



# Women without borders – how trans women find themselves online

A qualitative study on trans women in online support communities

Kvinnor utan gränser – hur transkvinnor hittar sig själva online  
En kvalitativ studie om transkvinnor i Internetbaserade stödgrupper

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08 / 2019

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## Introduction

In this thesis I have examined the relationship between trans women and online communities, specifically supportive online communities that are created and administered by trans women. Emi Koyama (2001) describes “trans” as “an inclusive term encompassing a wide range of gender norm violations that involve some discontinuity between one's sex assigned at birth to her or his gender identity and/or expression” (p. 1), while Stephen Whittle (2006) defines “trans identity” as “anyone who does not feel comfortable in the gender role they were attributed with at birth, or who has a gender identity at odds with the labels 'man' or 'woman' credited to them by formal authorities” (p. xi). However, as Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore (2008) assert in the following quote, “trans” and “transgender” should not be considered synonymous.

This special issue of 'WSQ' invites feminist work that explores categorical crossings, leakages, and slips of all sorts, around and through the concept 'trans-'. While gender certainly – perhaps inevitably – remains a primary analytical category for the work we sought to publish in this feminist scholarly journal, our aim in curating this special issue specifically was not to identify, consolidate, or stabilize a category or class of people, things, or phenomena that could be denominated 'trans,' as if certain concrete somethings could be characterized as 'crossers,' while everything else could be characterized by boundedness and fixity. It seemed especially important to insist upon this point when addressing transgender phenomena. (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 11)

Lori Girshick (2008) describes “transgender” as “An umbrella term for gender variant individuals” (p.206), and “trans-identified people” as “The collective of people who are gender variant in some way, who experience a disconnection to anatomy, gender expression, gender presentation, or gender roles outside the norm” (p. 206). In other words, “transgender” suggests the individual is “gender variant”, while “trans” suggests the individual is “gender variant 'in some way” (Girshick, 2008). Julia Serano (2012) claims that “anyone who fails to conform to the gender binary – whether an intersex child, a tomboyish girl, a gay man, a transgender person, etc. – is marginalized by society, albeit in different ways”, suggesting that people can be trans in several ways and that being transgender is just one aspect of being trans.

The community I have chosen as my main template for this thesis is a supportive online server known as “Kadath”, which is an online support community server dedicated to trans and non-binary people. However, at the time that I am writing this thesis, the members of this server mostly consist of trans women, and this is why I focus on the trans women of Kadath. As a trans woman myself I also wish to encourage appropriate representation for all gender nonconforming people, and I wish to leave any matters specifically related to non-binary lived experiences to the non-binary researchers who wish to explore these subjects.

I acknowledge that I am a trans woman, and interacting with Kadath has made me aware of

the importance of analytically engaging more in-depth with this server because, as I will explain in the “Background and Motivation” chapter of this thesis, it is important to tell different stories of the transgender lived experience. These different stories entail aspects such as the more joyous nuances of the transgender lived experience, and not just the depressing and dangerous aspects which are often associated with transgender lives. Kadath is, by my estimation, a community similar to another server known as GoneWildTrans. However, this thesis will be focused on Kadath, and will only reference GoneWildTrans where it is deemed necessary, and it is a matter which I will explain in the “Background and Motivation” chapter of this thesis.

Kadath, as a community server, leans towards the online amateur pornography sphere because the members of this server are welcomed to post selfies, nudes, and half-naked material of themselves on this server. In other words, it is a server that contains erotic content, as well as erotic language, and it is not appropriate for anyone beneath the age of 18 to visit this server. For this thesis I will be referring to the nude and half-nude material shared on Kadath as 'NSFW-erotica', and 'NSFW' would then be an abbreviation of 'Not Safe For Work'. It is an abbreviation that I have borrowed from the Internet culture, and NSFW is a label that one can find on social media posts on websites such as Reddit and Twitter. As the abbreviation implies, it serves as a warning to the user that the content of the post is not appropriate to display within the workplace, and this abbreviation will serve as an umbrella term which entails erotic, or semi-erotic, material. What I mean by 'material' is that these pornographic practices, contents, and demonstrations on Kadath, are shared over the Internet primarily through mediums such as images and videos.

## **Background and Motivation**

At the time which I am writing this thesis, social media have become a significant element of society. It is a communication tool that spans across several aspects of society – the largest companies use their own official Twitter accounts to address controversies related to their products, politicians make important announcements on their Instagram accounts, and small businesses use Facebook as one of their primary marketing platforms. The Internet has become one of the most prominent communication tools and the various social media platforms, of which the Internet consists of, act like separate spaces dedicated to different forms of online communication. It allows people from every corner of our world to interact and discuss with each other, and it also allows people to explore their identities with almost complete anonymity. For example, anyone who might question their gender or sexuality, but do not wish their close social environment to be aware of this fact, could seek advice from an online community instead. They could seek out a community dedicated to trans, non-binary, asexual, or homosexual people, and ask for advice from these

communities while minimizing the risk of unintentionally 'coming out'.

As I already have acknowledged in the “Introduction” chapter of this thesis, I am a trans woman, and I have experienced negative social consequences for being gender non-conforming, which includes many frustrations with the Swedish medical care system as a 'transgender patient'. I have been an active member of both GoneWildTrans and Kadath for over three years now, and the fact that the first communities dedicated to trans people, which I found association and acceptance in, happened to be communities of a more erotic notion is a case I find worth investigating. It is a circumstance which inspired me to conduct this investigation of Kadath, and I have to stress that visiting these servers can be a relaxed and wholesome experience. This is mostly the whole point of my thesis, to demonstrate that these trans women who partake in the online sphere of NSFW-erotica, are human beings. Both of these servers embody a lustful/erotic atmosphere from time to time, but I must stress that consent and personal boundaries are considered serious matters on both Kadath and GoneWildTrans. If I had to apply a metaphorical example regarding the atmosphere of these servers then I would say they are similar to visiting a nude beach where the occasional flirt might happen, and where consent is taken seriously.

As I mentioned earlier, I have been on GoneWildTrans and Kadath for over three years now, and I have a significant background with these servers. I have come into contact with the trans women of these servers, I have spoken to them, I have shared their anger, their joy, and their sadness. Because of this background I have become a trustworthy face among these trans women, and it is a notion that could prove to be beneficial when I aim to interview them regarding these sensitive subjects. I have a few essential things in common with these trans women, but it is not all about being transgender because I recognize that being transgender embodies many intersectional considerations. These aspects include matters such as: At what age they began their transition, if they were subjected to family rejection or not, whether or not they currently are on hormone replacement therapy, how long they have been on hormone replacement therapy, if they wish to perform sex reassignment surgery or not, and so on.

These servers welcome everyone, and while there is a multitude of cross-dressers, trans men, non-binary, and cisgender individuals on both of these servers, they are however largely dominated by trans women. I know this because every user on both GoneWildTrans and Kadath is free to assign roles to themselves, and when they utilize this tool their usernames become colour-coded in a correlation of their gender. These colours range from bright blue for cisgender men, green for non-binary individuals, bright pink for trans women, and so on. I also need to clarify that the trans women of Kadath and GoneWildTrans do not earn beneficial elements such as cash, or wealth, when they share their NSFW-erotica of themselves on these servers. This is a notion which I

have examined in this thesis – I have examined what other benefits there might be, besides a financial one, for these trans women when they share their NSFW-erotica on either Kadath or GoneWildTrans.

There is of course trans women on these servers who just want to chat and mingle, and do not share NSFW-erotica of themselves. This is of course completely fine regarding the official rules of both Kadath and GoneWildTrans, and no one is 'forced' to share such material of themselves to remain a member of either server. However, I have noticed there is a detached and perhaps indifferent relationship between the administrators of GoneWildTrans and the other members of the same server, and I suspect this matter might be worthwhile to investigate further. I interviewed the administrator and creator of Kadath, back in December of 2018, due to an interview assignment which I was tasked with at the time by my course coordinator, and it was that interview which inspired me to initiate this research.

There are two texts from my past studies in gender studies that have had a significant part in my inspiration to build and confront this topic – the topic of trans women's lived experience within online communities. The first text is a chapter from a book known as “Trans\* in College: Transgender Students' Strategies for Navigating Campus Life and the Institutional Politics of Inclusion” by Nicolazzo, Renn, and Quaye (2017). The other text is a journal article known as “Family Rejection, Social Isolation, and Loneliness as Predictors of Negative Health Outcomes (Depression, Suicidal Ideation, and Sexual Risk Behaviour) among Thai Male-to-Female Transgender Adolescents” by Yadegarfar, Meinhold-Bergmann, and Ho (2014).

Nicolazzo et al. (2017) take a critical standpoint against how transgender identity is being studied across several different establishments – establishments such as medicine, philosophy, and psychiatry. They question the notion of how transgender identity is being examined so extensively within the academic sphere, and how these studies of transgender identity are barely distributed at higher levels of education. The studies of transgender identity which are distributed at this level are often entirely non-empirical, which means the literature is not developed from the lived experiences of trans people – from their personal observations and backgrounds. Nicolazzo et al. (2017) assert that the texts which often are distributed at higher levels of education are entirely non-empirical, and also embrace a tendency to situate transgender individuals as nothing more than victims of physical violence and harassment. The latter affair would then carry the risk of reproducing a harmful notion – an assumption that transgender lives, their lived experiences, consists of nothing more than unmitigated suffering and anguish (Nicolazzo et al., 2017).

The journal article by Yadegarfar et al. (2014) is partially responsible for this reproduction as well – the reproduction of the transgender lived experience as nothing more than suffering. As

the title of the journal article suggests, it delves into several serious mental health issues that often plague transgender individuals, and how these mental health issues have a serious negative impact on their lives. These issues include elements such as family rejection, social isolation, and loneliness, which in turn cause these transgender individuals to take up harmful coping mechanisms such as substance abuse (Yadegarfard et al., 2014). However, my intention is not to discredit the importance of this journal article in any regard – I acknowledge that the work conducted by Yadegarfard et al. (2014) in this journal article is important to emphasize the urgency of issues such as family rejection, isolation, and loneliness among trans people.

