Queer refugees in Sweden: responding to vulnerabilities

Examining the risks causing vulnerabilities, responses to vulnerabilities, agency, and intersectionality

Abstract

Academic research on a global level and somewhat in Sweden has addressed the risks queer refugees face, uncovering vulnerabilities, their responses, and views on the agency. Though they left open questions about how much queer refugees can or can not respond to their vulnerabilities, how is this correlated to their agency, and what is the intersectionality of their experiences. This research aims to answer these questions concerning queer refugees in Sweden. A starting point is identifying the risks causing vulnerabilities and responses of queer refugees by employing Göttsche's theory on vulnerability as an analysis tool. This is achieved by life history interviews with queer refugees and ethnographical observations conducted in Sweden. To answer the question of how much queer refugees can respond to their vulnerabilities requires a theory of social navigation and theory of agency that explains the queer refugees' responses to their vulnerabilities. The theory of queer intersectionality uncovers the intersection of queer and refugee identity together with nationality, race, and specificity of identities (gay cis man and non-binary, trans person). This research detects a range of risks causing vulnerabilities, uncovers vulnerabilities, how much queer refugees can respond, and what that says about their agency as well as intersectional experiences of queer refugees in Sweden. The reasoning for using the term queer and ethical considerations as highly important aspects of this research are addressed in depth.

Keywords: queer refugees, Sweden; risks for queer refugees; queer refugee vulnerability; responding to vulnerability; queer refugee agency; queer refugee intersectionality

List of Abbreviations

RFSL - The Swedish Federation for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Intersex Rights

RNM - RFSL Newcomers Malmö

SMA - Swedish Migration Agency (Migrationsverket)

UNHCR - United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

ILGA - International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association

OECD - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

1951 Convention - Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)

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1. Introduction

1.1. Topic and research problem

"A person is sitting in the office. His wandering gaze detaches him from everything around him. My colleague proceeds to have a conversation with him, but nothing happens. I can not hear anything, but I can see the motionlessness. The loudest silence and sorrow. His expression, or lack of it, tells a story without a spoken word. The moment feels like an eternity as he continues piercing the window into the unknown and uncertainty. Later I met him and learned about his life, vulnerability, and how difficult it is to act on it. He remains, despite everything, determined to make the life for himself".[1]

This is how I experienced my first days in the RFSL Newcomers Malmö,[2] an organization project supporting queer refugees in Sweden,[3] where I interned and a place of fieldwork in conducting ethnographical observations and meeting interviewees. The first-day encounter left a strong impression, the one that never left me. Being in RNM has allowed me insider access to queer refugees, their lives, and how they continue to go against the grain and persist. This was a place where I saw human rights meet reality.

Firstly, it seems appropriate to ask a general question: Who are queer refugees? It can be said that queer refugees seek international protection or refuge due to persecution based on their sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression.[4] In simpler terms, queer refugees flee persecution for who they are and/or who they love.

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[1] Observational journal note was made during my internship period at RFSL Newcomers Malmö (further as RNM), September 2021. RFSL is an organization, Newcomers is a project of RFSL.
[2] Further as RNM
[3] RFSL, RFSL Newcomers project [website], https://malmo.rfsl.se/verksamhet/newcomers-malmo-2/ , (accessed 17 May 2022).
[4] UNHCR, LGBTIQ+ persons, [website], https://www.unhcr.org/lgbtiq-persons.html, (accessed 15 May 2022).

Persecution is based on criminalization existing in the countries of origin from which queer people flee.[5] The criminalization of same-sex acts exists in 70 countries worldwide, punishable by imprisonment or death.[6] Even though criminalization often refers to sexual practices, there are also restrictive measures in place when it comes to gender identity and gender expression.[7] Not only by legislation but through the social norms, queer people face discrimination, violence, and murder in their countries of origin.[8] Unfortunately, most queer people never manage to flee.[9]

If one is lucky, the departure from the country of origin can be understood as the first migration phase. Academic attention is primarily devoted to the second phase, which begins upon an individual's arrival in the host country and as the asylum process begins. The third phase occurs as an individual acquires a refugee status. This thesis mainly focuses on the third phase with inevitable attention to the second phase of queer refugees in Sweden.

Previously, academic scholars have been engaged in detecting risks, acknowledging and exploring the vulnerabilities of refugees and queer refugees, and the ways they respond to their vulnerabilities, either through resilience, coping, using strengths and external support, negotiating their lives, and by categorizing agency. A handful of scholars have done similar work when it comes to queer refugees in Sweden. The research problem of this thesis complements these findings by focusing on Sweden.

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[5] S. Jansen, 'Introduction: fleeing homophobia, asylum claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe', in T. Spijkerboer (ed), In Fleeing Homophobia, Sexual orientation, gender identity and asylum, Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 2013, pp. 14, 15.

[6] Ilga, Sexual orientation laws in the world [website], https://ilga.org/sites/default/files/downloads/ENG_ILGA_World_map_sexual_orientation_l aws_dec2020.png (accessed 15 May 2022).

[7] J. L. Gartner, 2014, humanityinaction.org, 2015, para. 6, https://www.humanityinaction.org/knowledge_detail/incredibly-queer-sexuality-based-asylum-in-the-european-union/ (accessed 15 May 2022).

[8] *Ibid*

[9] *Ibid,* para. 12.

Vulnerability can be understood multilayered. For Göttsches, vulnerability is present among everyone, undoubtedly refugees.[10] Often seen negatively in academia, a weakness to be overcome, she stands for acknowledgement, understanding, and compassion for those who are vulnerable.[11] Johnson emphasized the change of public imagination of refugees, depicted as faceless without personal stories, their vulnerability doubted, with a removed agency that is not acting.[12] To Bauer-Amin undeniable vulnerability of refugees is more than being a victim of a situation but reclaiming agency and personhood in new places of living.[13]

This thesis is about queer refugees' vulnerabilities in Sweden. It brings the knowledge of the risks that are causing vulnerabilities and responses they have to their vulnerabilities unveiled in analysis.[14] The thesis addresses how much queer refugees can respond to their vulnerabilities due to the influences of the risks causing vulnerabilities,[15] as well as how queer refugee agency can be perceived through their responses.[16] Lastly, the thesis provides an understanding of the intersectionality of queer refugee experiences.[17]

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[10] S. Göttsche, 'The Accumulation of Vulnerability; Aspects in the Figure of the Migrant: ATheoretical Approach' in N. Fromm (ed) et al, In Power in Vulnerability, A Multi-Dimensional Review of Migrants Vulnerabilities, Springer Vs, 2021, pp. 3, 5.

[11] *Ibid*, pp. 3, 4, 5.

[12] H. L. Johnson, 'Click to Donate: visual images, constructing victims and imagining the female refugee', Third World Quarterly, Volume 32, Issue 6, 2011, pp. 1016, 1018, 1023, 1024, 1027, 1028.

[13] S. Bauer-Amin, 'Resisting the current Refugee Discourse: Between Victimization and Reclaiming Agency', in J. Kohlbacher and L. Schiocchet, In From Destination to Integration –Afghan, Syrian and Iraqi refugees in Vienna, Austrian Academy of Sciences Press, 2017, pp. 127, 128.

[14] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 7, 8.

[15] H. Vigh, 'Motion squared; A second look at the concept of social navigation', Anthropological Theory, Vol 9 (4), 2009, pp. 419, 420, 430.

[16] C. Katz, 'Work and Play: Economic restructuring and children's everyday learning in rural Sudan', in M. Bourdillon and G. Spittler (Eds.) African Children at Work. Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2012, pp. 239-245. ; C. Katz, Growing up Global; Economic Restructuring and Children's Everyday Lives, University of Minnesota Press, 2004, pp. 244, 245, 247 – 251.

[17] K. Crenshaw, 'Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color', Stanford Law Review, Vol. 43, No. 6, 1991, pp. 1244, 1299. ;

Having this in mind, this chapter will define the research questions, aims, purpose, background, and placement, understanding of using the term queer, definitions of an asylum seeker, refugee, and queer refugee, and finally, limitations and delimitations. Chapter 2 firstly introduces a literature overview on the research concerning queer asylum seekers in Sweden and Europe and a psychological perspective on queer asylum seekers and refugees. Secondly offered are the discussions on vulnerabilities, responses, and agency of refugees and queer refugees globally. Thirdly, a discussion on risks, vulnerabilities, responses to the vulnerabilities, and the agency of queer refugees in Sweden is presented. The third and fourth section of the literature review chapter provides a source of the research problem. Chapter 3 lays out the theoretical framework, and chapter 4 the research design with ethical considerations. Chapter 5 showcases the analysis and theoretical implications in a discussion. Finally, in chapter 6 conclusion is drawn.

1.2. Research questions, aims, and purpose

Generally, academic scholars that have discussed the risk and vulnerabilities of refugees and queer refugees and the ways they respond to vulnerabilities have missed informing how much queer refugees can respond to their vulnerabilities and what that says about their agency, as well as about intersectionality. From there, it is important that research questions first ask about risks in order to proceed with further questions about queer refugees in Sweden:

1. *What are the risks causing vulnerability of queer refugees in Sweden?*
2. *How do queer refugees in Sweden address vulnerability? How much queer refugees in Sweden can address vulnerability?*
3. *What kind of agency do queer refugees from Sweden embody?*
4. *How is intersectionality reflected with queer refugees in Sweden?*

D. Rosenblum, 'Queer Intersectionality and the Failure of Recent Lesbian and Gay "Victories"', Law & Sexuality 83, 1994, pp. 86, 89, 91 – 93.

This thesis *aims* to detect the risks of queer refugees' vulnerabilities, uncover vulnerabilities, how queer refugees address their vulnerabilities, how much it is possible to address those vulnerabilities, what the limitations are to that, as well as to provide an understanding of the agency and intersectional experiences of queer refugees in Sweden. The *purpose* of this research is to provide new knowledge about queer refugees in Sweden by complementing existing academic work. This will be achieved by employing the theoretical and analytical framework of vulnerability from Göttsche by identifying the risks causing vulnerabilities, uncovering vulnerabilities, and the responses to vulnerabilities. The theory of social navigation by Vigh addresses the influences of social forces (risks), how much queer refugees can respond to vulnerabilities, and the limitations to those responses. Katz's theory describes the queer refugee agency according to the responses they make to their vulnerabilities. Lastly, Crenshaw brings the theory of intersectionality together with Rosenblum's theory on queer intersectionality for a holistic understanding of queer and refugee intersection. To achieve this, interviews were conducted with queer refugees in Sweden using the life history interviews and observations, and the data is analyzed using the holistic content mode of analysis together with Göttsche's analytical theory of vulnerability.

1.3. Background and placement

Numerous recent examples illustrate the plight of queer asylum seekers globally. Kakuma refugee camp in Keyna once again came to public attention because of vulnerable living conditions and violence committed against LGBT asylum seekers waiting for resettlement.[18] As the political situation changed in Afghanistan in 2021, the organization Rainbow Railroad working on emergency resettling of LGBTQI+ refugees, made a public appeal to the governments to introduce support programs for LGBTQI+ people fleeing

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[18] S. Roth, 'LGBTIQ refugees in Kakuma need durable solutions to address challenges', Blade, 29 April 2021, https://www.losangelesblade.com/2021/04/29/lgbtiq-refugees-in-kakuma-need-durable-solutions-to-address-challenges/?fbclid=IwAR22fKIXqO1zD6Rie9pUYlrjhl-vW8rbbeFDev0f9Ytdbu9-NTDeq-UyAKk&_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=4f66549bfdf30d4dc075448e9105a99b4670e1ee-1622653671- , (accessed 15 May 2022).

Afghanistan.[19] "Welcome to Chechnya" movie depicted activists in Russia assisting LGBT+ people for urgent asylum in the West.[20]

Thousands of LGBTI people seek asylum in Europe every year,[21] but the SMA has no data on Sweden. The OECD report on LGBTI inclusion in Sweden, based on the quality of the legal framework, ranks Sweden high in LGBT rights. The emphasis is on the prohibition of discrimination based on sexuality and gender, hate speech and hate crime legislation, recognition of partnerships followed by rights to adoption and reproductive rights, with some criticisms regarding trans rights.[22]

At the end of 2015, Sweden received 160.000 asylum applications, mostly from people fleeing war in Syria.[23] In response to the crisis, Sweden went from "having the EU's most generous asylum laws to the minimum EU level"[24] by imposing several restrictions, among which was the reduction of the permanent residency permit to a permit lasting three years.[25] This sudden shift awakened international concern, as UNHCR stressed the time-limited permits affecting integration,[26] and Amnesty International pointed to difficult access to

[19] Rainbow Railroad, Statement on the Situation of LGBTQI+ People in Afghanistan, [website], https://www.rainbowrailroad.org/the-latest/statement-on-the-situation-of-lgbtqi-people-in-afghanistan , (accessed 15 May 2022).

