

Girlfags and Guydykes: “Too Queer for Straights and too Straight for Queers”

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Abstract

The aim of the article is to highlight the experiences of those who call themselves “girlfags” and “guydykes” and to interpret the identity labels associated with these terms. Online, the communities that refer to themselves by these terms all define the labels and what they signify in terms of identity differently. These include descriptions of people who consider themselves gay but “in the wrong body”, for example, when a woman is sexually oriented toward gay men or when a man is sexually oriented toward lesbian women, most often with a gender or queer element to the definitions. Little to no previous research can be found on these identities, and what is known is mainly found on internet blogs and forums. The participants were sought through a Facebook forum, resulting in a total of 11 interviews with two guydykes and nine girlfags. The results were analyzed within the framework of social constructionism and applied with Butler’s (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix and van Anders’ (2015) Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT), involving concepts of gender/sex sexuality, nurturance, and eroticism. The results show that those who identify as girlfags and guydykes are proud of their identity, but the complexity of the identity nevertheless affects many aspects of their lives. The respondents reveal how the labels involve one’s sense of self and gender identity. In addition, they touch upon transgender issues, sexual identity, sexual orientation, and other relational aspects. These identities break gender norms, sexual practices, and even sexual orientations within the LGBT context. The results indicate the need for further research on transgender issues; in particular, the relational and social aspects of the girlfag and guydyke identities.

Introduction

The aim of this article is to highlight how girlfags and guydykes¹ describe their identity and experience and interpret the identity labels of “girlfags” and “guydykes”. Discussing sexual minorities often triggers strong feelings and debate, and minority identities are often treated as subjects to be presented and explained through the opinions and prejudice of others. In light of this, this study aims to center the words of the girlfags and guydykes themselves. “Girlfags” and “guydykes” are terms of self-identification used by sexual minorities, where, in short, “girlfags” is a label pertaining to women and “guydykes” pertains to men. These communities and related information about them are found mainly online in the form of forums, chat boards, websites,

¹ “Girlfags” and “guydykes” self-identify with these complex terms and use the former slurs as reclaimed words, with no negative association to their sexual identity. The complexity of the use of these terms is further discussed in the results.

and blogs. The most active forums and websites started around 2010, with one forum having 428 members as of March 2019 (Girlfags and gurdykes, n.d.). Most forums and sites are international and in English, with the exception of a few German blogs and forums. The definitions found online on the significations of the identities vary. Some are wiki-based, meaning anyone can change them, but this can lead to people writing derogatory definitions of the identity (Girlfag, 2014; Gurdyke, 2014).

The definitions tend to be complex, adding exceptions in multiple steps. In the brief version, the identity describes people who feel that they are gay or “homosexual”² but “in the wrong body”, for example, when a woman is sexually oriented toward gay men or when a man is sexually oriented toward lesbian women, and this usually includes a gender or queer element to the definitions of both gender and sexualities. A queer identity label can be described as a person’s choice to place themselves outside the heteronormative system or define themselves beyond the gender binaries (i.e., a man or a woman). Examples of identity labels within queer are “genderqueer”, “genderfluid”, and simply, “queer”. A queer identity can, in certain contexts, refer to any norm-breaking person within the LGBTQ+ umbrella. This can be liberating for the individual, as it increases control over their identity and makes it possible for them to personalize the identity rather than to adopt an established identity label (Schei Jessen, 2017). However, the basic principles behind the girlfag or gurdyke identity labels are contradictory and confusing in themselves, which further creates the need to look into every aspect of the identity to further understand the phenomena.

Girlfag and gurdyke identities have had an increase in activity in social media as well as other media in the past 10–15 years. Although these identities are mainly discussed on the internet, where there are clips of people discussing the identities, some mentions have also occurred on TV. In 2006, the American TV talk show, “The Tyra Banks Show”, interviewed two women who identify as girlfags on the theme, “Women Who Love Gay Men”. While censoring the actual name of the identity, the show describes it in detail (Banks, 2006). Also, in a 2016 episode of the TV series, *Shameless*, the LGBTQ+ character, Ian, says the word aloud when describing his friend (Wells, Abbot & Rossum, 2016). In addition to TV, in 2012, the author and sex educator Janet Hardy wrote an autobiography called *Girlfag – A Life Told in Sex and Musicals*. Hardy, who self-identifies as a girlfag, describes her life story and attraction to gay men (Hardy, 2012).

In this article, based on interviews with eleven self-defined girlfags and gurdykes, we take our departure point in the questions: How do the interviewees describe their experiences as girlfags and gurdykes and how do they interpret these identity labels?

Literature Review

To our knowledge, no scientific studies about girlfags and gurdykes currently exist. Therefore, this literature review describes phenomena that relate to the area in different ways.