However, these two journal articles which I have presented are just two examples out of hundreds of other journal articles that I have encountered during my time throughout gender studies – journal articles which only focus on the negative aspects of the transgender lived experience. It is a narrative that troubles me because I get the impression that these immense amounts of journal articles, who altogether unrestrictedly focus on the suffering of trans people, could as a whole present a narrative which produce harm rather than well-being. These narratives, which I do not claim to be false in any regard, could have the unintentional secondary effect of situating trans people as helpless victims, which would obstruct rather than develop their autonomy. Katarina Mattsson (2010) in her journal article “Gender and Whiteness in the Intersectional Turn” claims that migrants, who seek asylum in Sweden, are often treated like voiceless and thoughtless children by various authorities when they arrive to Sweden. They are treated like children because they are perceived as members of a 'dysfunctional' culture – as 'victims' of this dysfunctional culture, which situate them as helpless victims who are unable to speak for themselves (Mattsson, 2010).

I am worried that being repeatedly situated as a victim – situated as part of a 'dysfunctional' gender identity, could lead to a reproduction of infantilization instead. My intention with this thesis is to present another *side* of the transgender lived experience – to demonstrate that the transgender lived experience does not exclusively embody being a victim of mental health issues, loneliness, isolation, harassment, and physical violence. I wish to present another side of the transgender lived experience which demonstrates that being a trans woman can embody happiness, well-being, and a sense of kinship.

## **Aim**

This thesis aims to contribution to a positive narrative of the transgender lived experience – a narrative that demonstrates that the lives of trans people are not regulated to negative health outcomes. To realize this contribution I aim to demonstrate how trans people are capable of creating and maintaining safe online spaces dedicated to gender nonconforming people, and how these

online safe spaces reproduce autonomy for trans people in the context of trans-related discussions.

## **Research Questions**

The community aspect of Kadath is my main topic in this thesis, and I have identified three significant themes of this topic which operate on the server. These themes entail how the members of Kadath do femininity in the NSFW-erotica channels, what advice the members give each other in the support channels, and what care procedure the administration of Kadath employ to maintain Kadath as a safe environment for trans and non-binary people.

- How does a community like Kadath allow trans women to find a positive identity vs the negative narrative of loneliness and isolation?
  - What motivates the trans women of Kadath to post NSFW-material of themselves on the server?
  - How does the knowledge production within the support-channels of Kadath benefit the lives of trans women?
  - What are the most difficult challenges for the administration of Kadath to maintain harmony on the server?

## **Material**

My main platform in this thesis is a computer software known as Discord, which is a free computer software developed by Discord Inc., and specializes in text, audio, and video communication. Discord allows the user to connect to different servers dedicated to different topics and interests, and it is a software similar to Skype but more extensive through the tools which Discord grant the user. These tools allow the user to create their own servers, complete with their own server topics, rules, and administration. However, Discord is not a software which exclusively embody pornography or adult content, it is a software which embody a similar culture to that of the Internet, which means if you can think of a certain topic then Discord most likely already have a server dedicated to that same topic. There are Discord servers dedicated to specific video games, film franchises, music genres, computer programming, and baking.

Kadath is the Discord server which I have investigated in this thesis – an online support community dedicated to trans and non-binary people, which also serves as a platform for the members to share erotic material of themselves between each other. However, as I already have declared in the “Background and Motivation” chapter of this thesis, while Kadath is dedicated to trans and non-binary people, the members of the server mostly consists of trans women. It is also

important that I acknowledge Kadath as a 'Discord server' because these servers are not websites – they are accessible through the Discord communication software only, and not through any other computer software such as web browsers like Google Chrome, Internet Explorer, or Mozilla Firefox. Kadath is a private server, which means one will need an invitation from a member of Kadath to join the server. This aspect of Kadath situates the server as a closed online space, and I must approach this investigation with careful ethical considerations (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). As I write this thesis the server have around 55 members, and in order to describe the purpose of Kadath I have decided to quote the server's own “rules-and-infos” message board. It is a message board which disclose the purpose of the server, and it is available to everyone who is a member of the server.

The goal of this server. We are here to meet among trans and gender non conforming (gnc) people across Europe, organising events, saying hello when we travel somewhere, and generally making the divide between the countries and languages weaker. We are here to stick to each other when things are difficult and celebrate together when things are going well. This is a safe space. As per the rules below, no hate speech of any kind is allowed. [...] #original-lewd-cuties-pics is meant for pictures of members, as well as pictures of events. It is assumed to be nsfw. Don't post people's pictures unless they agree to. (Creator and administrator of Kadath, 2018, August 28)

By “#original-lewd-cuties-pics” the creator is referring to a channel of the server – a channel dedicated to be a space where the members can share NSFW-erotica of themselves. Almost all servers on Discord consist of several channels, and in the case of Kadath there is also other channels dedicated to politics, video games, meet-ups, music, and cooking. I have in this study conducted five interviews across five different individuals, and all of the interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes. Two of the interviewees were regular members, while the other three were administrators of Kadath. Four out of these interviewees are trans women, while one individual, an administrator on Kadath, is a non-binary person. However, I have to acknowledge that gathering potential interviewees have been tough in this study, and that a majority of the potential interviewees have turned down the offer to participate in an interview due to various personal struggles.

## **Method**

Since I wish this thesis to act as a platform for trans people, a platform which allows them to share their own experiences, I have decided that a qualitative research method is required for this thesis. The qualitative research method that I have chosen is one-on-one online interviews, and I have chosen this methodology because there are specific themes which I seek to analyse in this thesis, and one-on-one online interviews will allow me to ask questions about these themes directly.

This methodology entails that I will cooperate with the interviewees of this thesis, and schedule an individual interview with each interviewee. These one-on-one online interview sessions will last approximately 20 minutes, and all of them will be conducted over the voice communication software known as Discord.

A text known as “The Practice of Feminist In-Depth Interviewing” by Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber (2007) will serve as my main template for this methodology, and as the title indicates, Hesse-Biber (2007) advise the reader on how to conduct interviews of a more feminist notion, and the interview structure which I have selected for this study are “semi-structured interviews”. My intention is that I maintain an open attitude to what my interviewees wish to disclose during our interviews, and the procedure known as semi-structured interviews will allow me to achieve this purpose. Hesse-Biber (2007) claims that semi-structured interviews entail questions that do not steer the interviewee to give either a “Yes” or “No” as an answer, which will be a valuable approach in my interviews since I carry a certain bias with me into this field. For example, I have not asked my interviewees questions such as “Is there is a lot of transphobic language on Kadath?” because by presenting such a loaded question in this format – a format which steer the interviewee to give either a “Yes” or “No” as an answer, would be detrimental to the overall quality of the interview. It would be detrimental because I would run the risk of installing a belief within the interviewee – a belief that the server have a serious issue with transphobic language even though the interviewee might not think so (Hesse-Biber, 2007).

Since I am interviewing individuals who I have known for a couple of years, people who I have a history with, it would be appropriate that I apply another template to my methodology. This template is a text known as “Why not? The interviewing of friends and acquaintances” written by Bodil Stilling Blichfeldt and Grethe Heldbjerg (2011). This text entails an empirical study where Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011) performed in-depth interviews with interviewees gathered from their personal networks, and at the end of each interview Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011) would ask the interviewees if they felt the interpersonal relationship between them, between the interviewer and interviewee, influenced the quality of the interview. A majority of the interviewees answered no, but they acknowledged it helped that they had met and communicated with the interviewer beforehand – before the interview.

However, some interviewees in the study by Blichfeldt and Heldbjerg (2011) expressed concern around this matter – a concern regarding that if they had known the interviewer 'too well' then it might have influenced the interview negatively instead. For example, it would have been easier for the interviewee to withhold certain details of their personal information from the interview itself – certain details of personal information which the interviewer might already be

aware of, but which the interviewee does not wish to be on record (Blichfeldt & Heldbjerg, 2011). This circumstance highlights how all methodologies have their respective advantages and disadvantages, and that there is no flawless approach towards any thesis. Roksana Janghorban, Robab Latifnejad Roudsari, and Ali Taghipour (2014) in their journal article known as “Skype interviewing: The new generation of online synchronous interview in qualitative research” disclose how Skype, a computer software dedicated to text and voice communication, can be utilized as an efficient instrument for online interviews. As I already have clarified in the “Material” chapter of this thesis, Skype is a computer software which is similar to another computer software known as Discord – the main platform of Kadath and this thesis, so the methodological considerations for Skype should be appropriate for Discord as well.

Janghorban et al. (2014) assert that one-on-one online interviews provide flexibility in regard to time and location since the interviewer and interviewee are capable of conducting the interview from their respective homes – an approach which reduces the limitations of face-to-face interview sessions. However, a disadvantage with one-on-one online interviews is that the interviewer will have a reduced perspective on the interviewee's environmental condition – external stimuli surrounding the interviewee which might influence the interviewee's responses during the interview session. For example, the interviewee might have a friend or a family member nearby during the interview session, and it is possible that the interviewee do not wish to disclose certain information about themselves with the risk of people outside of the interview session overhearing this information. In other words, an important consideration in regard to one-on-one online interviews is to make sure that the interviewee is located in a private space during the interview session, so that the interview session remains 'one-on-one' (Janghorban et al., 2014).

## **Literature Review**

In this section I will cover three aspects of how trans people, and their lived experiences, have been discussed in previous studies. These aspects entail how trans people have been discussed in regard to 'doing gender', how the Internet have become an important tool for the trans community, and how communities dedicated to trans people have been examined in past studies. Catherine Connell (2010) in her journal article “Doing, undoing, or re-doing gender? Learning from the workplace experiences of transpeople” discuss how trans people at their respective workplaces are engendered by their co-workers to hide their identity as trans, and this is a case which Connell (2010) calls “doing gender in stealth”. Connell (2010) asserts that this engendered 'stealth' in a public space such as the workplace situates transgender identity as something to be ashamed of, which is an important issue to examine since it highlights another reason as to why trans people are

afraid of 'coming out' as trans. However, I wish to examine what knowledge would surface if one took this notion of “doing gender in stealth” and applied it to a different context – an online context instead of an offline one. Connell's (2010) journal article focused on the workplaces of her interviewees, public and offline spaces where nudity is not appropriate, while I have examined Kadath – a closed online space where nudity is celebrated. The interviewees in Connell's (2010) journal article also expressed that this stealth often requires overwhelming effort to maintain, and what I wish to examine is how the NSFW-erotica channels of Kadath allow the trans women of that community the opportunity to suppress this burden of being trans 'in stealth' – how they virtually 'let go' of all socially conditioned nuances of self-contempt and feel pride, rather than shame, over their trans identities and bodies.

