondents. To be seen in your drag and to be perceived as e.g.

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11 Coping is a term used in psychology to describe the ability to handle emotional and stressful situations.
a woman when you identify as a girlfag, but actively thinking of this as drag, could be seen as an act of coping with your body not aligning with your identity.

A gay gaze
Several respondents talked about having a gaze expressed as gay or male for girlfags and feminine or lesbian for guydykes. Viewing gay men, in what is perceived to be the way other gay men view them and vice versa. A few expressed a feeling of having an inner gay man as part of them. One girlfag describe her feelings of seeing men through a homosexual lens of sorts;

> It’s like I look at men like a man, a gay man, I imagine. Like I watch them with that same yearning or gaze. I do that with straight men, wishing for them to be, so that we can be gay together (at least in my head) (GF30).

In this quote we can see both references to a gay or male gaze and also a subtle reference to androsexuality even though the girlfag uses the word gay for herself she also describes her attraction to not only gay men but men in general, though yearning for a gay relationship. Both guydykes that participated shared similar experiences in having a female or lesbian gaze.

> Somewhere I was thinking… That I’m thinking more like… stereotypically like a woman about the world and in how I’m seeing other people, other than what I imagine cis men do. Well, what is that? Is that a trans thing, no… but it’s still, it’s something else regardless (GD42).

All participating girlfags and guydykes express an understanding and connection with gay men and lesbians, respectively. They describe sharing the same view on social interactions, politics and values. Several girlfags, as shown in the first quote above, express that they view the other gender regarding sexual attraction as if they are in fact of the same gender, having a homosexual attraction towards them. This phenomenon of a gay gaze is similar to that described by Neville (2018). In Neville (2018) it is referred to as masquerading as a gay man, using a male gaze as a coping strategy to be able to look sexually at men. This interpretation leaves room to discuss the gaze not as a homosexual attraction but an androsexual attraction. The expressed experiences of a gay gaze also fall in with the previous analysis on drag queens and drag kings, emphasizing the feelings of acting a gender that is not in line with your sex.

> I have the feeling I have like a male gaze when I look at women, maybe not in this sexist way but I… yeah, somehow have the feeling it’s different this that I see men from a male perspective in a way, as being a girlfag. And the same can happen when I desire women, it’s not always like that but usually it can happen (GF28).

Quoted above is one of several girlfags that also have an attraction towards women. Explaining how the gay or male gaze experienced when looking at men also sometimes transfers to when looking at women. If sexualizing, as described by Neville (2018), is associated with masculinity then performing a masculine role using a male gaze to be sexual could apply to any gender. In this case it could also be seen as conforming to the binary in the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990), by using masculinity in being attracted to the feminine.

Sexual (gender) roleplaying
All of the participants expressed thoughts on sex, their fantasies or sexual activities, that align with the stereotypical role of the so-called other gender. Girlfags mostly express a need to

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12 Androsexual is a term that describes being attracted or oriented towards the male, i.e. masculinity.
dominate, to top and be in control, to in some ways objectify the male body they are engaging with. For some, these wishes are not in line with their partners wishes, but for others these roles also suit the partner. A very few actually have experiences of being in relationships withgay-identified people of another gender. A dominant girlfag gives an example of her life with hergay-identified husband: “Along with my partner being a bottom and me being a top. So with a little imagination, some prosthetics, and creativity, we are still together” (GF55). Some respondents play on gender by their partners referring to them as e.g. male or wanting them to call their body parts something else. This help them feel connected with their identity, another girlfag expressed: “Yes, well I kind of like it when my girlfriend calls me a boy during sexual situations, it doesn’t happen often but I like it, and yeah, it does something with me” (GF28). Contrary to girlfags wish to dominate etc, guydykes emphasise the importance of the sex on equal terms, both participants being subjectives, no one dominating, but rather showing care and respect for their partner. One guydyke, compares his sex life with the heteronormative alternative;

*It’s funny cause... when your having sex with a straight girl... You can do the Exact same things but... I mean, practically it could be fucking someone from behind or whatever, you can do the Exact same thing but it is Different. That’s where it lies you know, in the meeting, not in the practise in any way. In expectations. And in the flow (GD42).*

The above quote and other statements from the respondents who identify as guydykes all focus on the mental aspects and the gender roles in their sex lives being different from that of their experiences of heteronormative sexual activities. Most girlfags’ fantasies of having another body or body parts are more pronounced regarding sexual activity with other people. One guydyke explain this phenomenon with lesbian sex being more including and broad in its practice in general, and therefore the difference is not so much the physical practice as both parts being equal, equally active, respectful and in no pre-expected power position towards one another. Almost all of the girlfags, as opposed to this, expressed a wish to top and to a further extent avoided attention to their female body parts in sexual activities. A more active, objectifying and dominant sexuality was ascribed masculinity and a more tactile, equal, verbal sexuality was ascribed to femininity. Butler (1990, p. 68) similarly writes about the intermediate types in the heterosexual matrix, where girlfags and guydykes would be placed, quoting Riviere; “In daily life types of men and women are constantly met with who, while mainly heterosexual in their development, plainly display strong features of the other sex” (Riviere 1929, in Butler 1990, p. 68).

Several girlfags participating in this study described coping with their female body, straight partner or heteronormative sexual situations by actively imagining themselves being penetrated anally when in fact being penetrated vaginally or fantasising about receiving a blow job, when receiving oral sex. This align with Branders’ (2015) outgiving on the power which fantasies can exert over us and form us as sexual beings. These experiences could be described as a very active form of that phenomenon. Furthermore, a few participating girlfags clearly express not wanting to be feminised, called feminine things or receive too much attention to e.g. their breasts but wanted to be perceived as a man or at least not a woman. One guydyke shared similar feelings of how he wants to be seen in sexual situations; “Don’t call my penis penis, I’d like that they call it clitoris. I like to be touched at my breasts. I’m much more loving touchiness, and things like that” (GD45). The other participating guydyke expresses similar behaviour regarding showing vulnerability, care and affection in sex but did feel comfortable with his male sexed body and did not wish it to be different or imagine it as different. At the same time as being very clear on his sexual activity being *lesbian* in regard to identity and social roles.
**About dicks**

As presented above, when performing a gender or having an identity as e.g. being lesbian, certain traits are connected to this identity by the respondents. Sexually, the identity is described as open minded in e.g. sexual practice, leaving room for diversity in actions and bodies. While, as an opposite to this, the traits connected to the gay male identity leave less room for a diverse practice, particularly in a regard to body parts. When speaking of dysphoric feelings and especially sexual feelings there is, for girlfags in particular, a focus on dicks (the word most participants use as to refer to penises). As stated above when discussing gender sexual roleplaying and sexual practices, most of the participating girlfags had more issues that surround their physical body than the participating guydykes. Most also describe explicit desires for having a male body and specifically a penis in sexual situations, both in partnered and non-partnered sexuality. One girlfag discuss this fact and say that girlfags’ fascination and admiration for dicks is similar to that of gay men’s fascination with dicks. Further stating this would be a big difference from straight women’s general feeling about dicks, which is perceived as more negative, by said girlfag. Some girlfags express their wishes and fantasies of having a penis with a focus on the physical sexual sensations they want to experience. One girlfag giving an example of this wish:

*I don’t want to be a man, but I do sometimes wish I had a penis so I could have tactile feedback during anal sex with my partner. But I don’t hate my breasts or my vulva; they give me a lot of pleasure and I’m very grateful for them. But sexual and kink dominance is often associated with the male, especially with respect to gay sex (GF55).*

Many also describe imagining the tactile sensations they would experience if they had a penis while masturbating, some also imagine getting an erection when sexually aroused. Many girlfags share stories and fantasies about particular sexual actions they want to experience with a penis, e.g. the exact moment of entering someone anally or so-called deep throating, i.e. receiving oral sex while pushing your penis deep into the back of the partners’ throat. For some respondents, the wish for a penis seem a significant part of their girlfag identity and sexuality. In other areas of life, and also sometimes sexually, the respondents describe themselves as mostly comfortable with their female bodies, but a uniting yearn for a penis seem to connect the girlfags in their identity. One girlfag exemplify these feelings in a clear-cut way:

*I don’t have body dysphoria about my... uhm, boobs or something. But I don’t like that I don’t have a dick. It’s very simple I think, it’s just like that’s wrong for me. It’s okey that I have a vagina, that’s okey. But I’m sad that I don’t have a dick. So if I had to decide, I would always choose dick. But if I could add it to my vagina, it would be okey too (GF26).*

Butler (1990, p. 95) writes about the differentiation of bodily pleasures and parts that are based on gendered meanings. How we associate pleasures with body parts but have constructed and naturalized these bodies as gender-specific. A wish for a penis, associated with the male, could be seen as a natural longing for girlfags when performing masculinity as the penis, according to Butler can “become a conceivable foci of pleasure precisely because they correspond to a normative ideal of a gender-specific body” (Butler, 1990, p. 95).

### 6.2 Sexuality and orientation

**Being gay, but…**

Most participant directly referred to themselves as being gay, as in girlfags being gay for men and guydykes being lesbians. Both identify with the gay and lesbian identity. Several of the
participants express this in a very clear way often without problematising the identity at that moment but saying it with pride in a self-evident way. One girlfag exemplify this; “I have known for a long time that I’m a gay man. I felt at ease in the company of gay men more than in any other social gathering” (GF69). A few shortly discuss how they interpret the meaning of *being gay* but most respondents told it as an indisputable fact;

_I remember that once I asked my parents when I was ten or something like that what they would do when I was gay. Looking back it’s interesting that I didn’t ask my parents “what would you do if I would be lesbian” (in german language it’s a clearer distinction than in the english language). My mother said that she wouldn’t like it, because we would face discrimination. But she had to accept that. My father said he wouldn’t accept it. So I knew I could never tell them that her daughter is a gay guy (GF27)._

The girlfag above highlights both how being gay can be stated clearly, much alike the major part of the participants in this study, and it also shows how the identity has been felt from a young age by many. Some describe a shared sexuality with homosexual men and lesbian women, that in some ways they are viewed by the gay people they are attracted to as other gay men or lesbians, at least in some sense. One guydyke and one girlfag give examples of them being perceived as gay, or possibly of another gender, on the following page;

_I usually am “the last guy you’re with”... Then you go for girls after that. I never found it difficult, not even when I was younger. That’s the kind of thing that would be a total nightmare to a straight guy I guess... But I’ve always found it sort of honouring to... get chosen Even though I’m a guy. And that’s because there’s something else Here (GD42)._

_I mean, they would never put their hand, a woman’s hand, in their pants to touch their ass... Because straight women would be like -what the fuck? They would never even think of it, but I am considered by them like the right person to do something like that. So I’m even considered something like that, something different by my gay friends (GF40)._

A few participants describe themselves as partly a gay man or lesbian woman. One e.g. assesses their gay male part as fifty per cent, one as two thirds and one as a fifth of their being. One guydyke describe what he calls *dykeness* as an ability you have, to some or to a full extent. A couple describe themselves as partly straight, partly gay, schwul\(^{13}\) or gay but straight in their relationship. This reasoning is similar to that of roles in a BDSM context, where some individuals identify fully or partly with their e.g. dominant side. It could also be compared to a switch identity\(^ {14} \). Fluidity and the ability to change in your sexual identity over time and context is an element to sexual orientation the SCT adds to previous theories on explaining sexual orientation. It allows and recognises these sexual minorities which may change in orientation and behaviour (van Anders, 2015).