² The terms “homosexual” and “transsexual” are often used by the participants when describing themselves in this study as well as in online forums and in descriptions of the identity. The authors are aware and apologetic about the potential pathological context the words might create but want to reflect the language of the participants. Outside of quotes, we have chosen to use different terminology, limiting these terms to within quotes.

According to Queen and Schimel (1997), the term “girlfag” appeared in the late 1990s, although American sex educator and writer Janet Hardy claims it was coined later in a 2003 article (Hardy, 2015). Several texts mention what is now known as the girlfag and guydyke identities. In 1987, the American psychologist Brian Gilmartin wrote a book called *Shyness & Love: Causes, Consequences, and Treatment*, which explores what the author refers to as a type of heterosexuality where men feel they do not fit in with their gender role, for example, regarding courtship. He uses the term “male lesbian” to describe men who are envious of the prerogatives of the female gender but do not wish to change their male bodies (Gilmartin, 1987). In the 1990s, Sedgwick (1993), a queer and critical theorist, wrote about her self-identification as a gay male and Nagle (1997), a bisexual activist and author, similarly depicted feelings of attraction towards gay men by imagining herself as a gay man (Nagle, 1997). Looking to history, a German essay with a queer theoretical perspective found similar phenomena described in prose as early as 40–104 A.D. and presents cultural and pop-culture phenomena connected to the identity of girlfags (Meyer, 2007).

Important for the understanding of girlfags and guydykes is sexual orientation. The concept is split between the essentialist view of sexual orientation as an unchangeable inborn part of oneself and the social constructionist fluid approach to sexual orientation. Researchers have not been able to conciliate to one definition, but those of both views often refer to four dimensions that encompass a sexual orientation. The first is the inner perception of one’s sexual identity (e.g., straight or gay). The second involves one’s erotic and sexual fantasies, while the third refers to with whom or toward whom one’s sexual activity is enacted. And last is to whom one feels emotionally attracted (Nilsson Schönnesson, 2012).

In the book, *Girls Who Like Boys Who Like Boys*, Neville (2018) mentions the girlfag phenomena, mainly relating it to women with fantasies that involve being a gay man in sexual situations with other men and identifying as a gay man while simultaneously identifying as a woman. However, she only touches upon gender and does not delve any deeper. Neville (2018) further discusses the male gaze as it has previously been discussed in feminist studies on social constructionism, pornography, and the making of pornography from a man’s perspective, but here, it is discussed even further. Neville (2018, p. 64) refers to Marks (1996, p. 130) when presenting the citation of a woman who says, “To look sexually at men I must masquerade as a gay man, i.e. provisionally borrow a male gaze.” According to Neville, it is widely known that men sometimes choose to watch pornography involving two or more women having sex. Less accepted and less known is when people who identify as women often enjoy porn and erotica including men having sex. Research from Chivers et al. (2004) focuses on how sexual arousal relates to sexual identity. For example, the researchers found women to be more open than men, with regard to gender, in what sexual stimuli makes them aroused (Chivers et al., 2004).

Zsila et al. (2018) investigate the modern phenomenon of Japanese *hentai* (i.e., animated or manga pornography) called “yaoi” or “Boy’s Love” (BL), which resonates with the girlfag phenomenon. Yaoi is a homoerotic anime genre mainly 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 fantasize and be sexually aroused by both feelings of love and lust between gay men (Zsila et al., 2018). Meyer (2010)

presents this as a world where there are no boundaries of gender and sexual orientation, and girlfags are included as a part of this culture (Meyer, 2010).

Also related to girlfags and gudykes is the term “crossdreaming” (or “crossdreamers”) that was coined 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 used on a website about crossdreamers along with scientific articles and reviews relating to fantasies, attraction and identification with trans identities. Crossdreaming is used in a wide sense, as it includes all aspects of gender identities, although not explicitly expressing the binary-coded aspect of same-sex attraction. The concept thereby may include girlfags and gudykes, and articles and stories about these identities are shared on a crossdreamers website (crossdreamers.com, n.d.). Sexual fantasies generally play an important role in people’s sex lives, as they have “a significant role in forming and exerting influence over us as sexual beings” (Brander, 2015, p. 206.). Some of the existing descriptions of the crossdreamer and girlfag and gudykes identities are similar to a disputed term presented in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) published by the American Psychiatric Association (2013) known as “transvestic fetishism 302.3”, further described as “autogynephilia” in male-to-female transsexualism. Transvestic fetishism describes a heterosexual male finding sexual arousal in cross-dressing (Lawrence, 2017). Autogynephilia is a term coined by Blanchard which refers to a male’s propensity to be sexually aroused by the thought of himself as a female (Blanchard, 1985). Autoandrophilia is the female equivalent. The terms are 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 fetishism and thereby denying transgender people their identity and/or rights to sex-confirming surgery (Lawrence, 2017). Criticism of autogynephilia is also expressed within academia (Moser, 2010; Serano, 2010). The crossdreamer and gudyke and girlfag identities reject the concepts, considering them pathologizing and transphobic, which is discussed on community discussion boards. However, the terms are sometimes discussed more neutrally by self-identified girlfags and gudykes in their search for similarities with their identity labels and feelings of same-sex attraction (Crossdreamers n.d., Girlfags and gudykes, n.d.).