Tobias Raun (2016) in his dissertation “Out Online: Trans Self-Representation and Community Building on YouTube” discuss how video blogs, also known as vlogs, produced and distributed by trans people on YouTube are invaluable for the transgender community. These vlogs which Raun (2016) have examined entail advice regarding transition technologies such as hormone replacement therapy, and what bodily transformations come with this medical treatment. Raun (2016) asserts that transgender representation, by actual trans people in the YouTube educational sphere, is crucial for the transgender community since the knowledge production in these videos reinforce the importance of the transgender lived experience. This is a statement which I agree with, but in regard to educational value and knowledge production I would instead argue that an online support community, where trans people can gather and exchange experiences, provide a more solid foundation for such goals. In a YouTube video it is usually a single person – a single perspective and lived experience which is presented before thousands of viewers, and due to 'trans' being an umbrella term for different kinds of gender nonconforming people it is important to remember that a single perspective can not be applied to every trans person – to every trans lived experience.

In addition to that, while the comment sections of YouTube videos provide the means to give feedback to the creators of the videos, they do not provide sufficient platform to sustain longer conversations or discussions among the viewers. However, online support communities like Discord servers provide these means – they allow trans people to create flexible group discussions, where everyone has an opportunity to give their input, rather than fixating on a single person's perspective in a YouTube video. I wish to demonstrate that online support communities are just as important, if not more, than the YouTube sphere in regard to educational value and knowledge production for trans people.

Andre Cavalcante (2016) in his journal article known as “I Did It All Online: Transgender identity and the management of everyday life” recite the story of Jen, a trans woman who utilized

the online sphere to explore her identity as transgender. Jen had found an online community dedicated to gender nonconforming people, a community known as “Susan's Place”, and in Jen's own words this community helped her to “do it all online” (p. 110). Cavalcante (2016) disclose what an important role Susan's Place had during Jen's transition – not only did this community keep her informed about trans-related surgeries, law, and politics, but it also became a “second home” for Jen, a place where she felt safe (p. 118). However, the journal article by Cavalcante (2016) is told entirely from Jen's perspective, while any mention of the administrators of Susan's Place remain almost completely absent. What I would like to examine in this thesis is the people behind these communities – the administrators who manage and maintain these online spaces, and the various challenges they face in order to maintain these communities as second homes for gender nonconforming people.

Before Jen found Susan's Place she had also been a member of a couple of offline support groups as well, groups which also were dedicated to gender nonconforming people. These support groups were offline, as in these groups would organize events for face-to-face interactions between the members. However, during these face-to-face events these support groups would also be subjected to uncomfortable verbal and non-verbal language from other people outside of the support group, language which made Jen feel vulnerable, which also led to Jen leaving these support groups (Cavalcante, 2016). In other words, there are aspects outside these support groups – aspects which are capable of causing considerable harm to everyone involved with the support group. This circumstance should not be underestimated since, as demonstrated by Jen's story, it could lead to the discontinuation of the whole support group. The people who organize the support group, in this case the administrators of Kadath, carry the responsibility to make sure everyone in the support community feel safe. Even though Kadath is an online support group, the online sphere, just like the offline sphere, still have people who spread harmful language, and these people are often referred to as Internet trolls (March, 2019).

### **Ethical Considerations**

A text known as “Social Media Research: A Guide to Ethics” by Leanne Townsend and Claire Wallace (2016) defines four key areas of ethical concern within social media research, and these key areas entail private/public data, informed consent, anonymity, and risk of harm. As I already have explained in the “Material” chapter of this thesis, Kadath is a closed online space, and the data gathered from this server should be considered private data (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). A journal article known as “Ethics of Social Media Research: Common Concerns and Practical Considerations” by Moreno, Goni, Moreno, and Diekema (2013) recommends that when a

researcher seek to examine a closed online space the researcher should make contact with the participants of the closed online space, and ask for their permission to conduct the research. I have spoken with the creator and administrator of Kadath, and I have informed her what my thesis entails. I have also informed her that I plan to ask the members of Kadath to participate in my thesis through several interviews, and I have been permitted by the administration of Kadath to ask the members of Kadath to be interviewed by me.

I have also asked the creator and administrator of Kadath to spread awareness of my research on the server, a request which she accepted, and an announcement regarding my research of this server have been made on Kadath's announcements channel. I decided it would be best to spread awareness on the server of my research ahead of time, so when the time comes, when I ask the members of Kadath to participate in an interview, it does not come as a complete surprise for them. Moreno et al. (2013) also recommend that the researcher acknowledge the privacy policy of the social media platform where the thesis is situated, and Discord's own privacy policy page provides with the following statement:

The Company is based in the United States. No matter where you are located, you consent to the processing and transferring of your information in and to the U.S. and other countries. The laws of the U.S. and other countries governing data collection and use may not be as comprehensive or protective as the laws of the country where you live. (Discord Privacy Policy, 2018, June 14)

Discord's privacy policy page also asserts that “where required by law, and in some other cases, we handle personal data on the basis of your implied or express consent”, which means that Discord, as a company, entrust the responsibility of communicating consent to the users themselves in regard to sharing personal data through their communication software (Discord Privacy Policy, 2018, June 14). However, for this thesis I have not applied an equal amount of ethical considerations in regard to GoneWildTrans because I am not investigating that server, and GoneWildTrans will instead remain in the background. There is a reason behind this decision, and this reason stems from why Kadath was created in the first place. This server was created because a majority of Kadath's members consist of individuals who are dissatisfied with GoneWildTrans – they were dissatisfied with the administration of GoneWildTrans and how that administration supervised that server. These dissatisfied members of GoneWildTrans separated themselves from GoneWildTrans, and formed their own community separated from that server, and they named their new server “Kadath”. However, due to the themes that I wish to analyse in this thesis, combined with the aspect that a majority of the members of Kadath embody frustration against GoneWildTrans, there is a high possibility that GoneWildTrans might be mentioned by the interviewees during our interview sessions.

I will not ask about GoneWildTrans directly in our interview sessions, but there is a possibility that the whole affair of GoneWildTrans, and the problems of that server, might emerge during our interview sessions. Due to this whole matter, the friction between GoneWildTrans and Kadath which I just described, I have made a decision. This decision entails that I have chosen to interview only those who are members of Kadath, in addition to those who are members of Kadath and GoneWildTrans at the same time, and those who are members of Kadath and used to be members of GoneWildTrans. I have designed a consent form for the individuals which I intend to interview, and the consent form have been examined and approved by one of my course coordinators. The consent form is meant to be filled out by the individuals which I have asked to be interviewed before the interview is ever initialized, and it is designed to assure that the individuals which I have asked to be interviewed are participating with consent (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). The consent form allows the interviewees to determine if they wish to be anonymous, and if they choose to be anonymous they may also give themselves an alias – a fictitious name which I can refer to them as (Townsend & Wallace, 2016).

The consent form also informs the interviewees that there are risks involved if they choose to participate in an interview, and these risks entail that there is no method which I can apply to my thesis in order to fully guarantee that the interviewees remain anonymous (Townsend & Wallace, 2016). However, since all of the interactions between me and the interviewees in this thesis have taken place through communication tools such as online voice and text conversations, I can not determine if the interviewees are participating with their *full* consent. In other words, due to the absence of face-to-face contact with the interviewees in this thesis, it is impossible for me to observe if the interviewees express any discomfort through their facial expressions or body language during the consent process, or if any of the interview questions during our sessions cause any corresponding discomfort among the interviewees (Moreno et al., 2013).

## **Theoretical Frameworks**

In this section I will present the theoretical frameworks which I have chosen for this thesis, and how these frameworks will govern the analysis of the collected data. These theoretical frameworks are “Doing gender” and “Trans feminism”, and while my framework will be primarily situated in the works of Catherine Connell (2010) and Julia Serano (2007), I will apply additional authors to these respective theoretical frameworks in order to bolster the groundwork of this thesis.

### **Doing gender.**

Candace West and Don Zimmerman (1987), in their journal article known as “Doing

Gender”, conceptualized the idea of 'doing gender', and they describe this concept as “a complex of socially guided perceptual, interactional, and micropolitical activities that cast particular pursuits as expressions of masculine and feminine 'natures'” (p. 126). West and Zimmerman's (1987) concept of 'doing gender' is inspired by Erving Goffman's theory on 'gender display', and they describe Goffman's perspective on gender as “a socially scripted dramatization of the culture's 'idealization' of feminine and masculine natures, played for an audience that is well schooled in the presentational idiom. To continue the metaphor, there are scheduled performances presented in special locations, and like plays, they constitute introductions to or time out from more serious activities” (West & Zimmerman, 1987, p. 130).

West and Zimmerman's (1987) “Doing Gender” is also developed from the writings of Suzanne Kessler and Wendy McKenna (1978) and their theory on 'gender attribution process', which disclose how the notion of 'only two genders', the categorization of male/female, is solely built upon a fixation of people's genitalia. Kessler and McKenna (1978), in their book known as “Gender: An Ethnomethodological Approach”, describe the 'gender attribution process' as “the method by which we construct our world of two genders” (p. 18), and that this construction can be subverted because “a person with a vagina who performed tasks that persons with penises were assigned at birth (e.g., going to war) would be cognitively grouped with those persons with penises and seen to be of the same gender. The genital would have no importance in the gender attribution” (p. 38). Kessler and McKenna (2006) would then further develop the concept of 'gender attribution' in a book known as “The Transgender Studies Reader”, and they describe the gender attribution process as “an interaction between displayer and attributor, but concrete displays are not informative unless interpreted in light of the rules which the attributor has for deciding what it means to be a female or male” (p. 175). This statement correlates with West and Zimmerman's (1987) understanding of Goffman's work because there is a presentation involved in the gender attribution process which entails an interaction between performer/audience – between displayer/attribution, which also requires scripts/rules.