**Orientation**

Most of the respondents describe their sexual orientation as homosexual but “in the wrong body”, or simply lesbian or gay (male). The two participating guydykes, below, try to clarify their orientation. One by explaining that the heteronormative games and positioning between men and women is what differs his orientation towards women from that of other men. The other guydyke endeavours in trying to describe the orientation further, trying to portray a lesbian mindset of sorts;

\(^{13}\) German language; meaning *gay man.*

\(^{14}\) A switch identity within BDSM refers to someone that is sometimes dominant, sometimes submissive in sexuality and relationships.
My sexual orientation is lesbian. Nothing else is my interest. There’s games between male and female, the cis-games between them are not in my interest. So I’m full lesbian in my head I think. (GD45).

I once read a thing where it said... you’re attracted to girls in the same way “girls that are attracted to girls” are attracted to girls. That explanation really works for me. Like, Yes, then I GET it (GD42).

A couple of respondents describe disappointment in not being able to be bisexual in their orientation. Both guydykes and a couple of girlfags express these feelings, having tried to explore their attraction to another gender but failed. The monosexual labels (gay or lesbian) described by these participants are in line with Galupo, Mitchell and Davies (2015) research on sexual labels within sexual minorities. Meaning the participants who identify as simply gay or lesbian use fewer identity labels than those who identify as queer and transgender identities. Furthermore, other participants clearly describe queer identities and plurisexual labels. The same participants also describe a BDSM interest which would further imply a link between plurisexual identity and personality types. This is described by Stief, Rieger and Savin-Williams (2014) as a higher tendency for sexual sensation seeking for individuals with plurisexual identity labels. Several girlfags identify as bisexual or pansexual though none of the guydykes identify with anything but monosexual labels, i.e. man and lesbian. A small inclination of generational differences showed in the results in this aspect, where older participants were more inclined to use monosexual labels than younger participants that to a further extent used plurisexual labels. This could signify a more essentialist view of sexual orientation for the older generation. These thoughts align with the research by Schei Jessen, 2017, showing that other LGBTQ+ people has changed towards a more social constructionist view on sexual orientation, over the past generations. Furthermore, all bisexual identified girlfags underline being gay and having a male gay attraction towards men, pronouncing their gay orientation. One girlfag describe this further:

I was very uncomfortable if someone told me I was straight because I was dating guys. In fact I’m bisexual and a lot of people told me bisexual means to be lesbian and straight in the same time, if you’re a girl, and that was really uncomfortable for me. Not only because bisexual is a whole identity, but also because everything connected with Me and Straight was strange (GF26).

Some of the girlfags further pronounce their androsexual attraction, i.e. an attraction towards the masculine, and have accepted trans men as potential partners, the key component in their attraction seem to be that the person is male or masculine, regardless of genitalia;

I have been thinking about this for quite a long time and I know that I’m definitely into men but I can imagine even being with someone who is trans man because for me it’s not much about the sexual organs but about the masculinity in general so because I see some people, some trans men, online of course, and I was like - yeah but he’s hot so who cares if he has a vagina or something else, he’s hot so I found out that I’m like, they call it androsexual... (GF40).

When moving forward towards the Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT), with its focus on complexities and sexual orientation, we can look back at Butler’s (1990) heterosexual matrix which is still relevant when describing androsexuality. Though, an important element that has shown through the interviews and is lost in the heterosexual matrix is the feminine traits in men and masculine traits in women that attract most girlfags and guydykes. In that sense androsexuality, a sexuality towards the male, would be insufficient in describing these
attractions to double gender traits. Though, androsexuality is including as an expression, in the sense of meaning any males and possibly masculine women.

Looking deeper into orientation, we may look at van Anders (2015) table (p. 12) regarding what the basis for sexual orientation may be. In this, androsexuality could be seen as an orientation based on sex. By sex referring to maleness and sex-related bodily features as what orients e.g. the girlfag above’s attraction. At the same time the feminine aspect in the male-attraction confuses and steers towards being attracted to men. Men, as in the gender/sex category, meaning aspects of men “that relate to identity and/or cannot really be sourced specifically to gender or sex” (van Anders, 2015, p. 1181). When describing their orientation, the respondents in this study state they are gay. By this they seem to be in consensus in referring to their inner gender identity and behaviour, and not appearance and body, often highlighting gender traits that concern the social, sexual and romantic aspects of gender identity. By this, the participating girlfags and guydykes suggest that homosexual orientation, or any orientation, issues from the gender identity and also that the homosexual attraction lies between gender and the gender/sex they are attracted to, with no regard to gender expression in themselves or biological sex. Girlfags and guydykes could, from this perspective, be described as an orientation based on gender/sex sexuality.

**Attracted to gay people**

All respondents describe being attracted to either gay men or lesbians as a major part of their girlfag and guydyke identities. Most focus on the more romantic aspects of attraction, for example seeing gay men kiss each other is a major part of the attraction for the participating girlfags towards gay men, and just seeing a lesbian couple is described as attractive and heart-warming for the participating guydykes. These feelings of nurturance are described by the majority of the respondents. *Nurturance*, as described by van Anders (2015) underlines the supportive, warm and loving emotions towards another. Most of the participants describe finding these feelings or attraction around the time or just before they had entered puberty. A few differ, two say it has been felt since the age of five or six and one says it started around 16 years of age. Some participants also describe more stereotypical characteristics of gay men and women as attractive, e.g. men being feminine and women being butch, though many of the participating girlfags seem to be indifferent to stereotypical characteristics and can feel attracted to all gay men or all men, as a gay man.

*I LOVE watching guys making out in movies. I think it’s not always that far from guys who like to watch women together. But different from the depiction of “lesbians” in porn, I like the idea of the romantic attraction between the two guys* (GF34).

The girlfag above underlines the importance of the romantic connection in line with the rest of the participants. Even while using the word *love* most girlfags and guydykes do not describe intense feelings and infatuations but, as in how van Anders (2015) differs love from nurturance, they rather describe a deep emotional connection. Most commonly told in this study, as combined with sexual feelings towards gay men and lesbians. All girlfags describe homoerotic fantasies of gay men. Many describe a preferable moment or part of sex as particularly satisfying, e.g. making someone choke on your dick, entering or penetrating a man from behind, and rimming; “Well two thing basically… Rimming and fucking” (GF40). Similar to that depicted under the above section *About dicks*. Most feel dominant in their role in fantasies and romantical or sexual desires;
So, often I fantasise about penetrating men, just the moment of entering them, it being both painful and pleasurable. I can just play that over and over in my head and it will make me come in thirty seconds. I have this fantasy both with me (and my dick) with strange men but also about my partners (GF30).

Many quotes, like the two above, indicate an eroticism towards men, as described by van Anders (2015), implying arousal and pleasure from e.g. the male body. Simultaneously the portrayed attraction is the homosexual action. All participants describe desire towards the gay attraction, a yearning more in line with how van Anders (2015) describe lust. On the theme of this need and longing (lust) for a gay attraction some of the participants shared their actual fantasies with longer storylines. Most themed with either changing bodies or gender as to be able to live their desires. Most girlfag fantasies include aspects of dominance towards gay men. Several of the participants also romanticize the first gay experience or turning straight men gay. One recurrent theme is opening up straight people’s eyes and introducing them to a gay attraction.

It is all in my head
Some of the participants describe seldom or never to have experienced much other than a heteronormative sex routine with a partner of the so-called opposite sex. Some of the participants have been in long straight relationships, and some in more open and queer relationships, but still mostly using the power of their mind in experiencing the sex as gay.

Some use their mind and fantasies to increase their arousal with their partner, fantasising about others partaking or their bodies’ experiencing different sensations. Butler (1990, p. 96) writes about how transsexuals claim a discontinuity between their body parts and sexual pleasures; “Very often what is wanted in terms of pleasure requires an imaginary participation in body parts, either appendages or orifices, that one might not actually possess, or, similarly, pleasure may require an exaggerated or diminished set of parts” (Butler, 1990, p. 96). Below, two of the participating girlfags describe how they, similar to the thoughts of Butler, imagine having other body parts as part of a sexual act;

I often had fantasies about dominant gay sex that I used to be able to come when I was having sex with people. Like, maybe it could be a good sexual relationship in the relationship in the beginning, the attraction making you all horny and more wet and ready to come. But after a while I always had to start imagine the guy fucking me being fucked from behind, anally, to get over that hill and be able to orgasm. I usually imagine it as both intensely pleasurable, filling feeling but also a bit painful for the receiver (the one I was fucking), imagining him grimacing with both pain and pleasure when someone, and sometimes I in these fantasies, entered them with my dick (GF30).

As some girlfags, in relationships with men, said; it’s all in my head. “It does feel like it’s part of our kink play, though even during our regular PIV sex15, I am imagining that I am penetrating him” (GF55). The use of fantasies can be used as experiencing something you would never want to do in real life but also to experience the things you want to, but do not get to do, in real life. The latter seems to be the case of many of the participating respondents. These are interesting examples of the ways fantasies can form us as sexual beings, as described by Brander (2015) who underlines fantasies’ role in shaping us in our sexual identity. In these cases, fantasies could be seen as helping to, or even creating, the homosexual aspect of the identity.

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15 PIV sex referring to penis in vagina sex
The practiced practice

The actual practiced partner sex varied. Many of the participating girlfags have sex where they are vaginally penetrated, some enjoy it, some are not so interested, and some avoid it due to it making them feel as less of a man to their partner. Some girlfags have experiences in penetrating their partners, a few refer to pegging. This could on one hand be seen as a tool to perform your inner male gender, and on the other hand, as an accepted practice for straight people, the word pegging in itself suggest a straight relationship, according to Aguilar (2017). The following quotes give two examples of girlfags who express their sexual activity in a context where they have a partnered sexuality with straight men; “The few times in my life I actually got to peg a man was intensely arousing. I’ve also got to use buttplugs on men and it just makes my knees tremble thinking about it” (GF30).