Theoretical Framework

The following section presents concepts that will be used in analyzing the narratives of the respondents. Firstly, Judith Butler’s theory of the heterosexual matrix (1990) will be presented. Thereafter, the concepts of Gender/Sex Sexuality and Eroticism and Nurturance from Sari van Anders’ Sexual Configurations Theory (2015) are highlighted to complement and extend the heterosexual matrix to capture the meaning of girlfags and gudykes’ sexual identity.

The Gender Aspect and the Heterosexual Matrix

The gender aspect of the results will be analyzed with Judith Butler’s (1990) concept of *the heterosexual matrix*. Butler explains how the heterosexual norm is compulsory and used as a lens through which we categorize people we meet in terms of gender, sex, and sexuality. Butler proposes that even sex is performatively constructed, creating a distinction between individuals which is held up through language and normative acts. This distinction has created the norm for

sexual orientation and desire deriving from this invented connection between gender and biological sex, thus 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 described as a strict binary used to place people in the matrix. When looking at a person, we assume that, for example, 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, although to do so is to view 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 accepted or seen as natural. Butler claims that 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 more, but ever since it was developed, the use of sexual orientation in a queerer setting calls for a complementary theory on sexual orientation for this study.

The Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT)

After studying the existing research, analyzing the identities of girlfags and guydykes from the traditional concept of sexual orientation seems impossible as the question of sexual orientation appears to be a confusing component of the identities. The concept of sexual orientation is simply inadequate when describing the identities. With feminist and queer science as a backdrop in her studies, Sari van Anders (2015) suggests that the concept of sexual orientation is lacking in the study of 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 developed the Sexual Configurations Theory to describe the complexities of people’s sexualities and their multiple sexual dimensions. It uses a 3D model to depict multiple sexual dimensions that relate to gender, sex, and number of partners. One’s orientation, behavior, and identity are seen as both related and distinct. The concept does not replace the term “sexual orientation” but rather enriches it, making it a broader, more comprehensive base to understand and describe diverse sexualities. Therefore, van Anders’ Sexual Configurations Theory is applied in a wider sense in this study, taking into account the complexity of sexual configurations in individuals.

The primary way to describe a person’s sexuality tends to be a description of their sexual orientation. van Anders (2015) argues that we understand sexual orientation from the perspective of gender, thus making gender a foundation for categorizing sexuality. Two genders are required for this: The gender of the individual and the gender(s) to whom the individual is attracted. But, van Anders (2015) asks, is it gender or sex? Extending thoughts on Butler’s (1990) concept of the heterosexual matrix, van Anders argues that sex seems to be what both laymen and academics alike refer to in discussions of sexual orientation; for example, the biological and physical features related to maleness and femaleness, although this is not usually made explicit. Does this place gender as irrelevant to sexual orientation? Gender refers to traits relating to

masculinity and femininity and gender diversity as socially and culturally learned. The confusion of gender and sex in regard to sexual orientation leads to many questions, for example, “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, p. 1177). By asking these questions, van Anders shows that the current use of sexual orientation in scientific research is insufficient and does not reflect the lived experience of many individuals (van Anders, 2015). The Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT) 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). SCT extends the theory of the heterosexual matrix by Butler (1990), who presents the heterosexual norm as compulsory and used as a lens to categorize people we meet in ways of gender, sex, and sexuality. Butler proposes that even sex is performatively constructed, creating a distinction between individuals that 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 strict binary used to place people in the matrix (Butler, 1990).

Core Concepts in the SCT: Gender/Sex Sexuality & Nurturance and Eroticism

van Anders (2015) presents the concept of gender/sex by first giving examples of what the concept of sexual orientation excludes. According to van Anders, sexual orientation based on sex is unclear as to whether the attraction lies in being attracted to vulvas, breasts, and penises or the perceived female or male body. The focus on sex also makes it difficult to sidestep binaries. Gender generally gives more options as a base for orientation, although the concept of sexual orientation fails to make sense of these options. It fails to describe a person who is attracted to women regardless of sex in contrast to people who are 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” in place of “sexual orientation” to include the gender aspect, which is often lost when talking about sexual orientation. van Anders (2015) promotes the need to see gender/sex sexuality as the key organizer of all sexuality. The theory claims that sexuality must be understood as reflecting aspects of gender/sex even when it is not explicitly named in that context (van Anders, 2015).