Raewyn Connell (2009), in a journal article known as “Accountable conduct: 'Doing Gender' in Transsexual and Political Retrospect”, initiate the text by reflecting on the writings of West and Zimmerman (1987). While Connell (2009) maintains that West and Zimmerman's (1987) journal article contains misunderstandings regarding trans people and trans identities, Connell (2009) also asserts that “What has always been shocking about transsexual transitions is that they reveal simultaneously the depth of embodiment and the force of the social process in a single life. Yet that is neither unique nor unintelligible; it is also emphasized, since 'Doing Gender' was published, by the growth of disability studies” (p. 108), which means that, even though West and

Zimmerman's (1987) 'doing gender' had a questionable starting point, the concept can still be exercised in favour of trans people. Connell (2009) concludes her journal article by declaring that “Toward the end of 'Doing Gender,' West and Zimmerman (1987) formulate this argument explicitly, if briefly. The collective agency of women, in the form of the feminist movement and its impact on law and other institutions, can change the conditions of accountability of individual actions – and thus change the process that currently legitimates patriarchy by producing the appearance of naturalness in asymmetrical interaction” (Connell, 2009, p. 109), which situates the concept of 'doing gender' as a constructive analytical framework for the trans feminist movement.

This statement by Connell (2009) is reinforced by Catherine Connell (2010) in her journal article known as “Doing, Undoing, or Redoing Gender? Learning from the Workplace Experiences of Transpeople”, where she claims that “Transpeople must decide to mask or to highlight the discordance between their sex, gender, and sex category. Regardless of their decision, they seem to develop a feminist consciousness by virtue of their positionality as transpeople. We might call this process 'doing transgender,' to acknowledge the unique interactive challenges and insights that transpeople experience” (p. 50). Connell (2010) continues to underline in the following quote what a decisive position trans people embody in regard to the concept of 'doing gender', and she calls this circumstance 'doing transgender'.

Drawing from the perspectives of transpeople, this article finds evidence that they experience the doing and the undoing/redoing of gender. Trans people are tasked with making sense of a disconnect between sex, gender, and sex category, which they solve in a variety of ways, including through 'stealth' representations and through a more transparent blending of characteristics from their former and current gender expressions. I call this constellation of interactive practices 'doing transgender.' Regardless of whether they are stealth or out, transgender positionality sensitizes trans people to gender discrimination, thereby opening up possibilities for the 'collective contestation' (Connell 2009) of gendered inequality by trans people and cisfeminists. (Connell, 2010, p. 51)

West and Zimmerman (2009), in their journal article known as “Accounting For Doing Gender”, revisited 'doing gender' to address the criticisms which their concept received, and one of these criticisms claims that in order to eliminate gender inequality one must be able to 'undo gender'. West and Zimmerman (2009) assert that “'Undoing' implies abandonment – that sex category (or race category or class category) is no longer something to which we are accountable (i.e., that it makes no difference). That implication is one consequence of drawing from the concept of doing gender, without seeing that accountability sits at its core. We should emphasize that the oppressive character of gender rests not just on difference but the inferences from and the consequences of those differences” (p. 117). West and Zimmerman (2009) end their journal article by stating that they “agree that the practices, props, bodily postures, and movements that go into

producing a display of sex category incumbency are worthy of greater attention. And as Messerschmidt suggests, what it takes to exhibit (or suppress) a body as male or female is part of the experience of femininity and masculinity. Investigation of sex category production – and recognition – can only complicate and deepen our understanding of doing gender” (p. 118).

### **Trans feminism.**

Koyama (2001), in a text known as “The Transfeminist Manifesto”, describes trans feminism as “a movement by and for trans women who view their liberation to be intrinsically linked to the liberation of all women and beyond. It is also open to other queers, intersex people, trans men, non-trans women, non-trans men and others who are sympathetic toward needs of trans women and consider their alliance with trans women to be essential for their own liberation” (p. 1-2). This is a statement which covers what I suggested in the “Introduction” and “Background and Motivation” chapters of this thesis – that trans feminism is not 'exclusively' relevant to trans people in any regard, but to all gender nonconforming people and those who feel affiliation towards the struggles of gender nonconforming people. Leslie Feinberg (1992) in her book known as “Transgender liberation: A movement whose time has come” demonstrates how trans people have been systematically oppressed throughout history due to divide-and-conquer tactics – tactics which have separated gender nonconforming people, and regulated them from uniting into the movement which Koyama (2001) described. Feinberg (1992) claims that “Genuine bonds of solidarity can be forged between people who respect each other's differences and are willing to fight their enemy together. We are the class that does the work of the world, and can revolutionize it. We can win true liberation” (p. 220), and once again 'liberation' is situated as a keyword in trans feminism.

Stryker (2006) asserts, in a book known as “The Transgender Studies Reader”, that Feinberg (1992) had “called for a political alliance between all individuals who were marginalized or oppressed due to their difference from social norms of gendered embodiment, and who should therefore band together in a struggle for social, political, and economic justice” (Stryker, 2006, p. 4). In order to emphasize the all-inclusive quality of trans feminism it is important to demonstrate how the injustice against gender nonconforming people embodies various forms of oppression, and how these oppressions intersect with each other. Serano (2012) asserts that trans feminism is “one of many so-called 'third-wave' feminisms”, and that “Its origins are closely linked with other feminist submovements – specifically, sex-positive feminism, postmodern/poststructuralist feminism, queer theory and intersectionality” (Serano, 2012, April 18). However, of these analytical frameworks which Serano (2012) mentioned, the intersectionality aspect of trans feminism is especially relevant for this thesis – a matter that will become evident later in the “Analysis” chapter

of this thesis when I cover themes which review power structures relevant to trans feminism.

Nina Lykke (2009), in her book known as “Feminist studies: a guide to intersectional theory, methodology and writing”, claims that power structures and identity constructions based on gender coordinates with power structures and identity constructions based on class, race, ethnicity, sexuality, and so on (p. 104). Lykke (2009) continues to disclose how intersectionality have bolstered postcolonial and anti-racist feminism by emphasizing power structures, differences between women, and the network of processes which 'do' gender, race, and ethnicity (p. 108). Serano (2012) also recognizes the importance of intersectionality within trans feminism when she describes trans feminism as “one of numerous third-wave feminisms that take an intersectional approach to challenging sexism and oppression. The only thing different about trans feminism is that it extends this feminist analysis to transgender issues, which have been largely overlooked or misinterpreted by feminists in the past” (Serano, 2012, April 18).

Serano (2012) concludes her viewpoint on trans feminism by presenting a tribute to postcolonial and anti-racist feminism, and asserts that “The myth that there is some kind of universal women experience was debunked by women of color, among others, long ago. All of us have different life histories, sexism impacts each of our lives somewhat differently and each of us is privileged in some ways but not others”, and that “these feminisms recognize that there are numerous forms of sexism – that is, numerous double standards based on a person’s sex, gender, or sexuality” (Serano, 2012, April 18). This is a statement which correspond with Koyama's (2001) viewpoint on trans feminism, and Koyama (2001) claims that “Transfeminism believes that a society that honors cross-gender identities is the one that treats people of all genders fairly, because our existence is seen as problematic only when there is a rigid gender hierarchy” (p. 9), which means that any narrative of a 'universal women experience' obstructs trans feminism as the movement that Koyama (2001) outlined.

In order to conclude this chapter on trans feminism I wish to quote a statement from a journal article known as “Introduction: Trans-, Trans, or Transgender?”, written by Susan Stryker, Paisley Currah, and Lisa Jean Moore (2008). This statement entails the intersectional aspects of trans feminism – the extensive quality of the 'transgender phenomena', which correlates with Serano's (2012) assertion on trans feminism and how this analytical framework unveils the double standards of sexism.

To suggest a few examples: do transgender phenomena not show us that 'woman' can function as social space that can be populated, without loss of definitional coherence, not only by people born with a typical female anatomy and reared as girls who identify as women, but also by people reared as girls who identify as women but who have physical intersex conditions, or by people who were born with a typical male

anatomy but who selfidentify as women and take all possible steps to live their lives that way, or by people born female who express conventionally masculine social behaviors but who don't think of themselves as or want to be men? Do transgender phenomena not show us that some who unproblematically occupy the space of social manhood have vaginas rather than penises, or that some men can choose to wear dresses without surrendering their social identities as men? Likewise, does not a working-class woman who makes her living through manual labor cross boundaries of middle-class feminine respectability because of the dirt under her nails? Hasn't Hillary Clinton been called mannish because she is politically powerful? Didn't white men denying black men the vote through Jim Crow legislation in the years before female suffrage assign black men the same citizenship status as that given to white women? In all of these examples, 'transgendered' bodies occupy the same gender-spaces as nontransgendered ones, and transgender characteristics can be attributed, as a form of disciplining, to bodies that might not subjectively identify as being transgendered. (Stryker et al., 2008, p. 12-13)

## **Analysis**

There are three themes which I aim to investigate in this thesis, and these themes are “Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica”, followed by “User support over online communities”, and then concluding with “Administrative care on Kadath”. In the last two themes I have also given a short description of what the respective themes entail before I initiate the actual analysis, and I will conclude this thesis by compiling the results of all three themes in the “Conclusion” chapter of this thesis.

### **Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica.**

The first online interview in this study was with a regular member of Kadath, a trans woman who wish to be anonymous, and will be referred to as “Anonymous” from here on. Anonymous is a 28 years old Caucasian lesbian/homoflexible Swedish citizen, she is an atheist and is currently working as a nursing assistant. Anonymous has been a member on Kadath for one year, she has shared NSFW-erotica of herself on this server, and she has considered sex work in the past. This online interview took place on 21 April, 2019, through voice chat over a computer software known as Discord, and the interview lasted around 20 minutes. During the interview I asked Anonymous the following question “So why do you think so many trans women are drawn to these servers? Why do you think so many transgender women are drawn to post NSFW-erotica of themselves on these servers?”. Anonymous responded as followingly:

One of the reasons being why I believe trans women are drawn to these servers and sites... and communities, is because of to gain affection. Where there is not otherwise possible in real life society because there is a big stigma about liking or... yeah, liking trans women. (Anonymous, 2019, April 21)

At this point during the interview, the interviewee had trouble expressing themselves, and

asked if we could start over. I attempted to assist them by asking them the subsequent follow-up question “But you mentioned there is a certain stigma towards 'liking trans women', could you tell a little bit more about that?”.

