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ALLYSHIP AMONG COMMUNITIES

Narratives from the Queer Community and the Roller Derby Community

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QUEERS READ THIS

Being queer is not about a right to privacy; it is about the freedom to be public, to just be who we are. It means everyday fighting oppression; homophobia, racism, misogyny, the bigotry of religious hypocrites and our own self-hatred. (We have been carefully taught to hate ourselves.) Being queer means leading a different sort of life. It is not about the mainstream, profit-margins, patriotism, patriarchy or being assimilated. It's not about executive directors, privilege and elitism. It's about being on the margins, defining ourselves; it's about gender-fuck and secrets, what's beneath the belt and deep inside the heart; it's about the night. Being queer is "grass roots" because we know that everyone of us, every body, and every heart is a world of pleasure waiting to be explored. Everyone of us is a world of infinite possibility.

Queer Nation Manifest (1990)

Abstract

This thesis investigated narratives of allyship within and between the queer community and the roller derby community. The thesis is an ethnographic interview study and through six interviews with people of the communities it studied how the interview participants understand the concept of allyship and what it means to be an ally for them. Furthermore, the thesis discuss how the interview participants *do* allyship within and between the communities they move within. Inspired by Ahlstedt (2016) the thesis circulate around narratives and uses a narrative analysis.

I conclude that allyship means to stand united and come together; to listen, relearn and support. Furthermore I understand that the interview participants interpret being an ally as understanding one's position from an intersectional perspective. From their 'I' and their own alliance, they ally with others. Vulnerability is a center concept in the discussion of how they *do* allyship. The creation of 'us' and a 'we' is another theme that shows how the allyship is done. Political values and statements are ways of creating alliances, political 'we' are constructed by delimitation to 'they'. By making statements and putting themselves on the political map, political alliances within and between the communities are constructed.

Keywords: Allyship, Queer Community, Roller Derby Community, Solidarity, Narratives

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

I stood by the water in the harbour of Gothenburg the other day. It was a clear, cold and sunny day. The river had been frozen recently but what I now saw was thousands of small ice floes, almost like islands. Thousands of ice floes next to each other, following the pace of the river, moving synchronized on the waves created by the ferries passing by. The ferries go back and forth between the mainland and a bigger island, moving people between worlds in a city where the segregation constantly is increasing. The ferries have broken the ice on the river and divided it to thousands of ice floes, thousands of isolated islands, which in some way are adapting to each other as they all depend on the ferries. There are gaps between the islands. While standing there, I realized this is a picture capturing how I view the society which I live in; I see thousands of worlds lived side by side, segregated because of the politics - the ferries. I see possibilities of linking the islands by bridging the distance between them, building bridges between them. I see possibilities of other politics, which do not cause divided societies.

This thesis is a process over time and space. It has been a while since I wrote those first introducing words. It is spring now. The ice floes has melted and an united mass of water has taken place in the harbour. Somehow, I always get back to that place. Right under the bridgehead in the port. What does it mean that the ice floes are eliminated? Are we united now as people when the ferries cannot break us apart to segregated ice floes? Or does the physical bridges carry a bigger role? After all, they are the ones transporting bodies from the mainland to the island in a segregated city. The ferries continue to go back and forth over the port. What role do they play now? As we live in a society where racist, homophobic, transphobic, and patriarchal politics tries to divide and segregate us from each other there is a need of bridge building, we have to find ways of trying to reach each other. We all exist in several worlds which have their struggles. We move between worlds and embody them,

feeling more or less belongingness to all of them. I sometimes find it hard to translate myself between worlds, as the language and behaviours varies between them. I think many of us are struggling with similar issues when moving between worlds. In this thesis I will study how worlds and the communities within them, the queer and the roller derby community specifically, ally and build bridges between them.

1.1.1 The Queer Community

There is a lot to be said about the queer community. First of all, the term queer is used as a result from trans people, lesbians, gay, bisexual, intersex, and asexual people adopted the term, referring to a broader concept of identities and sexualities that move beyond dichotomies as gay/straight or homosexual/heterosexual etc (Naples, 1998:27). It includes all who do not want to support, and instead questions, the heteronormativity as a norm and structure (Kulick, 1996:9). The term does not replace “lesbian”, “gay”, or “transsexual” but is instead a further extension of identities and sexualities, values and beliefs. I understand it as a lens, perspective and point of view, where people can gather and find common values and political goals (Kulick, 1996:9). The term queer has a long story, from being used to oppress non-cisgendered and non-heterosexual people to being reclaimed and used with pride. In the thesis you will get to know people mostly from Sweden from the community, but also spread over the world. Most of the interview participants live in Gothenburg. From my experience, people of the queer community in Gothenburg often know each other or have common friends. There are different groupings within the queer community of Gothenburg who mostly spend time on their own, but there are also bigger demonstrations and events that gather many people from the community. Such as public demonstrations as the International Transgender Day of Remembrance, the International Women’s day, the International Workers’ Day, Pride, Take Back the Night. Queer events and parties are also meeting points for the community.

1.1.2 The Roller Derby Community

Roller derby is a full contact sport on quad roller skates with its roots in 1930s Chicago, USA. Individuals who self-identify as women and gender expansive have been dominating the sport since the 1940s (Strübel, 2016:348). After a peak in the 70s, roller derby has experienced a revival in the 2000s, in spirit of the Do-It-Yourself-movement, due to the sense

of community and support it provides to its participants who have been marginalized because of different reasons (Strübel, 2016). Roller derby is dominated by mostly white cisgendered players, and is a sport where the athletes bodies are valued for what they can do and empowered to just be themselves, as a way of destroying traditional gender roles and where it is instead positive being strong, heavy and muscular (Strübel, 2016). Roller derby is a team sport, grounded on feminist values, played indoors on an oval track, where two teams compete to score as many points as possible. The jammers mission is to score points by passing the blockers, whose mission is to stop the opponents teams jammer. It is a strategically and physically challenging sport. By own experience, I would like to say it is more than a sport. It is a lifestyle and a world of its own, where marginalized and queer bodies create their own norms. There are currently about 30 leagues in Sweden with 1-3 teams each, and worldwide there are more than 400 leagues. It is a sport in growth and constant change. The community has an image of being inclusive, a self-image that needs to be questioned. I have played roller derby for two years now and find the community more inclusive than others, but of course the community has to continue to learn and re-do as structural problems and norms sippers into the community, just as any other community. To me, the sport stands for solidarity and respect. In this study you will get to know community members from small and big leagues, mostly from Sweden but also spread over the world. Being part of the derby community often mean that you know or have heard of people within other leagues, as the leagues often play against each other and therefore meet continuously, and because of the fact that people within the community are staying updated about who is playing in which team and league.

1.1.3 Overlapping communities

Roller derby is a queer sport, in the sense that it is a sport where queer bodies and identities take place and where it is norm to be queer. The queer community and the roller derby community in that way overlap each other. In this thesis narratives from the communities and the overlapping community they create will be shared. Feeling belongingness and identifying with both communities gives me an insider perspective. I think this position and situatedness brings something positive to the thesis in several ways. Firstly, by being where I am and who I am gives me access to the communities. Secondly, this insider perspective contributes with

a deep understanding in the meetings with the interview participants. I will come back to this discussion later on. This thesis focuses on the positive aspects of both communities, rather than analyzing the problematic parts. I am aware of that a critical study with a conflict perspective would have raised important questions and knowledges. Future research hopefully will have the opportunity to study the communities from a more critical perspective. This is a study which aims to spread hope. By sharing narratives from the communities I wish that this thesis highlights the importance of solidarity within and between the worlds we move. Because communities and alliances are what ties us together in a broken world where negative forces try to pull us apart. I hope this paper can inspire us as activists, so that we continue fighting against injustices and oppression. I think it's vital to remind us that we are many, and that we are able to see hope by seeing each other.

1.2 Aim

The aim of this thesis is to study narratives of allyship within and between communities. Through six interviews this study aims to use narrative writing in order to analyze how the queer community and the roller derby community ally and build bridges.

Research questions:

What does it mean to be an ally?

How do they *do* allyship within the community and between communities?

1.3 Contribution of the Thesis

Throughout this thesis, narratives from the queer community and the roller community are told. These communities are, from my point of view, communities that attempt to challenge several norms, and in practice work for pointing out structural injustices in the world we live in, with the aim to change the circumstances we live in. For these reasons, I find this thesis relevant for the field of Gender Studies. In this thesis, the narratives give inspiration of how one can relearn and re-do, how one, through gathering, can create own worlds with other norms than heteronormative, cisnormative and patriarchal ones. I find the work of the communities as norm critical work in practice. The thesis contributes with knowledge about how the communities, in practice, do this work to the field of Gender Studies.

Chapter 2

METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

2.1 Personal Reference Frame

My standpoint of being an intersectional feminist, and my identity as a queer person will shape and be part of how I approach the research. I want the project to be part of a social change with and by individuals, I therefore identify as an activist-scholar. I find myself as being part of the queer community, the roller derby community, the academia, my biological family, my chosen family, and the civil society beyond national borders. I experience that I have to adapt my language when moving around between the worlds which I belong to. In one way I have to translate and simplify the academic theories to a understandable language which I can use in my everyday life. I translate the experiences of my newcomer friends to my queer community. I translate and simplify my queer and norm critical thoughts to my heteronormative biological family. Translating queer thoughts, dreams and beliefs to normative rooms is painful and hard, as it forces me to simplify something that I do not want to simplify. It's a constant translation, adaptation of language, simplification of language. But I do not want to keep on simplifying, because life is complex. I struggle with keeping it complex and being understood. I have a intersectional understanding which implies that our personal stories are connected as we all are parts of the societal structures we live in. Therefore I believe that when we see that we are connected and which struggles we share it is easier to see that we actually can change the circumstances we live in. These experiences have got me interested in learning more about bridge building between worlds and how other people *do* allyship with communities around them.