In van Anders’ (2015) model and Sexual Configurations Theory, love and lust are replaced by the concepts of nurturance and eroticism. In van Anders (2015, p. 1183), drawing from Diamond’s (2003) compelling question, “What does sexual orientation orient?”, van Anders describes how it explicitly orients lust and attraction but implicitly also love. Love is a loaded word that carries implications of an important, deep emotional connection. Nurturance is not synonymous with love but nevertheless connotes a potentially committed connection, although foremost a loving, warm, and supportive feeling or relationship. 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, for example, those between family and friends. Instead of “lust”, van Anders (2015) chooses to use the term “eroticism”. This term describes sexuality that applies to bodily experiences such as arousal, tantalization, orgasms, pleasure, and more. van Anders explains that

while lust describes sexual desire, motivation, or wanting, eroticism describes “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, although sometimes in partnered sexuality, they both occur simultaneously (van Anders, 2015). Nurturance and eroticism are used as exploratory concepts in the analysis in this study in order to further comprehend the result and thoughts on attraction, sexuality, and orientation.

Method

Sample of Participants

To recruit respondents for this study, a strategic sample was sought. Respondents were sought in the international Facebook forum called “Girlfags and Guydykes”, seeking members that identify fully or partly as girlfags and guydykes. At the time (September 2018), the group consisted of 431 members, which was the largest member base of any forum of its kind. The group was closed, and one was required to apply for permission to gain access. The group information explained “This is a group for those who identify as girlfags or guydykes, or who think they might – and for their lovers”, although no active lovers were found in the forum. The inclusion criteria stipulated that the group is for people who fully or partly identify as girlfags or guydykes. The exclusion criterion pertained to age, as there should be no underage participants (18 years or older, according to Swedish legislation). The letter with information about the study was posted once and never withdrawn. It was met with exclusively positive and encouraging comments and likes. It stated that the interviews would be in English or Swedish, but no language skill level was stipulated. Nine self-identified girlfags and two self-identified guydykes aged from 26 to 69 years took part. Most respondents originate from Central Europe and North America, thus reflecting a mainly western perspective.

Recruitment and Interviews

In accordance with the internet-based methods of Cheng (2017), a letter of information was posted in the Facebook group, “Girlfags and guydykes”. The letter of information was written in English. The interviews were conducted by the first author (Lindqvist) and various interview methods were used: video call (2), phone call (1), in person (1), email (6), and email with sound files (1), with a total of eleven interviews out of thirteen people who expressed interest. Two simply never answered their email again after initial contact. The same interview guide was used as a base for all the interviews, and the participants were given the same types of questions. The main reason for choosing different media was, in terms of language skills, to make it as comfortable as possible for the participants to describe themselves. The duration of the verbal interviews ranged from 40 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The interviews were immediately transcribed verbatim after the interview. The written answers (email) were collected in one document per interview before analysis. The answers in most interviews were similar in content and length regardless of chosen media, although those in writing tended to be more

concise. During the transcription or collection of data, the data were anonymized and nothing apart from age and identity (girlfag or guydyke) was attached to the data (e.g., GF29 or GD52). All data were transcribed in English.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, Elo and Kyngäs' (2008) method was chosen. 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. In the next step, the construction of categories and abstraction was carried according to Elo and Kyngäs' description of the method. The data were 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 to be traceable (i.e., GF42 or GD67). The following step in the content analysis is that of open coding. Categories were formed freely without any category being valued as more or less significant than the other (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008). The categories were placed under main categories, where similar categories were merged or reduced. The material was then analyzed in relation to theoretical perspectives and previous research in the field.

Ethical Considerations

To maintain a high ethical standard, this paper has as its starting point the guidelines from the Swedish Research Council regarding the four fundamental ethical principles for higher research involving humans: the information requirement, the claim of consent, the confidentiality requirement, and the usefulness requirement (Codex (2012)). In this study, the information requirement has been met through 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 was made through the emailed form of consent and the written or verbal reminder at the start of each interview, which again informed 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. Lastly, the confidentiality requirement was met by not documenting any personal data apart from age and girlfag or guydyke identity and by anonymizing the data before analysis. The data have only been used for the purpose and aim of the study in accordance with the usefulness requirement. The study was ethically approved by Malmö University's ethical board.

Results and Analysis

In this section, the results from the interviews will be analyzed according to the themes that emerged during analysis (as described in the method section). The results will be further analyzed within the theoretical framework of this study.

A Play on Gender

After listening to the participants or reading their words, one can find consistency in terms of them not fitting in to the heterosexual norms that are generally expected of them. They describe seeing the world differently and have a hard time understanding what is expected of them as a woman or man in society and also regarding sex and intimate relationships. Several describe acting and reacting as another gender and in their narratives, the respondents often

stereotype and express a highly normative view on gender and identity expression. They say that they are aware of the stereotyping, but it would be difficult to explain their feelings and experiences in any other way. Some examples are when the participating girlfags say that they understand the minds of men (or gay men) better in general and also have a sexuality closer to that of men (which the respondents exemplify with enjoying the chase, being a top, and less interest in foreplay). The participating gudykes on the other hand, claim to understand the minds of women (or lesbians) better in general and to have a sexuality closer to that which is stereotypically perceived as lesbian (the respondents exemplify this with meeting on equal terms, giving pleasure, and respecting bodies).