Yeah, so the thing is why trans women do this is to gain gratification, satisfaction, affection that they would not otherwise [receive] by the... the common... by cis people. By people that are not born trans because outside in... in civilized... in society people frown upon trans women and think they are weird, disgusting, sick, and so on. There is a big stigma about trans, being transgender is some kind of mental disease or diagnosis, and [that] transgender people are not mentally stable. So for men, and for women, there is a whole bag of like stigma going on in saying that you find trans women attractive. You are not supposed to do that because then you are kind of ostracised from society. So people, men and women, do not tend to say, to a transgender woman, that you are beautiful and you are sexy, and... I find you really attractive or... and confess that they are sexually attracted by trans women. So what happens is that transgender people tend to go to themselves, to go to the only community that are welcoming them, and that is other transgender people. They want to... and here comes the other part, they want to know that they are beautiful because no one else is saying that to them. One way is to expose themselves naked in... it can be just... just show pictures of themselves, fully clothed, to like totally nude, or in erotic or pornographic positions, to get that confirmation that someone finds them beautiful. There is so many reasons for this. It can be safety as well, and not being seen as a freak. But there is many takes on this. Many, many reasons makes transgender women do this choice. Also, one of the reasons being on the net is that you have anonymity. You can be in Australia and message a girl like in Russia, [...] and you can both like... what should I call it? Satisfy your others needs in that aspect. (Anonymous, 2019, April 21)

In the journal article written by Catherine Connell (2010) the author disclose how five of the 19 interviewees “performed stealth” at their respective workplaces, and these individuals, trans women and trans men alike, did not openly identify themselves as transgender within their respective workplace. The interviewees in Connell's (2010) research assumed that their co-workers were not aware of their status as transgender, and because of that they also speculated that they were not *read* as transgender by their co-workers. The interviewees had to do gender in a manner which corresponded with their cisgender co-workers already established understanding of gendered norms, because only then would the interviewees be read as their preferred gender identity by their co-workers. This commitment by transgender individuals, the commitment of doing gender according to cisgender individuals already established understanding of gender, correlate with the results in the study by Brandon Miller (2017), which demonstrated that male/female stereotypes were the most prominent transgender-specific issues discussed in the videos made by transgender YouTubers. In Connell's (2010) own choice of words, the interviewees “had learned” how to do gender in a manner which cisgender individuals already comprehend, and this is a circumstance which Connell (2010) call “doing gender in stealth”.

The interviewees in Connell's (2010) research had learned through their cisgender co-workers how to *assimilate* their understanding of masculinity and femininity, and by assimilating this understanding of masculinity and femininity they had learned how to hide in plain sight. These individuals, according to Connell (2010), were “transgender in stealth”, and most of them had different reasons for being “in stealth”. I place emphasis on terms like “stealth” and “disguise” since I find the application of the term in this situation to be problematic and uncomfortable – especially in regard to trans women since I do not wish to reproduce any notion of trans women being 'devious men in women's disguises'. One trans woman, Jessica, in Connell's (2010) study did express the reason why she chose to remain in stealth. In Jessica's own words “with ignorant people, it is kind of like, there is no point.”, a quote in reference to the circumstance that she perceives her cisgender co-workers to be *too* ignorant (Connell, 2010, p. 40). Anne Enke (2012) in her book “Transfeminist perspectives: in and beyond transgender and gender studies” describe the term “cisgender” as “the characteristic of staying with or being perceived to stay with the gender and/or sex one was assigned at birth” (p. 20). Jessica finds her co-workers to be too ignorant in regard to what being a trans woman actually entails – that a trans woman, for example, is not a man in disguise or other similar preconceptions (Connell, 2010).

This is a statement which mirror what Anonymous had to say about cisgender individuals, because there is a similar tone of hopelessness in both Jessica's and Anonymous's statements. Both of these interviewees, Jessica and Anonymous, expressed a sense of hopelessness towards cisgender individuals and their perceptions of trans women. These assertions give off the notion that the interviewees embody an overarching dissatisfaction with cisgender individuals, since they seem to situate cisgender individuals as synonymous to 'ignorant people' – at least in regard to transgender related topics. It is possible that some of the trans women of Kadath are, just like the interviewees in Connell's (2010) thesis, conditioned to “do gender in stealth” outside of Kadath and the online sphere. Kadath, as a community server where NSFW-erotica is welcomed, seems to be caught in a converging space of doing gender inside and outside of stealth. This server is a closed environment – it is a platform 'in stealth' where the members can practice their own NSFW-erotica, and their practice of NSFW-erotica will most likely not influence any space outside of Kadath. It is a platform in stealth which allow them to *relieve* themselves from their stealth, and experiment with different feminine expressions which might be unexplored territory for them. As Julia Serano (2007) disclose in her book, trans women are often expected to embrace traditional feminine beauty standards, and this norm conditions trans women to embody these beauty standards because it grants them social benefits.

I place emphasis on the word 'relieve' in this context because Jessica, in Connell's (2010)

study, expressed frustration over how maintaining this 'stealth' can sometimes be exhausting. Anonymous claims there is a widespread stigma towards trans women, and this stigma dictate that trans women are “disgusting” and “sick”. She also declared how those who are attracted to trans women are also affected by this stigma, and that being attracted to trans women is something “you are not supposed to do”. It is possible that this circumstance have an impact on how trans women do gender as well, and feel more compelled to be in stealth. Someone close to these trans women, a family member, a best friend, or a partner, could be aware of this widespread stigmatization and might wish to avoid being perceived as *contaminated* by these “sick” trans people. It could manifest a social fear within them which cause them to, consciously or subconsciously, engender their respective trans loved ones to embrace doing gender in stealth – all in order to 'hide the transness' for their sole benefit.

I would like to take a moment here to acknowledge that this whole concept of “doing gender in stealth” appear to be similar to another concept known as “passing”, but for this thesis I would prefer to avoid confronting the topic of passing due to personal reasons. Connell (2010) use the term “passing” in her analysis and theoretical considerations, but she does not clarify if passing is meant to be considered synonymous to the term “in stealth” for the purposes of her journal article. For those who are not familiar with what the term “passing” means in a transgender context, Lori Girshick (2008) describes passing as “A concept meaning an individual is accepted as the gender he/she presents as; also meaning acceptance as who he/she really is without question that he/she might be or have been something else” (p. 205). Jessica disclose how her wish to remain in stealth actually required an increase of effort on her part – an increase of effort in regard to which clothes she would wear for the day. Before all of this, before Jessica began to embody the need to *remain* in stealth through her clothing, the choice of which clothes Jessica would wear for the day did not matter to her. However, when Jessica began to practice stealth, this procedure, this rite of selecting your clothing for the day, would sometimes consume up to 90 minutes for Jessica each morning (Connell, 2010). Meanwhile, in contrast to Jessica's situation, there are online communities like Kadath where trans women can let go of their stealth by removing their clothes.

Kadath is a space where trans women can openly display themselves as trans women without any anxiety – an anxiety which otherwise would summon a sense of hopelessness since “there is no point” (Connell, 2010, p. 40) in regard to informing ignorant people what being a trans woman actually entails. This is where the sense of belonging is being produced on Kadath's NSFW-erotica channels since it does not matter which background you have, if you reproduce traditional norms of femininity or not, because every trans woman is welcomed to throw away their clothes and celebrate through nudity that they are trans women. Clothes, in addition to exterior beauty, are

most likely significant themes regarding doing gender in stealth as a trans woman. This is a matter which correlate with the results demonstrated in the study by Brandon Miller (2017), where trans women dominated the transgender educational YouTube sphere with beauty/make-up tutorials as the most prominent topics in their videos.

Connell (2010) refer to Jessica's reasoning, regarding her clothes, as a typical example of working women being compelled by their surroundings to conform to traditional norms of feminine beauty. Connell (2010) does not clarify what “traditional feminine beauty” entails, but Samantha Holland (2004) in her book “Alternative Femininities: Body, Age and Identity” attempts to define this concept through a series of interviews. The interviewees in Holland's (2004) book described traditional femininity as “Supermodels” or “people who are very sort of classically dressed” (p. 41), and other keywords which also arose were “famous women” (p. 42), and “Pamela Anderson” (p. 43). They also defined what symbols traditional femininity give off, which were “dumb or girly but controllable” and “weaker and available” while embodying a “vulnerable thinness” (Holland, 2004, p. 43).

Connell (2010) asserts that these beauty standards aimed towards women, trans and cisgender women alike, can become fatiguing for these women in the long run. However, it still is a beauty standard which Jessica strive to maintain for herself, despite the fact that she seemingly finds the practice to be encumbering. Meanwhile, Anonymous contend that the trans women of Kadath seek to achieve this desire for themselves as well – they desire, just like Jessica, to feel beautiful and desired by others. The key difference between Jessica's and Anonymous's reasoning is that Jessica does not seem to express any concern about potential transphobia from her surroundings, while Anonymous is adamant that there is a widespread stigma against trans women. This whole affair situate the trans women of Kadath in a double bind, because if they do not embrace the stealth aspect of doing gender as a trans woman, then they place themselves in a precarious position – a position where they are exposed to potential transphobia. If they embrace the stealth aspect of doing gender, then they are instead reinforcing the same encumbering notion of traditional femininity which Jessica were exhausted by.

Online communities like Kadath seem to be platforms where trans women have the opportunity to alleviate themselves from this double bind, and they achieve this by revealing their nude, or half-nude, bodies to each other within a controlled and safe environment. It is a platform where trans women manage to reach a compromise which consists of relieving themselves from this stealth without exposing themselves to any potential harmful reactions – reactions which most likely would entail transphobic nuances. In these communities it does not matter if trans women wear masculine or feminine clothing, or if they are fully clothed, half-nude, or completely nude, all

of them are embraced as women anyway.

I would like to take a moment here to admit that what I have disclosed so far, in this concept of “Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica”, it might sound like I am suggesting a notion which could be problematic. This problematic notion would dictate that trans women, especially those who practice doing gender in stealth, are dependent of this stealth because these women would actually be 'cisgender men in disguise'. This notion is problematic because not only would I misgender these women, but it would also reinforce a harmful mindset that these women disguise themselves in order to deceive non-transgender individuals for unknown reasons. I would like to take a moment here to acknowledge that terms such as stealth and disguise might give off a villainous expression, which is not my intention with those terms. I would also like to acknowledge that I do not endorse doing femininity in stealth as something necessary or inevitable for all trans women, and doing femininity in stealth does not make one more, or less, 'authentic' of a trans woman.