2.2 Qualitative Study with a Constructivist Perspective

This study is a qualitative study which enables an investigation where the intention is to present an interpretation that gives increased understanding of the studied phenomenon (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2011). The qualitative method is suitable for the study since this type of investigation is interested in the construction of meaning (Alvehus, 2013). As

identities not are given but constructed in relation to other individuals and the surroundings, this study takes its starting point from a constructivist perspective (Weber, 2003). This perspective builds upon the assumption that our knowledge about the world is constructions of the 'reality' (Justesen & Mik-Meyer, 2011). Within the constructivism, the categories used among people are social products, which implies they are constructed in the interplay between people as well as they are in a state of constant change (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

2.3 Ethnographic Interview Study

As this study aims to describe how communities ally and cooperate, I have used a ethnographic method. The term ethnography basically means a description of people and of cultures (Denscombe, 2014:79). It is of importance that the ethnographer share lived experiences rather than observe from an outside perspective (Denscombe, 2014:80). Even if this study, in the end, did not include participatory observation, there still are glims of observations. As Pinsky (2015) expresses it, interview studies includes observations as well. After all, I do spend a lot of time within the same worlds and communities as the participants and therefore see and notice things from an inside perspective. I will later discuss how I have used my shared experiences with the interview participants throughout the thesis. Inspired by Ahlstedt (2016) I call this an ethnographic interview study, as I draw on ethnographic methods through interviews.

The aim has also been to take part of the participants' situated knowledge (Haraway, 1998). By having situated knowledge as a starting point it is possible to see the participants as knowledge creators within their movements and communities (Velásquez, 2007). I have been striving for a collaborative knowledge production where we will learn together. The starting point for the study has been to learn together and sharing a process of knowledge production, through dialogues, that will benefit us in our shared struggles (Davis & Craven 2016:155). This, for me, represents doing transversal politics in practice.

2.4 Collection of Narratives

The material is collected through individual interviews. I reached out for interview participants by telling about the project in the communities which I move whitin. People from

the queer community and the roller derby got back to me, wishing to participate and share their thoughts and experiences. Due to limited resources as time, this thesis consists of six interviews, lasting from 30 to 60 minutes each. I have interviewed the participants where the participants wish to do the interview. The interviews took place in university libraries, at sport venues, through Skype, in my home and in the participants homes. During the meetings, both me and the interview participant shared our experiences, thoughts and stories. When sharing ourselves and our stories with others we show that we are vulnerable, which leads to the process of building trust in relations. For being able to build trust in relations one has to dare to share oneself and one's experiences, to be vulnerable. It is about sharing, giving and taking. Therefore, I have not only been taking stories but also shared my story to the participants. As Butler (2015:211) writes: "I will only protect your vulnerability if you protect mine". The sharing is something I find vital, and something I have in mind when doing the interviews with the participants of this study.

2.4.1 Names and anonymity

The roller derby community and the queer community are quiet small communities. The participants for this thesis are born at different places over the world. Most of them currently live in Sweden. As the communities in Sweden are relatively small many people feeling belongingness to the communities might know each other. In order to keep the participants anonymous I asked them to choose their own names for the thesis. Choosing your name is common both in the queer community as well as in the roller derby community, it is seen as a practice where people own their name and how they want to be presented.

2.5 Narrative Writing

Inspired by Ahlstedt (2016), I circulate this thesis around narratives. They are the sun everything circles around; they are the form of the thesis. Because "it is in and through stories that we live our lives", as Cassandra Phoenix, Brett Smith and Andrew C. Sparkes write. I am interested in the stories of the interview participants, as they tell something about the world(s) we live in. I have always been interested of peoples stories and journeys, I think it is fascinating how come people end up being who and where they. When sharing our stories somethings happens between us, by being vulnerable for each other a process of trust takes

place. I believe sharing stories can make us stronger as a collective, because people do have common experiences even if the road to where they are at this very moment was very different. With the narratives of this thesis I hope to show the capacity of communities and alliances for building bridges in segregated societies.

Furthermore, I have chosen to do a narrative analysis, which could be described as “a technique that ask how things are said and how the story is told, as well as what it includes” (Ahlstedt, 2016:140). The chapter called “Narratives from the Communities” consists of long quotes as I wish to capture the story of the interview participants. By letting the reader know how the participants behaved while telling their story I wish to give a picture of how their stories were told. This by including laughter, silences, and hesitations etc, to make the interview participant *persons*, with beating, perhaps bursting, hearts and living souls, not just empty quotes.

2.6 On Moving Others

I attempt to write this thesis in a way that allows the reader to feel. I am inspired by theorists as Lugones, Anzaldúa, and Trinh, because they write in ways that make me feel. As this thesis aims to spread hope to the people of the communities, and other communities, this is a research where emotions matters and plays a central role. Besides that, I wish my language to be accessible, and to make the interview participant persons with beating, perhaps bursting, hearts and living souls, not just empty quotes. Lykkes book “Writing Academic Texts Differently” (2014) has also inspired my concerning my writing and language.

2.7 Reflexivity

How the participants have expressed themselves and what they share of their story is of course influenced with who I am and how we socialize. Inspired by Ahlstedt (2016) I view my experiences as available knowledge, which I can use for producing more knowledge. I see many pros of being part of the same community or communities as the interview participants, as we share many experiences and understandings without explicitly explaining them in detail. In accordance with Justensen and Mik-Meyer (2011) I believe that my experiences can come to good use and interesting analyses in this thesis. But there of course are problematic

aspects of this to. Being a queer cisgender woman and roller derby player makes me feel belongingness to both the queer community and the roller derby community, and the overlapping space they create, causing a blindness to the norms I follow. My whiteness privileges me in more ways than I see at the very first glimt. I therefore try to take a step back, listen and learn, and take responsibility over my whiteness. Overall, I follow the norms in both communities, which I will problematize further on. I will continuously explain how I have used my own experiences throughout the text.

2.8 Ethical Aspects

I have used Vetenskapsrådets (2002) principles as guidelines during this thesis. Before the interviews started, I informed the participants that their attendance in the study is voluntary, and that they could change their mind about their participant whenever they want. The participants are informed that this thesis will be published. I asked them if they were ok with me recording the interview, this for making things easier for me and transcription possible. I have kept the material in such an order that unauthorized do not have access to it, it is only me as the author that do have access to it. Collected material will be used only for this research. When presenting the narratives of the interview participants pseudonyms, chosen by the interview participants themselves, are used. Even if pseudonyms are used it might be the case that the participants are recognizable, as people within the communities might know each other. I have come to the conclusion that there is a low risk of hurting someone even if they might be recognizable for some readers, as this thesis highlights positive aspects and hope within the communities rather than problematic issues. I am aware that the choice of highlighting the positive aspects of the communities might give a problematic image of them and how they function in practice. Without sounding too naive, I still think it is of matter to focus on the positive forces of the communities as there is a need of feeling hope within the society overall, and in the communities specifically.

Chapter 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Assemblies

The theoretical framework takes its starting point from Butler's book "Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly" (2015). In this book, Butler discusses topics as gender politics and the right to appear; bodies in alliance; bodily vulnerability and coalitional politics in a way that interests me. I will start this chapter with discussing how I interpret the term assembly. In Butlers words, "there are bodies that assemble on the streets or online or through other less visible networks of solidarity, and whose solidarity when it emerges, rests on a common and forcible exclusion from the public space" (2015:156). Marginalized bodies have many ways of mobilizing, there are more ways of doing resistance than marching on the streets. When talking about the queer community and the roller derby community, from my experience, bodies within these communities have a longing for creating worlds beyond the cisnormative and heteronormative norms and worlds. As the people of the communities are excluded from the public space, due to violence, threats, and heterosexism, they assemble in other places and in other ways. In Butlers words:

"So when people amass on the street, one implication seems clear: they are still here and still there; they persist; they assemble, and so manifest the understanding that their situation is shared, or the beginning of such an understanding. And even when they are not speaking or no not present a set of negotiable demands, the call for justice is being enacted: the bodies assembled "say" "we are not disposable", whether or not they are using words at the moment; what they say, as it were, is "we are still here, persisting, demanding great justice, a release from precarity, a possibility of a livable life"

(2015:25)

We are still here, we are still queer, longing for livable lives. But who are we? Here, Butler refers the “we” to those people whose needs, desires, and demands are yet not fully known, and whose getting together is tied up with a future that is yet to be lived out (2015:169). Furthermore, Butler explains that assemblies maintain themselves throughout “speech or silence, by action or steady inaction, by gathering together as a group of bodies in public space - visible, audible, tangible...” (2015:156). As I mentioned before, Butler focuses on gatherings in the streets, such as demonstrations. In this thesis I take use of her thoughts and would like to move beyond the streets, into other spaces than the public spaces as Butler discusses. I agree with her when she states:

“When bodies gather, they are demanding to be recognized, to be valued, they are exercising a right to appear, to exercise freedom, and they are demanding a livable life.”