Not Getting Things Straight

All 11 of the participants expressed feelings of not belonging in the context of heteronormative behavior. After assessing their bodies, several described not fitting in with the femininities or masculinities that were expected by others, and thereby do not experience the expected feelings of gender belonging. Most participants describe their experiences in a way that can be read as being judged through the lens of the heterosexual matrix (Butler, 1990). They feel conflicted when others place them within this matrix when they themselves feel they do not belong, or that they belong in two options at the same time (e.g., man and woman, or woman and masculine). These aspects of gender, femininities, and masculinities are perceived as socialized, cultural, and learned gender roles — a social constructionist setting in line with Butler (1990) and van Anders (2015) — but in this case, the gender aspects do not match the participants' assigned gender and thereby break social norms. Several respondents explicitly expressed viewing sexuality and gender in a social constructionist setting. The following gudyke exemplifies this:

I've never considered the feminized or the feminine as less. 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)

The participants have early memories of not fitting in with their expected gender roles. Participant GF43 describes both her own socialized behaviors (i.e., masculine behavior) and also letting what attracts her involve a norm-breaking gender performance with men presenting feminine behavior: "...but [I] 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." Another girlfag further emphasizes crossing these lines on social gender roles both regarding her own behavior 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 above statements, together with other stories from both girlfags and gudykes, show similar patterns in, for example, women adopting more masculine behavior in combination with being attracted to men who adopt more feminine behavior. There are also examples of gudykes,

men, adopting more feminine behavior while they are attracted to women performing more masculine behavior. These performances are, in respect to Butler's (1990) heterosexual matrix, a possible norm-breaking act, a play on gender, and a subversive act. All the respondents described not fitting in with the gender binary regarding gender traits; for example, the girlfags often refer to themselves as tomboys in their early years, and many still apply this label to their identity as grown-ups. The participating girlfags have mostly male or gay male friends and gudykes describe mostly relating to their female friends, as they describe having a hard time understanding the minds and interests of men. The following girlfag 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, [but] 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 relates, most participants underscore their gender norm-breaking as social, sexual, and relational behaviors 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 aspects of non-normative gender behaviors are what the participants describe they are attracted to in partners as well, often ascribing this to the preferred partners' gay identity, which is often explained in a simplified way by the participants.

Subversion of Gender Roles and Expectations

Most of the respondents describe feeling comfortable in their assigned bodies and enjoying certain aspects of the masculine and feminine behaviors or traits that are culturally and socially expected of them from their perceived gender roles. A few respondents discuss this, and remarked that, for instance, they would still perform feminine behaviors even as a man, as these traits are not dependent on their sex. This supported by Butler's (1990) theory on sex also being a social construct. A gudyke describes masculine expressions as the practical choice, not as 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). It is not clear what the respondent means by female clothes, but it is interesting how this respondent's stereotypical image of women's clothing has a bearing on how gender is expressed by the respondent. Some of the respondents identifying as girlfags described feeling like drag queens when they enjoy their feminine expression, like a show they put on with attention they might enjoy, but it nevertheless feels 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, um... 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 [as] feminine. (GF28)

The girlfag above describes the feeling of being in drag as a subversive act, as described by Butler (1990), by recognizing it not as a cis-female performance but rather by recognizing the feeling of drag in what would be perceived as a feminine woman through the lens of the heterosexual matrix. Butler (1990) describes drag as a potentially subversive act but indicates that it nevertheless conforms to the existing matrix and reinforces 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 [the girlfag] community and language, I would compare myself to a drag queen” (GF43). In the same way, this could be seen as a subversive act but expressed within the framework of the heterosexual matrix described by Butler (1990), thus reinforcing it. These feelings of dragshowing involve complex feelings toward femininities and masculinities and also a high awareness of gender roles by some of the respondents. This may represent a conscious disregard of the importance of gender manifestations in relation to their inner gender identity, or in other words, knowing their true identity is more important than how others perceive it. The sense of drag when presenting one’s body could be seen as a coping strategy, a mental persuasion, where the positive act of drag hides the true identity of the respondents. To be seen in drag and to be perceived as, for example, a woman when you identify as a girlfag, but at the same time actively thinking of it as drag, could be seen as an act of coping when one’s body does not align with one’s identity.