In order to further develop the theme traditional femininity on Kadath I decided to conduct another online interview, and the respondent in this interview is a pansexual trans woman who wish to be called “Yoshi”. Yoshi is a 22 years old Caucasian Swedish citizen, and have immigrated to Sweden from the Netherlands. She is a regular member of Kadath, and have been on the server for 1 month. She has a bachelor's degree in video game programming, and is currently employed as a game developer. Yoshi has shared NSFW-erotica of herself on Kadath, and she has considered sex work in the past. This online interview took place on 17 May, 2019, through voice chat over a computer software known as Discord. The interview lasted around 20 minutes, and during the interview I asked Yoshi the following question “How are trans women expected to 'do femininity' in the gaze of cisgender individuals?”. Yoshi responded as followingly:

I find that hard to gauge because I do not interact with a whole lot of those people... of 'those people', Christ. I would say that for cis people it is often a lot... I would say that it is often a bit more accepted if you go with traditional feminine... like appearance and such. But I would not say in my circle it is not very common, I have very nice, open thinking, very trans-accepting friends who fully understand that not everyone likes to be traditional trans-fem. Yeah, I think, definitely in my circle, it is a lot more accepted and fine. I do mostly hang out with people that themselves are not traditional, like even if they are cis and not... they do not, like, being traditional fem themselves, or guys who love embracing their feminine side. So I feel... but I do feel that the general community, like outside of my group definitely feels more comfortable when you just go traditional trans-fem – beauty and appearance. (Yoshi, 2019, May 17)

Yoshi's story seems to correlate with the analysis which I have outlined so far – that traditional femininity, in regard to trans women, is generally “more accepted” in the gaze of

cisgender individuals, and it is a concern which Yoshi have noticed even though she does not interact with many cisgender people. This whole notion of traditional femininity being more accepted is problematic because it reinforces a particular hierarchy among trans women – a hierarchy between different types of femininities, with traditional femininity at the top. However, this hierarchy would not embody power, but protection – protection against potential transphobia. Gender, in the scope of trans women, would then not embody expression or identity as its primary principle, but safety and well-being instead. Traditional feminine beauty standards seems to be interlinked with doing gender in stealth as a trans woman, and because of that traditional femininity becomes a sphere of protection for trans women. This circumstance reinforces what I have previously disclosed about Jessica in Connell's (2010) study – that maintaining traditional feminine beauty standards can be encumbering for women, and possibly even further encumbering for trans women since this norm is engendered to be a sphere of protection for trans women. This correlates with another aspect of Serano's (2007) studies, where she describes how trans women felt compelled to embrace traditional feminine beauty standards in order to be considered as *valid* trans women by their respective medical care systems.

Communities like Kadath, where trans women can display their nude or half-nude bodies, is not only about removing their clothes and celebrating the transgender body, it is also a space where they can partially remove their gender expressions – their femininities. I am, of course, not suggesting that trans women become non-binary when they remove their clothes, but that they alleviate themselves from this double bind of doing gender – a double bind which I have previously described in this theme. By presenting their nude bodies to each other they partially alleviate themselves from all socially conditioned forms of femininities, and instead find solidarity through an unadorned form of femininity – which would be the nude feminine body. I use the word “partially” because it might be impossible to completely remove all gender expressions from oneself, at least in regard to transgender or cisgender individuals. It is of course difficult to speak about trans women's relation to traditional femininity in this broad and overarching manner, and while I am suggesting that some trans women might be embracing traditional feminine beauty standards even though they might not identify themselves within that norm, it is of course a speculation which I do not intend to be applicable to all trans women.

### **User support over online communities.**

In order to examine the theme of user support over online communities I aim to apply a journal article known as “Online support for transgender people: an analysis of forums and social networks” written by Sabrina Cipolletta, Riccardo Votadoro, and Elena Faccio (2017). This journal

article will assist me in exploring how the members of Kadath conduct and experience the support given through the support-channels of the server, and it will also guide me in determining how the support-channels of Kadath produce a sense of belonging among its members. The research conducted in this journal article is similar to the research which I aim to execute in this thesis, and while the online communities which were analysed in their research did not seem to be pornographic of any notion, they still were Italian support communities on both Facebook and other various online forums dedicated to transgender individuals (Cipolletta et al., 2017).

Cipolletta et al. (2017) gathered their material through content analysis of Italian online forums and Facebook groups, and they also conducted several online interviews with the members of these communities. Through a data analysis of the material they had gathered, Cipolletta et al. (2017) were able to deduct six different categories which frequently surfaced in their data. These were categories such as what motivation the interviewees had when they subscribed to these communities, what they needed help with, if they prefer online or offline interactions, if they were an administrator or regular member within these communities, what type of discussions could ignite conflict on these communities, and how these communities could assist certain individuals to seek more professional help (Cipolletta et al., 2017).

The second online interview in this study was with an administrator of Kadath, a 25 years old Caucasian trans woman who wish to be called “Millie”. Millie is pansexual, and a citizen of the United Kingdom – with Scottish heritage. She has a diploma in management, and is currently employed in that field. Millie has been on Kadath for 7 months, she has shared NSFW-erotica of herself on this server, and she have considered sex work in the past. This online interview took place on 28 April, 2019, through voice chat over a computer software known as Discord, and the interview lasted around 20 minutes. During the interview I asked Millie the following question “I have noticed that Kadath have its own serious/support channel. What would you say are the most common difficulties in life which the members of the server usually share in this support channel?”. Millie responded as followingly:

It probably like... mostly tied to like... Well there is a few... well I guess it all are tied to like the experience of being trans. But like generally it is stuff like relationship with... or like frustration with like the [gender identity clinics], the clinics in their area, or just generally struggling with dysphoria and stuff. Probably the most common sort of thing is usually like depression and stuff but it is usually like linked towards... linked to a generally overhanging thing of like dysphoria or just the general experience of being trans in general. (Millie, 2019, April 28)

Millie utilized words such as “common” and “generally” frequently when discussing depression and dysphoria amongst trans women – situating these terms as interlinked within the lived experience of trans women. She also disclosed how this interlinked system, an interlinked

system of suffering, caused a lot of frustration within the trans women of Kadath as well. According to Millie, the most common issue which trans women sought advice for in the support channels of Kadath entailed their frustrations – frustrations towards their respective medical care systems, especially the gender identity clinics. This is a claim which correlate with the results presented in the study by Cipolletta et al. (2017), which demonstrated that the most common reason why transgender individuals are motivated to seek out and join these support communities is to share their experiences – followed by developing close relationships as the second most common reason. It is possible that this exchange of experience between the members, as 'transgender patients' within the medical care system, empower the prospect of building close relationships between the members of these communities. In other words the sense of belonging within these support communities are not exclusively built upon shared feelings of frustrations aimed towards the medical care system, but through sharing information and experiences as transgender patients as well.

The results in the study by Cipolletta et al. (2017) also demonstrate that the most common online help which transgender individuals sought advice for were medical advices – matters such as transition procedures, hormone treatments, and preparation for surgery. This result in Cipolletta's (2017) study correlate with Millie's story because the transgender communities which Cipolletta et al. (2017) had investigated, in addition to Kadath as well, seem to inherit the responsibilities of the medical care system – specifically the responsibilities of the gender identity clinics. These responsibilities entail giving advice to transgender individuals on matters which is often considered to be transgender specific – matters such as the medical advice which I recently disclosed, as well as psychological support.

One might even go further with this argument and assert that these support communities carry equal or greater responsibility than the gender identity clinics, and the reason why I express hesitation towards this argument is because this argument carries varying consequences depending on the subject's geographical location. This argument stem from another result in the study by Cipolletta et al. (2017), which entails that the transgender individuals within these communities, who had previous experience with their respective medical care systems, seemed to embody significant influence in the decision-making regarding offline professional help. This influence entails if the transgender individuals who sought advice on the community would seek offline professional help from their respective medical care systems, because the advice they would receive from these communities consisted of what type of professional help they would seek, where to seek this help, and what potential uninformed advice they should be prepared to receive from their respective medical care systems (Cipolletta et al., 2017).

I would like to take a moment here to assert that, by situating this responsibility among the transgender support communities, I do not call for a message which would dictate “let's blame these support communities if something goes wrong during a transgender individual's transition!”. Instead I call for a possible change of perception of transgender individuals within the medical care system – a perception which could encourage the medical care system to consider the possibility that transgender individuals who seek medical care are not completely clueless in regard to matters such as what it means to be transgender, in addition to what the transition process will encompass. This is a sentiment which corresponds with Serano's (2007) ambition, since it might deconstruct some of the hierarchical autonomy within the medical care system and allow transgender individuals input in regard to what the medical care processes should entail for themselves. This is where the sense of belonging is yet again being reproduced through the support channels in communities like Kadath, because it is possible that this support functions as a stepping stone, or a roadmap, for transgender individuals to make more well-informed decisions when they enter their transition processes governed by their respective medical care systems. As Tobias Raun (2016) contend in his dissertation, representation of transgender individuals within educational spheres, such as YouTube, is invaluable for the transgender community, and one could argue these online support communities are equally educational as any YouTube channel.

I acknowledge it is difficult to discuss the medical care system, and gender identity clinics, in this broad and overarching manner. However, I am certain that when Serano (2007) address “modern medicine” she is examining what is traditionally known as 'western medicine', which is generally associated with the medical care system of Northern America and Europe. Since Kadath is a community primarily dedicated to transgender and non-binary individuals in Europe, I conclude that it is safe to assume that when the members of Kadath discuss the medical care system they address the same sphere as Serano (2007). I should also mention that the communities examined in Cipolletta's (2017) study were “Italian forums and Facebook groups” (p. 1543), so when I address the medical care system in this thesis I am actually referring to the medical care system within a Western/European context.