I definitely touch his ass a lot with my hands, with my toes, with some fingers as well and I pay a lot of attention to his body because that actually turns Me on and yeah. Then we have normal sex but, but this way is much better for me when I can at least to something differently. But I didn’t take out my strap-on on him yet, even though I have one... (GF40).

One participating guydyke wanted to only have, what is explained as, lesbian sex and was not interested in using his penis. The other guydyke viewed any sexual practice in “a lesbian light”, even while he had penetrating sex. Both guydykes express their practice to be more give and take, more equal, than some participating girlfags who clearly express dominance in their sexual activity. The guydyke, below, describe his sexual practice and in what ways it is a lesbian practice:

Of course you sort of sleep with people in a different way, I guess. I mean, you can be more free and get more tools than you do in common hetero sex. That’s it. But it’s not like you’re rid of the straight practices either, I’m thinking, lesbians doesn’t either. That’s why I joked about that thing with the strap-on, that you always have it close by. But, then we’re fucking from behind in a lesbian way, like, or fisting that way. … But of course, I guess, I probably lick a thousand times more than other men do. It’s one of those things, and I probably use more fingers and such things, naturally. And I’m thinking it’s about the Flow. It’s not seven minutes and then you come and it’s over, it can be a six hour flow (GD42).

The practiced practice, i.e. the participants actual sexual activity, could indicate an eroticism towards men (girlfags) and women (guydykes), by being aroused and enjoying sexual activities with straight people. In that way letting their eroticism, as described by van Anders (2015), orient them towards the gender masculine or feminine. But at the same time, this could also be seen as coping strategy in lack of the real thing i.e. gay men and lesbian women, using their fantasies to experience the sexual relationship in another way (see; It is all in my head). Most participating girlfags have vaginal sex with men, not necessarily having a “gay practice”, as they put it themselves. For the guydykes this tends to be less restricted, thinking lesbian practices is not restricted in forms of sexual activity. The girlfags in this study have a harder time incorporating vaginal sex in what is perceived as gay male sex, but many still enjoy sexual acts of that nature with men, many while fantasizing.

Dominance and submission

Dominance and submission are a major part of BDSM and allow consenting people to roleplay or live their identity, usually involving exchanges of power. Carlström (2015) further explains BDSM as a medium to play with taboos on e.g. gender. Half of the girlfags describe being into kink and BDSM. Some explicitly reveal they found it a good medium for expressing their identity sexually, to find submissive partners, men, willing to be penetrated and controlled; “I
think I’m happy cause I’m kinky too. So there are a lot of guys that like to be penetrated and that fits perfectly with my sexuality” (GF26). Another girlfag; “But once I began a relationship with the person who became my husband, I noticed that I really enjoyed gay porn, leather culture, gay erotica, and BDSM…” (GF55). These quotes by the girlfag respondents further align with Carlström’s (2015) description of BDSM as a tool to live fantasies or to live your identity. Many respondents had specific fantasies about being dominant and inflicting pain being part of their arousal, e.g. making men choking on their dicks or penetrating men in a painful way. These were not all lived experiences but fantasies on sexual sadism and display of power. One girlfag, below, describe how she uses BDSM as to live her fantasies and girlfag identity;

I liked to be in control and bind him and blindfold him as to be able to imagine ourselves as something else, better. I also felt more comfortable knowing he wouldn’t try and be dominant and enter me vaginally ruining my mode. The dominant side also made it possible for me to have him kiss and bite my nipples, as I like without focusing on the breasts being gendered and also getting to touch his asshole and put things there, buttplugs and dildos (GF30).

Being on top and being dominant is associated with masculinity. Butler (1990, p. 73) describes the primary characteristics of the libido as masculine. Furthermore, lust and eroticism, as described by van Anders (2015) is an extension on the concept of libido. The dominant ways making it easier for the girlfag above to experience her eroticism towards the male body and lust for a gay sexual practice.

6.3 Identity

Definitions and labels
Seeing as the girlfags’ and guydykes’ definitions of the identity vary and are not yet held in conclusion, many of the participants shared their version of a definition of the phenomena or discussed its content. Most respondents include an aspect of varying in identity or orientation, on a scale or being in between other definitions of sexuality, always including an aspect of homosexuality. One girlfag is of assistance in summarizing the discussions;

To reduce it to a shortlist:
Fetish - more than that.
Orientation - definitely.
Transgender - not as far as physical features are concerned.
BDSM - not necessary, but helpful.
other - behaviour-/loot-schematic exchange
   • mental and emotional transgender (GF69).

The complexity portrayed by the participants in describing and defining their identity accentuate the need for new ways to describe sexual identities that the SCT by van Anders (2015) provide. The use of the term configurations is deliberate to cover complexities, such as your sexuality changing in different contexts. The respondents of this study adhere to these aspects and thereby indicate a view on sexual orientation as non-essentialist to your being. Many of the respondents’ configurations, suggested by van Anders (2015) as an alternative expression to orientation, shift, or increases over time and contexts.

The suggested definitions varied in focus on the homosexual or the trans aspect, though all examples included both aspects and included individual variations in how strong certain aspects of the identity is. Many participants also suggested different versions of the simplistic “feeling
homosexual in the wrong body”. One participant stated that it is an identity on the trans spectrum (GF26), another girlfag suggests; “I would say, if there are two opposite poles, cis and trans, and at the same time gay and straight, then girlfags and guyydikes are in between those poles at the same time” (GF28). Several others discussed the identities sometimes as a step towards transitioning, providing examples of how this has happened a few times in girlfag and guyydike online communities. To be “sexually trans” was suggested as a definition. Some participants gave more complex suggestions, e.g. trying to define the “gay attraction”;

Right.. so, this really worked for me “men who are interested in women, in the same way that women who are interested in women, is”. That this, the first time I read it I immediately understood. Though it is a kind of confusing definition I guess… (GD42).

The participants varied in where the identity felt strongest for them, some describe a variation in intensity and some a variation in whether e.g. the romantic or the sexual aspect is stronger for them personally. All seemed to agree on the romantic aspect pervading the identity, and a feeling of self-identification as homosexual men and women. The emphasis on the romantic aspect align with the previous analysis on the respondent’s nurturance, as described in the SCT (van Anders, 2015), towards gay people (of another gender) and eroticism towards men (girlfags) and women (guyydikes). In the respondent’s description of their identity nurturance is seemingly the definitive aspect in defining their identity, i.e. the gay man or lesbian aspect in the identity label. Gender/sex sexuality, as described by van Anders (2015), depicts people’s attraction regarding gender, sex and gender/sex (see table 1, p. 15). But, van Anders (2015) also reminds us that, as in other areas of sexuality, there may be an incongruence in our attraction or orientation and who we actually have sexual relations with. Further asserting girlfags’ possible nurturance towards gay men, and eroticism towards masculinity. A few describe it firstly as part of their personality or feeling of self. The two quotes discuss what personally encompasses the identities for these girlfags;

I’ve considered it being a fetish, because I do sometimes feel obsessed with gay sex and romance but then when it comes down to think it’s mostly about feelings of love and lust. I feel butterflies in my chest seeing or fantasising about gay couples, wanting to be part of that. Wanting to be that. I guess it also relates to trans a lot, like I do feel I am a gay boy inside half the time. Or possibly bisexual boy sometimes, but mostly just, gay. It’s how I feel about men, especially gay men, when I look at them, I want to be their gay lover (GF30).

But also for me, it’s like I really feel... especially in sexual situations, in sex, I really feel like I want to be a man in that situation with a man. This is why I like identify as a girlfag because that’s exactly it. And also like, like the dominant partner, and it took me a long time to find this out, to find this out about myself (GF40).

Even while most of the participants in this study identify as girlfags, and the same situation is mirrored in many forums where guyydikes constitute a minor part of these, both the participating guyydikes and girlfags are unanimous in saying the identity labels and definitions concern girlfags and guyydikes equally. Most express this is the same identity in different bodies with similar struggles. Two differences that are discussed is that guyydikes have a harder time crossing over from masculinity to femininity and are more accused of fetishizing. Girlfags on the other hand, are said to have a more difficult time finding a gay male partner and therefore are assumed, by several of the respondents, to have a greater need for community.
**Transgender and transitioning.** All the respondents somehow commented on the transgender aspects of the girlfag and guydyke identity. Some expressed exploring the trans aspects further, many have considered if they are in fact transsexual. Some still have not written off that notion;

> After I knew what transgender is, I always had times where I thought that I really want to be a boy. It comes and goes over 10 years now. Sometimes the wish is there, sometimes I don’t think about it and sometimes I feel good the way I am (GF27).

> Before I found out that I’m a guydyke or maybe transsexual I tried to feel and look like a male. After finding me, after I found me… I would like that other people take me as a woman. [...] Every time when I close my eyes I feel female, and most times when they are open, I’m feeling it too (GD45).

The quotes above strongly indicate transgender issues. Many participants though, tell stories of them considering being transsexual as a thing of the past. That the thoughts on sex confirming treatments have been written off after finding other identity labels such as girlfag or guydyke, genderqueer or genderfluid, still considering the identity to be a transgender identity. One girlfag also describes her body dysphoria decreasing after finding the girlfag identity. This aligns with Wurm and Hanner (2017) and Ekdahl’s (2017) description of people finding comfort and improved health if they can identify and be part of a group identity of their choice.

**Discussing the predicaments**

All of the respondents had the general outlook that the girlfag and guydykes identities are somehow problematic. There is the practical aspect of bodies and sex and there is the aspect of being accepted and welcomed in your identity. When discussing the definitions and labels of the identity, two main discussions arose, presented below;

**It is not a fetish!**

When talking about what defines the identity many participants unknowingly quoted each other in saying: it is not a fetish. A fetish meaning “a form of sexual behaviour in which gratification is linked to an abnormal degree to a particular object, activity, part of the body, etc.” (Fetishism, n.d.) Many further discussed why they do not consider it a fetish. Judging by the tone and exclamations marks used when talking about this issue, it is apparent it is a sensitive issue regarding how to define the identity, most respondents wanting to make sure to steer associations away from sex and kink, towards identity, orientation and gender. One girlfag describe her identity and how she differs between kinks and identity;

> I don’t think it’s a kink or a fetish and because it changes a lot about how I feel and, uhm, I won’t say it’s a sexual practice because you can be into pegging as a straight cis girl too I think, that’s not about my identity. It’s definitely not a fetish, it’s not a kink, because it’s more than this. I have several kinks and I have several fetishes and it’s something else (GF26).