[20] U. Bacchi, 'Filmmaker uses face swaps to make Chechnya 'gay purge' movie', Reuters, 24 June 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-russia-lgbt-film-interview-trfn-idUSKBN23V2UI , (accessed 15 May 2022).

[21] S. Jansen and T. Spijkerboer, Fleeing homophobia, Asylum claims related to sexual orientation and gender identity in Europe, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU University Amsterdam), 2011, p. 7.

[22] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 'Over the rainbow? The Road to LGBTI Inclusion', OECD, 2020, pp. 1, 2, https://www.oecd.org/sweden/OECD-LGBTI-2020-Over-The-Rainbow-SWEDEN.pdf (accessed 15 May 2022).

[23] Migrationsverket, History, [website], https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Migration-to-Sweden/History.html (accessed 15 May 2022).

[24] *Ibid*

[25] *Ibid*

[26] United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 'UNHCR recommendations to Sweden on strengthening refugee protection in Sweden, Europe and globally', UNHCR Representation for Northern Europe, 2020, p. 4, https://www.unhcr.org/neu/wp-content/uploads/sites/15/2020/06/UNHCR-recommendations-to-Sweden-on-strengthening-protection-of-refugees-May-2020.pdf (accessed 15 May 2022).

employment, learning the language, and less mental health support for refugees.[27] ILGA and media criticized stricter rules by highlighting the impact on LGBT refugees in Sweden to feel less secure and part of the society, experiencing uncertainty for their future.[28] The media also discussed the "political backdrop pushing for greater returns".[29] Relevant organizations and queer asylum lawyers emphasized that asylum policy changes made it harder for queer people to obtain refugee status.[30] RFSL and media reports raised concerns queer refugees being considered non-credible in their asylum cases based on sexuality and gender identity.[31]

The research interest in queer refugees is multidisciplinary, from legal and health-related studies to anthropology, cultural geography, etc. This thesis placement aims to benefit the field of human rights by providing new knowledge on queer refugees in Sweden that also complements existing work. The human rights focus is on the risks and vulnerabilities, asking how much is possible to address those vulnerabilities, what that tells about agency, as well as the role of intersectionality for queer refugees in Sweden.

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[27] Amnesty International, SVERIGES NYA MIGRATIONSLAG FÅR STORA KONSEKVENSER FÖR MÄNNISKOR PÅ FLYKT, [website], https://www.amnesty.se/aktuellt/sveriges-nya-migrationslag-far-stora-konsekvenser-manniskor-pa-flykt/, (accessed 15 May 2022).

[28] Ilga Europe, 'Annual Review of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex people in Sweden covering the period of January to December 2021', https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/2022/sweden.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2022). ; J. Voss, 'Bekymrat RFSL ville se permanenta uppehållstillstånd som huvudregel', QX, 25 June 2021, https://www.qx.se/samhalle/212675/bekymrat-rfsl-ville-se-permanenta-uppehallstillstand-som-huvudregel/ , (accessed 15 May 2022).

[29] F. Lindsay, 'Sweden Has A Problem Sending Asylum Seekers Back', Forbes, 17 February 2020, https://www.forbes.com/sites/freylindsay/2020/02/11/sweden-has-a-problem-sending-asylum-seekers-back/?sh=50cf88ba1d36, (accessed 15 May 2022).

[30] V. Ahldén and M. Thorén, 'Homosexuella skickas tillbaka – klarar inte Sveriges homotest', Expressen, 30 May 2017, https://www.expressen.se/nyheter/homosexuella-skickas-tillbaka-klarar-inte-sveriges-homotest/ , (accessed 15 May 2022).

[31] RFSL, LGBTQI asylum-seekers are refused on unlawful grounds, [website], https://www.rfsl.se/en/organisation/asylum-and-migration/rfsl-slapper-ny-rattsutredning/, (accessed 15 May 2022). ; 'I could be deported to Iran because Sweden doesn't believe I'm gay', The Local, 21 February 2019, https://www.thelocal.se/20190221/i-could-be-deported-to-iran-because-sweden-doesnt-believe-im-gay/, (accessed 15 May 2022).

1.4. Definitions and legal framework

This section provides an understanding and reasoning for using the term queer, as well as definitions of an asylum seeker, a refugee, and a queer refugee coming from the national and international legal framework.

1.4.1. Using the term queer

There are numerous ways of understanding what is queer. In this thesis, the term queer refers to the sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression of people outside the norm of heterosexuality and not necessarily fixed notions of gender.[32] Using the term queer comes from the necessity for easier communication, with a notice that the thesis further addresses the experiences of gay cisgender men and a transgender, non–binary person. The dictionary defines queer as something different from usual, offensive, and a way of individual identification.[33] ILGA defines queer as an inclusive term for people who are not identifying as heterosexual and as differentiation in gender identity.[34] According to RFSL, the term can be used by an individual to define their sexual orientation and/or gender identity.[35]

Kunzel notes that the field of LGBT/queer history is "so wide-ranging (…) that it is impossible to survey as a whole".[36] The term is utilized differently in academic discussions, as Luibheid noted that "many scholars (…) deploy the term queer to acknowledge that all

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[32] RFSL, Glossary, [website], https://www.rfsl.se/en/lgbtq-facts/glossary/ , (accessed 15 May 2022).

[33] Merriam-Webster, Queer [website], https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/queer, (accessed 22 May 2022).

[34] ILGA Europe, 'Glossary', p. 7, https://www.ilga-europe.org/sites/default/files/glossary_october_2015_edition.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2022).

[35] E. K. Sedgwick, 'Queer and now', in D. E. Hall, A. Jagose and S. Potter, In The Routledge Queer Studies Reader, Routledge, 2013, pp. 8, 9.

[36] R. Kunzel, 'The Power of Queer History', The American Historical Review, Volume 123, Issue 5, 2018, p. 1562.

identity categories are burdened by legacies that must be interrogated, do not map neatly across time and space, and become transformed through (…) specific (…) circuits".[37]

Undoubtedly, the term bears controversy since, historically has been used in a derogatory manner, as a slur, and as abuse.[38] For some, it arrived as a form of activism[39] to "challenge existing norms and structures (…) what is considered normal or not regarding gender and sexuality".[40] The term has been reclaimed in the time of the HIV/AIDS epidemic[41] as the "Queers read this!" manifesto called queers to act against heterosexism and violence during HIV/AIDS epidemic.[42] Over time queer also expanded through culture, as "drag is being recognized as queer art".[43]

According to Jagose, "queer focuses on mismatches between sex, gender and desire",[44] and diversity of sex, sexuality, and gender, remains resistant to the definition and impossible to fix in theory.[45] Trying to define queer is to limit its potential to "usher (…) a new age of sexual radicalism and fluid gender possibilities".[46] For Halperin, "queer theory has (…) re-opened the question of the relations between sexuality and gender (…) pursued (…) critique of gender and sexuality from narrowly conceived notions of lesbian and gay identity; it has supported non-normative expressions of gender and sexuality".[47]

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[37] E. Luibheid, 'Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship', GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies, Volume 14, Number 2 – 3, 2008, p. 170.

[38] Kunzel, 2013, pp. 1564, 1568, ; A. Jagose, Queer Theory: An Introduction, Melbourne University Press, 1996, p. 1 ; D. Halperin, 'The Normalization of Queer Theory', Journal of Homosexuality 45 (2/3/4), 2003, p. 339.

[39] Kunzel, 2013, p. 1580.

[40] RFSL, Glossary, [website], https://www.rfsl.se/en/lgbtq-facts/glossary/ , (accessed 15 May 2022)

[41] Kunzel, 2013, pp. 1564, 1565.

[42] R. Fawaz and S. P. Smalls., 'QUEERS READ THIS!, LGBTQ Literature Now', GLQ, 24 (2-3), 2018, pp. 169, 170.

[43] A. Masse, 'Drag is art, and it's important to queer history', The Peak, 15 October 2021, https://the-peak.ca/2021/10/drag-is-art-and-its-important-to-queer-history/, (accessed 22 May 2022).

[44] Jagose, 1996, p. 3

[45] *Ibid*, pp. 1, 5, 6.

[46] Halperin, 2003, p. 339.

[47] *Ibid*, p. 341.

Sedgwick perceives queer as an "open mesh of possibilities, gaps, overlaps, dissonance and resonances, lapses and excesses of meaning when the constituent element of anyone's gender, or anyone's sexuality aren't made (or can't be made) to signify monolithically".[48] Queer can't only assume sexuality and gender but also race, migration, and ethnicity, as they cross with other identities.[49] The contribution of Halperin, Jagose and Sedgwick align with an understanding of queer in this thesis.

From what I have witnessed in the field, the term queer has been most frequently used in the local context. That includes queer refugees interviewed for this thesis, who spoke of queer as an umbrella term while still claiming unique sexuality and gender identity. I had encountered the term frequently during my internship in RFSL, with queer asylum lawyers, activists, queer Swedes, and of course, queer asylum seekers and refugees. For that reason, the popular term LGBT+[50] will not be used here but will be seen to an extent in the analysis as interviewees sometimes used both terms. There is no intention to criticize or validate one term over another.

1.4.2. Definitions of an asylum seeker, refugee, queer refugee, and legal justification

The definition of an asylum seeker comes in line with the understanding of the Swedish Migration Agency:[51] an asylum seeker makes an application for protection (asylum) in Sweden and their status is under consideration.[52]

The Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951)[53] defined the term refugee to "apply to any person who"[54] has "wellfounded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race,

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[48] Sedgwick, 2013, p. 8.
[49] *Ibid*
[50] LGBT+ acronym: https://www.glaad.org/reference/terms
[51] Further as SMA
[52] Migrationsverket, Asylum regulations, [website], https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/Private-individuals/Protection-and-asylum-in-Sweden/Applying-for-asylum/Asylum-regulations.html#:~:text=An%20asylum%20seeker%20is%20a,has%20not%20yet%20been%20considered , (accessed 15 May 2022).

religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country".[55] Sweden ratified the 1951 Convention.[56]

What defines a queer refugee is persecution based on the "membership of a particular social group".[57] As the 1951 Convention missed to mention what defines members of a social group,[58] UNHCR defined a social group as a group of people who "share a common characteristic other than their risk of being persecuted, or who are perceived as a group by society. The characteristic will (…) be (…) innate, unchangeable (…) fundamental to identity, conscience or the exercise of one's human rights".[59] The UNHCR Guidelines[60] and Handbook[61] have defined the membership to a social group by mentioning sexual orientation and/or gender identity as "innate and immutable characteristics (…) so fundamental to human dignity that the person should not be compelled to forsake them".[62]

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[53] Further as 1951 Convention

[54] UNHCR, 'Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees', UNHCR Communications and Public Information Service, Switzerland, 2008, pp. 3 – 5, https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html (accessed 17 May 2022).

[55] *Ibid*

[56] UNHCR, 'States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol', UNHCR, p. 4, https://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b73b0d63.pdf (accessed 17 May 2022).

[57] See quoted text from the Convention from footnote 55

[58] R. C. M. Mole, 'Introduction: queering migration and asylum', in R. C. M. Mole (ed), In Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe, UCL Press, University College London, 2021, pp. 5, 6.

[59] Jansen, 2013, pp. 1, 3.

[60] UNHCR, 'GUIDELINES ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION NO. 9: Claims to Refugee Status based on Sexual Orientation and/or Gender Identity within the context of Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Convention and/or its 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees', UNHCR, 2012, https://www.unhcr.org/509136ca9.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2022).

[61] UNHCR, 'HANDBOOK ON PROCEDURES AND CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING REFUGEE STATUS AND GUIDELINES ON INTERNATIONAL PROTECTION UNDER THE 1951 CONVENTION AND THE 1967 PROTOCOL RELATING TO THE STATUS OF REFUGEES', UNHCR Geneva, 2019, https://www.unhcr.org/publications/legal/5ddfcdc47/handbook-procedures-criteria-determining-refugee-status-under-1951-convention.html (accessed 15 May 2022).

[62] *Ibid* , p. 178.

And when it comes to the societal perception of the group there is no requirement "that members of the social group associate with one another, or that they are socially visible".[63] The Mentioned Guidelines and the Handbook are not legally binding in Sweden, but migration authorities found the Handbook as a source of law.[64]

The Swedish national Aliens Act (Utlänningslagen), relevant for people applying for asylum in Sweden, retinas the same refugee definition as the 1951 Convention, mentioning persecution grounds on a membership to a group on the basis of sex (and gender) and sexual orientation.[65] Therefore, a queer person is bestowed with a legal right to seek refugee status in Sweden.

1.5. Limitations and delimitations

The apparent limitation would be my lack of Swedish, which made the access to the topic limited but without questioning that the knowledge of such a topic shouldn't exist in English. The duality of roles, being an intern and researcher meant overcoming a one-sided perspective on queer refugees that I have supported during the internship. This task implied reflecting with the supervisor and talking to lawyers and those that the queer refugees have criticized. Along with the delimitations, this thesis does not address queer refugees' persecution in-depth and the perspective outside queer refugees themselves in Sweden. Ethical boundaries are examined in-depth in Chapter 4.