(Butler, 2015:26)

Wherever bodies gather, they are gathering for the purpose of being strength in their position, demanding more of life than being marginalized and oppressed. They, we, are demanding a livable life. How come some bodies are in more need of assemblies than others? How come some lives are more marginalized than others? Sara Ahmed discusses in their article “Collective Feelings” (2004) how emotions has the power to move us and argues that emotions play a vital role in the materialization of individual and collective bodies (2004:25). Furthermore, Ahmed asks: “How do emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others?”. They argues that emotions influence how we inhabit the world(s) with others and that we then involve alignment with some subjects and against others (2004:32). In Ahmed’s words:

“What separates us from others also connects us to others”

(2004:30)

Reading Ahmed, draws my attention to Mouffe’s thoughts about the creation of ‘we’ and ‘them’. In “On the Political” Chantal Mouffe (2005) describes that the criteria of the political

is the friend/enemy discrimination and grouping, and the formation of a 'we' in contrast to a 'they'. Furthermore they states:

“It deals with the formation of a 'we' as opposed to a 'they' and is always concerned with collective forms of identification; it has to do with conflict and antagonism and is therefore the realm of decision, not free discussions.”

(Mouffe, 2005:11)

By reading Mouffe (2005:15), I interpret that in the creation of collective identities there is always a creation of a 'we' which only can exist by the delimitation of a 'they', which implies that “the 'they' represents the condition of possibility of the 'we'” Mouffe (2005:18). Besides antagonism, the concept of hegemony is center for 'the political'. Also Jodi Dean writes about the creation of a 'we', and states that this is done through shared questions and language (Dean, 1998:15-16). They writes:

“By expressing my sense of our experience in language, I not only build a connection to others but also facilitate the collective negotiation of who 'we' are or what it means to be one of us.”

(Dean, 1998:16)

Are assemblies results of the very creation of the 'we' and the 'they'? I will continue this discussion further on.

3.2 Intersectionality

I will now move on to the discussion of the term intersectionality. It is clear, in today's societies, that some bodies are more vulnerable, marginalized and oppressed than others. I ask myself, how is that? What are the reasons and effects of marginalized bodies? I want to start this section by discussing the term intersectionality, introduced by the black feminist and critical race theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, who discussed the intersections of gender, race and class matters (Yuval-Davis, 2011:159). Crenshaw (1989:139) defines

intersectionality as “the multidimensionality of marginalized subjects’ lived experiences”. In a Swedish context, the term was introduced in an anthology edited by Paulina de los Reyes, Irene Molina and Diana Mulinari in the year of 2002. Molina (2016:33) states that the term refers to intersections between different power structures in society, at the beginning especially focusing on racism, sexism and class oppression. Later on also oppressions connected to ableism, ageism and heteronormativity has been able to be analyzed through the intersectional perspective (Lundberg & Werner, 2016). We are all placed in an intersectional network of social structures that define the life conditions of our lives (Lykke, 2003).

Hübinette, Hörnfeldt, Farahani och León Rosales (2012) stresses how an individuals physical body affects how they will be viewed and treated, which in turn is reflected in that person's possibility of choosing education, work, housing and ways of living. For de los Reyes and Mulinari (2010), intersectionality is about questioning knowledge that is taken for granted about the social order which we live in, focusing on the norm and abnormalities from this. In the Swedish context, the norm and the majority group consists of the white cisgendered heterosexual middle/upper-class male (Elmeroth, 2008). What happens when bodies differs from the norm? How come a norm can be maintained when more people deviate from the norm than people passing within the norm?

Reading and studying intersectional feminist, queer, and norm critical literature by Butler, Lykke, Ahmed, Anzaldúa, Trinh, Kulick, and Spade closely during the last years has inspired me and made me come to understand and interpret myself and others from an intersectional perspective in new ways. I have created, and re-created, myself. I have polished myself, learnt and re-learnt. I remember being new in the city three springs ago, strolling around in, to me, new streets. I always ended up at the port, under the bridgehead, or at the bridge binding the city together. I still end up at those specific places, now new, in the process of polishing myself. Becoming me. Queer literature by mentioned theorists with its intersectional understandings helped me find myself; three years back a lost soul, today a proud queer. By understanding the concept of intersectionality I understood myself, figuring out my identity in terms of sexuality and belongingness, I see others in new ways too.

3.3 Allyship

What is an alliance, and how can one understand and define allyship? And what happens when marginalized bodies gather and create alliances? First, let's have a look on how Butler understands the concept:

“What I am calling alliance is not only a future social form; sometimes it is latent, or sometimes it actually is the structure of our own subject-formation, as when alliance happens within a single subject, when it is possible to say, ‘I am myself an alliance, or I ally with myself or my various cultural vicissitudes.’ That means only that the ‘I’ in question refuses to background one minority status or lived site of precarity in favor of any other; it is a way of saying, ‘I am the complexity that I am, and this means that I am related to others in ways that are essential to any invocation of this I’. For the point is not that I am a collection of identities, but that I am already an assembly, even a general assembly, or an assemblage.”

(Butler, 2015:68)

I understand my own ‘I’ and everyone else taking part of this thesis in accordance with Butlers understanding of an alliance. Reading Butlers words I get back to the introducing words of this thesis, what I see is thousands of ice floes floating side by side. We are all our own alliance, and by linking the distance between us we can create even wider alliances.

Lugones has in their paper “Playfulness, ‘World’-Travelling, and Loving Perception” studied cross-cultural loving and the need to understand the plurality among women, through describing the experience of ‘outsiders’ to the mainstream (Lugones, 1987:3). They describes how loving someone requires trying to see with their eyes and going into their worlds or communities, only by doing this world-travelling we can identify with each other (Lugones, 1987:8). By this travelling one can understand “what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes” (Lugones, 1987:17). I find Lugones concept of world-travelling interesting as it explores the distance between people and functions as a tool for making us

see and understand each other. I am interested in exploring how the concept can be used to connect different communities. I recognize my feelings of moving between rooms with how Lugones (1987) writes about world-travelling. Lugones (1987:11) states that “one can travel between rooms and one can inhabit more than one of these worlds at the very same time”. Furthermore, they states:

“There are worlds that we can travel to lovingly and traveling to them is part of loving at least some of their inhabitants. The reason why I think that travelling to someone’s world is a way of identifying with them is because by travelling to their world we can understand what it is to be them and what it is to be ourselves in their eyes. Only when we have travelled to each other’s worlds are we fully subjects to each other.”

(Lugones, 1987:17)

We travel because we love, we travel because we want to or/and have to continuing loving. For me, this is what Lugones means with cross-cultural and cross-racial loving, the need to understand and affirm the plurality among us. In Lugones (1987:3) words, “We learn to love each other by learning to travel to each other’s worlds”. Comparing Lugones’ (1987) thoughts about world-travelling and Butler’s (2015) view on every ‘I’ as an alliance, both concepts are, for me, about meeting each other. The travelling is in that sense a way of building bridges and alliances between different ‘I’. As I mentioned, Lugones (1987:11) states that “one can travel between rooms and one can inhabit more than one of these worlds at the very same time”. I see connections to how I understand Butler’s definition of alliances. Inhabiting more than one world at the time is a way of being an ally with oneself, to one’s own alliance. Even if people carry very different experiences that has formed them, they have something in common, and that is that they dare to be vulnerable and loving. They dare to show that they are sad and hurted, in pain and struggling. For me, this is an example of Lugones concept of world-travelling, the moving to each others worlds. This “travelling to each other’s worlds enables us to be through loving each other” (Lugones, 1987:8). I agree with Lugones when they states that we are fully dependent on each other for the possibility of being understood, without this understanding we are not making sense. Without this we are not integrated, but instead lacking (Lugones, 1987:8).

Trinh T. Minh-Ha writes about the boundary event, immigration and refugeeism from a postcolonial and feminist perspective in the book “Elsewhere, within here”. Just like Lugones talks about worlds, Trinh describes how all of us live in many different worlds at the same time, and how these worlds exist in the very same time at the very same place, which is the place we are right here and right now (Trinh, 2012:92). I see a clear connection between Trinh’s discussion with how Butler views alliances, we are alliances to ourselves and everything exist within us. Furthermore, Trinh discuss the meaning of being a metis, the translators’ translator, and how this position makes it possible to understand the language of several sides and might function as a tool of making them understand each other (Trinh, 2012:62).

According to Ning Puyu (2013), who writes about translation strategies under intercultural context, translation is generally considered as the significant channel of intercultural communication. To succeed on the process of translation, translators must be aware of cultural identities and emotional states of themselves and others, willing to step outside their own perspective and show respect and politeness of the other person’s value system. I see myself and all of us who try to bridge the gap between contexts as these translators as Puyu (2013) talks about. They claims that language is the carrier of culture and that translation involves the transfer between two different cultures carried by two different languages. I find these thoughts interesting in relation to allyship, as it is vital that the involved do understand each other for having a strong and fruitful allyship.

A question that has crossed my mind during this process of writing is how one do allyship within communities when there exist problematic structures between the allies, making some within the community feel excluded. In the book “Challenging the Myths of Gender Equality in Sweden”, edited by Martinsson, Griffin and Giritli Nygren (2016), self-images in a Swedish context are problematized. As they state, there is a need of challenging myths of equality (Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren, 2016). Even if allyships can be as an alternative reality, discriminatory norms and practices still might exist just as in all parts of the society. In Lykke’s words:

“I think it is important to deconstruct the different myths of equality that are embedded in national self-images such as the Swedish one.”