A kink can be defined as a sexual activity, often within BDSM, which the practitioner prefers (Carlström, 2015). All of the participating respondents claimed their identity to be part of the inner feeling of self somehow. One guydyke, below, exemplifying how the identity is about his self-identification;

> I think, first and foremost, it’s not a fetish. I get really stressed out and provoked by that thought, because it’s an identity. It’s about who I AM, not what others are. I’m thinking, I mean, a straight girl could never dress up like a dyke and it would work. It would never have worked, because it’s still who I am, that’s the thing you know (GD42).
The two quotes in this section both emphasise the girlfag and guydyke identities as something that describe who they are and how they feel. It describes their self-identification, which relates to others, but is expressed as not about what others are. This is a bit contradictory when, at the same time, throughout this study, the emphasis is on the gay attraction. By the romantic aspect pervading the identity, this distances the identity from a fetish, which focus on sexual activity and eroticism. van Anders’ (2015) concept of *eroticism*, relating to how e.g. the girlfags also seem to be androsexual, and thereby not actually fetishizing gay men, as such, but are sexually aroused by masculinities overall.

**Why fag and dyke?**

When discussing the general definitions many came into the subject of semantics, i.e. the choice of words used to describe the identity. Both in the sense of their meaning and the binary aspect they reflect. The two girlfags quoted in this section sums up the discussions of the respondents.

In other languages, e.g. German and Swedish, there is a more neutral single word meaning gay man, much like lesbian. Translating girlfag into these languages becomes a more neutral and non-derogatory way of referring to the homosexual aspect. One girlfag explains how many felt regarding the use of words;

> *I think somehow, Germany is somehow very open minded in general about sexuality and the people are not so… hm, how to call this, not so obsessed about academic terminology so they are kind of free to express themselves and they are not in constant conflict about it as in the Anglo Saxon countries. Because, if you say the word girlfag, it is so offensive to so many people, but there is no other... well some people tried to find better expressions but… uhm, there’s this German expression schwul frau which is maybe better, because it doesn’t sound offensive to anyone in English (GF40).*

As the majority of the respondents were not native English speakers, using the words girlfag and guydyke, in English, did not feel as controversial or upsetting as a few suggest it does for native speakers. Many expressed the convenience of having a single more neutral word for gay man, unlike fag, even though more queered nowadays, it still upsets some people, according to several respondents. Schei Jessen (2017) discusses the decline of binary labels, such as homosexual, in the queer community, and the fear that brings for some LGBTQ+ people of their identity being erased. These are similar thoughts to that of girlfags and guydyes need to use the binary aspect and homosexual labels to identify. A few of the participants discussed the queer world being too academic and excluding, both in language and political correctness, wanting the including LGBTQ+ context to actually be, just that, including;

> *I see it as a scale. The binary aspect is unfortunate but necessary for people who are girlfags and guydyes to identify the identity when they hear it. It is my perception that most GF/GDs hear it and feel instantly at home, having found their identity. Most people who write in the fb-group say they just found this concepts and it describes exactly how they’ve been feeling for years or for life. The binary take is used to describe homosexual feelings, which I think is key to the identity really, queer labels doesn’t cover the exact feeling, though of course girlfags and guydyes are queer (GF30).*

**Health and community**

On the subtheme of health three categories emerged. Firstly, thoughts and feelings of how the girlfag and guydyke identity and the transgender aspect of the identity have affected the participants personally, secondly the participants’ sexual health and more general feelings and opinions expressed about the autogynephilia and autoandrophilia diagnosis in the DSM-5 (APA, 2013) that relates to the identity. Lastly, experiencing a lack of community and not being
welcomed in the LGBTQ+ community. Negative health aspects are also implied within the preceding themes of this study. Many participants describe feelings of confusion and rootlessness, not knowing how to identify and where to exist.

**The trans aspect**

The utmost majority of the participants have experienced a decrease in health that they connect with their identity as a girlfag or guydyke and the transgender aspects of the identity. A few describe having problems with anxiety, depression, self-hate and body issues. One girlfag explains; So if there are no clues, of course it affects you a lot, I think it affected me a lot, especially when I was in my twenties and I was trying to conform so much back then and it… it hurt me(GF40). Another girlfag portrays the sexual limitations that are part of the identity and the following dysphoria, as a consequence; “But mental health yeah… I think when I have sex with a straight guy it always make me feel kind of depressed and it makes me dysphoric” (GF26). There are similar experiences in the group as described with other LGBTQ+ people in form of so-called *minority stress*, described by Wurm and Hanner (2017). One girlfag describe how these experiences affect her;

> As in like, I get stressed out when people speak in negative ways about gay or trans people, I feel hit by their comments even if the people don’t look at me and I pass as straight. Which also feels sad. That people don’t see where I belong. And my community doesn’t always either (GF30).

The quote above also clearly underlines the frustrating feelings of being made invisible in your identity which Wurm and Hanner (2017) describes as a health issue for LGBTQ+ people. Many describe negative health issues regarding not being able to identify within the cis-norm and neither within the trans community. The loss of a community and clear identity label is described as a tearing, disruptive and has for some lead to depression and a need to seek health care.

> Being something, which is neither here nor there, with many things, like being bisexual, then you always have, assuming you’re not straight enough, or too straight for queers, and too queer for straights. You’re kind of queer but many people don’t see you as that, so yeah... I think it does something with myself... my... confidence. I feel insecure about this... the feeling that you’re not enough, not cis enough to just feel good about it and not trans enough to say: Hello! I’m getting a transition, and this is why I am this (GF28).

The girlfag above describe many participants’ feelings of being on the trans spectrum, but not trans enough to find a community or be understood in their identity. Neither queer enough for the queer community, which Ambjörnsson (2016) describes as a sometimes surprisingly excluding minority community. Most of the respondents had little or no experiences of body dysphoria, but some more pronounced. Many describe having no difficulty with the fact their body is female (girlfags) or male (guydykes). Some express being thankful for their body, e.g. to have been able to give birth, but also longing for something else. One girlfag tie her past dysphoric feelings and experiences to her self-identification as a gay man;

> I’ve had dysphoric feeling. Mostly before I found my girlfag identity and then genderqueer identity. I’ve worn packers, male underwear, done chest-binding a few times. It’s like I was lost because all in me that was connected to love and sex felt gay but I was confused about my body, because I really also liked it somehow, nothing wrong with my boobs and my vagina really (GF30).

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16 The quote “too straight for queers, and too queer for straights” (GF28) is used as a subtitle in this study as to highlight the identities being described as in between e.g. both gender- and sexual identities.
A few participants’ body dysphoria and transgender feelings were more profound, a known ill-health risk factor for LGBTQ+ people (Malmquist, et al., 2017, & Mohr & Kendra, 2011). One guydyke explain his disappointment in his body not matching his identity as a lesbian woman and the negative feelings connected to his male body;

In my fantasies I’m a real woman with a real female body and I feel close to me, and like... like... like a real female. And if I open my eyes and don’t take a look on my body, I feel it too. And if I take a look on my body, I feel much more shame and much more... I wouldn’t say hate but I don’t know a better word. Much more... unliking about my body. Because it’s not the body that I would like to have, to have the sexuality that I want to have to have the only sexuality that I need (GD45).

Autoandrophilia and autogynephilia are two diagnosis presented in DSM-5 by the American Psychiatric Association (APA). The diagnosis is debated by LGBTQ+ activists and academics alike. Autogynephilia is described as a male’s tendency to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as female (Blanchard, 1985), and vice versa when it comes to females (autoandrophilia). The participants were asked about their knowledge and feelings of the terms autoandrophilia and autogynephilia. Some asked for an explanation of the words or guessed themselves on their meaning. Their answers varied greatly with their pre-understanding of the concepts. Some clearly consider the terms as offensive and transphobic, others are more neutral or curious. Several respondents described imagining another body in sexual fantasies, especially girlfags imagine having penises and sometimes male bodies. A few also described imagining their body or body parts as male when having sex. One girlfag describe these feelings, adding an element of inner identity to it;

I often imagine myself being a man when having sex with men. It has happened with girls too but very rarely. But with men it turns me on so much giving a blow job thinking I’m another man or imagining them actually penetrating my ass and not my vagina to be able to orgasm and to enjoy it more. Feels... right somewhere inside of me (GF30).

One of the participating guydykes explicitly state he wants to be seen as a woman and is turned on by thinking he is, and the other guydyke have no recognition in this, feeling male and comfortable in his body.

When I fantasize, I have a cock and I watch it being sucked and handled and appreciated by my partner, who is often immobilized or under orders not to move. I use it to penetrate my male partner in my fantasy, imagine what it feels like, and especially enjoy their spasms around my cock when I bring them to orgasm (which usually brings me, as well) (GF55).

Looking at the quote above, many of the thoughts on sex and bodies changing were often sexually explicit. None of the participants described being turned on by having another body in contexts other than sexual situations with others or in in sexual fantasies. This would potentially differ from the DSM-5 diagnosis. Some participants also describe transgender feelings and body dysphoria that did not relate to arousal and lust (see A play on gender).

Sexual health aspect
Many participants discuss their identity or identities and how it affects their sexual health. Some express worry of sexual risk-taking behaviours and increased risks of infections, and others connect their more active sex lives to plurisexuality and BDSM, leading to a generally more
open minded attitude towards sex; “More at the same time and such things? Of course, that’s more risky than being totally monogamous with one person, sure. I mean, it is a more openminded sexuality” (GD42). One girlfag, alike a few other participants, describes using sex to confirm the identity, sometimes successfully and sometimes as a way to relieve anxiety about body and identity;

Meeting up people I really don’t know just to do things that I’m into or make them treat my body a certain way without questioning it. ... I’ve had a need for sex and experimenting to feel better about myself and my restlessness, my body, and this has led to a higher number of sex partners I think (GF30).