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[63] UNHCR, 2019, p. 178.
[64] Förvaltningsrättens i Stockholm, migrationsdomstolen, dom den 28 oktober 2011 i mål nr UM 7018-11
[65] Sveriges Riksdag, Utlänningslag (2005:716)

2. Literature review

This chapter has several attempts. Firstly, it brings a legalistic academic understanding of issues for queer asylum seekers in Sweden and Europe. Secondly, authors from psychology provide a perspective on queer asylum seekers and refugees. Thirdly, refugees and queer refugees' vulnerabilities and responses to vulnerabilities through resilience and coping are offered by health research academics. Additionally, ethnographical research discusses the necessity of negotiation for the agency and even its categorization of refugees and queer refugees. Lastly, the risk, vulnerabilities, responses to vulnerabilities, and agency come from authors of sociology, anthropology, and health research, regarding queer refugees in Sweden and Europe. The last two sections also served as a source of the research problem.

2.1. Issues for queer asylum seekers in Sweden and Europe

Academic focus is predominantly placed on queer asylum seekers over queer refugees. From a legal perspective, to understand queer refugees, attention must be first placed on asylum seekers. This understanding highlights that the asylum claim is based on persecution originating from the criminalization of "consensual same sex sexual acts or the expression of non-standard sexual or gender identities".[66] As noted by Jansen, Berg, Millbank, and Vitikainen, in Europe and Sweden, migration authorities additionally seek proof of persecution on individual grounds.[67] Proving the persecution of an individual is made by assessing the individual's credibility connected to their sexuality, gender identity, and gender expression. Jansen notes an array of discriminatory assumptions about what constitutes sexuality and gender in the way LGBT people act and look, often through

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[66] Jansen, 2013, p. 1.
[67] *Ibid*, pp. 7, 8. ; L. Berg and L. Millbank., 'Constructing the personal narratives of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Asylum Claimants', Journal of Refugee Studies 22(2), 2009, pp. 2, 4. ; A. Vitikainen, 'LGBT rights and refugees: a case for prioritizing LGBT status in refugee admissions', Ethics & Global Politics, Volume 13, Issue 1, 2020, p. 66.

westernized lenses.[68] Talking about Sweden, Gröndahl emphasized the importance of the migration authorities distinguishing the grounds for asylum based on sexuality from gender identity for trans, nonbinary and intersex people.[69] She notes that during the asylum interview, LGBT asylum seekers are expected to reflect on internalized thoughts about their identity about the negative feelings of difference, stigma, and shame.[70] As Gröndahl suggests, there is no right or wrong way to define one's identity, as it is individual and subjective.[71]

From legal anthropology, Dustin and Held examined how factors of space, religion, and support influence LGBTIQ+ asylum cases in Europe.[72] Their research has shown that the spaces such as accommodation or detention centres influence queer asylum seekers with lack of privacy, harassment, and living in fear of being 'outed'.[73] They found that LGBTIQ+ asylum cases also face discrimination and stereotypes in other spaces, such as public transportation.[74] Additionally, research has shown that accommodation placement plays a role in isolation from the world and the support community.[75] Dustin and Held also uncovered the religious aspect as a source of persecution, the self-identification, as well as a struggle due to LGBTIQ+ identity.[76] Lastly, research has concluded regarding the support of LGBTIQ+ organizations in providing education about rights and creating a sense of belonging and community.[77]

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[68] Jansen, 2013, p. 16.

[69] A. Gröndahl, AVSLAGSMOTIVERINGAR I HBTQI-ASYLÄRENDEN, RFSL, 2020, pp. 29, 30.

[70] Gröndahl, 2020, pp. 33-44, 78-80, 137-139.

[71] *Ibid*, p. 86.

[72] M. Dustin and N. Held, ''They sent me to the mountain': the role space, religion and support groups play for LGBTIQ+ asylum claimants', in R. C. M. Mole, In Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe, UCL Press, University College London, 2021, pp. 184-186.

[73] Dustin and Held, 2021, pp. 188, 189, 194, 195.

[74] *Ibid*, p. 189.

[75] *Ibid*, pp. 191 – 193.

[76] *Ibid*, pp. 195 – 202.

[77] *Ibid*, pp. 202 – 208.

2.2. A psychological perspective on queer asylum seekers and queer refugees

From psychology and trauma-related studies, Herlihy and Turner shared knowledge of the difficulties in the LGBT asylum interview.[78] Their research has shown that LGBT asylum seekers need "to relate a coherent account of events (…) experienced",[79] which "necessitates (…) denial (…) of traumatic events (…) and (…) poses challenges to recounting".[80] For that reason, authors framed the LGBT asylum seeker's storytelling in the asylum interviews as "incomplete autobiographical accounts"[81] as they are sourced from past traumatic events and retold involuntarily.[82]

Shidlo and Ahola discussed the mental health challenges and trauma of LGBT refugees.[83] From early age, these events accumulate in life[84] to "verbal, emotional, physical abuse (…) discrimination (…) conversion".[85] The research has shown that the diagnoses range from depression, panic disorder, and PTSD,[86] which "includes (…) re-experiencing traumatic events, numbing and avoidance of thinking about (…) events".[87] Their research concluded that LGBT refugees are at risk of losing two support mechanisms.[88] One is the "support of their ethnic community. Their compatriots remind them of the very people that they have

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[78] J. Herlihy and S. W. Turner, 'Asylum claims and memory of trauma: sharing our knowledge', The British journal of psychiatry: the journal of mental science 191(1), 2007, p. 3.
[79] *Ibid*
[80] A. Shidlo and J. Ahola, 'Mental health challenges of LGBT forced migrants', Forced Migration Review, Issue 42, 2013, p. 9 ; Herlihy and Turner, 2007, p. 4.
[81] Herlihy and Turner, 2007, p. 3.
[82] *Ibid*, Berg and Millbank, 2009, pp. 2, 4.
[83] Shidlo and Ahola, 2013, p. 9.
[84] *Ibid*
[85] *Ibid*
[86] Post-traumatic stress disorder.
[87] Shidlo and Ahola, 2013, pp. 9, 11.
[88] *Ibid*, p. 10.

fled from and are fearful of".[89] In the second conclusion, queer refugees blame themselves and hide their past lives when meeting new queer communities.[90]

2.3. Vulnerabilities and responses to the vulnerabilities of refugees and queer refugees

The following sections will emphasize the authors who have addressed the vulnerabilities of refugees and queer refugees and different ways to address responses to vulnerabilities through resilience, coping, and negotiation. Some authors have even categorized agency based on individual efforts and the influences of society.

2.3.1. Vulnerability and resilience of LGBT refugees

Alessi addressed the vulnerability and resilience of LGBT refugees in North America.[91] The author acknowledged past trauma experiences and explored categories contributional to resilience:[92] "staying hopeful and positive; utilizing community and legal services; relying on support from significant others (…); doing whatever it takes; and giving back".[93] In the first category, the participants expressed feelings of desperation and the freedom to express their identities, staying hopeful and positive.[94] The therapy in LGBT organizations and churches has been important in strengthening their resilience.[95] Additionally, Alessi found that LGBT refugees relied on religion and spirituality.[96] The author concluded that these categories contribute to resilience as a "protective factor in resettlement"[97] and are

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[89] Shidlo and Ahola, 2013, p. 10.
[90] *Ibid*
[91] E. J. Alessi, 'Resilience in Sexual and Gender Minority Forced Migrants: A Qualitative Exploration', Traumatology Vol. 22, No 3, 2016, p. 203.
[92] *Ibid*, pp. 203, 205.
[93] *Ibid* p. 206.
[94] *Ibid*
[95] *Ibid*
[96] *Ibid*, p. 209.
[97] *Ibid*, p. 204.

essential for a "particularly vulnerable subset of the forced migrant and LGBT population".[98]

2.3.2. Coping strategies and agency of refugees

Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee conducted empirical research on refugees coping in Australia.[99] Their study on mental health and responses to trauma asked the participants about the stressors as well as about the strengths and resources they employed for coping.[100] The research showed several coping strategies: family and community support, religion, and personal qualities.[101] The authors considered these coping strategies beneficial for adaptation and health.[102] Schweitzer, Greenslade, and Kagee hope for a research shift from already seen negative outcomes[103] towards an "active and problem-solving way"[104] with a primary aim for a "comprehensive picture of the refugee experience".[105]

2.3.3. Queer refugees negotiating vulnerabilities

Chossières's ethnographical fieldwork on queer refugees' experiences in Paris has shown the necessity of identity negotiation in making a living.[106] Chossière walks us through experiences of queer refugees being shouted, scolded, and 'put in their place' by the migration and local authorities, to which they have no choice but to comply.[107] The data

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[98] Alessi, 2016, p. 211.
[99] Schweitzer, J. Greenslade, and A. Kagee, 'Coping and Resilience in Refugees from the Sudan: A Narrative Account', Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry, 41 (3), 2007, pp. 2, 5.
[100] *Ibid* pp. 2 – 8.
[101] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 9 – 12, 14.
[102] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 9 -13.
[103] *Ibid*, p. 14.
[104] *Ibid*, p. 13.
[105] *Ibid*, p. 14.
[106] F. Chossière, 'Refugeeness, Sexuality, and Gender: Spatialized Lived Experiences of Intersectionality by Queer Asylum Seekers and Refugees in Paris', Frontiers in Human Dynamics, 2021, pp. 1 – 3.
[107] *Ibid*, pp. 4, 5, 8.

revealed the necessity for queer refugees to carefully navigate their movements around the city.[108] Chossière notes that in the new environment, queer refugees found themselves in heteronormative and cis-normative spaces where they were marked as 'others', making them adjust their behaviour and leaving them with a lack of belonging.[109] Additionally, the research has shown a lack of belonging in spaces from which queer refugees long for inclusivity, such as in dating culture, where they are racially fetishized and humiliated.[110]

2.3.4. Categorizing refugee agency

Colic-Peisker and Tilbury have analyzed settlement services and refugees' resources.[111] Concluding from the data collected, the authors proposed a four-element typology of the refugee resettlement style.[112] In the first category, they found that "some refugees use an active approach to resettlement, pursuing particular goals, and having a generally positive attitude".[113] Additionally, this research has shown the second category of "passive (…) styles"[114] where the victims experience a lack of control in their lives, looking for someone to blame, but also welfare services creating a victim mentality.[115] These authors brought in a somewhat explicit example of the categorization of an agency based on how much effort refugees put in and how much other factors (services) influence them.

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[108] Chossière, 2021, pp. 5, 6.
[109] *Ibid*, pp. 1, 6, 7.
[110] *Ibid*, pp. 7, 8.
[111] V. Colic-Peisker. and F. Tilbury, '"Active" and "Passive" Resettlement: The Influence of Support Services and Refugees' own Resources on Resettlement Style', International Migration Vol. 41 (5), 2003, p. 62.
[112] *Ibid*
[113] *Ibid*, p. 67.
[114] *Ibid*, p. 72.
[115] *Ibid*, pp. 76, 78 – 80.

2.4. Contextualizing queer refugees: risks, vulnerabilities, and responses to the vulnerabilities of queer refugees in Sweden

This section contextualizes queer refugees in Sweden with some reflections on Europe. From there, it becomes clear what risks queer refugees face, their vulnerabilities being uncovered, how they respond to their vulnerabilities, and what can be learned about their agency. These contributions arrive from sociology, anthropology, health research, and some master's thesis (migration and ethics and gender studies).

Mole sociologically explored the contested relationship between nationalism, sexuality, and migration by seeing both sexualities as the reason for migration and migration influencing sexuality.[116] He emphasized that "LGBT migrants often find themselves marginalised, both as ethnic minorities in the destination society and as sexual minorities within the diaspora community".[117] Valenzuela's study showed that the voluntary gay man migration was an aspiration to exercise their identities to the fullest capacity: the anonymity from family and ethnic society, leaving closed socio-economic groups, and not looking for the same in a new environment, as well as exploring self-expression, and feeling of queer belonging.[118]

A handful of authors that have addressed queer refugees in Sweden (in English) are represented here. Wimark discussed the phenomenon of homemaking for queer refugees by highlighting the liminality queer refugees experience from encountering norms in Sweden.[119] Those norms are communities from countries of origin, where queer refugees

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[116] Mole, 2021, p. 3.
[117] *Ibid*, p. 2.
[118] C. Valenzuela, ''The gay person always looks for the big European city': the sexual migration of Latin American gay men in London', in R. C. M. Mole, In Queer Migration and Asylum in Europe, UCL Press, University College London, 2021, pp. 27-37, 38 – 52.
[119] T. Wimark, 'Homemaking and perpetual liminality among queer refugees', Social & Cultural Geography, Vol 22, Issue 5, 2021, pp. 649 – 654.

experienced support but also fear of disclosing their identity.[120] The research has shown the expectations placed on queer refugees to feel out and proud in Sweden by society and authorities.[121] Wimark found a lack of access and understanding from LGBT organizations intended to support them.[122] Lastly, the research has concluded that queer refugees arrive in Sweden, a country synonymous with queer rights, where limiting norms appear, finding themselves unable to fit in, creating liminal belonging as they do not adjust to what is expected of them.[123]

Worthy mentioning are two master thesis, as the interest in the field has been on the slow rise when it comes to article and book contributions in English, to my knowledge. Korten explored experiences of sexuality and gender identity intersection with the inclusion and exclusion of LGBT refugees in Sweden, arriving with findings on vulnerability and support.[124] The research found several key components contributing to the outcomes of inclusion and exclusion, such as arriving alone but also finding support among friends and religion as a conflict with oneself.[125] Korten found that LGBT refugees' search for inclusion through LGBT organizations was marked with experiences of no understanding and their voices being silenced, contrasting to the understating found in the Swedish church.[126] Lack of belonging was found due to experienced racism and the need for general downplaying of ethnicity, religious identity, and refugee status for more inclusion.[127]

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[120] Wimark, 2021, pp. 654, 655.