(Lykke in Martinsson, Griffin & Giritli Nygren., 2016:119)

3.4 Solidarity

In the books “Solidarity of Strangers: Feminism after Identity Politics” and “Feminist Solidarity, Reflective Solidarity: Theorizing Connections After Identity Politics” Jodi Dean writes about the important concept of solidarity, a crucial and vital concept for the creation of alliances and allyship. They presents three forms of solidarity, named conventional solidarity; reflective solidarity; and affective solidarity. The conventional solidarity builds upon the groups common interests, concerns and struggles, whereas the affective solidarity is based upon the mutual feelings of care and concern. Reflective solidarity, on the other hand, the group appeal to others to include and support each other because of the fact that their communicative engagement allows them to expect others to take responsibility for their relationship (Dean, 1996). I understand that through the reflective solidarity, the ones in solidarity recognize each other in their differences. Therefore the very differences becomes the basis for the creation of the ‘we’ (Dean, 1996:39). Reading Dean, I interpret that the reflective solidarity move beyond identity. They writes:

“I present a reflective concept of solidarity, then, as part of feminist theory’s move beyond identity. By turning our attention away from ourselves and toward our interconnections, we reconceive our differences as opportunities, as perspectives and talents that give us new understandings of the relations of power in some people’s lives as well as new ways to combat and resist them.”

(Dean, 1998:5)

Furthermore, reading Dean draws my mind to the creation of ‘we’ and ‘they’, earlier discussed by Mouffe. Dean (1998:17) states that a ‘we’ is constituted against the ‘they’ as an effect of ‘their’ wish to exclude ‘us’, this through threathfull acts and acts of silence. The reflective solidarity therefore builds upon “the exclusion of exclusion”, as Dean puts it, where

the 'we' is maintained through the struggle against 'they' (Dean, 1998:17). I'll end this section about solidarity with the words of Dean, discussing the importance of recognition:

“Once we recognize that the more differentiated we are, the more we depend on each other for recognition and connection, we create the possibility for seeing our relationships themselves as key components in the process of working together on shared political concerns.”

(Dean, 1998:6)

3.5 On vulnerability

Vulnerability is a center concept in this study for different reasons. Firstly, this thesis builds upon narratives of marginalized and vulnerable bodies. Spade discusses how trans people experience more violence and vulnerability, as their lives are controlled by legal and administrative systems that employ inelastic gender binaries (Spade, 2015:xiv). Secondly, the term has repeatedly coming back in the stories of the interview participants. It seems like vulnerability and emotions matter to the interview participants. I agree with Brené Brown, sociologist and author, that it takes courage to be vulnerable. Brown (2015) states: “Most people believe vulnerability is weakness, but really vulnerability is courage. One ask oneself, am I willing to show up and be seen?”. Because to feel this vulnerable means to be alive.

As I mentioned, vulnerability was a concept I got back to with the participants during the interviews. I understand that the concept of vulnerability is constant present in the communities studied, it seems to me that that both the roller derby community and the queer community try to practice being vulnerable to each other. People of the communities share their stories to each other and try to be open about for example issues related to mental health, anorexia and identity. In relation to this, a quote from the interview with Foxy got stuck in my mind: “it is like people in the derby community dare to feel for real”. Throughout this thesis I will explore and discuss why vulnerability seems to be of importance for the communities studied. Butler (2015:123) writes following: “I would like to turn to a consideration of vulnerability as a form of activism, or as that which is in some sense

mobilized in form of resistance.” Perhaps the presence of vulnerability in the communities has something to do with that? I will come back to this discussion later on.

3.6 Previous Research

As I have mentioned, I enter this research from a queer feminist standpoint with an intersectional understanding. I place myself within the fields of community studies and am inspired by the scholar of hope (Liinason & Cuesta, 2016). Besides mentioned researches in this chapter, there are many others that write about similar questions. I am inspired by Nira Yuval-Davis, who has developed the concept of transversal politics and introduces the three bases which the concept relies on (1999). Furthermore, they introduce the importance of the processes ‘rooting’ and ‘shifting’ when doing transversal politics (Yuval-Davis, 1999). I find it interesting how Yuval-Davis has studied belonging and the politics of belonging in relation to nationalism, migration, and human rights movements (2011). Another inspiring researcher is Juan Velásquez, who also has worked within the field of transversal politics and describes the concept as “the key to a feminist border-crossing”. Velásquez (2007) has focused on a group of women at a multicultural meeting place in Sweden, who deal with moving over borders concerning ethnic and national belongings. The material was collected through qualitative interviews in combination with participatory observation in meetings and interviews in group and individually, with the aim of achieving an inside-perspective and the women's situated knowledge (Velásquez, 2007). Using an inside-perspective and the situated knowledge of the participants is clearly something I am inspired by. Another vital researcher is Gloria Anzaldúa (2012), her concept of mestizas, borderlands and thoughts about belongingness over national borders has impacted me in many ways. I ally with mentioned researchers and see them as part of my academic family, as they have helped me to come to understand things in new ways.

Chapter 4

NARRATIVES FROM THE COMMUNITIES

4.1 Presentation of the interview participants

The participants of this study are six persons identifying with and feeling belongingness to the queer community, the roller derby community, or both. The participants have pseudonyms in this work, here named Xal, Patrik, Kim, Foxy, Siri and Olivia. Most of the interview extracts and citations are translated by me as the author from Swedish to English.

Xal

Identify as queer and lesbian, feeling belongingness to the queer community and the non-white room. Pronoun: She

Kim

Queer identifying with the roller derby community, especially The Vagine Regime, and the queer community. Pronouns: They and Them

Foxy

Identify with the queer community and the roller derby community. Pronouns: They and She

Siri

Feeling belongingness to the roller derby community. Pronoun: She

Patrik

Identify with the roller derby community, ally with the queer community. Pronoun: He

Olivia

Identify with the queer community and the roller derby community. Pronoun: She

4.2 Defining ‘Allyship’

I will start this chapter by sharing how some of the interview participant’s thoughts on the concept of allyship and being an ally. When asking them what allyship is for them and how they define the concept, they answer:

Siri: When I am thinking about being an ally, I am thinking of an united front. That one share the same values and point of view.

Foxy: To ally is to come together for a common goal and to stand up so everyone or a certain person reaches that goal. It is to collaborate and to make sure everyone is included.

In the talks with the interview participants, we often got back to the discussion of how the allyship may or may not differ when one ally with someone one share similar experiences with and when one ally with someone that one do not share experiences with. I asked them if there is a distinction in the doing of allyship if you share specific experiences with the one you ally or if you do not.

Xal: I think, if one ally with someone that carries different experiences than yourself, it is about listening. To support and be a backup, but to not talk for someone and be someone's voice. From my point of view, every human being have different experiences and it is not like I... [inhales and take a few seconds break] I am and act in the same way no matter what, I listen to people's experiences no matter what they carry with them. No matter who they are and which experiences they carry, I act respectful when meeting them. The difference of being ally to someone that one do not share experiences with is about taking a step back and listen, to show that one support that person without taking their experiences away from them. That’s how I think about it. Actually it is the same when it comes to a person that one share experiences with, as they still might differ slightly. It is

about realizing your position. Just because you are oppressed in one environment it does not mean you always is oppressed. One has to remember the intersectional perspective and positions.

Olivia: To me, alliances is when more than two people share a common problem, have something they believe in and want to work for achieving. Perhaps you do not need to have a shared problem, but a shared position. To find someone who share similar or the same experience. I also think one can have alliances crossing positions, it is about having the same mindset, same values, and that you work towards the same goals. It is about working toward the same goal or to share experiences. Perhaps not sharing the very same experiences, but that you can share your experiences and be understood and heard. To achieve confirmation and and hopefully also support to think new and more norm critical, both what one self can do but also what you can ask of others.

When analyzing the material and listening through the interviews I realize that I share a common language with the participants. They are speaking in terms of feminist concepts and terms, perhaps because they are aware of my position as a master student in gender studies, but I also think it depends of the fact that it's *their* language. Several of the interview participants have experience of studying feminism and queer theory at university, and/or have an interest for staying updated in feminist debates and literature. From their stories I understand that the intersectional condition and positions are of matter when one do allyship. The experiences we carry depend on who and where we are. Like Lykke (2003) states, we are all placed in an intersectional network of social structures that define the life conditions of our lives. Having one's intersectional position in mind then is vital for how the allyship is done. Furthermore, Xal and Patrik give examples of how they ally with people whom they do not share experience and position with:

Xal: I can understand homophobia if I have been exposed to it, but I cannot understand transphobia towards me because I do not have that

experience. But I still can ally with that person. And even if I can understand homophobia I can never feel what you feel. But I can understand it from my feelings that I carry, even if it is not yours. [Exhales and laughs] Deep talk here.

Patrik: Even if I am a white heterosexual cis-man that do not feel like being part of the queer community I support it, the derby community would not have been the same without the communities allying with each other. Because the queer community brings in values that lifts us. I cannot express how the roller derby community develops the queer community, but the queer community develops the roller derby community a lot! The queer community is something that I want to support and help in the way I can without clamp in and take over.

I understand that the interview participants define allyship as coming together, whether they share a common problem, a common experience, or a common goal. I understand that the allyship might depend on who you are, but mostly what you believe in. Kim shares an example of how the queer community and the roller derby community ally, which for me is a practical example of an overlapping community: the Vagine Regime.

Kim: Within Aotearoa (New Zealand) the queer communities and roller derby community don't really connect or reach out to each other, apart from with Vagine Regime Aotearoa (VRA). Vagine Regime is an international movement of queer roller derby skaters creating a place for them in roller derby in a way to celebrate the diversity of the queer community. VRA was founded by some queer roller derby skaters, I believe in 2013, who wanted to build a community of queer roller derby people and their friends within Aotearoa and internationally.