Researchers have found a connection with transgender people who, before social transitioning, experience changes in attraction and an increased risk of negative health outcomes, self-harm and sexual risk-taking behaviours (Katz-Wise, Reisner, Hughto, & Budge, 2017). In this light, girlfags and guydykes can be viewed as pre-transition, or never to transition, transgender people. The quote above indicating sexual self-harm behaviours and sexual risk taking connected to their inner gender identity. A couple of the participants describe the opposite, that their confusion about their identity and what they want sexually has led to fewer or no sexual partners. Their feelings about their identity have stood in the way of finding a romantic partner. At the same time as describing the beauty and feeling of belonging and longing when seeing gay people of the so-called opposite sex, many respondents explicitly expressed feelings of sadness and heartache as not to be able to participate or be seen by others as a gay man or lesbian. Several respondents describe feelings of love and simply, that it feels right, seeing e.g. two gay men holding hands or kissing in public, or pictured in books or movies. Then follows the hopeless feeling of possibly never being able to have that kind of relationship. Some participants cried when describing these forlorn feelings;

It always makes me happy and sad at the same moment. It is, you know I love that, I mean I love to read and see gay couples, yes. And movies, books, everything. But I’m always getting a bit sad because it’s always... It’s like oh... I never... I won’t ever... Will not ever have this. I can’t have this because I’m not assigned male at birth and that’s something that makes me very sad... You see, I’m a bit sad now, yes, just talking about that (GF26).

A few respondents that were in relationships with gay identified men or lesbian identified women also described the confusion and anti-climax of not being able to join their gay partners in their separatist contexts. While being very understanding of this, it creates frustrating feelings and feelings of being made invisible in their identity and as a partner, which carries known negative health aspects (Wurm & Hanner, 2017). One guydyke and one girlfag portray these feelings;

And I’ve always thought it was problematic that I want settings where men are not allowed. I’ve liked it, you know. The lesbian settings in that, that they’ve actually been excluding. But then I also get that I can’t go there... (GD42).

It’s only between my husband and myself, as well as in my own mind. The only drawback is that I am usually not welcome in gay male exclusive spaces (gay bars or bathhouses), and while I would NEVER try to invade such a space, it still feels unfair and makes me sad sometimes (GF55).

**Belonging to the LGBTQ+ community**
All participants clearly state that they feel they are LGBTQ+-identified people, making references to orientation and gender identity or their plurisexual identity labels. Many
respondents express defensive comments and excuse themselves for sometimes being able to pass as straight but are also upset by the fact they are made invisible in social settings. In this way the identities furthermore fit in with Wurm and Hanners (2017) description of risk exposed LGBTQ+ by being made invisible in their pride. Many describe having visited Pride parades and parties, feeling at home there, but having had trouble finding their place;

I went to pride sometimes and it was always an amazing feeling. I felt like I was right there, but I always felt a bit excluded, because I was a girl in a relationship with a heterosexual guy. No place for me in the rainbow (GF27).

Of course we’re LGBT+. We’re breaking both gender and orientation norms. I know we can pass as straight but the idea of us not suffering enough to be part of the LGBT community is ridiculous and I’m very disappointed in people expressing this, one would think more of LGBT people where openness, respect and friendliness should rule (GF30).

As quoted above, some express disappointment and feel upset when their identity is questioned in an LGBTQ+ context. Though a few of the participants are hopeful, saying “the trans revolution” the recent years has made in between identities more accepted.

Reactions from the LGBTQ+ community. Almost all of the respondents had experiences of their identities as girlfags and guydykes being criticised, first and foremost online. The participants describe different forums, social media and wikis where people, from the LGBTQ+ community, have written derogatory things about the identities. Comments in the lines of calling them straight and fetishizing or accusing them of being transsexual but in the closet. A so-called inner identity seems to provoke some LGBTQ+ people whose own appearance and choice of partner is socially norm breaking and who risk abuse because of their sexual identity. Two girlfags extend their thoughts on why there is judgement and where it comes from;

I think it’s mostly the gay lesbian communities. The lesbian community, more the older generations. More the feminist or the lesbian feminist who were, who have, some eighties ideas about feminism and being queer. Yeah, those people are mostly the ones who judge (GF28).

I think it’s a mixture between LGBTIQ gatekeeping, like: oh there’s straight people who want to keep our space and can’t leave us alone and they are invading our space and yeah, that’s part of the problem (GF26).

The first quote partly indicates an older generation of LGBTQ+ individuals that might judge. This is described by Schei Jessen (2017), who states that queer identities may seem threatening to e.g. the lesbian identity, thinking all labels might end up queer and communities may be lost. Though, the girlfag and guydyke identities are more problematic than just being queer, they are also provocative in the use and meaning of the words, that e.g. questions if you even must be a woman to be lesbian, encroaching on unknown lands. Many of the participants describe that they are careful and feel restricted in being open with their identity in different contexts. In an LGBTQ+ context for the risk of being shunned, and in open social context for being misunderstood in their complex, contradictory identities. Some of the participants express having taken real harm, being personally attacked after revealing their girlfag or guydyke identity online in LGBTQ+ communities. Some have cried, self-harmed and questioned their own identity. As stated in the introduction to this thesis, the subject of sexual minorities often triggers debate and prejudice by outsiders. To be met by these reactions in the community they feel they belong to, possibly leads to additional exposure, and some respondents express feeling

17 The quote “No place for me in the rainbow” is used in Discussion and Conclusions, portraying feelings of belonging and exclusion on a parallel.
wary about where they can be safe and safely express their identity; “I never felt comfortable with the idea to ask for help in an LGBT space, because I thought that they would laugh about me or that they don’t take me serious” (GF27). This quote is alarming in how it describes the exclusion from a minority community for an LGBTQ+ person, leading to a risk of added vulnerability.

There is change. Things happening a bit cause there’s also a movie\(^{18}\) about a girlfag. I saw people, after seeing the movie, started rethinking their assumptions, so queer and LGBT people started rethink their assumptions and starting accepting it more and yeah, to appreciate it was possible to be seen as a girlfag in this community (GF28).

Where there is opposition, there is resilience. A few participants, like the girlfag above, express that they see a positive change coming, with the queer and trans concepts creating a more allowing existence and queer activism that leading to change. Several of the respondents brought up positive personal experiences of explaining the identities to gay and queer people without being judged, they have then felt relieved and accepted, with hope for the future.

### 7. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In the introduction to this study, the identities of girlfags and guydykes were portrayed as contradictory and intriguing. This first assessment of the identities has followed throughout this study, fuelled by the ambiguous yet unified empirical data the participants have provided. The study does not provide any simple answers but rather raises further questions. From the results and analysis we can conclude that the respondents in this study describe complex identities that pervade many aspects in their lives. It involves their feeling of self, gender identity and transgender issues as well as sexual identity, orientation and relational aspects. The identities are portrayed with both pride and vulnerability and there are difficulties presented within each aspect of the identities. In the following section a discussion will highlight parts of this study, with a focus on the main findings. The discussion will further connect the results and analysis with the aim and objectives of this study. Central questions emanating from the results will be raised as implications for further studies.

#### 7.1 Describing sexuality and orientation

The aim of this study was to highlight how girlfags and guydykes describe the identity and what it means to them. The meaning of the identity has its own individual interpretation in participants’ lives. For most it is experienced as a whole identity, entailing both gender identity and sexual orientation. For a very few it is seen mainly as a sexual orientation. Despite these differences there are recurring patterns told by the respondents when sharing their stories. All of the participants describe the identity being connected to their sexuality and sexual preferences, either in partnered sexuality, fantasies or non-partnered sexuality. A pronounced attraction to homosexuality is shared by all the respondents. It is lived and experienced in different ways. The theme of being in between gay and straight is visible throughout the empirical data and analysed with the help of the Sexual Configurations Theory by van Anders (2015).

\(^{18}\) The movie this girlfag (GF28) refers to is the German short film Mimicry, made by Jennifer von Schuckmann in 2018.
To answer the aim of the study an open internet-based method was applied as to reach out to respondents. A selection bias can be discussed from several perspectives. The language barrier implicitly creates a westernised perspective and a class perspective in feeling comfortable enough to be interviewed in a second language. The respondents vary in richness in their language and answers. In this small sample, language and speech skills do not seem linked to the choice of either email or live interviews. A non-randomised sample of participants, as presented in this study, tends to portray those who have motives for participating. This is something many respondents were open in saying. Some express that they want the minority to be seen and help others who have similar feelings on identity but also to make the identity known in an LGBTQ+ context. Sometimes motivated respondents aim to emphasise a certain perspective on a subject, e.g. only the positive aspects. This may be partly true in this study, but the empirical data also show vulnerability, openness and presents both positive and negative aspects of the identities. In this way the method answers to the aim of this study, to describe the identities from the girlfags’ and guydykes’ perspective.

The discourse used by the respondents can sometimes be seen as problematic, provocative, and insensitive. The choice not to comment on this during interviews or in text was an active choice as to protect the integrity of the respondents and not to colour the results with said students’ pre-understanding. The use of language at times indicated transphobia, internalised transphobia, homophobia, stereotyping, and exoticizing. Some of these expressions by the respondents may very well reflect on language skills and the use of simplified explanations in an interview in a second language. Though, when presented with these phenomena it spurs a wish to delve deeper into what creates an identity and the use of language. Studies on sexuality and discourse may provide a new perspective. How we as individuals perceive and speak about a phenomenon is described by Simon and Gagnon (1986) as produced between cultural normative discourses that reach us through e.g. research and media. These discourses are produced as so-called truths in our individual consciousness and is reflected upon our use of language and how we experience things. Some use of language in the empirical data may indicate class issues and some raises flags onto areas of identity that must be explored further.

One of these problematic areas is the consensus in a desire for gay relations. All participants desire and romanticise gay men (girlfags) or lesbian women (guydykes). Some put emphasis on their wanted partner being gay (of another sex) and the characteristics, identity and community that brings. This is an example of potential unaware exoticizing. Some underline being attracted to the connection, often sexual and romantic, in same-sex relations. This can be viewed from the outside or experienced with the help of self-identification, e.g. for girlfags as a gay man with a male partner. In most cases girlfags have partners who are straight men. This indicates an eroticism, as described by van Anders (2015), for the male and which can be described as androsexuality. This in itself could be seen as a coping strategy for the difficulties the respondents meet in living their identity, i.e. to have actual relations with gay men. An interesting comparison with girlfags, and their androsexuality as a potential coping strategy in the absence of homosexual male partners, could be to look further onto studies on how sexuality develop when wanted partners are lacking. This phenomenon has been studied in e.g. prison environments. A prison may be an adequate symbol for the frustration most girlfags and guydykes experience in the restrictions their identity carries in terms of relationships and sexual activity. Gibson and Hensley (2013) have studied sexual orientation in prisons from a social constructionist setting. The study shows that inmates who engage in homosexual behaviour are 52 times more likely to change their sexual orientation. The authors further discuss

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19 Exoticizing indicates a fascination for “the other” in difference to displaying hate for e.g. a person from another culture. This often leads to reducing an individual to a bearer of the culture you associate them with.
homosexuality as being allowed in the subculture of a prison setting for these individuals, but may not be outside of prison, which indicates homosexuality as a social construct. This behaviour has also been referred to as “situational homosexuality” (Sykes 1958, p. 336 in Gibson & Henley, 2013), a concept that might be applicable to the identities of girlfags and guydykes. To turn this thinking on sexual orientation around, girlfags and guydykes can be considered gay men and lesbians who engages in heterosexual behaviours and thereby develop e.g. an androsexual orientation. This could then change their sexual orientation or be seen as “situational heterosexuality”.