Katarina Mattsson (2010) disclose how Sweden as a nation is often deemed as the leading forefront of justice and equality regarding migration politics, and this pride most likely extends to LGBT+ rights as well, in addition to the medical care system and its management of 'transgender patients'. Since I am a Swedish citizen myself it is necessary that I assume the medical care systems in other parts of Europe are equal to, or below, the quality of medical care which the Swedish system currently provide for their 'transgender patients' – that is the lens which I have to apply in this context. However, I would like to clarify that although I find it necessary to embrace this lens, I

still find it uncomfortable. In other words, this is not a lens which I have chosen in order to gather some sense of national superiority or patriotic pride for myself – I still have my own dissatisfactions with the gender identity clinics of the Swedish medical care system.

Millie seemed to suggest that the transgender individuals who seek advice on these communities do not always struggle with dysphoria, but with “the general experience of being trans in general”, which situate these two circumstances as similar – not identical. It is possible that gender dysphoria have become too synonymous with terms such as depression and confusion, which is not problematic in of itself – however, it is possible that an exchange of influence occur when health issues are labelled with medicinal terms. This exchange would entail developing these health issues as urgent, but at the same time situating the same health issues as *incurable* unless they are examined by the medical care system. It is possible that some trans women wish to change the notion of gender dysphoria to some other understanding, rather than the usual notion of being depressed and confused. However, it is important to acknowledge that the results in Cipolletta's (2017) study also demonstrated that almost half of the interviewed transgender individuals expressed distrust towards the medical care system, and the reason why they expressed distrust emanated from bad experiences with the medical care system in the past.

Some of the transgender individuals who expressed distrust in Cipolletta's (2017) study also disclosed how they sought professional help from their respective gender identity clinics – only to become increasingly confused in regard to 'what it means to be transgender'. They became increasingly confused by each appointment at their respective gender identity clinics since the advice they would receive at these clinics did not correlate with their understanding of 'being transgender', and their transgender lived experiences were neglected by the medical care system. This circumstance seems to be another reason as to why gender dysphoria should not be considered synonymous to 'confused' since this confusion seems to be a social matter which targets all transgender individuals, rather than an internal mental/physical struggle within the transgender mind/body. Serano (2007) contend that the medical care system is mainly governed by cisgender individuals, it does make sense that a significant amount of transgender individuals express distrust regarding professional help. It mirrors the general hopelessness which I presented in the previous theme of “Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica” – the general hopelessness which Anonymous and Jessica expressed towards cisgender individuals (Connell, 2010).

I wish to, yet again, stress that I do not call for a sentiment which dictate “let's blame these communities if transgender individuals do not seek the professional help that they need!”. I would instead argue that it is important to acknowledge how these support communities act like cushions for transgender individuals – cushions which guide them towards the proper help that they need, but

also inform them of the potential misinformation they might receive from their local gender identity clinics. The data which I have presented so far seem to indicate that support communities like Kadath, whether or not the members are aware of it themselves, embrace a position which is in opposition of the medical care system – or at the very least the general problematic operation which is often applied towards transgender and non-binary individuals alike.

### **Administrative care on Kadath.**

For this theme my main template will be a journal article known as “I Did It All Online: Transgender identity and the management of everyday life”, written by Andre Cavalcante (2016). In this journal article, Cavalcante (2016) recite the story of a trans woman named Jen, and how she reached out to several transgender support groups and communities when she began her transition. Jen initially struggled to find a support group which she deemed suitable for herself, but then she found “Susan's Place”, an online support community made by trans people and dedicated to the transgender community. Susan's Place became a “second home” for Jen because it was a space that did not make her feel threatened and vulnerable, and this aspect of the community is called the “care structure”. Cavalcante (2016) describe the term “care structure” as “architectures of organized care and concern, created and maintained by collective and cumulative practices of human thought, effort, and creativity” (p. 110), and those who are primarily responsible for managing and maintaining this care structure are those who administer the community. This aspect of an online community, how the administration maintain this care structure on the server, could be worth examining because the administrators carry a certain responsibility – the responsibility of making sure this care structure remain a care structure for every member on the server. This responsibility of the administrators have a significant impact on server's care structure, and because of that the sense of belonging in the community as well.

The third online interview in this study was actually conducted back in 2 December, 2018, and it was involved in one of the methodology assignments which was assigned to me by my course coordinator at the time during Gender Studies 2. This interview was with a trans woman who wish to be called “Tali”, a Swiss citizen who is the creator and administrator of Kadath. She is also an administrator on GoneWildTrans, and this online interview took place over voice chat, through a computer software known as Discord. The interview lasted around 20 minutes, and during the interview I asked Tali the following question “Are there any controversial subjects that you, in your experience as an administrator, are currently struggling with or have struggled with in the past?”. Tali responded as followingly:

On Kadath it is... there have been a few issues of discussing medical procedures for trans people that has been quite controversial mostly because... it comes with risks,

and at the same time we have a place that is... that wants to be further accepting and providing of a safe space, a safe haven, and [building] a place where people can get better. So discussing these rather real and harsh realities cause some issues at some point, and took a bit of time for the administrators to sort that out. We have not really had anything since... but we have now rules and more administrators in place to both allow these conversations in a more healthy way without shushing the truth of, you know, for example recovery period from bottom surgery being quite taxing on the body and the mind – but at the same time keeping the ones that want a more positive space away from those conversations since they can just... if it is too much for them they can opt-out of that. So we have that in place [but] on GoneWildTrans it is fairly more complicated because, the way I see it, there is a bit of a rift between the professional models and the amateur ones. Most of the amateur ones are fairly early in their transition, a year or less usually, and they have all these issues that come from being [early] in transition that is, usually, one of the moments where there is most financial instability because the 'coming out' is typically the tipping point where everybody... everything can just disappear from their life. Usually these early transition trans people would look for some place with kins that they can feel accepted in, and they try to look for that in GoneWildTrans, but GoneWildTrans is not meant as a safe space for trans people – it is meant as a shop window for porn consumers. That is a very different mindset, and the administrators who are actually professionals do not seem to understand really the struggle of the newer members, and... yeah, so basically the newer members require some form of protection against the more aggressive people who would come to the... for the pictures. The professionals know how to deal with those but the amateurs do not, obviously, and there is a bit of a... yeah, of a divide at this point which I am trying to reconcile, but it is a bit complicated. Other things that I am trying to remind of the administrators is that... the fact that, from their own admission, trans people who are around or above two years of hormone therapy tend to fade away from trans spaces. That is really no random chance – it is usually the turning point where hormones have done maybe everything they could, and trans people start to pass all the time, and can just move on from transition. It is basically over, and trans people do move on at that point because it is a very difficult stage of life, but the administrators are above two years and, you know, have embraced it. [They] just keep going on and so they have all this experience, and they just do not really see these struggles of other people who are newly coming [to the server], I think. That is so suppositive of the divide, on a more experience of life level – they do not really see the things as they were before, and they are a bit condescending about it. (Tali, 2018, December 2)

What I gather from Tali's story is that trans-related issues can sometimes engender difficult conversations because they often entail hard truths – truths which can be burdensome to face since transitioning might not be the most straightforward journey for everyone. It also seems to be difficult to make sure every member feel satisfied and safe in support communities like Kadath, in addition to the communities which Jen had visited as well (Cavalcante, 2016). Two communities in Jen's story which stood out to me were offline support groups – offline as in these groups would meet in real life and support each other through face-to-face conversations, and I assume these support groups were dedicated to non-heterosexual and gender nonconforming people altogether. These were support groups which she took part in before she discovered Susan's Place, but both of

them each had their own problems which caused her to leave these groups. Jen did not feel safe in the first support group she attended, because this was a group which was outgoing. They would organize several sociable activities together in public areas, which made Jen feel unsafe since the group would receive weird looks and ridiculing language from people outside of the support group – calling back to Anonymous's assertion that transgender individuals are stigmatized as “weird” and “sick”. The second support group which Jen had joined had an internal problem, rather than an external opposition. According to Jen the second support group suffered from a division, and this division caused her to eventually leave that group as well (Cavalcante, 2016).

This ties back to Tali's story about how GoneWildTrans is currently facing a dilemma, and it is possible that as a community gather more members the risk of conflicts grow as well. Tali also seemed to suggest that as trans women progress further into their transition they also become detached to other trans women who are early in their transition, which is a bold statement but might be one worthwhile to consider. This delves into a subject which I almost wished to avoid, but it is something which needs to be addressed. This phenomenon, also known as “transmedicalist ideology”, is a mindset which dictates that in order for a trans person to be considered to embody the 'transgender lived experience' they have to conform to certain principles. They have to realize these principles because only then will they be considered a 'true transgender', and if they do not realize these principles they will be labeled as “transtrenders”. These principles consist of elements such as how long one have known that they are transgender, how long they have been open about their transgender identity, if they experience gender dysphoria or not, and also to which extent they have underwent physical gender altering processes. These processes would include bodily modifications such as sexual reassignment surgery, voice training, hormone replacement therapy, and chondrolaryngoplasty – shaving of the Adam's apple. These aspects of transitioning are misappropriated and squandered as embodied 'passports' of transgender identity, and through this conduct transgender identity have become distorted into a hierarchical structure, with those who conform to these embodiments at the top of this hierarchy.

During my investigation of Kadath I sought after academic journal articles on transmedicalist ideology within transgender spaces, but I was unable to find any journal articles of that category, which demonstrates how unexplored and serious this affair is. Due to the absence of previous research into this matter, it is difficult to pinpoint a 'correct' term of this ideology other than “transmedicalist ideology”. However, I should mention that within the online sphere there are several labels for those who embody this ideology, and these labels include “transmed” and “truscum”.

Serano (2007) describe how transmedicalist ideology basically exists within the medical

care system for transgender individuals as well – especially in regard to trans women since if they do not, for example, experience severe dysphoria during their evaluation process then they risk being perceived as 'not transgender enough'. This mentality seemed to have seeped from the medical care sphere and spread to transgender spaces – spaces such as online forums and support communities like Kadath, where it have mutated into something potentially even more harmful since it basically is social gatekeeping conducted by other transgender individuals. Serano (2007) disclose the term “gatekeeping” as a discourse which situate a responsibility among transgender individuals – a responsibility which dictate that transgender people need to conceal their transgender status, and in turn enable cissexism. Serano (2007) define cissexism as a bias towards holding transgender people accountable, in regard to how they do gender, to a different comprehension compared to their cisgender counterparts. Cissexism also reinforce the gender binary – an understanding of gender as divided into two distinct and separate forms of masculinity and femininity, with no spaces in-between these aspects. This is a concept which I have already examined in the theme of “Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica”, where I demonstrated how trans women are engendered to embrace traditional feminine beauty standards since any other forms of femininities do not entail the social benefits which is ascribed to that norm.