[121] *Ibid*, p. 657.

[122] *Ibid*, pp. 658 – 661.

[123] *Ibid*, p. 662.

[124] Z. Korten, Queer Migration Perspectives: Identity construction and experiences of social inclusion and exclusion of LGBTQ refugees in Sweden, MA diss, Sweden, Malmö University, 2019, pp. 15, 20, https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1483244/FULLTEXT01.pdf, (accessed 15 May 2022).

[125] *Ibid*, pp. 18, 32 – 44.

[126] *Ibid*, pp. 47 – 51.

[127] *Ibid*, pp. 51- 52.

Bogaers' research about LGBT asylum seekers and refugees in RFSL Linköping found affiliation of vulnerability, survival, and resistance.[128] The participants used a collage to represent their experiences through images and words.[129] They wrote the words associated with their life in Sweden as safety, freedom, and health, compared to the words associated with their lives back in their countries of origin as having no rights and hopelessness.[130] Bogaers found that life in Sweden was also associated with loneliness, which could imply missing family and friends and isolation from other migrants, creating a lack of home.[131] Additionally, it was found that participants felt bored and had nothing to do, which was related to the difficulty of finding work and the requirement of speaking Swedish.[132] As a final discovery, participants related RFSL Linköping with family, belonging, and safety, helping them survive and build resilience by walking together in the Pride march.[133] The limitation of this research was in unclarity whether a mix of images and words was enough to create interpretations yet justifiable as the language appeared to be a research barrier.[134]

Ultimately, a health research study conducted by Kostenius, Hertting, Pelters, and Lindgren underlined how the vulnerability of LGBT refugees in Sweden could be a potential.[135] The authors have identified three main themes.[136] In one, the interviewed participants have expressed fear of persecution they have faced, feelings of shame, and negative effects on their mental health.[137] In the second theme, the interviewees found the support resource

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[128] S. Bogaers, We are here, but are we queer? A bricolage of the experiences of LGBTQ refugees in Linköping, Sweden, MA diss, Sweden, Linköping University, 2018, pp. 10, 11, 18, 19, http://liu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2%3A1250566&dswid=-3092 , (accessed 15 May 2022).
[129] *Ibid*, pp. 35 – 40.
[130] *Ibid*, p. 36.
[131] *Ibid*, pp. 35-40.
[132] *Ibid*, pp. 39, 40.
[133] *Ibid*, pp. 41 – 46.
[134] *Ibid*, pp. 48, 49.
[135] C. Kostenius et al, 'Health-related integration interventions for migrants by civil society organizations: an integrative review', International Journal of Qualitative Studies on Health and Well-being, Vol 16, 2021, pp. 1, 10.
[136] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[137] *Ibid*, pp. 6, 7.

from a local community organization that has provided them with feelings of trust, safety, and pride.[138] In the LGBT refugee transition to their new life in Sweden, other factors have been contributing: attending university, learning the language and traditions, as well as the culture of the LGBT scene.[139] On the downside, interviewees also experienced racism, difficulties with the assigned communal accommodation, and a lack of openness in society to LGBT people.[140] In the final phase, when it comes to the future, interviewees expressed a desire to give back to LGBT organizations, looking at themselves as leaders for LGBT refugees.[141] The main takeaway from this study was to emphasize the relationship between vulnerability and potentiality.[142] Authors saw that favourable and less favourable experiences could bring risks but also resources for personal development.[143] The research recommended "avoidance of deficit-focused perspectives (…) but those (…) individuals who are (…) strong and resourceful (…) and who can bring change".[144] Focusing on strengths and resources would seem better for their hopes and agency.[145]

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[138] Kostenius et al, 2021, pp. 7, 8.
[139] *Ibid*
[140] *Ibid*
[141] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[142] *Ibid*
[143] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[144] *Ibid*
[145] *Ibid*

3. Theoretical framework

This chapter presents the theoretical framework and connections with queer refugees in Sweden. The theory of vulnerability from Göttsche also implies analysis of risks causing vulnerabilities, individual awareness, and seeing responses to vulnerabilities. The possibility for people to act on their vulnerabilities is addressed in Vigh's theory of social navigation. Katz's agency theory describes the responses of queer refugees. Lastly, Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality with Rosenblum's theory on queer intersectionality helps a holistic understanding of queer refugees' experiences.

3.1. Theory and analysis tool of vulnerability

From a theoretical perspective, Göttsche discusses the concept of vulnerability. According to Göttsche, vulnerability as an ontological category concerns all humans and, inevitably, refugees.[146] She notes that the concept of vulnerability has travelled across time and has gained a multitude of meanings. Often in academia, it is perceived negatively as a weakness, defect, suffering, and fragility.[147] As people have arrived at a historical thought of influencing their life trajectories, people have taken measures to overcome, correct, and eliminate vulnerability as an obstacle and mistake.[148] This view characterizes "vulnerability as something that needs to be overcome".[149] It was with theology and philosophy that the view on the concept has shifted toward the importance of understanding, and compassion,[150] as a "desirable characteristic (…) without necessarily insisting on overcoming it".[151]

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[146] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 5.
[147] *Ibid*, p. 3.
[148] *Ibid,* pp. 3, 4.
[149] *Ibid*, p. 4.
[150] *Ibid*, pp. 4, 5.
[151] *Ibid*, p. 5.

Göttsches's theoretical concept of vulnerability extends as an analysis tool used with refugees.[152] Göttsches provides an opportunity for analysis, which means a necessity to detect the risks causing vulnerabilities (risks are an inseparable part of vulnerabilities),[153] by asking an individual who is aware of their vulnerabilities, leaving room for discovering the outcomes of an individual's actions (responses to vulnerabilities). A vulnerable individual who is aware of those risks is "able to develop qualities, strategies and abilities to cope with one's vulnerability".[154] But, even if vulnerability reveals a possibility of adaptation and coping, it will depend on the context in which vulnerability emerges and the position of the vulnerable subject.[155] In the next section, the theory of social navigation addresses the limitations of people responding to their vulnerabilities.

There are four risks causing vulnerabilities, and they don't have a clear-cut distinction between them.[156] The sociality is seen as a society, "sense of togetherness (…) shaped by common values, norms, traditions, and practices",[157] producing belonging and security.[158] In sociality, there is a risk of disregard, lack of appreciation, and social exclusion, starting with an individual's semi-conscious exposure to society.[159] One may seek support, togetherness, and belonging in a particular group, which may produce less or even more harm and potentially act as a risk.[160] Such a group can be significant for an individual if participation within a broader society is not possible.[161] If one is left behind in society, they risk becoming 'the other'.[162]

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[152] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 23, 24.
[153] Göttsche refers to the work of Burghardt in defining four factors of risks causing the vulnerability (called also vulnerantality) - Göttsche, 2021, pp. 6, 7.
[154] *Ibid*, p. 8.
[155] *Ibid*
[156] *Ibid*
[157] *Ibid*
[158] *Ibid*
[159] *Ibid*, pp. 9, 10, 23.
[160] *Ibid*, pp. 9, 10, 17.
[161] *Ibid*, p. 10.
[162] *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.

Culturality "opens up spaces for sharing (…) protection, orientation and meaning to human beings (…), a source of inclusion but also division".[163] "The negative consequences only become apparent through repeated injuries (…) stereotyping, insults or seemingly neutral statements".[164] Culture can categorize or label people based on 'culturally or socially incompatible characteristics' in verbal or non-verbal communication (symbols, traditions, and language), leading to stigmatization and exclusion.[165] Dealing and negotiating the process of old and new values also bear a risk.[166]

With corporality, the human body is seen as a "medium of vulnerability"[167] with a visible "public dimension"[168] that suffers.[169] The body is vulnerable physically involving violence but also through discipline, submissiveness, control in mobility, the way people live in accommodation, and if family reunification is allowed.[170] An individual is always affected to a certain level.[171]

With liminality, the social and cultural context creates the borders and thresholds for an individual, lasting temporarily or continuously.[172] Liminality is manifested through different forms of spaces and time,[173] where an individual leaves "the familiar terrain (…) and everything unknown seems threatening".[174] Regardless, the individual can still push out the liminality, e.g. an individual can positively imagine themself.[175]

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[163] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 10, 11.
[164] D. Burghardt et al., Vulnerabilität: Pädagogische Herausforderungen. Kohlhammer, 2017, p. 44, cited in S. Göttsche, 'The Accumulation of Vulnerability; Aspects in the Figure of the Migrant: ATheoretical Approach' in N. Fromm (ed) et al, In Power in Vulnerability, A Multi-Dimensional Review of Migrants Vulnerabilities, Springer Vs, 2021, p. 13.
[165] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 13, 14, 17, 23, 24.
[166] *Ibid*, p. 20.
[167] *Ibid*, p. 14.
[168] *Ibid*
[169] *Ibid*, pp. 14, 16, 17, 24.
[170] *Ibid*, pp. 15, 16.
[171] *Ibid*, p. 15.
[172] *Ibid*, p. 16.
[173] *Ibid,* pp. 16, 17.
[174] *Ibid*
[175] *Ibid*, p. 17.

To these factors borrowed from Burghardt, Göttsche builds her factor of structurality. Structures or institutions can better people's lives but can also act detrimentally through laws, distribution of power, traditions, and the dynamic of work.[176] Such acts arrive from the structures but are mediated in interactions with the public employees[177] leaving "vulnerability hardly comprehensible".[178] The asylum process can also be a risk.[179]

Göttsches's view of vulnerability as not being negative, a deficit, or one's weakness, but rather the need to acknowledge and understand vulnerability, the need for compassion, was applied to refugees, but here it comes useful for queer refugees in Sweden. Also, to understand the vulnerability of queer refugees, there is a need for analysis by detecting risks causing vulnerabilities (which is asked of queer refugees in Sweden) and seeing those vulnerabilities and their responses to their vulnerabilities.

3.2. Social navigation of vulnerability

Göttsche's theory briefly mentions the individual's ability to respond to vulnerabilities except referring to restriction by context and the individual's position at the time. The social navigation theory by Vigh helps to understand the possibility of an individual responding to their vulnerabilities. The concept of social navigation is interested in how people move and act in uncertain, difficult, insecure, unstable places, practices, and precariousness, influenced by forces they seek to escape.[180] Here, navigation refers to the movement[181] of an individual "in a moving environment"[182] that is unsettled.[183] The same moving environment moves people as well.[184] Social forces influence individuals, positions, and

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[176] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 17, 18, 24.
[177] *Ibid*, p. 18.
[178] *Ibid*, p. 19.
[179] *Ibid*, p. 22.
[180] Vigh, 2009, pp. 419, 420.
[181] *Ibid,* p. 420.
[182] *Ibid*
[183] *Ibid*, pp. 420, 425.
[184] *Ibid*

possibilities as they move them and affect them.[185] Navigation implies one's attentiveness,[186] "making (…) way through immediate difficulties as well as directing one's life (…) into the future".[187] Navigation is an experience of control over social forces, or lack of it.[188] Vigh highlights that individuals are never entirely free or have the possibility to move as they please, but they move as social forces move them.[189] People lean towards flexibility, negotiation, and adjustment.[190] Vigh mentions networks, contacts, and events that may provide a way out.[191]

As seen in the Literature review chapter, queer refugees in Sweden sought support from queer organizations.[192] In other cases, queer refugees have to accept the degrading treatment of migration authorities.[193] Previous studies have said little about the challenges of queer refugees to respond to their vulnerabilities, how much it is possible to respond, and why. This theory can be utilized to understand how queer refugees in Sweden respond to their vulnerabilities while facing the risks that are causing their vulnerabilities, the risks that influence them, and the risks from which they seek to escape.