An interesting reflection is that the participating girlfags express their sexuality in a stronger way than the participating guydykes. The uneven representation in the sample between girlfags and the much fewer guydykes may play into this. Though, it seems clear that when girlfags describe the identity they put further emphasis on the sexual aspects, sexual details, practices and fantasies than the guydykes. This aligns with the classical notion of masculinity being associated with sexual libido (Butler, 1990). Sexual dominance is described as a part of most girlfags sexual identities while the guydykes underline their need for an equal sexual partnership. Both parts are in mutual agreement on not being sexually comfortable in their assigned gender roles. Girlfags and guydykes seem not to, in this way, identify with their socially constructed and gendered courtship rules, as described by Gilmartin (1987). BDSM was a common tool for the girlfags to live their sexual and possibly relational desires. Both in ways of being dominant and to find an allowing context for e.g. penetrating men. In this context, pegging can be seen as a heterosexual sexual act (Aguilar, 2017) for the partner but with the use of fantasies be experienced as gay sex. Due to the problematic relational situations for girlfags and guydykes, the use of fantasising in romantical and sexual situations seems a common denominator. The use of fantasies to live a sexual identity should be explored further in regard to these identities, fantasising might also have an effect on partner relations. Some of the partners in this study were to a large extent unaware of their partner’s girlfag or guydyke self-identification. The partner perspective in terms of actively being imagined as something you are not could provide an interesting perspective on the identity’s relational aspects.

7.2 Experiencing gender and identity

It is interesting how identities that at first glance seem mostly to concern sexuality, focus a lot on gender in different ways. There is variation in what the respondents describe and what parts of the identity that they put emphasis on, but questioning gender performance is a common thread. The ability to exemplify these gender issues has been relieved by the use of theory of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). From what we just read in the results and analysis, it is clear that the gender issues pervade the identity and it could be argued that the sexual activities and sexual orientation could even be seen as a result of gender identity issues. The theme of existing in between cis and trans creates an ever-present complexity to the identities of girlfags and guydykes. The focus on gender aspects in the empirical data might revise a further focus on sexual orientation, as was a chosen to be analysed with van Anders (2015) Sexual Configuration Theory (SCT) and instead further explore the identities from the perspective of queer theory. The quote “too straight for queer, and too queer for straight” may be symbolic of the fact that this study initially left aside queer theory for a focus on sexual orientation and ends up too queer not to recommend a further focus on gender and queer studies.

A prominent feature the respondents describe is not fitting in with the gender traits people expect of them. Saying this, they do not generally refer to appearances or bodies but to social, relational and sexual aspects of gender identity. All respondents describe feeling more masculine (girlfags) or feminine (guydykes) in behaviour than other women or men they know
of. They also describe connecting to friends and people of the so-called other gender, sharing an understanding of social behaviours and cues. Many describe being seen by others as not conforming to their assigned gender identity and are often welcomed and accepted as parts of separatist groups, e.g. groups of women or lesbians for guydykes. These non-conforming ways can be seen as breaking the heterosexual matrix in regard to masculine and feminine gender traits as described by Butler (1990). The weight of the identity differs between the respondents and affect their lives in both different ways and to different degrees over time, this could be described as gender fluidity. A few girlfags identified as genderqueer or genderfluid. The fact that only girlfags in this study provide fluid identities align with Ross, Daneback and Månsson (2012) and their study on sexual orientation, labelled as either fixed, e.g. homosexual or fluid, e.g. bisexual. Their data suggests fluidity is more common in women than in men. Their data further shows that it is much more common for women to have sexual fantasies of homosexual relations than it is for men. These findings might be one step onto explaining the differences in sample of girlfags and guydykes, where this study seemingly reflects the online activity from the two parts of the identity.

The implications of transgender issues call for further studies. All of the respondents discuss transgender feelings as a part or potential part of the identity. They describe identifying more or less as transgender in their identity today. This ranges from still consider to be transsexual and to feel confused about their gender, to feeling comfortable in their bodies. A few explicitly say they have felt like the so-called other sex since the age of five or six. Most feel their thoughts and feelings of being homosexual but in the “wrong body” came about in puberty and increased from around the age of 16 and upwards. A common theme described is that the respondents have thought a lot about if their identity as transgender and possibly transsexual before finding the girlfag and guydyke identities and community. A general feeling of confusion and sadness about their identity has preceded the respondents’ feelings about their identity today. The participants feelings connected to not conforming to the traits of their expected assigned gender roles were often described as alienating and confusing. Some of the respondents have more experiences of gender dysphoria and have experienced severe anxiety and questioned their own existence. A few also mention that the identities seem to have been a step towards transitioning for a few transsexual people who have previously identified as girlfags or guydykes. This is difficult to interpret, and no information was provided on the phenomena except that it does not seem to be common in the group.

If the cis to trans identity is seen on a scale, as several girlfags and guydykes try to portray, a variation in experienced gender dysphoria in the group follows. The wish to be, or the self-identification as, another gender would then still be present but lesser in more cis-gendered individuals of the identity. Jacobson and Joel (2019) have recently presented a study relevant to these thoughts, on self-reported aspects of gender identity and sexuality. One of the aspects they study is “Satisfaction with one’s affirmed gender and the wish to be the “other” gender” (Jacobson & Joel, p. 253, 2019). The results were highly variable regardless of identifying as cis or trans but it was more common in the cis-gendered group. The mean levels for this wish was low and the main determinate for these feelings was sex-gender configuration. Furthermore, “Dislike of one’s sexed body and the wish to have the body of “other” sex” was studied. These feelings were more common in the transgender group, but the authors found a small difference within the cisgender and gender-diverse group. This difference was that the male-assigned people in the study wished, more than the female-assigned, to have the body of the “other” (Jacobson & Joel, p. 254, 2019). This latest result of Jacobson and Joels’ study does not connect directly to the results of this study, where transgender feelings are presented both by guydykes and girlfags. The respondents in this study are far too few to see if these results
could connect to the identities but lays the foundation for further research. From Jacobson’s and Joel’s research we can also see that to identify or wish to be the “other” gender or to have the body of the “other” gender does not necessarily indicate gender dysphoria, which seems to be one of the fairly unique, though problematic, aspects in the girlfag and guydyke identities. The comfort girlfags and guydykes describe in their bodies, and in some respects also gender, is what differentiates them from transsexual people. Though at the same time adding complexity by providing an inner gender identity that could be considered transgender.

7.3 Contradictions and community

Even though the girlfag and guydyke identity can be confusing, many describe a great sense of relief after finding the identity that describe their feelings. The theme of feeling pride but meeting or fearing prejudice is recurrent, the complexity in feeling both included and excluded simultaneously in identity and community seems psychologically agonising for the respondents. Coping strategies are central to girlfags and guydykes. The identities present many obstacles that make it seem almost impossible to experience the relationships and the sexuality they want. The foremost strategy is the use of fantasies, a way of coping, which many are aware in using to experience, e.g. sex with men, as a homosexual act. Other strategies are subtler and may be subconscious. These include drag showing (see A play on gender) where the strategy is used in order to handle not to be seen as your inner gender identity but still feel pride. Minority stress, as described by Wurm and Hanner (2017) often pushes LGBT people into coping strategies. Research by Frost, Lehavot & Meyer (2015) show that the negative mental health outcomes from minority stress can lead to problems related to physical health. This is an area that was not covered in the interviews. Further investigating the physical health, psychological toll and coping strategies would add to knowledge on the groups’ life and health issues.

The concepts of girlfags and guydykes are problematic and contradictory, not only to themselves. When speaking of themselves and their identity, positive words were often used, and pride shone through. It was first when discussing community and relationships that the identities were described as problematic. The respondents went into a slightly defensive mode, having experienced criticism before. The participants initially spoke freely of their sexual desire to gay people, sometimes in lines with what a fetish could be described as, but when they discussed how others view the group they underlined it is an identity, adamant in distancing themselves from fetishists. Some of the participants proudly describe other fetishisms they might have connected to a BDSM lifestyle but to discuss the girlfag and guydykes identities in terms of a fetishism was rejected. A fetishism may be considered a sexual obsession, which is similar to how one girlfag discuss her feelings20, though she later rejects the concept as it lacks complexity. A complexity that is important for the girlfag and guydykes identities to mediate as to cover the problematic relational and sexual issues they face. Also, a fetishism concerns objects and not a whole person or identity. The identities seem not to dehumanise homosexual people and reduce them to a sexual activity but rather be attracted to gay men and lesbians in both romantical, sexual and social aspects, from the perspective of a gay gaze (see A play on gender). For most their BDSM activity does not inflict shame but the respondents do not want it seen as part of their being and their feelings connected to the identity to be reduced to a kink or a fetish. Fetishism, as a word, can carry negative connotations which is enhanced by LGBT people using it as an invective against girlfags and guydykes. This discussion is reminding of the struggles and ongoing discussion Carlström (2016) presents, regarding BDSM practitioners, on identity versus preference.

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20 Quote from a girlfag (GF30) under 5.3 Identity, Definitions and labels (p. 32)
Perhaps the most difficult and contradictory part of the identity is the claim to have a homosexual identity of “another” gender. When looking at the four basic principles of sexual orientation, described by Nilsson Schönesson (2012), we can look at it as if the identities either meet two or all four of the requirements. Firstly, girlfags and guydykes’ self-identification is gay (man) or lesbian. Secondly, they have erotic and sexual fantasies towards gay men and women. Third, with or towards whom their sexual activity is enacted is difficult to precise. Looking at the results, it is clear that even if the wanted partner is e.g. a gay man, a straight man is also a possible sexual partner. Lastly, to whom they feel emotionally attracted, i.e. van Anders (2015) concept of nurturance, is shown in the results as aimed towards gay men and lesbian women. The last two of these four principles encircle the complexity of the identities regarding sexual orientation. If we look at it from the perspective of having an inner gender identity as male (girlfags) and female (guydykes) it is possible to see a so-called straight relationship as homosexual in both nurturance and in sexual relations. This gender perspective relieves understanding of men identifying as lesbian and women identifying as gay men. On the question of sexual orientation, the use of the Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) in full could provide further interesting perspectives since the theory also includes an openness to future components of sexuality (van Anders, 2015). This might be necessary as to be able to describe the girlfag and guydyke identities since, even if helpful in describing, the concepts of e.g. eroticism and nurturance are not enough to understand the complexities from the empirical data. The use of the SCT could be relieved if the respondents were to be asked questions directed to differ between these concepts and further study aspects of love and lust versus nurturance and eroticism.