Sexual (Gender) Roleplaying

All of the participants expressed thoughts about sex, sexual fantasies, or sexual activities that align with the stereotypical role of the so-called other gender. Girlfags mostly express a need to dominate, to top and be in control, and in some ways, to objectify the male body they are engaging with. For some, these needs are not in line with their partner’s wishes, but for others these roles suit the partner. Very few actually have experiences of being in relationships with gay-identified people of another gender. A dominant girlfag gives an example of her life with her gay-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, for example, 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, among other things, the participating guydykes emphasize the importance of sex on equal terms – where no one dominates, but instead everyone shows care and respect for each other.

As stated, when performing a gender or having an identity like, for example, being lesbian, certain traits are connected to this identity by the respondents. Sexually, the identity is described as open-minded in terms of aspects like sexual practice, which leaves room for diversity in actions and bodies. When speaking of dysphoric feelings, or more specifically, sexual feelings, for girlfags in particular there is a focus on “dicks” (the word most participants use to refer to penises). As stated, when discussing gender sexual roleplaying and sexual practices, the participating girlfags had more issues regarding their physical body than the

participating gudykes. They describe the explicit desire to have a male body and specifically a penis in sexual situations, both in partnered and non-partnered sex. 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 gives an example:

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. Girlfags recurrently share stories and fantasies about particular sexual actions they want to experience with a penis, for example, the exact moment of entering someone anally or so-called deep throating, which is the action of receiving oral sex while pushing one's penis deep into the back of the partner's throat. For some respondents, the wish for a penis seems to be 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 the common yearning for a penis seems to connect the girlfags in their identity.

Being Gay, but...

Most participants directly referred to themselves as being gay, as in, girlfags are gay men and gudykes are lesbians. Both identify with the gay and lesbian identity. Several of the participants express this in a very clear way often without problematizing the identity at that moment but saying it self-evidently with pride. One girlfag exemplifies 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 briefly discuss how they interpret the meaning of being gay, but most respondents spoke of 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, there's a clearer distinction than in 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 their daughter is a gay guy. (GF27)

This girlfag highlights both how being gay can be stated clearly, much like the major part of the participants in this study and shows how the identity has been felt from a young age by many. A few participants describe themselves as partly a gay man or lesbian woman. Fluidity and the ability to change in one's sexual identity over time and context is an element to sexual orientation that the SCT adds to previous theories on explaining sexual orientation. It allows and recognizes these sexual minorities which may change in orientation and behavior (van Anders, 2015).

Orientation

Most of the respondents describe their sexual orientation as gay but “in the wrong body”, or simply lesbian or gay (male). In the following, the two participating gudykes try to clarify their orientation. One does this by explaining that the heteronormative games and positioning between men and women are what differentiates his orientation toward women from that of other men. The other gudyke endeavors to describe the orientation further, trying to portray a lesbian mindset of sorts:

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 gudykes and three girlfags express these feelings, having tried to explore their attraction to another gender, but failing. 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. 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 individuals with plurisexual identity labels to seek sexual sensations. Six of the participating girlfags identify as bisexual or pansexual, although none of the gudykes identify with anything other than monosexual labels, such as ‘man’ and ‘lesbian’. Similarly, a small generational difference showed in the results, where older participants were more inclined to use monosexual labels than the younger participants, who mainly use plurisexual labels. This could signify a more essentialist view of sexual orientation for the older generation. This aligns with research by Schei Jessen (2017) showing that other LGBTQ+ people have changed towards a more social constructionist view of sexual orientation over the past generations.

Delving deeper into orientation, one can draw from van Anders' (2015) theory of what constitutes the basis of sexual orientation. Here, androsexuality could be seen as an orientation based on sex, with “sex” referring to maleness and sex-related bodily features guiding what orients a person, supported by respondents describing attraction toward gay trans men. Here, “men” refers to 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 behavior, not their appearance and body, often highlighting gender traits that concern the social, sexual, and romantic aspects of gender identity. Therefore, the participating girlfags and gudykes suggest that same-sex orientation, or any orientation, issues from the gender identity and also that the same-sex

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 toward gay men, and simply 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), refers to the supportive, warm and loving emotions one feels toward others. Most of the participants describe experiencing these feelings or this attraction around the time, or just before, they entered puberty. However, a few differ: two stated they have felt this way since the age of five or six, and one said it started around age 16. Some participants also describe more stereotypical characteristics of gay men and women as attractive, for instance, men being feminine and women being butch, although many of the participating girlfags, as gay men, seem to be indifferent to stereotypical characteristics and can feel attracted to all gay men or all men.

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 underscores the importance of the romantic connection in line with the rest of the participants. Even while using the word "love", the girlfags and guydykes do not describe intense feelings and infatuations, but much like how van Anders (2015) contrasts love from nurturance, they describe instead a deep emotional connection.

Many of the respondents' statements indicate an eroticism toward men, as described by van Anders (2015), implying arousal and pleasure from, for example, the male body. Simultaneously, the attraction portrayed by the participants is the same-sex practice (i.e., a stereotypical idea of what gay sex means). All the participants describe a desire toward the gay attraction – a yearning more in line with how van Anders (2015) describes 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 were themed with either changing bodies or gender in order to live out their desires. Most girlfag fantasies include aspects of dominance toward 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 gay attraction.