3.3. Agency: Resilience, reworking, and resistance

Katz's understanding of the agency is expressed through resilience, reworking, and resistance. All three forms of agency are descriptions of responses people provide in difficult situations, trying to survive and resolve problems.[194]

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[185] Vigh, 2009, pp. 420, 425.
[186] *Ibid*
[187] *Ibid*
[188] *Ibid*, p. 430.
[189] *Ibid*, p. 432.
[190] *Ibid*
[191] *Ibid*, pp. 421, 422.
[192] Kostenius et al, 2021, pp. 7, 8, 10.
[193] Chossière, 2021, pp. 4, 5, 8.
[194] Katz, 2012, pp. 227 – 229, 231 – 236, 239.

Resilience is seen as a small act that enables people to get by, allowing them to manage and recuperate the means of everyday life and shore up resources.[195] It represents the action of making it through the day, more or less successfully, by enduring.[196] Reworking means more conscious, focused, pragmatic responses by using available resources to make it more livable.[197] Outcomes and consciousness are much broader than when it comes to resilience.[198] The attempt is not to change hegemonic relations (as they might not be able) but rather to resolve imidate problems using resources.[199] Katz found acts of resilience and reworking to be also overlapping.[200] Finally, resistance means more conscious acts of opposition to address and confront oppression and exploitation at different levels.[201]

One example offers a comparative perspective for queer refugees in Sweden. Waite, Lewis, Dwyer, and Hodkinson used Katz's approach to study the UK labour exploitation of asylum seekers and refugees and make reflections on their agency.[202] The source of exploitation was found in the policies restricting asylum seekers and refugees to decent labour and making them vulnerable.[203] Small acts of resilience were recognized in earning every penny and having to work in an oppressive system.[204] Reworking acts were seen as not challenging the hegemony, but having responses, reflected in negotiating payment and working hours.[205] Resistance as an oppositional act of addressing power and resources was seen in solidarity through collective action and confrontation with oppressive structures.[206]

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[195] Katz, 2012, pp. 239 – 244, Katz, 2004, pp. 244, 245.
[196] Katz, 2012, pp. 242-245, *Ibid*
[197] Katz, 2012, p. 239, Katz, 2004, pp. 247, 251.
[198] Katz, 2004, p. 247.
[199] Katz, 2004, pp. 247 – 250, Katz, 2012, p. 240.
[200] Katz, 2012, p. 239.
[201] Katz, 2012, pp. 239, 246, 247, Katz, 2004, p. 251.
[202] L. Waite et al, 'Precarious Lives: Refugees and Asylum Seekers' Resistance within Unfree Labouring', ACME: An International E-Journal for Critical Geographies, 14 (2), 2015, pp. 479 – 481.
[203] *Ibid*, pp. 480, 483, 484.
[204] *Ibid*, p. 485.
[205] *Ibid*, p. 486.
[206] *Ibid*, p. 487.

While psychological studies have emphasized the importance of an active, positive, coping, and problem-solving queer refugees agency for the mental health of queer refugees, other authors have even categorized refugee agency as passive or active based on their efforts and influences from support services.[207] Katz's theory offers an understanding of queer refugee agency in Sweden based on responses to their vulnerabilities, responses that are conditioned and not dependent solely on queer refugees. As already seen, sometimes queer refugees could not even respond (e.g. restricted movement or having to comply with migration authorities).[208]

3.4. Queer intersectionality

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality acknowledged that discrimination against black women could not be observed separately as an issue of race or gender but as they intersect,[209] as "women of colour are marginalized within both".[210] While antiracist politics addressed the tendency to cast a black man as a threat to white women, simultaneously, they missed addressing the black rape victims and the rape of a black woman by a black man.[211] While antirape feminists criticized the notion that a woman needs proof resiting the rapist, simultaneously, they missed addressing the rapes committed against black women and black women labelled as bad women (due to the sexualized images based on their race).[212] Crenshaw's theory has the analytical strength of wide applicability, and intersectionality can be a matter of a gay person of colour criticizing the church for producing heterosexism.[213] As with race and gender, or sexuality and race, the intersectionality of queer refugees requires a holistic understanding of marginalization coming from both or more.

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[207] Schweitzer et al, 2007, pp. 2, 5, 9 - 13, 14 ; Kostenius et al, 2021, pp. 6, 7, 10 ; Colic-Peisker and Tilbury, 2003, pp. 62, 67, 72, 76, 78 – 80.
[208] Chossière, 2021, pp. 4, 5, 6, 8.
[209] Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244.
[210] *Ibid*
[211] *Ibid*, pp. 1245, 1266, 1269, 1271 – 1273.
[212] *Ibid*, pp. 1266 – 1271.
[213] *Ibid*, p. 1299.

Complementing Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality is Rosenblum's understating of queer intersectionality. Rosenblum created what he calls queer continuum,[214] which represents inclusiveness for queer people (not just lesbians and gays) that resist compulsory heterosexuality while respecting their singular identities (experiences of gays are not the experiences of lesbians).[215] Rosenblum builds on the work of Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality, calling queer identity (seen as a queer continuum) intersectional as queers face discrimination related to sexuality, gender, but also class, race, and ethnicity.[216] He demonstrates this by criticizing the victories that gays and lesbians achieved in court.[217] When a gay couple faced home eviction, their victory had to do with the Court recognizing them as a family[218] due to a significant "level of emotional and financial commitment".[219] It was a victory in itself, but such a victory would exclude those with less financial means or those who don't commit to monogamy.[220] Both Crenshaw's and Rosenblum's theories of intersectionality are important for understanding the experiences of queer refugees in Sweden as at least two-fold, being a matter of queer identity and being a refugee.

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[214] In order for Rosenblum to build queer continuum, he uses Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum that explains the range of women's experiences including lesbian sexuality, rejection of compulsory heterosexuality (e.g. resistance to marriage), differentiation from experiences of homosexual men, and embracing experiences beyond white middle-class Western women, but races and ethnicities. - A. C. Rich, 'Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence', Journal of Women's History, Volume 15, Number 3, 2003, pp. 27 – 41.

[215] Rosenblum, 1994, pp. 91 – 93.

[216] *Ibid*, pp. 86, 89.

[217] *Ibid*, pp. 84, 85.

[218] *Ibid*, pp. 96, 97.

[219] *Ibid*, p. 97.

[220] *Ibid*, pp. 103 – 105.

4.Research design

Qualitative research as a way of learning and understating the aspects of social life[221] is seen as appropriate to "explore, describe, or explain social phenomena; unpack the meanings people ascribe to (…) situations".[222] As thesis questions ask about the lives of queer refugees in Sweden, it is reasonable to use qualitative methods, specifically conducting interviews with queer refugees in Sweden, complemented with ethnographical observations in Sweden, as primary data sources.

The following sections address the interviews with queer refugees in Sweden and the life history interview method; secondly, the ethnography, observations, and field notes, with a focus on internship and fieldwork; thirdly, the holistic content mode of analysis; fourthly, the ethics and its relation to consent, anonymization, and confidentiality, as well as to interviewees, internship, and fieldwork. Lastly, the reflexivity and a position of a researcher are addressed. Some reflections on vulnerability are present as well.

4.1. Interviews

"Humans (…) have used conversation as a central tool to obtain knowledge about others (…) how they experience the world and (…) think, act".[223] For this thesis, interviews were conducted individually[224] with queer refugees in Sweden who have obtained refugee status.[225] Due to the sensitivity of the stories, individual interviews were conducted.[226] In

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[221] P. Levy, 'Introduction to The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research, Second Edition', in P. Levy (ed), In The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research (2 ed.), Oxford University Press, 2020, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.9, pp. 2, 3.
[222] *Ibid*, p. 2.
[223] S. Brinkmann, 'Unstructured and Semistructured Interviewing' in P. Levy (ed), In The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research (2 ed.), Oxford University Press, 2020, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.9, p. 1.
[224] *Ibid*, p. 20.
[225] One of the interviewees have not obtained refugee status but this person was a queer asylum seeker. This person managed to obtain legal status in another legal manner.
[226] *Ibid*

total, four people were interviewed, and each person was interviewed three times, producing twelve interview sessions. Each interview lasted approximately an hour and over. The intention was to have all twelve interviews conducted in person,[227] but three interviews were held online due to health-related reasons. Because the interviews were conducted in person, I could 'read' the interviewee's body language and facial expressions,[228] which were important for assessing anything that would make the interviewees uncomfortable. Online sessions provided a similar experience. The location of the interviews was decided together with the interviewees. RNM provided a venue, described by interviewees as safe and comfortable, where they could talk freely. The interviews were conducted in a non-disruptive environment, and volunteers present during the interviews were not considered disruptive to the interviewees.

The interview format was semi-structured, which allowed questions prepared in advance to change for the purpose of staying on the topic and remaining attentive to the interviewee's inputs.[229] Questions changed with each person in each session, as interviewees spoke differently about their experiences in Sweden. During the interview, I took notes that helped me follow the conversation and 'steer' the questions. All the interviewees spoke fluent English. The strategy was primarily to listen to the interviewees, listen to what they had to say and what they didn't want to say (paying attention if they would avoid answering a question, which wasn't the case).[230] The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed ad verbatim, except for the first interviewee, who suggested an online transcribing program. The rest of the interviews (eleven) were done ad verbatim, primarily for the concern of uploading sensitive data online. The interviews were transcribed shortly after every session,[231] which allowed the reformulation of questions for the following interview. The reliability of interview data was based on interviews with queer refugees I

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[227] Brinkmann, 2020, p. 21.
[228] *Ibid*
[229] *Ibid*, pp. 14 -19.
[230] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[231] *Ibid*, p. 21.

met before the interviews, building a trusting relationship, and encountering similarities with queer refugees during the internship.

4.1.1. Life history interview method

The life history interview method focuses on capturing individual and subjective experiences, people's realities, and encounters with society.[232] The interviewee is invited to talk in their own words about their lives, the world, and how they cope with society.[233] The method is, in essence, critical of absolute truths as it seeks to explore various people's experiences.[234] It relies on semi-structured questions and uses a small sample.[235] The method's limitations include a lack of generalization due to interviewing a small sample.[236] The method also suffers from the recollection of stories that can produce less accurate accounts of events.[237] This limitation is acknowledged, but it remains secondary to the fact that only queer refugees can speak for themselves. Life history interviews entailed deep conversation focused on a segment in the interviewee's life on several occasions.[238] In practice, interviewing took time, without rushing, allowing queer refugees to talk about life in Sweden.

4.2. Ethnography, observations, and field notes

Aside from interviews, the method of ethnographical observations[239] was used during my internship at RNM with queer refugees in Sweden. Ethnography invites the reader to walk

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[232] N. Bakar and M. Abdullah, 'The life history approach: fieldwork experience', Jurnal e-Bangi, Volume 3, Number 1, 2008, p. 1.
[233] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 3, 4.
[234] H. Lim, 'The Life History Interview: Researching the Dynamic Identities of Ethnic Minority Women in Britain', Enquire, 4 (1), 2011, pp. 3, 4.
[235] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[236] Bakar and Abdullah, 2008, p. 6.
[237] Lim, 2011, pp. 3, 4.
[238] M. Beck, A. Bryman and T. Liao, 'Life History Method', in M. Beck, A. Bryman and T. Liao, In The SAGE Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods, Sage Publications, Inc, 2011, p. 2.
[239] Observations were complemented with field notes.

in the shoes of another, "to grasp people's perspectives"[240] by providing informational richness.[241] The participant observation method combines the researcher's participation as an insider and simultaneously acting as an observer or outsider.[242] In essence, observations require locating spaces, gaining access, spending time in the field, and understanding what is going on.[243] Observing is intended to uncover meanings and context.[244] Merry has accentuated the necessity of ethnographical methods in researching human rights, which are often dismissed and seen as unreliable.[245] Ethnography looks at individual practice, how people talk about the world or the meanings they provide, and the social structures they operate within.[246] As part of observations, field writing involves descriptions of spaces, people, and actions, which were taken in the form of journal notes.[247]

4.2.1. Internship and fieldwork

The internship at RNM, lasting over six months, allowed me to meet the interviewees and observe the lives of other queer refugees in Sweden. RFSL is an LGBTQI organization, anti-racist, norm critical,[248] providing safe space and strengthing identities of the vulnerable voices.[249] RNM was created to provide a safe space and support for LGBTQI+ asylum

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[240] A. K. Harrison, 'Ethnography' in P. Levy (ed), In The Oxford Handbook of Qualitative Research (2 ed.), Oxford University Press, 2020, DOI:10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190847388.013.9, p. 13.
[241] *Ibid*
[242] *Ibid*, p. 18.
[243] *Ibid*, pp. 19, 20.
[244] S. E. Merry, 'The potential of ethnographic methods for human rights research' in B. A. Andreassen, H. Sano and S. McInerney-Lankford, In Research Methods in Human Rights; A Handbook, Edward Elgar Publishing Limited, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA, 2017, p. 143.
[245] *Ibid*, p. 141.
[246] *Ibid*
[247] Harrison, 2020, pp. 14, 20, 21.
[248] RFSL, Normkritik [website], https://www.rfsl.se/hbtqi-fakta/normkritik/ , (accessed 16 May 2022).
[249] RFSL, Goals for societal change 2021-2023 [website], https://www.rfsl.se/en/about-us/organisation/goals-societal-change/, (accessed 16 May 2022).

seekers and refugees in Sweden.[250] The core of the RFSL project are activities conducted by volunteers as an essential support mechanism for the target group.[251]

One of the crucial services is social and mental health support.[252] Another indispensable support tool is legal advice in encountering migration authorities. An integration volunteer organizes Language Café, as well as employment support opportunities. The project tends to be more than service drop-in by creating a sense of community where asylum seekers and refugees interact with the Swedish queer community and wider society.