When asking how they *do* allyship, they replies:

Kim: VRA has fantastic relationships with other leagues in Aotearoa, partially because all of our skaters are from leagues throughout the country, but mostly because of the way that we connect with others when we have games. We play all levels of derby leagues, we play with a great attitude, and we allow anyone who considers themselves an ally to skate with us if they want while maintaining our commitment to queer skaters and the community by maintaining a safe space for our queer skaters so that they can skate with pride. I see this (allowing ally's to skate with us) as an important way to develop and maintain strong and positive relationships between the queer derby community and the larger derby community. When it comes to allyship I don't believe in excluding anyone from joining in, because of two reasons: one, we need support and connection with non-queer people, and two, we never know what stage of self-awareness and self-finding anyone is at, maybe they need the opportunity to dip their toe in and learn more about our community and in turn themselves.

I think this is a powerful story of how the communities need and support each other, how they overlap and are intertwined. When discussing how the interview participants *do* allyship, it is clear that this is a big and complicated question. There are so many ways of doing it, and aspects to have in mind. During the talk with Kim, they pretty much concluded what the discussions have been circulating about.

Kim: Through self-learning, listening and support.

Kim's words draws my attention to how Dean (1998) views solidarity, which can be summarized through the very making of oneself vulnerable, to listen with respect, and to understand each other's particularity. These components are vital in the building of interconnections and alliances (Dean, 1998). I interpret the self-learning, which Kim talks about, as a re-learning, to become better in the way you act and are as fellow human. We live in a world where many things not are as they should be, it is in many aspects a broken world. Global structural injustices, racists in the parliaments, marginalized people suffer and die. In

that sense, I interpret this self-learning as a process where one challenges the norms one has been raised into and re-learn. Kim also mentions the importance of listening. This is a theme that has been mentioned in most, if not all, interviews. I understand that the act of listening, taking a step back, letting someone else speak is a center concept in how the interview participants *do* allyship. This enables us to know how one can give support to each other.

4.3 The Power of Vulnerability

Vulnerability has been a concept the interview participants have been coming back to during the talks. It seems like vulnerability matters in both the queer community and the roller derby community. Questions which have crossed my mind are: What does it mean to be vulnerable? How do the communities practice vulnerability? Why is vulnerability of importance? As I mentioned in chapter 2, vulnerability seems to be vital due to two causes. Firstly, this thesis builds upon narratives of marginalized and vulnerable bodies. Secondly, the term has repeatedly coming back in the stories of the interview participants.

So, one could say that both the queer community and the roller derby community are marginalized and vulnerable communities due to the fact that people within the communities differ from societal norms. From the stories of the interview participants I understand that they embrace the vulnerability in several ways. I understand vulnerability as a pillar in how the communities *do* allyship. When asking how Siri and Foxy do for being including and supporting within the league and team, we got into the discussion of vulnerability. They answered:

Siri: In my league, we work a lot with ‘emotional rounds’ before and after everything we do. This in order to validate everybody's feelings. After a bout it is hard to gather people, some are high on endorphins, some are angry, some are happy. We try to gather the team and bring up if something did not feel right or ok. For us it is so important to have a climate where it is allowed to say such things.

Foxy: Before every practice we have an ‘emotional round’ where everyone in the team tell how they feel. And if someone feels bad we ask what they need and what we can do for them. As a freshie it was scary, ‘Am I really going to tell how I feel?’, I lied and told them I was fine. Someone said their life felt like shit, another told they had broken up with their girlfriend. Then I realized people actually shared how they feel. Now I know more about my teammates that I’ve known for 1,5 years than I know about friends that I’ve known for 4 years. It is so open and allowing. We can say: ‘I have a bad day and if I start to cry it is not your fault’. That’s such an important thing, not having to keep up a smile but actually may show that things are hard and tuff. And that’s ok.

Within the leagues, it is clear that there is a shared practicing of vulnerability. In the following quote, I understand that this also goes between and beyond leagues.

Olivia: Yes, we do conqurate against each other between leagues, we are doing sports. But there is a incredibly strong sense of solidarity. This weekend, for example, just before our bout I went to say hi to a player in the opponent team since she had the same derbyname as me. She was so open from the very start and told me she just had broken down, and did not know how to manage to make it through the whole bout. To say something like that to your opponent right before a bout shows an extreme... [takes a breath] humility. What we are doing is about so much more than who receives the highest score. We are all in this together. Damn, it’s so beautiful. [gets teary-eyed]. I am touched.

I remember feeling touched when Olivia shared this story, I think it manifests a moment of vulnerability between leagues and opponents. Even if we play against each other during the bouts we are as feminist players in this together, as we are convinced that what the world needs right now is roller derby, with everything the sport stands for and works for achieving. In accordance with Butler (2015:123) I understand that vulnerability can be used as a tool for

political change, and I interpret that the community use it as a form of activism and way of mobilizing resistance. When talking to Olivia I ask why vulnerability is of such matter, she answers:

Olivia: From my point of view, it is about that we want to be in a room where we all are accepted. Where I can work for you feeling good in here. I work for you being able to grow as a person in here. I work for you being able to see your full potential and enjoy yourself. I want you to enjoy our togetherness, because when you are, so am I. Because when you grow as a person, I grow as a person We are on different sides of the track, we play in different jerseys but we both want to become more whole as human beings, so that we have the energy to get through this life. So that we can make the existence a little better for more people on and outside of the track, so that we can go to work a little more happier the next day.

After those words, both me and Olivia sat quite for some seconds with tears in our eyes. I remember feeling this rush of love for the sport and the community at that very moment. I felt touched and thankful for being a part of this 'us'. Reading Olivia's quote thorough Butler thoughts about assemblies, I understand this gathering of queers and roller derby players as a demand to be recognized and valued, people of the communities are demanding a livable life and, in practice, exercise freedom (Butler, 2015:26). They allow themselves and others to be free from norms that try to hold them back.

Olivia: We are all fighting for strengthening each other as derby players, we see each other grow as players month for month, year for year. And the more I get the opportunity to be part of this work and for everyday we see each other grow as players, we also get the opportunity to meet as human beings. You get to know each other, by every little step you take closer to a person, the more you get to see of the fragility and the little in every person. It is beautiful to get to know

the small things in every person, as the same time as you see them glow and shine as derby players.

I understand this fragility that emerge by getting closer to each other as vulnerability, the daring of share yourself and all those feelings and struggles you carry. To dare to be vulnerable to others is for me an example of Lugones concept of world-travelling (1987), as this act can be seen as an invitation to each other's worlds. As Butler (2015:211) puts it: "I will only protect your vulnerability if you protect mine".

Olivia: I talked to one of my teammates the other day, about her picture of people in the team as being complete and protected persons who never experience hard times with themselves, like inferiority or anxiety. I remember when I was a rookie and saw the A-team players skate in like some knights on wheels with high speed and I remember thinking 'what kind of bodies are those? Are they UFOs?' Later on, I got the opportunity to join the A-team. Even if I do not know everyone in the team, I know that we all have our weaknesses and that we all have been fighting and that we all have shown ourselves vulnerable. Every single one has made themselves human to me. To me, there is no such thing as being hard and cocky, to me there are no person trying to keep up a surface. Everyone is... [takes a breath] everyone dares to make themselves vulnerable. But perhaps you do not see that from distance. I remember when I moved here and started to hang with queer anarchists and my mom told me 'I bet they are good persons, strong and whole persons'. And I remember thinking 'all of us are spending at least to nights a week crying at home, many of us are depressed, all of us are fuckups'. Perhaps you get an image of roller derby players and the leftists being invulnerable heroes... [breaks for a few seconds] But we are free. If you have dared to do something many people do not have the courage doing, it gives you a power that many are impressed and scared of.

From these stories I learn that vulnerability exists in the communities as the people feeling belongingness to them have dared to be vulnerable. As Olivia states, “if you have dared to do something many people do not have the courage doing, it gives you power”. Those words are worth repeating. I connect this to Brown’s (2015) thoughts concerning vulnerability and agree when she states that vulnerability is courage. Furthermore, Butler (2015:123) discusses that vulnerability in fact can be a form of activism as this mobilization of bodies embracing the vulnerability in themselves and others as strength, is a form of resistance. From own experience I know that many in my team and in my queer family share these thoughts about vulnerability, and in the meetings with interview participant I got touched by the power of vulnerability. I understand that the vulnerability is something that is linking people together, making them stronger by daring to be softer. Because we are broken in a broken world. We are trying to heal each other by being vulnerable. The world is falling apart, but we are rebuilding it. I understand that the overlapping communities can help queers and people of the roller derby community to breathe and gather energy. For this to occur, I agree with Spade’s following statement:

“Most vulnerable first, centering the belief that social justice trickles up, not down and that meaningful change comes from below.”

(Spade, 2015:137)

4.4 The Creation of ‘Us’

This section will discuss how the ‘we’ is created. During the interviews I noticed that the participants talked in terms of ‘we’, referring to the community or communities they feel belongingness to. I interpret that this act of language does something, create something. A ‘we’ and a ‘us’ is constructed, in relation to a ‘they’ (Mouffe, 2005; Dean, 1998). An alliance is built as an effect of this very act. When I asked Olivia and Xal what makes them feel belongingness to communities, they answered:

Olivia: I think it depend on things I do not understand. But I am looking for places and things I identify with.

Xal: I feel belongingness to the queer and lesbian community because I feel that I can share experiences with them and I am not getting questioned for who I am. We find strength in each other. It is something with sharing experiences and being understood. With ‘community’ I mean that I move around and with queer and lesbian persons, perhaps not a specific room or place. That’s how I define queer rooms. Somehow, it means to find home. Before I found the queer room I did not feel home at any place. Now I feel that I can find strength by knowing that I have many people behind me that support me if I’m exposed to anything.