It is all in my Head

Some of the participants describe seldom or never having 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, and

therefore mainly use the power of their mind in experiencing the sex with their partner as gay. The idea of having sex in a way that enhances their identity as gay person in a gay relationship often makes the respondents use stereotypes in describing gay sex. Some use their mind and fantasies to increase their arousal with their partner, fantasizing about others partaking or their bodies' experiencing different sensations. Butler discusses how transgender individuals 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). Some girlfags in relationships with men stated that it's all in one's head: "It does feel like it's part of our kink play, though even during our regular PIV sex (referring to penis in vagina sex), I am imagining that I am penetrating him" (GF55).

The Trans Aspect

Most of the participants have experienced a decline 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 the sexual limitations that are part of the identity, and as a consequence, the dysphoria: "But mental health, yeah ... I think when I have sex with a straight guy, it always makes me feel kind of depressed, and it makes me dysphoric" (GF26). There are similar experiences in the group, in the form of minority stress as described by other LGBTQ+ people according to Wurm and Hanner (2017). Another girlfag explains 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 participant clearly explains the frustrating feelings of being made invisible in one's identity. The loss of a community and a clear identity label is described as painful and agonizing.

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 describes 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 were more pronounced. Many describe having no difficulty with the fact their body is female (girlfags) or male (guydykes), and some even express being thankful for their body, for

example, to have been able to give birth, but at the same time, a longing for something else. One girlfag ties 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, [there's] nothing wrong with my boobs and my vagina, really. (GF30)

A few of participants' body dysphoria and transgender feelings were more profound, which is a known ill-health risk factor for LGBTQ+ people (Lundberg et al., 2017; Mohr & Kendra, 2011).

Belonging to the LGBTQ+ Community

All the 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 further fall in line with Wurm and Hanner's (2017) description of risk-exposed LGBTQ+ by being made invisible in their pride.

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)

Almost all the respondents had experiences where their identities as girlfags and gudykes were criticized, 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 along the lines of calling them straight and fetishizing or accusing them of being transgender 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 also risk abuse because of their sexual identity, unlike girlfags and gudykes who can often pass as straight. One girlfag extends her thoughts on why there is judgment and where it comes from:

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 quotation partly indicates an older generation of LGBTQ+ individuals that may judge. This falls in line with Schei Jessen (2017), who explains that queer identities may seem threatening to, for example, the lesbian identity, with the thinking that all labels may end up as "queer" and then communities may be lost. Some of the participants express having been hurt by being personally attacked after revealing their girlfag or gudyke identity online in LGBTQ+

communities. Some have cried, self-harmed, and questioned their own identity. To be met by these reactions in the community they feel they belong to possibly leads to additional exposure, and some respondents express feeling 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 [sic]” (GF27). This is alarming because it describes an LGBTQ+ person’s exclusion from a sexual minority community, which only leads to the risk of more vulnerability. Despite this, several of the respondents brought up positive personal experiences after having explained the identities to gay and queer people without being judged. This led to feelings of relief and acceptance, with hope for the future.

Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this study was to highlight how girlfags and guydykes describe their experiences and interpret their identity labels of “girlfags” and “guydykes”. The respondents describe having complex identities that pervade many aspects of their lives. It involves their feeling of self, gender identity, and transgender issues in addition to sexual identity, orientation, and relational aspects. The identities include not only pride but also vulnerability, and there are difficulties presented within each aspect of the identities. The participants often stereotype regarding the girlfags’ perceptions of gay men and the guydykes’ perceptions of lesbians which can be interpreted as an internalized essentialist way to view identity. In this concluding part of the article, we discuss these findings further.

Describing Sexuality and Orientation

The meaning of the identity has its own individual interpretation in each participant’s life. 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, patterns recur in the stories shared by the respondents. All of the participants describe the identity as being connected to their sexuality and sexual preferences, either in partnered sexuality, fantasies, or non-partnered sexuality. A pronounced desire to same-sex attraction is shared by all the respondents, but it is lived and experienced in different ways. The theme of being in between gay and straight is visible throughout the empirical data and analyzed with the help of the Sexual Configurations Theory by van Anders (2015). One of these problematic areas is the consensus of the desire for gay relationships. All the participants desire and romanticize gay men (girlfags) or lesbian women (guydykes). Some emphasized that they wanted their partner to be gay (of another sex), and this also involves the characteristics, identity, and community surrounding being gay. This is an example of potential unintentional exoticizing, where many participants refer to certain ideas and stereotypes of what gay identities entail. Some highlight being attracted to the connection, often sexual and romantic, in same-sex relationships. This can be viewed from the outside or experienced with the help of self-identification, for example, for girlfags as a gay man with a male partner. In most cases, girlfags have partners who are straight men. As described by van Anders (2015), this indicates an eroticism for the male which can be interpreted as androsexuality. This in itself could be seen as a coping strategy for the difficulties the respondents meet in living their identity, such as having actual relations with gay men.