My role was to act as a first contact person for people seeking support, meet some of those needs, and refer them to a volunteer for specialized support. Most of the encounters I had were in direct interactions, having an opportunity to meet over 50 queer asylum seekers and refugees. I also learned about queer asylum seekers and refugees working with volunteers. The role of an intern has granted me access to interviewees, meeting them before the interviews, building trust, and learning about queer refugees' lives. This internship and fieldwork have been one-of-a-kind experiences, leaving me changed forever. There, I saw how the risks, vulnerabilities, and responses of queer refugees manifest and take shape, for better or worse (more in chapter 5). That place was a physical manifestation of the human rights field. In the organization, I felt welcomed and accepted.

4.3. Holistic content mode of analysis

The holistic content mode of data analysis arrives from the narrative and life history research approaches to analyzing narrative materials.[253] These approaches underline the existence of more than one truth of realities, working with small samples with in-depth

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[250] RFSL, RFSL Newcomers project [website], https://malmo.rfsl.se/verksamhet/newcomers-malmo-2/ , (accessed 17 May 2022).

[251] RFSL, Our Newcomers Team [website], https://malmo.rfsl.se/verksamhet/newcomers-malmo-2/our-team/ , (accessed 16 May 2022).

[252] RFSL, RFSL Newcomers Malmö [website], https://malmo.rfsl.se/en/areas-of-work/newcomers-malmo/ , (accessed 16 May 2022).

[253] A. Lieblich, R. Tuval-Mashiach and T. Zilber, 'A New Model for Classification of Approaches to Reading, Analysis, and Interpretations', in Narrative Research, SAGE Publications, Inc, 1998, pp. 2, 3.

understandings of stories[254] but knowing that the stories can never be fully accessed as they change over time and are interpreted by the researcher and the reader.[255] As this analysis method suggests, data interpretation is not about speculating but rather self-discipline and self-awareness in comparing analyzed and raw data to achieve data replicability.[256]

The holistic content mode of analysis uses a whole story told in an interview and focuses on the content.[257] After several careful readings, a separate section of the story is extracted, and a theme (foci) that appears as dominant is analyzed in light of the story in its entirety.[258] After deciding on a theme, the researcher provides thick narrative descriptions for each theme.[259]

Göttsche's theory on vulnerability simultaneously suggests analyzing vulnerability by detecting risks in the lives of refugees, which allows uncovering their vulnerabilities and seeing the responses to vulnerabilities. This form of analysis is aligned with the holistic content mode of analysis as it provides an opportunity to identify the main themes (risks causing vulnerabilities for queer refugees), uncover vulnerabilities and the responses to vulnerabilities through thick descriptions. The thick narrative descriptions that have emerged from such analysis on queer refugees opened the possibility of discussing theories regarding responses to vulnerability, agency, and intersectionality of queer refugees in Sweden. As seen in chapter 5, some of the risks overlap and are examined holistically with the entirety of the data.

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[254] Lieblich et al, pp. 2, 3, 4, 8.
[255] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 3, 4, 7, 8, 9.
[256] *Ibid*, p. 9.
[257] *Ibid*, pp. 11, 12, 13.
[258] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 4, 11, 12, 13.
[259] *Ibid*, pp. 2, 4.

4.4. Ethics, consent, anonymization, and confidentiality

Since the thesis about queer refugees was conducted in Sweden a lot of consideration went into making sure that the Lund University ethical research guidelines were followed,[260] as well as the legislation and regulation on personal data,[261] the law on Ethical review of research involving humans,[262] the Good research practice,[263] and the principles of professional responsibility by the American Anthropological Association.[264]

Just mentioned guidelines, legislation, and principles were also implemented in creating the consent form. The from has addressed the following: the researcher has the role of collecting, accessing, and deleting data. The purpose and method were communicated. Interviewees were provided with the option of declining a question and withdrawing consent. The interviewees were familiarized with interview duration, usage of notes and audio recording, the safety of data storage, and archiving and deleting data, and the interviewees were provided with a contact from the University. The interviewees knew of

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[260] Lund University, Research ethics and animal testing ethics, [website], https://www.staff.lu.se/research-and-education/research-support/research-ethics-and-animal-testing-ethics, (accessed 16 May 2022). ; Lund University, Ethical review, [website], https://www.staff.lu.se/research-and-education/research-support/research-ethics-and-animal-testing-ethics/ethical-review, (accessed 16 May 2022).

[261] Sveriges Riksdag, Personuppgiftslag (1998:204) ; Sveriges Riksdag, Lag (2018:218) med kompletterande bestämmelser till EU:s dataskyddsförordning ; Prvazyplan, EU General Data Protection Regulation (EU-GDPR) [website], https://www.privacy-regulation.eu/en/index.htm (accessed 16 May 2022). ; ActiveMind.legal, Article 9 – Processing of special categories of personal data [website], https://www.activemind.legal/legislation/gdpr/article-9/ (accessed 16 May 2022).

[262] Sveriges Riksdag, Lag (2003:460) om etikprövning av forskning som avser människor

[263] SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL VETENSKAPSRÅDET, 'GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE', SWEDISH RESEARCH COUNCIL VETENSKAPSRÅDET, 2017, pp. 10, 12, 14, 35, 36, 39 - 42, https://www.vr.se/english/analysis/reports/our-reports/2017-08-31-good-research-practice.html (accessed 17 May 2022).

[264] American Anthropological Association, Principles of Professional Responsibility [website], https://www.americananthro.org/LearnAndTeach/Content.aspx?ItemNumber=22869, (accessed 16 May 2022).

my scholarship provided by the Swedish Institute.[265] An additional safeguard was set: the interviewee had an opportunity to see transcripts and prevent any information they considered delicate from being disclosed. The anonymization of data was guaranteed.[266] Consent was signed on voluntary bases.[267]

Anonymization has been secured to make no identifiable connections between the data presented and individuals.[268] This was achieved by careful examination of data several times and in consultation with the supervisor. Sensitive data such as names, cities, countries, and similar have been removed. Additionally, the order of interviewee appearance in one analysis section doesn't correlate to the order of appearance in another section, making it less possible to identify the interviewee and cause harm after publishing. All the files have been protected with a password, and names have been coded. The supervisor was the only one who looked at anonymized data.[269] I have contacted and obtained consent from a person mentioned in one observation, again anonymized. The journal is locked with a password, and it will be deleted simultaneously with transcripts.

4.4.1. Ethical considerations for interviewees, internship, and fieldwork

Finding the queer refugee interviewees in Sweden proved somewhat challenging. I have reached out to relevant contacts and organizations, as well as through closed queer social media platforms in Sweden, with limited success. I learned that queer refugees are reluctant to speak, primarily if they perceive the researcher as a stranger, a person they have never met before. Reluctancy to speak may testify to their vulnerability and the necessity for

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[265] GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE, 2017, p. 13.
[266] Lund University, Research, [website], https://www.staff.lu.se/support-and-tools/legal-records-management-and-data-protection/personal-data-and-data-protection-gdpr/area-specific-information/research, (accessed 16 May 2022).
[267] Lund University, Research ethics and animal testing ethics, [website], https://www.staff.lu.se/research-and-education/research-support/research-ethics-and-animal-testing-ethics, (accessed 16 May 2022).
[268] *Ibid*, p. 40.
[269] GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE, 2017, p. 40.

understanding without thinking that their agency is removed.[270] However, the internship undertaking allowed me to meet the interviewees for this thesis and an opportunity to establish trust relations. While the interviewees are not necessarily directly associated with RNM, my internship served as a channel for meeting them.

I decided to interview only the ones I had the opportunity to meet before I started the interviews. This resulted in a smaller sample, but the conversations we had before the interviews helped me to learn what they wanted to talk about, trying to anticipate and avoid causing harm.[271] I interviewed queer refugees months after I asked them for participation, as I wanted to make sure we had established a trusting relationship. As a foundational principle of ethics, avoiding harm requires responsibility to participants regardless of any greater good of research results.[272] Avoiding harm is about what one does to another, a matter under a researcher's control.[273]

The interviewees received questions before the interviews, allowing them to prevent undesirable questions. The interview questions have been formulated on the experience I gained during my internship and knowing something about interviewees before the interviews.[274] Before every interview, every interviewee was asked if they felt ready to be interviewed. If any question was uncomfortable during the interview, they could interrupt, move to the next, or stop the interview. Breaks were taken. Knowing the interviewees before the interviews allowed me to recognize if they felt discomfort during the interview or after. With every new session, they were asked if there was anything they found troubling in the previous session, which they all denied experiencing.[275] The intention was not to leave the interviewees thinking they were abandoned or purely used.[276] They saw this

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[270] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 4, 5, Johnson, 2011, pp. 1016, 1018, 1023, 1024, 1027, 1028.
[271] GOOD RESEARCH PRACTICE, 2017, pp. 4, 10, 12, 14, 35, 36, 39,   G. Ulrich, 2017, pp. 192-197, 205, 209.
[272] Ulrich, 2017, pp. 195, 196, 200-202.
[273] *Ibid*, pp. 197, 209.
[274] Brinkmann, 2020, pp. 3, 4.
[275] Ulrich, 2017, pp. 200, 201.
[276] *Ibid*, p. 203.

research as a way to tell their stories. The interviewees have either previously experienced interviewing or have spoken on the topic numerous times.

RNM knew of my research role and the observations I made. The internship role placed me in a position to participate but also observe as an outsider. For that reason, I have not been a part of any activity where I would have had any saying. During the internship, I followed the internal RFSL policy of how to work with queer refugees, essentially avoiding harm and producing vulnerability. All the mentioned ethical considerations had paramount importance in this thesis.

4.4.2. Reflexivity and a position of a researcher

The interviews for this thesis were conducted after I had finished my internship. The exception was one person interviewed during the internship period for technical reasons. In no way were the interviewees in a position of conflict if they wanted to seek support from the organization. I remained in contact with the interviewees for clarifications of the data. I became aware of my position as a white European man, conducting research on a scholarship with a secured residency permit. Also, being under the queer umbrella has probably allowed me access and to gain trust.[277] Before these interviews, my previous experience consisted of interviews I did for a few projects and RFSL.

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[277] Harrison, 2020, p. 20.

5. Analysis

As mentioned in the theoretical chapter, Göttsche's view of vulnerability is utilized both as a theory and analysis tool: identifying risks causing vulnerabilities by asking vulnerable individuals and uncovering those vulnerabilities (although the ability to act is conditional).[278] Such an approach to analysis combined with the holistic content narrative method of analysis implied how the analysis section was formed: allowing identification of themes (five risks) and thick narrative descriptions arriving from it. These interview descriptions uncovered vulnerabilities and how queer refugees in Sweden respond to their vulnerabilities[279] but also allowed theories of agency and intersectionality to come to light, discussed in the same chapter. The next sections are also complemented with observational journal notes.

5.1. Sociality – togetherness, belonging, and lack of security

"She comes here to have a place to be, usually to sit in silence. Not much interaction with anyone. But on Friday, she would come during Fika, play music for others, and sit on the sofa, but this time facing others. There is some language barrier between us, but this place ... I would say is a home out of the home. Outside the walls of this organization, when she walks away, she has to take several over-the-shoulder looks behind her".[280]

In conversation with the interviewees, a few associations came to mind about society in Sweden. One interviewee spoke about queer refugee community in Sweden: *When I came [...] I felt like I was not alone, I am not the only person who is in this situation. I feel safe with queer people specifically.*

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[278] Göttsche, 2021, p. 8.
[279] When the queer refugees responded, they responded to the risks causing vulnerabilities.
[280] Observational notes, September 2021 – December 2022.

Another interviewee spoke similarly: *I had [...] close friend (s) from the LGBT community [...] we were in (name of an organization) together, that is [...] helpful because you know that you're not alone [...] other people [...] been through what you've been through.* Initially, the interviewee made several attempts to reach out to an organization supporting queer refugees, and only through persistence in contacting them could they learn about eligibility for asylum and receive legal support.

Support for the interviewee arrived from the LGBT community, friends, and the Swedish church. The interviewee also accepted an invitation to live with a friend's family during their difficult asylum: *The family that I already consider as my family here in Sweden [...] were the one who was [...] lifesavers. After I moved to Sweden, then I [...] start to be very [...] out and proud [...] because I knew that this is a safe environment.* As seen, a sense of pride and security correlated with Swedish society.