Reading the empirical material, I find a clear pattern of the participants searching for a community they identify with. For example on the ground that they identify as queer, or share political values, thoughts or believes. They seem to look for gatherings of people who are as different as themselves. I recognize myself a lot in both Xal’s and Olivia’s stories. I remember understanding I was queer and felt pretty lost in myself. I was new in Gothenburg and felt new to myself. Beginning roller derby ment a lot to me in that process, as it at the same time was my first queer room and gave me access to an empowering community. It was such a relief to find home. With this experience and Xal’s narrative about finding home in mind, I move towards Ahmed’s question about collective feelings and how “emotions work to align some subjects with some others and against other others” (2004:32). Her words pops up in my mind: “What separates us from others also connects us to others” (2004:30). Being queer in a cisnormative and heteronormative society does something to us, it ties us together, connects us in a powerful way. The same goes for playing a marginalized sport. An alliance of ‘we’ is created as a distance to normative people and sports is made. The ‘we’ is created through the very delimitation to the ‘they’, which implies that “the ‘they’ represents the condition of possibility of the ‘we’”, as Mouffe (2005:18) put is. Being queer, marginalized, and different thus make the people of the communities feel united. I understand this through reading Dean (1996), who states that solidarity can be built upon the notion of seeing oneself in each other’s differences. Being queer and marginalized in this cisnormative and heteronormative society then makes people of the communities recognize themselves through others.

Writing these words gets me to think about Anzaldúa (2012) and the borderlands she writes about, and how we are connected over and beyond national borders. I hear the words “queer solidarity smashes borders” repeating in my head. I understand the gathering of queers and skaters within the communities, the creation of ‘us’, as a consequence of that these bodies needs, desires and demands are not yet fully known, and whose getting together is tied up with a future that is yet to be lived out (Butler, 2015:169). Reading Butler’s thoughts about alliances, I interpret each and one of us as our own alliance. Because we are not a collection of identities, but already an assembly (Butler, 2015:68). This searching for communities which one identify with can then be understood as a collaboration between alliances, or even an act of making the assembly even bigger and more powerful. Anyways, the league and my teammates has become a huge part of my life, and somehow a ‘we’ was united. Let's hear what Olivia states about the importance of the ‘we’.

Olivia: We spend so much time, feelings and effort on derby. Sometimes I think that derby just is a hobby. But when it doesn't work it really feels horrible. When I was away last season, practicing with another league, it wasn't that fun as it uses to be. Because the right persons weren't there. Derby is not just derby, derby is... [takes a breath] it depends on which persons are there. I missed my league, I wanted to be with my league. I did not just want to play derby, I wanted to be with my league, to meet you and build something together.

I do understand what Olivia experiences and recognize her feelings concerning that derby is so much more than derby. Who are present is vital. Yes, I perceive the environment welcoming and including when practicing with other leagues and during boot camps with various leagues, but it is something special with *your* league. I understand that there is a ‘we’ within ‘us’, a ‘we’ within the ‘we’. Among derby players, there often is a strong feeling of belonging to the community as a whole, but also a sense of belonging to your specific league. And within your own league there are groupings and power relations. But still, there is something about your own league. I wonder, how is this ‘us’ created? Of course, to apply to and join a league creates some kind of distance to others. A ‘we’ is then created as the

consequences that there are approximately 30 leagues within Sweden and 400 leagues over the world. Concerning the roller derby community, there is a formal process of belongingness as most of us who feeling belongingness to the community are skaters, bench crew, referees, and officials committed to certain leagues. The queer community, in contrast, is a more open community as there not are any bureaucratic entrance processes. From my experience of being part of the queer community of Gothenburg during the last three years, I have seen how groups change and move within the community. People move in and out from groups within the community, move between different 'we'. The same goes for the roller derby community, by getting to know people in my league during the last two years I see that there exists several 'we' within 'us'. At first sight I just saw the A-team, the B-team and the group of new skaters, so called rookies or freshies. Later on, I got to know people better and saw that there were groupings within and across the teams. From my perspective, the 'we' is created as a result of acts and language. It is a performative act, just as gender is constructed performatively. Through talking about ourselves in terms of 'we', describing ourselves and our sport as marginalized, alliances and worlds are created, constructed. When there is a 'we', there also is a 'them', what are the consequences of that? There are of course problematic aspects of creating distance between 'us' and 'them'.

Siri: I perceive derby-Sweden as that we are good on including and being welcoming. We try to protect them we have in the sport.

Roller derby has an self-image and reputation of being an including sport and community. From the material I understand that injustices and structural issues take place within the community. The self-image is built upon that many within the roller derby community rests upon feminist and queer values and that the people of the community tries to do something about the injustices they see, experience, and are affected by. But still, discrimination and exclusion occurs. Not all members of the community feel included and valued for who they are. Inspired by Martinsson, Griffin and Giritli Nygren (2016) I find it crucial to challenge the self-image of being equal and including as a sport and community. As Lykke states, "it is important to deconstruct the different myths of equality that are embedded in national self-images such as the Swedish one" (in Martinsson et.al., 2016:119). The material shows that there is a strong sense of being inclusive by the participants living in Sweden, I assume

that the same goes beyond national borders as the roller derby community is international. In the next quote Foxy shares some words about how the feeling of belongingness to the 'we' does something.

Foxy: We have each others back even if one barely know each other or know anything about them, because one know that we are united in a way.

By feeling belongingness to and included in the community, to feel like one is included in the 'we', Foxy means that one can count on people having your back. This is of course powerful and strengthening for those who are included in the 'we'. But I wonder, who is shut out? There is a risk of excluding people by thinking that the community is completely including and flawless. There is a need of continued work for being including and to continue question the existing self-image. Do the dichotomies of 'we' and 'they' in fact create bigger distance between some groups, when others move closer? Perhaps some ice floes move closer, away from others. Identifying with the queer community and the roller derby communities perhaps can be understood as making clear who you are and what you believe in, dissociating oneself from those who don't share your values. Those are the ones left out, those are the 'they'. As Mouffe (2005) states, the political demands that there is friend/enemy grouping, a 'we' in contrast to a 'they'. The political, in those terms, has to do with a conflict, antagonism and hegemonies. By reading Mouffe (2005) I understand that the 'we' within the roller derby community and the queer community are collective identities, maintained by the delimitation of the 'they'. Because the idea of allyship, as I interpret the material from the interview participants, is not that every single of us are meant to come together and unite, but the ones sharing common values should find each other, and the strength that involves. So that the communities together can stand united, resisting racist, patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic forces. Those are the ones left out. So that the people of the communities can live livable lives. I therefore understand that the solidarity within the communities involves what Dean calls a reflective solidarity, which builds upon "the exclusion of the exclusion" as the 'we' is maintained through the struggle against the 'they' (Dean, 1998:17).

4.5 Shared Values and Political Goals

Another vital subject during the interviews has been politics. I understand that political goals and shared values create an important pillar which the allyship within and between the communities builds upon.

Patrik: I think what the roller derby community and the queer community have in common is that both are a safe space with similar values, and that's the reason why we work so good together. I remember that bout when the skaters stood together with the banner 'Open the border!' instead of doing the regular skate-in. Some of the referees asked me if this really is a political arena, I told them everything and everywhere is a political arena. Because everything is politics. That would never have happened on a soccer game as you risk to make people upset. But we have the courage to say 'if you don't like what we stand for, don't be here. Because if you don't agree with this, you don't accept who we are'.

Political values and statements are other ways of creating alliances, political 'we' are constructed by delimitation to 'they' (Mouffe, 2005). This 'we' is skating on wheels with banners with political messages in sport venues instead of walking in the streets, doing resistance to racist governmental decisions. These bodies has assembled here, sharing common values and stand in solidarity with each other and other marginalized bodies, taking distance from the 'they' who stands for conservative politics, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. I therefore understand that the community is maintaining a reflective solidarity between them, as they are excluding the ones excluding them by violence, threats and silence (1998:17). Patrik shares another example of how a team shows their allyship with refugees:

Patrik: It was great to see Crime City Rollers during playoffs when they did the warm up in their 'Refugees Welcome' t-shirts and people were looking at them. Not because they did not agree with the message, but because they did not think this is an arena for that.

Which is completely bullshit. In Malmö there is a more clear connection between roller derby, the queer community and leftists. It is more outspoken and open than in Gothenburg.

This act is an clear example of how the community shows its allyship with refugees. It is an example of how the community makes statement of what it stands for and believes in, in contrast to the 'they'. As Patrik states, there is a connection between roller derby players, the queer community and leftists. How outspoken this connection is varies city to city. No matter how outspoken it is, a powerful context is created, a context where people with similar values can gather and find strength in each other. Contexts are created, and bridges between the ice floes are creates. Bodies gather and demand livable lives. Foxy shares their thoughts about how the communities, for them, has melted together to one overlapping context.

Foxy: There were queer contexts for queer persons and it was the roller derby context, and suddenly many queers found their context where it does not matter how I look, I don't have to be the fastest, I don't have to be the strongest, because there is someone who stands up for me and I am good enough. In my head, there is a strong feminist and anti-racist value base within roller derby what highlights people who do not receive the space they need and deserve in society. Roller derby is not only that my team ally with me, but also that teams ally with each other. I have never in other sports played a game and hugged my opponents afterwards saying 'well played, you are so strong and thank you for the great game', meaning it.