Experiencing Gender and Identity

It is interesting how identities that, at first glance, seem mainly to involve sexuality but also focus on gender in different ways. What the respondents describe and what parts of the identity they emphasize varies, but questioning gender performance is a common thread. It is clear that gender issues pervade the identity, and it could be argued that sexual activities and sexual orientation could even be seen as a result of gender identity issues. The self-identified theme of existing in between cis and trans creates an ever-present complexity to the identities of girlfags and guydykes and the participants often describe having feelings that reflect a trans identity. The focus on gender aspects in the empirical data may lead to a change in further research on sexual orientation, with perhaps a further exploration of the identities analyzed from the perspective of queer theory instead of an analysis that applies van Anders' (2015) Sexual Configurations Theory (SCT).

Contradictions and Community

Although the girlfag and guydyke identity can be confusing, many describe a great sense of relief after finding the identity that matches their feelings. The theme of feeling pride but meeting or fearing prejudice is recurrent. Also, the complexity in feeling both included and excluded simultaneously in identity and community seems psychologically agonizing for the respondents, and thus, 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 to use fantasies as a way of coping, which many are aware of using to experience, for example, sex with men as a gay act. Other strategies are more subtle and may be subconscious. These include drag showing, which is a strategy one can use to handle not being seen as one's inner gender identity yet still be able to feel pride.

Perhaps the most difficult and contradictory part of the identity is the claim to have the gay identity of "another" gender. When looking at the four basic principles of sexual orientation described by Nilsson Schönnesson (2012), we can determine if the identities either meet two or all four of the requirements. Firstly, girlfags' and guydykes' self-identification is that of a gay (man) or a lesbian. Secondly, they have erotic and sexual fantasies involving gay men and women. Third, with or towards whom their sexual activity is enacted is difficult to pinpoint. Looking at the results, it is clear that even if the wanted partner is, for example, a gay man, a straight man is also a possible sexual partner. The last requirement is to whom they feel emotionally attracted, which falls in line with van Anders' (2015) concept of nurturance, and, as shown in the results, this is aimed towards gay men and lesbian women. The last two of these four principles demonstrate the complexity of the identities regarding sexual orientation. 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 gay in both nurturance and in sexual relations. This gender perspective gives an 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 in full could provide further interesting perspectives, as the theory also includes an openness to future components of sexuality (van Anders, 2015). This may be necessary in order to accurately describe the girlfag and guydyke identities because, although the

concepts of eroticism and nurturance are helpful in learning more about the identities, they are not enough to fully understand the complexities of the empirical data.

Thoughts and Implications for Further Studies

In modern western society, the need for individualism comes with conflict: one wants to be seen and heard, yet at the same time, there is an increasing view of 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 gurdykes may even upset people who would be considered liberal within the LGBTQ+ community. The identity labels can be considered norm-breaking when expressed as a binary in an increasingly fluid LGBTQ+ context (in terms of labeling). In terms of experiences and identity, the identities provocatively appear somehow in between both — moving between trans and cis, though definitionally trans, and from gay to straight, thus experiencing pride and prejudice, as well as rejection and belonging.

Highlighting the experiences of a sexual minority that is relatively unknown in academia is challenging. The study has provided an overview, but the material implies a need to delve deeper and wider. The small number of respondents is a limitation of the study. The pervading subtheme is the duality of feeling proud of, and finding comfort in, their identities, while at the same time, rejected by the LGBTQ+ community and potential partners. This ambiguity seems to be a risk factor for negative health outcomes and should be explored further. It is apparent that gender identity issues exist within the group, and it is well known such issues can have a negative effect on mental health in terms of minority stress (Wurm and Hanner, 2017), which also indicates the need for further studies. The phenomena interestingly relates to — though the respondents reject — the autoandrophilia concept by Blanchard (1985), which could be further discussed. 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 requires further qualitative studies for a deeper understanding.

Based on the narratives of eleven respondents, the identities of girlfags and gurdykes seem to fall in between categories. They could be considered a queer identity but are seemingly too straight for queer. At the same time, they provoke by using a binary concept when describing gender/sex identity. From these few voices and ample descriptions from the community, we can draw that girlfags and gurdykes identify with each other, as the same phenomena. It is claimed to be a mainly romantic and sexual identity, although evidently existing on the trans spectrum, judging from the stories told. Few identities can claim to unify a (trans)gender identity with a sexual orientation; however, the identity labels of girlfags and gurdykes are contradictory and confusing yet also strikingly clear, resulting in an arena for people where none existed before.

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