Similar to many girlfags and guydykes often having spent most of their lives without the identity label there must be many who share their experiences but are unaware of the identity labels, for example people reading this, who may recognize themselves in parts of what is discussed in this study. This is mentioned by some of the respondents as a reason for why they want to participate in studies on the identities. The participating girlfags and guydykes feel pride, they feel they belong with other sexual minority groups, but get the message; there is no place for you in the rainbow\textsuperscript{21}. This leads to an increased vulnerability for the group. Many of the respondents have hope for a better future and several express a wish to raise awareness of the identities as to welcome people feeling lost and looking for the identity and to find acceptance and understanding in the LGBTQ+ community.

8. AFTERTHOUGHT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDIES

In this modern, western, society there is a conflicting need for individualism, to be seen and heard, and on a parallel, an increasing view on gender and sexuality as queer and non-definable. This particular identity within sexual minorities almost seems too queer for queer. The identities of girlfags and guydykes may even upset what would be considered liberal people within the LGBTQ+ community. The identity labels can be considered norm breaking when expressed as binary in an increasingly queer LGBTQ+ context. The identities provocatively appear always somehow in between both in experiences and in identity. Moving in between trans to cis, from gay to straight, experiencing both pride and prejudice, rejection and belonging.

\textsuperscript{21} Part of a quote from girlfag (GF27) under 5.3 Identity, Belonging to the LGBT Community (p. 38)
The aim to highlight the experiences of a mostly academically unknown sexual minority is challenging. When the basic principles behind the identity labels are contradictory and confusing in themselves it further creates a need to look into every aspects of the identity to reach further understanding of the phenomena. This study has provided an overview, but the material implies a need to delve deeper. This study aimed to highlight the experiences of the girlfag and guydyke identities, as were told by the respondents, and presented the themes of their main narratives. The pervading sub plot is the duality in feeling pride and finding comfort in their identities and at the same time being rejected in the LGBTQ+ community and by potential partners. This ambiguity seems to be a risk factor for negative health outcomes and should be explored further.

It becomes apparent that there are gender identity issues within the group. It is well known such issues relate to a negative effect on mental health in terms of minority stress (Wurm and Hanner, 2017) which indicates further studies are needed. The difficulties with relational aspects for the respondents, finding a partner, living their sexuality and being accepted in their identity, was touched upon in the interviews but require further qualitative studies for a deeper understanding. To further understand these gendered and relational behaviours the Sexual Script Theory by Gagnon and Simon (1973) could be of use. The theory suggests we are provided with scripts on how to act sexually and how and with whom to create relations. These scripts exist on different levels and evolve with us and are affected by the dominant societal discourse, but the theory also provides space for developing sub discourses that can include sexual subcultures (Gagnon & Simon, 1973). This study aimed to highlight how the identities are described by the respondents and had to delimit the perspective to that of the group itself and not their partners and social surroundings which could add new perspectives on describing the identities. The empirical data show the importance of exploring the sexual and the relational in reference to inclusion and exclusion. This, and a deeper understanding of the different aspects of the identities that has been presented in this study reveals several areas for further research.

The identities of girlfags and guydykes are sufficiently in between categories and could be considered a queer identity but are seemingly too straight for queer and provoke by using a binary concept in describing a gender/sex identity. Few identities can claim to unify a (trans)gender identity with a sexual orientation, creating a contradictory, confusing yet strikingly clear identity label that has created an arena for people where there used to be none.
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APPENDIX 1 - GLOSSARY

This glossary does not claim to provide the utmost definitions of phenomena but to supply help in understanding this study and its language.

Androsexuality: Being attracted to masculinity or male anatomy, regardless of whether the object of one’s affection identifies as a man (Dictionary, 2019).

Autoandrofilia: Biological female who get aroused by the image of herself as a man (Crossdreamers, 2010).

Autogynephilia: Term coined in 1989 by sexologist Ray Blanchard to refer to “a man's paraphilic tendency to be sexually aroused by the thought or image of himself as a woman.” (Crossdreamers, 2010)

BDSM: Abbreviation of Bondage & Discipline (BD), Dominance & Submission (DS), and Sadism & Masochism (SM). BDSM is a way of practicing one’s sexuality, identity and/or preferences, where a mutual erotic exchange of power is involved, often expressed as dominance and submission. Sometimes engaging in consensual pain is part of the sexual interaction. For some people, BDSM is a sexual orientation or identity, though it is not defined as such in Swedish law (RFSL, 2019).

Body dysphoria: In DSM-5, gender dysphoria is defined as “a marked incongruence between one's experienced/expressed gender, of at least six months duration.” Dysphoria is defined as an unpleasant or uncomfortable mood, such as sadness, anxiety, irritability or restlessness. The term body dysphoria can be used instead as this suffering may primarily be about the body, and not exclusively about cultural gender roles (Crossdreamers, 2010).

CIS-gender: The term cisgender is often used in the context of how somebody's assigned biological sex and legal gender correspond to the person’s gender identity. For example, a cisgender woman is a person who was born with a vagina (biological sex), who was registered as a ‘female’ by authorities (legal gender), who considers, and has always considered, herself a female (gender identity) and who expresses her female gender through for example clothing, body language, hairstyle and social behaviour (gender expression) (NSFG, 2018).

CIS-normative: A person who in their identity, legal gender and gender expression identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. Cis is Latin for “on the same side” (RFSL, 2019).

Crossdreaming: The term was made by the person behind the blog: www.crossdreamers.com, to describe the act of dreaming about being one’s target sex or getting aroused from the idea of being one’s target sex. These feminization fantasies (in case of biological men) and masculinization fantasies (in the case of biological women) are often found sexually arousing. Male to female crossdreamers often imagine themselves having breasts and female genitalia. Some crossdreamers will play the culturally defined role of the opposite sex in these fantasies. Female to male crossdreamers may fantasize about taking the proactive, dominant, thrusting, role when having intercourse. The term was originally an answer to the concept autogynephilia, developed by Ray Blanchard (Crossdreamers, 2010).

Deep throating: The act of performing oral sex on a person with a penis when the penis is pushed down deep in the oral cavity of the person performing oral sex. This might trigger a gag reflex (Urban dictionary, 2003).

Drag king/drag queen: A person who uses gender roles, social attributes and symbols to challenge the boundaries between male and female. Often an exaggerated performance with the purpose of entertaining an audience, or in a playful way to express part of their identity (RFSL, 2019).

Fetish: The sexual arousal brought on by any object, situation or body part not conventionally viewed as being sexual in nature (Crossdreamers, 2010).

Gender: The term gender was introduced in response to the growing understanding that femininities and masculinities are ‘made’. In simple terms, gender is often described as a person’s social and cultural sex, in contrast to the same person’s assigned biological sex. The making of masculinities and femininities is closely related to masculinity and femininity. The concepts of masculinity and femininity enable an understanding of the term gender that reaches beyond people’s biological bodies. For example, a biologically male-coded body can move and be
dressed in a female-coded way (NSFG, 2018). In social studies the term gender describes the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women (Crossdreamers, 2010).

**Gender binary (The binary):** The dominant social system and classification of all people based on their sex and gender into two distinct, oppositional and disconnected forms of male (masculine) and female (feminine). The gender binary classifies people into one of only two groups and assumes that the differences between the groups are greater than the differences between individuals within the groups. The gender binary permeates all of our social interactions and structures within society (RFSL, 2019).

**Gender dysphoria:** A strong and persistent feeling of having been assigned the wrong gender. This feeling is often associated with a mental ill health and can lead to a reduced ability to function in everyday life. Hence, persons with gender dysphoria can seek gender affirming health care (RFSL, 2019).

**Gender expression/Gender traits:** The way in which a person expresses their gender identity through presentation, accessories or behaviours that are socially associated with gender, such as clothes, body language, and hairstyle (RFSL, 2019).

**Genderfluid:** Genderfluid is a non-binary gender identity that is not fixed and is capable of changing over time (RFSL, 2019).

**Gender identity:** A person’s self-defined gender – the gender one identifies with (for example, woman, intergender, genderqueer, non-binary, man). A person’s body and/or legal gender do not necessarily reflect a person’s gender identity (RFSL, 2019).

**Genderqueer (GQ):** A person who self-identifies as between or beyond the gender categories of man/male and woman/female. Genderqueer can be used synonymously with intergender or non-binary (RFSL, 2019).

**Hentai:** A subgenre of the Japanese genres of manga and anime, characterized by overtly sexualized characters and sexually explicit images and plots (Oxford dictionaries, 2019).

**Heteronormativity:** The system of norms that affect our understanding of gender and sexuality. According to heteronormativity, people are either a man/boy or woman/girl and nothing else. Women and girls are expected to be feminine, and boys and men are expected to be masculine, with everyone expected to be heterosexual. We are all impacted by these norms, whether we conform to them or not (RFSL, 2019).

**Closeded (In the closet):** Not disclosing (coming out) or being secretive about an individual's own sexual orientation and/or gender identity (Crossdreamers, 2010).

**LGBTQ:** An umbrella term for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. The L, G, and B refer to sexual orientation, who a person feels romantically or sexually attracted to, and the T refer to gender identity and expression. Q refers to queer in relation to sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, or relationships and sexual practice, but it also represents a critical view of existing norms (RFSL, 2019).

**Minority stress:** People who are members of a group that is stigmatized by mainstream society may be more vulnerable to psychological distress known as minority stress. Commonly people experience minority stress in response to being treated with discrimination and prejudice. The study of minority stress has focused mainly on racial and sexual minorities and how discrimination creates health disparities for them. The minority stress model, developed by Meyer in 2003, is based around the idea that the relationship between minority and dominant values results in conflict with the social environment. In the case of sexual minorities this refers to people in the LGBT community dealing with homophobic culture, which can be hostile to them (Vantage Point Recovery, 2019).

**Non-binary:** A person who self-identifies as between, beyond, with both, or neither of the gender categories of woman/man. Sometimes non-binary is used as an umbrella term for different gender identities that do not fit within the gender binary, such as intergender or genderqueer. Non-binary does not mean the same thing for everyone who identifies with it. For some, it means feeling both male and female; for others, they are between the two categories, while many non-binary people do not identify with any gender at all (RFSL, 2019).
Norm critique: A pedagogical method with the purpose of contributing to increased social equality. The aim is to shift focus from individuals, who are seen as different, to analysing social structures and questioning what is considered to be “normal”. When working with a norm-critical perspective, there are three steps to take into consideration: Highlighting and questioning norms, highlighting the privileges conferred on those who conform to the norm and reviewing one’s own position (RFSL, 2019).