Just like for Foxy, derby for me is a place where bodies on the margins get their deserved space. It is a space where we can gather, recharge, rest, and make resistance; where we can organize in order to dismantle the patriarchy, the capitalism, the racism, the homophobia and transphobia. Even if we as roller derby players bouts against each others as opponents we are united in our political goal. The community is built upon solidarity. Because we have shared goal: social justice and equality. And we know who our enemy is: the existing norms and societal structures.

Olivia: Remember who the real enemy is.

Olivia's words draws my mind to Mouffe's (2005) discussion of the friend/enemy grouping, which takes place in the political and among collective forms of identification. According to Mouffe (2005), hegemony and antagonism are center concepts within the political. By being hegemonic within the roller derby community, and by sharing political values which are the contradiction to the ones of the enemy, the 'we' is created and maintained. In this way, I understand that what separates groups from groups also is what keeps the both groups intact. Furthermore, I understand that there is a conventional solidarity within the communities as the people within them share interests and struggles, which Dean (1996) states characterizes this form of solidarity.

4.6 Norm Critical Thoughts / Creating the Utopia

From the interviews I understand that the people of the queer community and the roller derby community share a longing for worlds beyond the cisnormative, patriarchal and heteronormative norms and worlds. People on the margins live in a hard world. In the need of softness, the people of the communities has created their our own rooms and worlds. For the fact is that queers and marginalised people are dying. When they assemble in their communities it is a way of saying "we are still here, persisting, demanding great justice, a release from precarity, a possibility of a livable life" (Butler, 2015:25). One of the participants share some thought on his allyship with the queer community:

Patrik: Somewhere, it is about how you want things to work and how you want the world to be. Especially if you think about queer politics, one gather in a dissatisfaction how the world looks like. One of the reasons that I feel ally with the queer community is that those thoughts are within me and develops me to a better person. I was aware of them before but did not have them so close to me before I got involved within roller derby.

I understand that the participants share this dissatisfaction about how the world look like. In the following quotes stories are shared about the pros of the queer room and the room of roller derby.

Foxy: It feels like non-queer contexts become closed and that there are certain rules of what to do and not. Queer contexts feels more open and you can be who you are. You can look however you want and be however you want.

Siri: From my point of view, roller derby is a very allowing room where we try to include each other. It is a space where people are aware. We do pronoun rounds and are respectful to each other. I think many get in touch with roller derby as it is a space where you can be who you are.

What I hear, reading these stories, is a creation of an utopia and the moving closer towards it. An utopia with its own norms, making it easier to live livable lives. It is so vital that it's possible to exist as you want in a world that is so broken. I think communities open ups the possibility for more livable lives.

Olivia: No matter what is going on in your private life I can come to the sport venue, put my skates on and forget everything for a while. Just spend time with others, laugh and have fun. You get to run away and remember your context, this is what matters. I work a couple of hours each day and do not need to invest myself at work, because I have a place to which I can run away. I have somewhere to enter, which is fun and just for me and us. I can be proud of what I do and we do together. I can own that together with all of you. To have a context where you are able to have fun but at the same time is bloody serious, where we fight so hard for building something up and to achieve a certain accomplishment. To have that as thirty year old is a luxury, to be able to run away.

The communities can in this sense be understood as places that marginalised people run to, worlds they enter, for being able to endure other worlds they move within. I view the communities as spaces where people can set their own rules, norms and structures. Spaces where they actually feel that they have the power to change things; where they cannot only dream but also implement and actualize their hopes and dreams. Not only dreaming about an utopia, but actually creating and inhabiting it.

Olivia: It has meant a lot to me as a lesbian to play roller derby. For me... [takes a few seconds break] There are so many things to say, I'll start here. Since I was 16 years old I understood I fall in love with women, but still I have been striving for a heterosexual life unconsciously. It has created many problems for me. I did understand that I was a lesbian before I started to play roller derby, but it is first here I have a context where it is the norm and where it is ok to be free in that. It has meant a lot to me to be expected to be lesbian and not having to explain it. Being here gives me a mindset that strengthens me as a queer person. Because it is about becoming more physically comfortable and physically obvious in different rooms. To me, it is interrelated with sexuality and identity.

To move within worlds where it is the norm to be queer does something to you. I understand that it gives a feeling of freedom and strengthens you. Even Foxy ties on to the feeling of freedom in their story. When asking what it means to be part of the communities, they answers:

Foxy: It means everything. It is a security and freedom. It feels like someone always have your back. It does not feel so lonely in life when things fuck up.

I remember being touched in this conversation, as I came to realize how much the communities means to me too. During the talk with Foxy we got into a discussion that I

understand circulate around individualism versus collectivism. I asked them what is it that makes them stand up for each other within the team.

Foxy: I think everyone want to feel less alone. We all know how it is to be alone and not being able to do anything, how it feels like when you want to call someone but not being able to do it as it makes you feel demanding. In this community people say 'we are here, this is what we want to spend our time and energy on'. Because there are so many who have not had these many friends before.

Being part of the communities is in that sense a way to be part of a collective, instead of being alone. A conversation with Siri ties into the same discussion.

Sofia: The siblinghood that exist within the roller derby community is so beautiful, that we really want other people and league to grow.

Siri: ...and that people take four hour from their sparetime to help someone else unpaid. There are so many enthusiast within this sport.

Sofia: I wonder what it is what makes us sit down in that car and go those four hours.

Siri: It is hard to pinpoint, but I have gotten so much from the roller derby community so for me it is a way of giving back. I want everyone to experience it, to be in love with your sport. And I want to pass that forward. I want everyone to join.

Sofia: What is it that you want to pass forward?

Siri: I really want to pass forward the feeling of being part of a community. I come from a school background where I did not have many friends, coming to a league and get 30 new close friends, where we practice, play and spend time together, is completely new to me. I want everyone to have their own derby team.

Sofia: I feel you. I think it is so beautiful and important. It is like I fall in love again and again with everything roller derby involves. It is so much more than just practices and games, it is my life, my everyday.

These talks circulates about questioning individualism. From talking with the interview participants about their engagement in the communities I interpret that being part of a community is to be part of something. I think this is vital for us as human beings. The fear of feeling lonely seems to be common for many of the participants, and I interpret that they share a longing of feeling belongingness to something bigger than themselves. They embrace the power of solidarity and collectivism.

Foxy: A lot within roller derby builds upon solidarity, this is not an individual sport that you cannot be on the track by yourself winning. Jammers need their blockers and blockers need their jammers. We need each other as teammates and it is expressed through that people need each other. All of us need to be seen. Once you started to see people you cannot stop doing so, once you cared for a person you cannot stop doing so.

S: What is it that you share?

Foxy: First of all, the love for the sport. That everyone of us saw a pair of roller skates and thought 'that could be something for me'. Everyone of us have been standing on a pair of roller skated for the first time and thought 'what am I doing? How am I supposed to go fast and tackle when I feel like Bambi?'. Everyone of us have been there and fought to develop as players. Beyond this we of course stand in solidarity as we all want human rights to be something that exist in reality and not just on paper. We move within feminist struggles and stand up for non-men, and support them.

To need your teammates goes for all sports played in teams, in that sense this is nothing unique for roller derby. Within several team sports, defence players are dependent on their offensive, just like the offensive players are dependent on their defensive players. Anyways, I interpret these communities as spaces where they people of them can gather, dream, and live livable lives. They are spaces where the people of the communities can create their own norms and get closer for achieving an everyday that is close to an utopia. Utopias are not about what is impossible to achieve, but what not yes is achieved. I mean, it was not long ago

since homosexuality stopped being considered as a disease in Sweden; it was not long ago since trans persons were sterilized in Sweden. What I wish to highlight is that the lives lived today has once been seen as lives lived in utopias. We are as human beings capable to re-think and adapt to new norms. Even if it is hard to see, things are changing for the better. Through gathering in communities and building bridges between them, a process of change is taking place. Communities are questioning structural norms by creating own norms. Does it sound like an utopia? Lets see about it.

AN ARMY OF LOVERS CANNOT LOSE

We are an army because we have to be. We are an army because we are so powerful. (We have so much to fight for; we are the most precious of endangered species.) And we are an army of lovers because it is we who know what love is. Desire and lust, too. We invented them. We come out of the closet, face the rejection of society, face firing squads, just to love each other!

Queer Nation Manifest (1990)

Chapter 5

FINAL WORDS

5.1 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis has been to study narratives of allyship within and between communities. Through six interviews with members of the communities this study has aimed to use narrative writing in order to analyze how the queer community and the roller derby community ally and build bridges. The research questions have been: What does it mean to be an ally? How do they *do* allyship within the community and between communities? In this very last chapter I will summarize the findings of the thesis.

Firstly, what does it mean to be an ally? This study shares stories about how the interview participants understand the concept of allyship. Based on the empirical material, I conclude that allyship means to stand united and come together; to listen, relearn and support. Furthermore I understand they interpret being an ally is to understand one's position from an intersectional perspective and to take responsibility for that position. Depending on who you are in relation to the ones you ally, how the allyship is done and takes place may vary. Furthermore, I understand that the interview participants use their intersectional position as a starting point when doing allyship, and that respect towards others is vital. From their 'I' and their own alliance, they ally with others. I therefore interpret the interview participants' understandings of alliances through Butler's (2015) discussion of assemblies. Furthermore, I conclude that the interview participants, by the term 'ally' mean to act in solidarity with the ones included in the 'we' and by making themselves vulnerable for each other, which corresponds to Dean's (1998) definition of how solidarity is performed. I will discuss and summarize how this 'we' within the communities is created and maintained later on.