The third interviewee spoke about being 'out',[281] safety, and rights in Sweden: *I was privileged, [...] I [...] never had to come out in my family. That is something that unfortunately a lot of people don't experience. If your family loves [...] you, then you know that it's okay if your colleague talks behind you. This is a privilege [...] in Sweden, and I think it is a little bit irresponsible [...] to stay in closet. You have all of this safety and freedom and rights and you choose not to be yourself because you think of what would people say. It should come as a human right but it still comes as a human privilege.*

"Family support for queer refugees is almost nonexistent, as families themselves persecute them. I meet a handful of people who have contact with their families. When I was asked about my holiday plans, I avoided talking about going back home to see my family. Words such as "love", "family", and "home" have different meanings in this organization".[282]

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[281] Not keeping a secret about sexuality from others.
[282] Observational notes, November 2021 – January 2022.

The fourth interviewee spoke about what creates a sense of belonging: *Some people do it more successfully than others, for me it was very easy to establish myself, because [...] I moved countries so much. For me [...] it was easy, to get a lot of social contacts. I felt I can be myself and I felt like home. People were [...] extremely supportive. Another important was [...] employment. And I think a lot [...] comes from outside of [...] asylum seekers, [...] people [...] who have, can give to those who don't [...] have. There is very limited what asylum seekers can do for each other, besides talking [...]. I am going through a lot [...] as you guys...and I wish I can help you, but I haven't figured this out either.* As seen, this interviewee found support but not necessarily in the queer refugee community in Sweden.

Additionally, this interviewee initially experienced a lack of access to the organization dedicated to supporting queer refugees: *I think for most of the time I tried to come to (name of the organization), there was no one there. So that was when it was the most important. Because [...] I was considering applying for asylum, but then because I didn't have [...] any sort of support [...] I did not apply immediately.* Eventually, the interviewee managed to create a contact with the organization and obtain legal support: *Through this process [...] being able to talk to lawyer [...] was extremely important [...] find out how the process goes. And (person from in the organization) was the one who encouraged me to apply for asylum, I was very unsure if I should. For me, (organization) made the difference in the end.*

Notably, interviewees spoke of the same fear they have in Swedish society, from the communities from their countries of origin in Sweden. One of the interviewees specifically referred to those communities as non-queer refugees: *I don't [...] have [...] connection to the general refugee community. I felt quite threatened by them. If they knew (Swedish society) that we are being persecuted by another refugee, then probably they might provide us with [...] protection. Swedish society still think that all refugees are the same. Because if you're LGBTQ refugee, then you're living in the minority of the minority.*

For another interviewee, this fear extended to the religious segment of communities: *I am safe, being in Sweden. I can be myself [...] but [...] there are many people from (name of a country) living in (a place), but I don't have a [...] contact. When I applied for asylum I*

avoided them because I was not feeling safe to tell them [...] that I am a queer person. Muslim people I have seen in (a place), I never felt secure, because those are the people who tried to kill me. I still don't feel safe with any Arabic people.

Similar was repeated by the third interviewee: *I just completely avoid them...I am very scared of meeting another (name of nationality) on the street [...] unless they are queer, then, I have a lot of sympathies for what they are going through.*

For several months during the internship, I have witnessed the same issue: "*A queer refugee informed me that they would be visiting the organization less often in the future as a person of the same ethnicity has looked for them and found them. This person knew they were a queer refugee of the same nationality. Sometimes, for a queer refugee coming to the organization can be problematic, as their fear from communities of national origin transcends. But when they come, they are meticulously observant of their surroundings. The curtains stretching from the ceiling to the floor, preserve the sense of safety as those insides can't be seen from the outside".*[283]

According to Göttsche, one of the risks causing vulnerability can be defined as sociality. As people expose themselves to society for a longer period, senses of togetherness, belonging, and security appear, but also a risk of disregard, social exclusion, and lack of appreciation.[284] Support can be found in different groups if participation in the wider society is not possible, resulting in more or less harm and risk.[285] If one is left behind in society, they risk becoming 'the other'.[286]

The interviewees expressed more or less a sense of togetherness and belonging through new Swedish family, friends, queer community, Swedish church, work, and ability to adapt due to frequent movement. Only with one interviewee, there was an exception of full support from family, something rarely seen among queer refugees. The feeling of security in Sweden corresponded with their sexual identities and/or gender and feelings of pride.

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[283] Observational notes, October 2021 - January 2022.
[284] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 8, 9, 10, 23.
[285] *Ibid*, pp. 9, 10, 17.
[286] *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.

Some difference in pride was found in Widmark's study on queer refugees' experiences in encountering norms in Sweden, where they have experienced clear expectations to be out and proud in society.[287] For one interviewee from this thesis, the sense of queer pride meant an association of Swedish queer people being reluctant to be public with their queer identity, seeing it as a privilege and not a human right.

The organizations providing support have bolstered senses of togetherness, belonging, and security, even though some interviewees found organizations not necessarily crucial and initially hard to reach. Dustin and Held also found a sense of belonging and community associated with organizations supporting queer refugees in Europe.[288] Widmark's study found a lack of access and understanding from LGBT organizations.[289] Such findings are only partially relatable to what has been seen in this thesis. Even though queer refugees initially struggled to gain access, they spoke highly of the support and understanding they received, as organizations made a difference for them.

Notably, identified sociality and security risk coming from communities from countries of origin living in Sweden arrived from a group, as suggested by Göttsche.[290] The risk from these communities has been similarly seen in other research,[291] but Widmark's work suggested that queer refugees in Sweden were able to find support in these communities.[292] This contradicts the findings of this thesis, as queer identity has been a problem for having any contact with these communities. Similar has been seen in the field. Göttsches's view of vulnerability that moves from the perception of weakness, and deficit, to be overcome, seen in other ways than negative, is essential for acknowledging, understanding vulnerability, and being compassionate.[293] Queer refugees' vulnerability, feeling threatened and scared, requires all of it.

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[287] Wimark, 2021, p. 657.
[288] Dustin and Held, 2021, pp. 202 - 208, Kostenius et al, 2021, pp. 9. 7, 8.
[289] Wimark, 2021, pp. 658 – 661.
[290] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 9, 10, 17.
[291] Shidlo and Ahola, 2013, pp. 10, Valenzuela, 2021, pp. 38 – 52.
[292] Wimark, 2021, pp. 654, 655.
[293] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 4, 5.

The theory of social navigation by Vigh is essential in understanding the limitations of queer refugees' responses to vulnerabilities. With the sociality risk, as queer refugees lived and moved around Swedish society, the risk arrived from their countries of origin communities. Such risk has not only produced their vulnerability and influenced their positions in society but has also limited their responses to the risk. The available option was the strategy of avoidance and having no contact with the mentioned communities for the long-term goal of living safely in Sweden. Queer refugees also tried to navigate and respond when encountering a lack of access to organizations in the asylum process. They managed to do so by adopting a strategy of perseverance in reaching those organizations, with the important goal – of having the support for the asylum process.

In her theory, Katz sees the expression of agency according to people's responses to risks of vulnerabilities in the form of resilience, reworking, and resistance. According to Katz, people are either surviving (resilience) or making some tangible outcomes (reworking) or rarely responding in confrontation and opposition to the problem (resistance).[294] Having that in mind, the interviewees have expressed acts of resilience by utilizing their strategies of avoidance, the only available option for them, without any opportunity to act against the risk of their vulnerability. However, these are not 'small' acts of just getting through the day,[295] but rather ever-present and consuming.[296] The queer refugee agency is in a position where it is almost impossible to respond. For some interviewees, managing to access the support could be seen as an agency of reworking, as they used available resources to achieve a tangible outcome of receiving the support from the organizations. However, this response could not be seen as more conscious than the one of avoidance.[297] It was more about the possibility of using available resources.

Lastly, Crenshaw's and Rosenblum's theory of queer intersectionality is valid for understanding the queer refugee's vulnerabilities as they intersect their queer and refugee

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[294] Katz, 2012, pp. 227 – 229, 231 – 236, 239 - 244, 245, Katz, 2004, pp. 247 - 252, 254.
[295] Katz, 2012, pp. 239 - 244, 245, Katz, 2004, pp. 247 – 251.
[296] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 4, 5.
[297] Katz, 2012, pp. 239-244, 245, Katz, 2004, pp. 247 – 251.

identities and others.[298] The risk from communities from countries of origin can only be observed involving refugee status and queer identity intersection. A queer refugee does not fear communities for just being queer or just being a refugee, but because of the intersection of being both queer (queer refugees associate communities with people who persecuted them in their countries of origin for being queer) and being a refugee (sharing the same country of origin with people from mentioned communities living in Sweden).

5.2. Culturality – stereotypes, othering, and negotiation

"While sitting at the table, I can hear him repeating what he was told today: "Oh, how come you don't speak Swedish yet"? By the end of the day, a new person walked into the organization to meet with one of the volunteers. I can hear along the lines: "You as a black person, you will be unfortunately targeted, I saw so many times with my own eyes".[299]

The first interviewee explained how a certain perception of being a refugee influenced his work opportunities as he sent over 700 job applications: *If people find out my background as a refugee, they usually just like random [...] discriminate. I applied for a job and then [...] they asked [...] what kind of residence permit I have. If I answered that I am under refugee status [...], you can see their face. So even you are technically one [...] of LGBT community, but then you're still being excluded. After I changed my name, I applied [...] within two months, I already got twelve interviews. I've whitened [...] my CV completely [...] my name has been westernized, I'm also [...] erasing all of my ethnic background [...], in the language section I only put English and Swedish [...], my education background that is not from Sweden, I had to take it out.* As he showed me his CV, the interviewee explained how he took advice from a human resources manager in Sweden and used a black and white CV photograph. This interviewee is a person of colour and identifies as a gay cis man.

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[298] Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1244, Rosenblum, 1994, pp. 86, 89, 91 – 93.
[299] Observational notes, November 2021 - January 2022.

The second interviewee wished to talk about a stereotype he encountered, which left him taken back and deeply disappointed. This stereotype was related to his sexuality and gender, being a gay cis man: *When a (queer refugee) wants to be close with them (queer Swedes) mostly they think [...] "Oh, maybe they are looking for a sugar daddy." Oh please! Don't think of us as beggars. We are not looking for a sugar daddy. What we are looking for is just friendly place, because when I come here as a [...] queer refugee [...], I can't have any contact with my old community, [...],don't forget that we are alone here.*

On another occasion, the same interviewee experienced racism from a friend: *Can you see that you are racist? You are a very nice person but still... He understood it. I didn't mind on my friend, rather I felt proud that I could educate him. My friends are good but I won't feel even after twenty years that this is my home country in front of the white people.*

The third interviewee spoke of feeling a certain way in Swedish society: *Sweden itself is really closed society. So even if you're not gay, [...] it's really hard to get into the society. It takes forever for me to get into [...] society. I still feel that I'm still being considered as THEM. Regardless how much contributions you give back to society [...] you are still not going to be considered. My Swedish family helped me to bridge between me as a foreigner to the Swedish community. And also [...] the fact that I'm working.*

Another interviewee wanted to discuss a similar issue: *A lot of local Swedes [...] treat you differently [...] speaking the same level of Swedish [...], contributing the same amount of tax [...]. You don't need to create this US against THEM. Locals have to work on, it is not only on the refugee [...] to integrate completely [...] because that is impossible. Meeting in between or halfway [...], it should be more room for understanding, accepting. You got to know the rules and try to find the balance of fitting into [...] without losing yourself.*

Lastly, one more interviewee emphasized what was helpful for them: *I feel like (learning the language) had helped me, to get [...] opportunities and [...] dating someone who [...] is Swedish [...] made a lot of difference [...] in understanding the culture and society.*

The second risk causing vulnerability, according to Göttsche, named culturality can be understood as a concept of culture. Culture is a space for sharing, protection, and meaning of traditions, languages, and symbols.[300] But with risks of stereotyping, insults, and seemingly neutral statements repeatedly directed toward a refugee can lead to exclusion and stigmatization.[301] When negotiating and dealing with old and new values goes wrong, the risk of culturality appears as well.[302]

As just seen, the risk of culturality came in different forms: the perception of refugees and the necessity of erasing one's name, ethnicity, education, language, and race, but not necessarily sexuality and gender (gay cis man), in pursuit of a job. Also, the risk from culturality was seen in the form of a stereotype associated with a gay cis refugee man. The vulnerability aspect was loneliness and missing people from the past, and longing to meet new friends was disappointing due to a stereotype. Acknowledging and understanding vulnerability matters,[303] regardless of whether the interview said anything about responding to this stereotype.

Racism was identified as another risk. Even though Göttsche has not positioned racism as a risk from culturality specifically, it could be said that it represents a risk that arrives in lack of shared values, far from protection, and leaning to insult and stereotype. The topic of racism has also been noted in other studies about queer refugees in Sweden.[304] The interviewee in this thesis, who has experienced racism, clearly correlated to feeling a lack

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[300] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 13, 14, 17, 23, 24.