Paraphilia: A paraphilia is a condition in which a person's sexual arousal and gratification depend on fantasizing about and engaging in sexual behaviour that is atypical and/or extreme. A paraphilia is considered a disorder when it causes distress or threatens to harm someone else. A paraphilia can revolve around a particular object (children, animals, underwear) or a particular behaviour (inflicting pain, exposing oneself) but is distinguished by a preoccupation with the object or behaviour to the point of being dependent on that object or behaviour for sexual gratification (Psychology Today, 2019).

Pegging: A sexual act consisting of one person (usually female-bodied) using a strap-on dildo to anally penetrate another person (RFSU, 2017).

PIV sex: Abbreviation for Penis in Vagina-sex, e.g. vaginal intercourse (Boskey, 2018).

Pride: Pride is celebrated all over the world today for many reasons. It is said that the Pride movement started in 1969 when LGBT-persons at the club Stonewall Inn in New York had enough of the repeated harassments from the police. The guests at the bar protested which became the start of riots that went on for several days. From this event Pride was born as a way of standing up against repression and openly show oneself as a proud LGBTQ person. The most prominent symbol of the movement is the rainbow flag (RFSL, 2017).

Pronoun: She, he, zie, they – how a person wants to be referred to when talked about by other people (for example, Zie is kind). A person’s pronoun may or may not reflect their gender identity. If you are uncertain about a person’s pronoun, you can ask them in a respectful way. (“What is your pronoun? /What pronoun would you like me to use when I talk about you?”) Some people prefer to be referred to by their name, rather than a pronoun (RFSL, 2019).

Rimming: The act of stimulating the anal area of a sexual partner by licking the area (RFSU, 2017).

Sexual minority: The term “sexual minority” includes a variety of gender and sexual identities and expressions that differ from cultural norms. Usually, sexual minorities are comprised of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals (Cochat Cosat, Rodrigues, Leite & Queirós, 2017).

SRHR: Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The right to one’s sexuality free from prejudices, discrimination, violence or coercion is fundamental for the individual persons experience of health and wellbeing (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2018).

Transgender: A person who does not identify with the sex assigned to them at birth. Transgender is an umbrella term with several different identities, as there are many different ways of being transgender. The term specifically refers to gender identity and gender expression, and has nothing to do with a person’s sexual orientation (RFSL, 2019).

Transsexual: Transsexual people have a gender identity that is inconsistent with their assigned sex and desire to permanently transition to the gender with which they identify, usually seeking medical treatment to align their body with their identified gender. Transsexualism/gender dysphoria is a medical diagnosis by which a person is assessed to undergo gender confirming/affirming treatment within the Swedish healthcare system. This process is usually referred to as transition and entails hormone treatment and surgery to change the body to become more “masculine” or “feminine” (RFSL, 2019).

Queer: A term based upon a critical view of ideas about what is considered normal or not regarding gender and sexuality, and how everyone is placed in specific categories resulting from a heterosexual and gender binary perspective. In other words, a way of questioning dominant social ideas about how people should experience sexual, as well as other, relationships, how we should form families, express our gender, and so on. There are also queer activists who organize to challenge existing norms and structures, and people who call themselves queer. For some, being queer is a way of defining their gender identity and/or sexual orientation, while for others it offers an identity where one does not have to define one’s sexual orientation and/or gender (RFSL, 2019).
REFERENCES TO THE GLOSSARY


APPENDIX 2

Information letter

Girlfags and guydykes

Siri Lindqvist. Nurse (BScN), Midwife (One Year Master).
Master’s thesis in Sexology

Me:
My name is Siri Lindqvist, I’m a registered nurse, midwife and sex therapist. I’m from Sweden and studying the masters program in Sexology at Malmö University and I’m currently studying for my Masters thesis in Sexology.

Why: This study aims to give voice to girffags and guydykes, an identity often made invisible and breaking many norms. The study also wants to contribute to increased knowledge of girffag/guydyke identities and sexuality for an improvement in treatment by professionals within healthcare, especially within sexual health and gender identity. To illustrate how sexual practice, sexual orientation and identity can gather under one concept and to describe Girffags and Guydykes’ being and experience of being.

This thesis means to tell the story of Girffags and Guydykes from the groups’ own perspective and with these facts be able to recognise the group and, if possible, somewhat define the group and your identity and sexuality.

How: I am seeking ten people who fully or partly identify as Girffags or Guydykes (over 18 years of age). I welcome participants from all identity markers with a variation in assigned gender. The interviews will be in English or Swedish. I would like to speak to you about the girffag/guydyke phenomena and how you experience your identity and sexuality.

Interviews can be arranged through (your choice)

- Skype interviews
- Phone call
- Email

If you are interested in participating please contact me at gfgd2019@gmail.com

- Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. You can stop participating at any time and no explanation is necessary.
- We strive to guarantee confidentiality in the study in that no unauthorised person may have access to the material. The material is stored so that it is only accessible for the individual leading the study. In the reporting of results in the form of a degree project paper at Malmö University/or in another form of publication, the respondents will be unidentifiable and it will not be possible to link the results to individuals.

Right of use: The study aims to be publically published as a Master's Thesis in 2019 through Malmö University

You are hereby asked to take part in this study
APPENDIX 3

Interview guide

INTRODUCTION

- Me, my work, degrees and interests
- Aim of study and method of study
- Information about anonymity, integrity of participants and being able to stop/withdraw
- Information about semi-structured interviews, time frame, answer or skip question etc
- Repeating the information-letter
- Consent to partaking – verbal reminder

THEMES

Time frame – start of feelings/actions towards the identity, identifying with girlfags/guydykes

Identity – assigned gender, sexuality, identity, group identification

Romantic Relationships – shared sexuality, shared identity, partners, dating

Social and institutional – openness, dating, friends, work, meeting society

Difficulties – meaning of identity, LGBTQIA+, health aspects and DSM
APPENDIX 4

Segments from the Ethics Application to Malmö University (23rd October 2018)

INFORMATION AND CONSENT

How to obtain consent?

The informant will have access to the information-letter posted in the Facebook forum. Consent will be gained via email exchange where the informant interested in participating will receive the consent form in accordance with appendix 2 which they will be able to answer in writing. In the initial part of the interview I will remind the informant of the content in the information-letter and the aim and methodology of the study. I will also confirm consent for their participation in the study and that they can withdraw at any time.

RESEARCH ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

What risks and complications for the participants may arise in connection with the investigation?

Sexuality is, for many, a sensitive area of life. That, in combination with questions surrounding identity within the LGBTQIA+ spectre and relating to trans-identity issues can make the subject even more delicate. To identify as LGBTQIA+ in today’s context is to be extra exposed in society and there are many ideas and prejudice aimed towards the group. It is important to give the informant sufficient information about the study and refer to aid systems if needed so that the informant feels comfortable with their participation.

Since I am not a person that the participants are dependent on as a health care professional, there is little or no power imbalance between us, or an underlying coercion where the person feels forced to participate, regarding to be able to, for example, receive good health care. In my role as a researcher in this study, in accordance with all research, I have to be aware of my position of power towards the subjects. Marginalised groups are often objects of study and it is important that it is evident to them that this study aims to provide them with a voice to express their identity on their terms. To relieve this power imbalance I chose to let the informants chose their preferred method of interview.

I will inform the participant that I will anonymise the interviews and emails during transcription as thoroughly as I can, aiming at giving the informant as high anonymity as possible and that the recorded data will be destroyed after the paper has been approved and published. In the beginning of the interview I will inform the participant that the information shared will only be used in this study and not for any other purpose and make sure they know that they can withdraw or pause their participation at any time during the interview and being able to withdraw up until the material has been analysed.

I have chosen not to set a limit to how long the informant has been identifying as a girlfag or guydyke after discussions with my colleagues about how an identity marker can supervene and describe something you always felt. How long a person has been using the actual word is therefore of less relevance for the lived feeling of the identity. A new identity marker or context can, in some cases, cause a reaction of crisis. If a crisis reaction will arise during the interview,
I will immediately turn off the recording devise and support the participant in their reaction. The informant could come in contact with suppressed feelings during the interview and in my profession as a midwife I have the tools to comfort such a reaction if need be.

Through the sensitivity of my profession I will try to steer the conversation as to avoid trigger points and too sensitive subjects. I will use open questions to avoid putting pressure on the informant. It is also assuring for the informant to be able to chose their own level of participation and knowing that they can stop or pause the interview at any time and chose to.

It is of great importance that if the need of counselling or other needs should arise during or after the interview, that I try to see to it that they get the information needed to seek this support. If so, I will do my best to give them contact information for LGBTQIA+ support groups and refer them to their local health institutions in their respective country. Finding these support systems in their respective countries can pose a difficulty depending on what their respective country has to offer. Hence, I cannot promise the participants this help but that I will be as helpful as possible in this regard. I will choose not to counsel them myself, partly because it could affect my interpretation of the data but also so that the informant should not feel that things they have said in the interview could affect the counselling in a negative way.

I have chosen not to send letters of information about participation or consent in the post to the participants’ houses since I do not know about their home situation or have access to this information. It is not my intention to, in any way, affect or interrupt the informants’ everyday life, which I could do by sending letters that could be opened by another person in the household. It may very well be illegal in most countries to open another person’s mail but in some households this is overlooked which is hard for me to judge in advance. Avoiding the risk of revealing the participants LGBTQIA+ identity to others, including family members, is of highest priority. It is well known that LGBTQIA+ people are at greater risk of abuse from both family members, partners and the general public and there’s no knowing if the participant is open with their identity in their household. For the same reason written forms of consent are not asked to be printed and signed by the informant.

I publish this study through Malmö University for access. I will inform the participants about this in the beginning of the interview so that they can trust my intentions with the study. I will also encourage the informants not to give themselves away as participants in the study in the Facebook forum to protect their privacy and integrity even though the data will be anonymised and the participants untraceable.

Describe any benefits that the project may pose to the participants

This study aims to contribute to increased knowledge of non-binary identities and queer sexualities for an improvement in treatment by professionals within healthcare. To illustrate how sexual practice, sexual orientation and identity can gather under one concept and to describe Girlfags and Guydykes’ being, and their experience of identity and being. This thesis attempts to bring light on the concepts of Girlfags and Guydykes, from the individuals who identity as such’s own perspective, and with this data be able to recognise the group and, if possible, somewhat define the group, their identity and sexuality.