So, how do they *do* allyship within the community they inhabit and between other communities? Throughout the narratives of this thesis, examples of how the people of the communities ally are told. How the allyship is done is discussed through the themes

“Vulnerability”, “The Creation of Us”, “Shared Values and Political Goals”, and “Normative Critical Thoughts / Creating the Utopia”. Firstly, I have come to the conclusion that vulnerability is a center concept in the discussion of how the interview participants *do* allyship. By making themselves vulnerable, and by daring to let themselves be seen vulnerable, bridges are built within and between the people of the communities. I connect this to Brown’s (2015) thoughts concerning vulnerability and agree when she states that vulnerability is courage. Within the roller derby community allyship and vulnerability is for example done and maintained by the very practicing of emotional rounds. By the sharing of feelings I interpret that alliances within the leagues are created and maintained. It seems like something occurs within the communities when the people of them share their true feelings and thoughts, instead of holding up a false surface. Both within and between leagues of the roller derby community there is an understanding of vulnerability as an important condition.

In this thesis stories of opponents breaking down before bouts have been told. I see these moments as glew, getting and keeping the community together united. By sharing what one carry and asking for help, bridges between the people of the community are build. I have come to the conclusion that vulnerability is something that intertwine the people of the communities, and something that is used as a form of activism. I understand that the doing of resistance through vulnerability among the communities is a practical example of Butler’s (2015) thoughts about the concept and its use as a tool for political change. In interpret that the people of the queer community and the roller derby community embrace vulnerability. From the discussions with the interview participants I understand that this might have something to do by being part of a marginalized and vulnerable group and community. Furthermore, I interpret that they embrace vulnerability as they have dared to be vulnerable once and see the power of this very action. In Olivia’s words:

“Perhaps you get an image of roller derby players and the leftists being invulnerable heroes... [breaks for a few seconds] But we are free. If you have dared to do something many people do not have the courage doing, it gives you a power that many are impressed and scared of.”

By daring to be themselves and to embrace their and others vulnerability is therefore a way of doing allyship and alliances among the communities, both with oneself and others; both within one's community and across communities.

The creation of 'us' and a 'we' is another theme that shows how the allyship within and between the communities is done. I note that alliances are created as a consequence of the use of language, talking in terms of 'we'. A 'we' is constructed as a people of the communities distance themselves from people following mainstream norms and mainstream sports. People on the margins of society become a 'we' by delimiting themselves from the 'they', through a friend/enemy grouping, in Mouffe's (2005) words. By talking in these terms, strong bonds are made to one's queer family and/or to one's derby league. Alliances are built as an effect of this very act. Being queer, marginalized, and different thus make the people of the communities feel united. I understand this through reading Dean (1996), who states that solidarity can be built upon the notion of seeing oneself in each other's differences. Being queer and marginalized in this cisnormative and heteronormative society then makes people of the communities recognize themselves through others.

I understand the gathering of queers and skaters within the communities, the creation of 'us', as a consequence of that these bodies needs, desires and demands are not yet fully known, and whose getting together is tied up with a future that is yet to be lived out (Butler, 2015:169). Reading Butler's thoughts about alliances, I interpret each and one of us as our own alliance. Because we are not a collection of identities, but already an assembly (Butler, 2015:68). As a reader of this paper, one is told that the derby players have each others back even if they do not know each other in person. Being part of the community in that way involves that one have thousands unknown people having your back, supporting you when you are in need of support. The same goes for the queer community. From distance roller derby can look like women and non-binary trans people tackling each other down, tearing each other apart, but the fact is that people of the community are lifting each other up. Every time you fall down on the floor, you are surrounded by team mates that care about you, giving you a helping hand up on your skates again. Together we fall, together we stand.

This construction of alliances as a consequences of the groupings ‘we’ and ‘they’ is within the studied communities closely tied with political goals and shared values. Through the discussions with the interview participants I conclude that political goals and shared values create an important pillar on which the allyship builds upon between the queer community and the roller derby community. By making statements and putting themselves on the political map, political alliances within and between the communities are constructed. In this thesis narratives have been shared about derby teams showing their allyship and support to refugees by skating with banners saying ‘Open the borders’ and wearing t-shirts stating ‘Refugees Welcome’. These acts are examples of how the roller derby community ally with refugees and question governmental decisions concerning migration politics. By showing this dissatisfaction towards parliament politics and their decisions, a political alliance is constructed based on the ‘we’ distancing themselves from the ‘they’. This alliance of roller derby players and queers stands for solidarity, human rights, and anti-racism. The bodies of people feeling belonging to the queer community and the roller derby community have assembled, on the basis of sharing common values and standing in solidarity with each other and other marginalized bodies, taking distance from the ‘they’ who stands for conservative politics, racism, homophobia, and transphobia. I therefore understand that the communities are maintaining a reflective solidarity between them, as they are excluding the ones excluding them by violence, threats and silence (Dean, 1998:17). The construction of the ‘we’ within the communities, based on political goals and shared values, corresponds with Mouffe’s (2005) discussion about the friend/enemy grouping. As Mouffe states, the political demands that there is a ‘we’ against a ‘they’.

Moving back to the introducing metaphor about the ice floes in the harbour of Gothenburg, all ice floes can impossible become united. Some move closer and some move further away from each other. I interpret the queer community and the roller derby community as spaces and forces linking people with common political goals and values together, uniting them. In that sense, some ice floes build bridges through alliances and become a shared ‘we’, while this ‘we’ delimit themselves from the ‘they’. Because the idea of allyship, as I interpret the material from the interview participants, is not that every single of us are meant to come together and unite, but the ones sharing common values should find each other, and the

strength that involves. So that the communities together can stand united, resisting racist, patriarchal, homophobic and transphobic forces.

In the very act of people gathering, alliances are made. This thesis has focused on the gathering of queer persons and people of the roller derby community, worlds which I inhabit and feel belongingness to. I see myself in the interview participants, and I see them in me. We are an alliance. In our dissatisfaction of how the world functions, we have meet. And by meeting, we find strength and energy to endure living on the margins. By gathering and coming together, queers and people of the derby community are protesting to the current norms. From the interviews I understand that the people of the queer community and the roller derby community share a longing for worlds beyond the cisnormative, patriarchal and heteronormative norms and worlds. When they assemble in their communities it is a way of saying:

“We are still here, persisting, demanding great justice, a release from precarity, a possibility of a livable life.”

(Butler, 2015:25)

I interpret the communities as places where other norms and structures than the cisnormative, heteronormative, and patriarchal take place. The communities are in that sense spaces where the people of the communities create their own worlds, and move towards their dreams and utopias, beyond the world as we know it. By showing respect towards each other within and between the communities studied, alliances are constructed. For one thing is certain: we have always been here, and we will always be here. In the need better life circumstances people on the margins of society come together, gather in alliances, create their own communities where they can breath, find joy, grief, and laugh. I conclude that people of the queer community and the roller derby community *do* allyship by acting in solidarity with each other, with the ‘we’.

5.2 Further Remarks

This study has studied narratives from the queer community and the roller derby community. The study has given me a greater understanding of the allyship and solidarity within and between the communities. Writing this thesis has made me concern of how vital it is to remind us as queer and marginalized persons about the fact that we are many angry persons who are dissatisfied with how the world has ended up. From meeting and talking with the interview participants I hear dreams and hopes about how they want the world to function and look like. From my point of view, there are many structures making people numb and inhabit a feeling of political depression and/or hopelessness in the world as we know it. For being able to dream I think it helps to remind ourselves as activists that we are many, many more than we can imagine, and that change is possible. There are people who are ready to have your back whenever you are in need. There are alliances and communities who are longing for a societal change and revolution. I think it is vital that there is a continuously contribution of researches that spread hope and practical examples of how one can fight and change problematic norms, oppressions, and structures. Therefore I emphasize the importance of researches focusing on solidarity, coalitions, and examples of practical change.

Furthermore, doing this thesis, my eyes has opened up wider concerning the possibilities of doing research about the queer community and the roller derby community. I think it would be interesting if future research would have the possibility to do closer collaborations with the queer or roller derby community. For the last couple of years, during my studies within gender studies, I have found the method of Participatory Action Research interesting. I therefore find it would be interesting if future research would have the possibility to do a Participatory Action Research with a league from the roller derby community, a group within the queer community, or perhaps a group of people feeling belongingness to both communities. This would open up the possibility to follow the participants between the different rooms and worlds they move. I have found it interesting to write this thesis from a position as an insider of the communities, as the process on its own has ended up being a process of building bridges and creating alliances within and between the communities. I therefore encourage further research to use this insider perspective in studies about communities. I see it as a form of activism on its own.

Furthermore, I see a need of further research which spreads hope to the people of the communities, but there is also a need of critical researches which problematize problematic structures within them. Just as there is a need of this sharing of hope through storytelling, there is a need of norm critical analyses of the communities. The queer community as well as the roller derby community have problematic norms and structures within them. Research focusing on problematizing these and giving practical examples of how they can change for the better would be fruitful for the communities. I see a need of problematizing the whiteness within the roller derby community, power relations in relation to hierarchies, and the self-image of the sport overall. Concerning the queer community I also see a need of questioning and problematising power relations within the community overall and the groups within it.

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Sofia Skoglund

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Questions to participants

Name

Pronouns

To which community/communities do you feel belongingness? Why is that?

What does it mean to be part of a community to you?

What is allyship to you, how do you understand the concept?

Whom do you consider yourself ally with?

How do you cooperate with other communities?

How do you do allyship?