The prevalence of transmedicalist ideology within transgender communities is partially the reason why I chose to write a thesis back in 2018, at my time during Gender Studies, where I introduced the concept of “the plastic woman”. However, I must admit that I would not realize the clear similarities between “the plastic woman” and Donna Haraway's cyborg until roughly eight months later. It is a concept where I detail how an individual can partake in the transgender lived experience even though the same individual is not conscious of their transgender identity – that an individual might have been trans their entire life even though neither them or their surroundings were conscious of this matter. It is also a concept about how an individual can be perceived as transgender by their surroundings even though the same individual does not openly identify as transgender – that being transgender is more than just physical transition, it is also about being physically or socially gender nonconforming as well.

The term “the plastic woman” is inspired by characters like Rachael and Ava in films such as “Blade Runner” (Deeley & Scott, 1982) and “Ex Machina” (Macdonald, Reich, & Garland, 2014) respectively – women who are not necessarily considered to be cyborg in the traditional sense, but still fake, synthetic, and *plastic*. It is my way of expressing the experience of being caught in a double bind between two double binds because, as a trans woman, it does not matter how one choose to approach their transition because someone will always hold your gender expression accountable. Cissexism, or transmedicalist ideology, will soon enough push you towards

a gender expression which you do not really identify with – an identity which does not feel right for you, it does not feel real, it feels fake, synthetic, plastic. I am plastic, just like a mannequin, and just like a clothing store mannequin everyone fight over and decide for me what clothes I should wear. Everyone fights over me and it does not matter if I get hurt in the process since I am only plastic, and plastic, unlike flesh, can be replaced.

One might read about this concept of transmedicalist ideology, and its presence within transgender communities, and think “why not just ban these individuals if they are causing so much conflict?”. I would like to reiterate that this issue is one of the most difficult and prevalent challenges which Tali have faced in her experience of being an administrator on two different transgender communities – indicating that the transgender people who embrace this ideology is not an outnumbered group. It could mean that an action such as banning these people is not a solution at all because this seems to be a significant part of the transgender community, and not the occasional Internet troll or individual who spreads hate speech. The presence of transmedicalist ideology within transgender communities could also be another explanation behind why traditional feminine beauty standards and doing gender in stealth, as previously discussed in the theme of “Doing femininity through NSFW-erotica”, have become so prevalent among trans women. As I already have disclosed in the previous theme of “User support over online communities”, support communities like Kadath have a significant influence in the process of transgender people seeking to transition through their respective medical care systems, and it is possible that transmedicalist ideology seep through to this stage of transition as well.

I would argue this ideology is a harmful affair for all trans people because it only adds this additional layer to how trans people do gender – an additional double bind which only makes a trans life even more difficult to find serenity in. Trans women are not only engendered by their surroundings to remain in stealth, due to the circumstance that no one wish to be associated with them, but they are also held accountable by other trans people to do gender in line with a cissexist perspective. In other words, it only further reinforce the idea that the transgender body is something to be ashamed of, and anyone associated with that body should be equally ashamed as well.

The reason why I delve into transmedicalist ideology is because the presence of this ideology in a support community for transgender people affects the care structure of the community, and probably not in a healthy way. As Jen disclosed in Cavalcante's (2016) journal article, it is the administrators who are primarily responsible for the care structure of a support community, most likely because the administrators are located on the highest position of the community's hierarchy. Meanwhile, what I have demonstrated so far is that transmedicalist ideology is built upon turning transgender identity into a hierarchical notion, and when concepts like transmedicalist ideology and

care structures collide with each other it could lead to harmful results. What I gather from Tali's statement about GoneWildTrans is that the transmedicalist approach to the server's hierarchy have deconstructed the ordinary hierarchy between member and administrator, and if the hierarchy have shifted so have the care structure as well.

One could of course argue it is natural that trans people who embody 'more experience' as transgender become the administrators of support communities dedicated to trans and non-binary people, but as I have outlined earlier, transmedicalist ideology tend to push a narrative that your transgender identity is something to be ashamed of – something you should hide. This is especially harmful to those who have newly discovered that they are transgender, people who most likely are inclined to seek advice in online spaces dedicated to trans people, because these individuals have technically been hiding, have been in stealth, their entire life already. This is another reason as to why I take issue with Connell's (2010) application of the term “in stealth” because it remains unclear if this term is meant to be applied to trans people who have not yet discovered that they are transgender, and I find that worrisome because it discards their transgender lived experience up until this point – that everything that came before their transition does not matter in the discourse of 'what it means to be transgender'.

In order to further develop the theme of administrative care on Kadath I decided to conduct an additional online interview with another administrator of Kadath, and this individual is a non-binary person who wish to be called “Alice”. Alice have been an active member on Kadath for 2 years, they is a 20 years old pansexual Caucasian, and a Polish citizen. They is currently unemployed, but practices sex work and also have another income outside of sex work. Alice is also agnostic, and have an educational background in technical school. They have shared NSFW-erotica of themselves on Kadath, and also frequently visit the serious/support channels of the server. This online interview took place on 24 May, 2019, through voice chat over a computer software known as Discord, and the interview lasted around 20 minutes. During the interview I asked Alice the following question “Let's imagine a scenario where you and the other administrators on Kadath have to find a new administrator, what would you say are the most important traits in a person in order for them to fill that role?”. Alice responded as followingly:

Well someone who definitely have to be quite active and also perhaps liked by the community, and friendly to... obviously friendly to people. But I find moderators will probably have to be responsible, and not avoid doing something because they like someone, but just do things that are needed. (Alice, 2019, May 24)

What I gather from Alice's statement is that an administrator, in a support community like Kadath, is expected to not get too attached to any member and enforce the rules regardless of their personal bonds – a position which engender them to embrace an almost unbiased position.

However, when a community encounter a controversial subject such as transmedicalist ideology, it seems like this unbiased position becomes difficult to maintain. A community like Kadath is also liable to form emotional bonds between all of its members, regular members as well as administrators, because of the support and NSFW aspects of the server – further influencing the decision-making of the administrators. For example, it might be difficult on a moral and emotional level to ban a member if that same member previously have expressed troubles with loneliness and isolation in the support channel, and it is a dilemma which could entail an emotional and mental toll on an administrator – engendering this unbiased position even more difficult to maintain.

## Conclusion

What I gather from this analysis is that, due to certain external factors, femininity have become a difficult concept for trans women to outline for themselves. These external factors would include the widespread social stigma against trans women, which Anonymous outlined, as well as the burdensome principles of transmedicalist ideology – both within and outside of the medical care system. I do not claim that trans women would be too inherently helpless to navigate the concept of femininity without the assistance of other trans women, but due to these double binds which are almost impossible to satisfy, the theory of 'doing femininity' have been situated as an esoteric concept for trans women – uncharted territory yet to be fully explored. I assert that these double binds are almost impossible to realize because, as I detailed frequently throughout the analysis of this thesis, it is possible for trans women to be embraced as women by their surroundings, but only if they hide their status as transgender – situating the concept of transgender as something to be ashamed of. It does not matter how *far* a trans woman might be in their transition, the sense of having to hide, to remain 'in stealth', and be ashamed of their identities as trans still follow them like a chronic disease, and the concept of doing femininity remain an inescapable debate for trans women.

This is where communities like Kadath become significant because it is a space where trans women can escape from this debate, and find temporary solace from a discussion full of double binds. It is also a sphere where they are able to collectively deliberate on what the concept of femininity means to them, and celebrate that they are women with minimal influence from any uninvited voices. I use the term 'minimal' since, as I detailed in my analysis of “Administrative care on Kadath”, transmedicalist ideology still have influence in these spaces – an ideology governed by cissexism within the medical care sphere. The NSFW-erotica aspect in online communities like Kadath acts like a complimentary premium in the celebration of being a trans woman because it does not only celebrate *beautiful* bodies – it also serves as a celebratory reminder of how varying

trans women's bodies can be. It reminds trans women that, just like how there is no 'universal transgender lived experience', there is no 'universal trans body' either.

As I disclosed in the “Administrative care on Kadath” chapter of this thesis, transmedicalist ideology is a mindset which dictate that in order for a trans person to embody the transgender lived experience they have to realize aspects of physical transitioning. It is an ideology which distorts transgender identity into a hierarchical notion, and those who are located at the bottom of this hierarchy – the trans people who have not realized certain aspects of physical transitioning, remain forgotten or rejected by those who are located on a higher position of this hierarchical ladder. I assert that transmedicalist ideology reproduce this narrative of the transgender lived experience being regulated to negative health outcomes, and this harmful reproduction occurs when trans people are considered 'not trans enough' and are left forgotten, abandoned, and rejected. However, communities like Kadath combat this ideology through their practice of NSFW-erotica because it is through these channels where they demonstrate how varying the trans body can be, while transmedicalist ideology would rather encourage a singular and regulatory vision of the trans body.

The trans women of Kadath also subvert this narrative – the narrative of the transgender lived experience being regulated to negative health outcomes, by sharing their stories and experiences with each other in the server's support channels. The knowledge production which occur in the support channels allow the members of Kadath to shape their own narrative during their transition – a narrative where they face their respective medical care systems with confidence and determination, a prospect which I disclosed in my analysis of “User support over online communities”. In direct opposition of transmedicalist ideology, the trans women of Kadath have not abandoned or forgotten the trans women who might be early in their transition, or those who have chosen to not go through with certain physical transitions. I assert that the knowledge which is shared on Kadath, the knowledge production which occur in the support channel of that server, is a crucial aspect for the trans feminist movement.

Communities like Kadath achieve a sense of community among its members, but it is impossible to determine how extensive this communion is since this server push the concept of femininity as something subjective. This notion is additionally truthful in regard to all transgender individuals since all trans people are born different, and then again are reborn different over a longer period of time as transgender.

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