[301] D. Burghardt et al., Vulnerabilität: Pädagogische Herausforderungen. Kohlhammer, 2017, p. 44, cited in S. Göttsche, 'The Accumulation of Vulnerability; Aspects in the Figure of the Migrant: ATheoretical Approach' in N. Fromm et al, In Power in Vulnerability, A Multi-Dimensional Review of Migrants Vulnerabilities, Springer Vs, 2021, p. 13, Göttsche, 2021, pp. 13, 14, 17, 23, 24.

[302] Göttsche, 2021, p. 20.

[303] *Ibid*, pp. 3, 4, 5.

[304] Kostenius et al, 2021, p. 6.

of belonging in Sweden. This lack of belonging is connected to sociality risk but practised in culturality through racism.[305]

Interviewees that have experienced vulnerability in feeling the "US" and "THEM" have been at risk of lack of belonging and feeling like the 'other', making the risks of culturality and sociality intersect again.[306] Some interviewees emphasized the necessity of making compromises from both sides in society and culture to overcome the vulnerabilities. Yet, the negotiation process of new and old values has arrived easier for some.

One interviewee experienced a perception of refugees in search of a job. Facing the risk of sending 700 job applications with no luck, he decided to go against this risk, and as those social forces (risk) influenced his access to employment, he took a strategy of editing his CV and pursuing a long-term goal of employment and staying in Sweden. Going against the grain. This act could also be understood as a reworking act, achieving and getting twelve job interviews in a short period. Going against the risk also had a price, as I looked at an A4 paper titled "CV" and saw another person on that paper. For this interviewee, the name, ethnicity (language, education), and race have formed a negative refugee perception and specific intersectionality about refugees. But the interviewee's sexuality and gender (gay cis man) have not played a role in the intersection with being a refugee.

The stereotype of a gay cis man looking for a 'sugar daddy'[307] represents the intersectionality of being both a gay cis man and a refugee. Hypothetically, a queer person or a refugee can encounter the stereotype of 'looking for a sugar daddy', but for this queer refugee, it differs. A queer refugee is a person who is a refugee (the interviewee pointed out that he was associated as a "beggar") and in need or depending on someone, but also he is a gay cis man stereotyped by a queer Swedish person. This indicates that a gay cis man, also a "beggar" refugee needs a queer 'sugar daddy'. What Rosenblum considered as part of

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[305] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 10, 11.
[306] *Ibid*, pp. 10, 11.
[307] 'A well to do man who spends money on a boyfriend'.

queer intersectionality (resistance to compulsory heterosexuality) here would be the resistance to imposed queer norms.[308] This stereotype also discovered that sometimes there are no responses to vulnerabilities, again considered acceptable by Göttsche.

Another time, the interviewee also experienced racism from a friend, which felt disappointing, but the interviewee responded with a strategy to 'educate him'. Following Katz, such an act can be understood as reworking as the interviewee consciously employed a resource to go against the problem (not resolving the issue itself) with an outcome as his friend in the end 'understood'.

Lastly, the response of interviewees that have experienced the risk of 'othering' was to find ways to respond through different strategies: having a new Swedish family and working but also negotiating (balancing) new social values or learning the language and dating. A study on queer refugees' health in Sweden found that learning the traditions, language, and culture of the LGBT scene helped queer refugees transition into new life.[309]

5.3. Corporality – medium of vulnerability

"It was clear to me. He was hiding in the organization. Hiding as in asking to stay for a bit longer in the office. Afraid to go out because these men were outside. He can't be free to move as he wants. He carries his body everywhere, all the time".[310]

The vulnerability of the body dominated the conversation with interviewees in various ways. For the first interviewee, the correlation of the body had to do everything with their queer identity, more specifically being a non-binary, trans person: *I [...] haven't got the appointment with the gender clinic. I started hormones but that is on my own... When you do the first appointment then it takes a couple of years for the entire process to go through. [...] so it is really bad, trans care is catastrophe here.*

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[308] Rosenblum, 1994, pp. 86, 89, 91 – 93.
[309] *Ibid*, p. 6.
[310] Observational notes, December 2021.

For the second interviewee, the vulnerability of the body concerned their arrival in Sweden: *When we got here it was -20 degrees. I thought the contact lenses [...] are gonna freeze. We [...] were given this room in a camping site [...], too cold [...], built for summer, so isolation is non-existent. The whole place was [...], 9 sq meters. You have to put your jackets [...] inside, and there was [...] a bathroom outside. We tried to see the best in life because life is sometimes too dark so that is the only option you have. So then we kept making fun of the situation: "Oh, you know, our life is so luxurious, we live on a camping site, people have to book and they have arranged this for us". You try [...] take away the seriousness, the sadness. We were very happy [...] that libraries are free in Sweden. We lent a lot of books and we entertained ourselves by reading [...], some nice bonding time, then you are closer with a person when you experience these extreme situations. We create support for each other, [...] your mind goes in another direction.* Importantly, this was the only interviewee who arrived with family and had their support.

The third interviewee spoke about visibility: *Once I got my refuge status, I just decided to change my whole identity. I'm also...still kind of scared for me, I'm still kind of being threatened. And I just don't want my family...I don't want to risk their life either. I don't want them to get the consequences [...] If they [...] found out that I'm...living the gay life in Sweden, then my family still gonna get consequences. So that's why I just decided to change my identity both for my mental health...for my safety reason.*

With corporality and according to Göttsche, the body of a refugee is seen as an inevitable public medium that suffers physically and through restrictive mobility, living arrangements, and family reunification.[311] The refugee body is always, to an extent, vulnerable.[312] Göttsche's risk has the universality of meaning as it is always in some way vulnerable. As seen from the interviews, corporality simultaneously is a risk source, but it also means body vulnerability. For the first interviewee (non-binary, trans person), the risk arrived from a lack of access to trans healthcare, producing vulnerability of the body through risky health undertaking, taking hormones on their own. For the second interviewee, risk came from

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[311] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 14 - 17, 24.
[312] *Ibid*, p. 15.

precarious accommodation arrangements, leaving their body vulnerable to cold and cramped living space. Dustin and Held's study on spaces of queer asylum seekers in Europe also found issues in living arrangements, though in different scenarios.[313] Some found issues with collective living arrangements in Sweden.[314] With the third interviewee, the risk is hard to identify, but relating to those who would have a problem interviewee living a gay life in Sweden, leaving the body directly vulnerable because of its public dimension. This interviewee's vulnerability was reflected in exposure, visibility, and feeling scared and threatened. When it comes to their vulnerabilities, queer refugees responded,[315] but as pointed out by Göttsche, the body is always vulnerable, in one way or another.

Even though navigation and responding to the risks causing vulnerabilities would initially seem impossible, against all odds, a non-binary, trans interviewee managed to respond by being resourceful in finding the hormone treatment and pursuing a long-term goal of body integrity. Addressing accommodation meant taking on strategies of keeping the spirit alive, support of family, and visiting the library. The third interviewee's response had to do everything by going against the risk in question, by taking the most extreme strategy – changing their identity.

As Katz noted and seen here, differentiating acts of resilience and reworking sometimes is not possible.[316] Even though the second interviewee used conscious resources, there was no possibility of resolving the accommodation problem. But with the first interviewee, the resourcefulness in obtaining hormones precisely defines what reworking means: conscious actions of solving an immediate problem, but without changing the overall issue. The third interviewee's agency was also reflected through reworking, even though at a high price. The intersectionality of this interviewee requires an understanding of both their queer identity and refugee status. Because the interviewee faced the risk from people who

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[313] Dustin and Held, 2021, pp. 188, 189, 194, 195.
[314] Kostenius et al, 2021, pp. 7, 8.
[315] Johnson, 2011, pp. 1016, 1018, 1023, 1024, 1027, 1028, Bauer-Amin, 2017, pp. 127, 128.
[316] Katz, 2012, p. 239.

disagree with them living a gay life in Sweden, it concerns their gay identity in intersection with their refugee status (living) in Sweden.

5.4. Liminality – queer refugee in between

"The feeling of being trapped in between, in the desire to move on with life, says much about being a queer refugee. It can be about accessing mental health services, finding a job, or thinking of being sent back. But until something changes for queer refugees, as they are nervously moving through uncertainty, they don't tap in place, rather trying to do everything they can".[317]

The sense of being on hold, waiting for development, was seen in queer refugees' waiting for the decision on their refugee status from the migration authorities in Sweden: W*hen you're applying for asylum, you literally don't know where your life going to be. You can't even plan your life, [...] living on the line. Like I'm starting (started) to question everything.* During this period, the interviewee took Swedish language classes to stay preoccupied and managed to achieve a level of Swedish for high school in a matter of months.

The second interviewee added: *When I came here [...] I was thinking [...], I don't want to go back. What will happen? I don't know, maybe my life will end immediately at the airport. Because I saw [...] queer people in Sweden enjoying their [...] freedom. And that is not only their right, that is my right also. If they will tell me [...] go back to your country...what will happen?*

The third interviewee described a conversation with other asylum seekers while waiting: *You talk to these people [...] and the only thing you talk about is [...] asylum process, how long it will take, this one has been waiting for two years [...] there is no concrete information. Should I [...] do something? Those months are not easy. I try to stay positive and [...] with hope.* Continuing, the interviewee explained the moment of getting the

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[317] Observational notes, November 2021 – March 2022.

positive decision: *It was…nice moment because all of this uncertainty, not knowing goes away, with one phone call in a second [...], one of my most life-changing phone calls.*

According to Göttsche, liminality risk arrives in the form of borders placed for an individual, lasting temporarily or for a longer period. An individual leaves the well-known and exposed to the new appears threatening.[318] Having a positive image of oneself can help push out liminality.[319] As seen predominantly with interviewees, they experienced the risk of liminality in waiting on their queer refugees status from the migration authorities. Wimark's study on queer refugees in Sweden saw liminality as a sense of liminal belonging, as queer refugees encounter norms they don't adjust to.[320] The interviewee's vulnerabilities reflected deep uncertainty and fear of being sent back to the country of origin, lasting until receiving the decision. More than ever, Göttsches's view of vulnerability matters as queer refugees' vulnerabilities shouldn't be seen as a weakness or deficit but requires understanding.

The interviewees tried to navigate in an unpredictable environment that determined their positions and possibilities and the realization of their long-term goals, the most important of them all - getting the refugee status. They took on strategies to be as preoccupied with language classes and stay hopeful and positive, all responses to the risk of waiting. Alessi's research on LGBT refugees in North America found the importance of strategizing hope and positivity for better mental health in the asylum phase.[321] According to Katz, resilience describes queer refugees: as trying to get by and pull through and survive the day.[322] Here intersectionality is extremely important. The risk of liminality is connected to a fear of being sent back to the country of origin. Such risk would be a death sentence for a queer refugee. This is not just a problem of refugees but refugees in imidate danger due to their queer identities, as interviewees have emphasized. Even though the liminality can be a risk

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[318] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 16, 17.
[319] *Ibid*, p. 17.
[320] Wimark, 2021, p. 662.
[321] Alessi, 2016, pp. 203, 206.
[322] Katz, 2012, pp. 239 - 244, 245, Katz, 2004, pp. 247 – 251.

for any refugee, undeniably queer refugees bear the queer connotation, coercion, persecution, and death.

5.5. Structurality – hardly comprehensible risk

Lastly, the interviewees discussed their experiences and positions concerning institutions. The first interviewees talked about experiences in the asylum process: *It was very intrusive [...] trying to catch me in lie, investigative [...] especially as LGBT refugee. I was supposed to talk free and openly to someone that I never met before. There were [...] questions how do I concretely express as non–binary, [...] how a non–binary person dress. They [...] don't understand [...] identity being subjective. [...] It inherently assumes [...] you need to [...] show of that you are [...] non–binary. That [...] you face your whole life, constant questioning of your identity [...] being LGBT or queer [...] shouldn't require [...] a proof.*

The second interviewee added about the asylum process: *My lawyer has been really helpful, whenever there's a question that is out of the line, then my lawyer basically try to make sure that the question is relevant....they're asking about my ex-boyfriend...what I...do with my ex-boyfriends. I think that was like start to get personal. But then...the lawyer... (said) account is not relevant, and that's why having a lawyer is important.*

"The support from the lawyer comes as probably the most requested support. Dealing with the migration authorities is something everyone needs to do. Trying to understand the power of institutions and law is to embrace the opportunities it provides for keeping people safe but also how harsh it might be".[323]

The third interviewee talked about the institutional obstacles to having a partner in Sweden: *I hear that that [...] people are coming...with partner visa. Do we queer people get that opportunity? We don't. What about my partner? Can he apply for [...] visa from (name of the country), will he feel safe? (making the application for coming to Sweden). How will he*

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[323] Observational journal note, November 2021.

show the authority that we are in a relationship now? Is it supposed to feel safe for him? In a country where homophobia is everywhere?

The four existing risk factors that Göttsche built from Burghardt were complemented with structurality risk, defined by Göttsche. The structures such as laws, distribution of institutional power, traditions, and work dynamics of institutions can negatively affect and cause risk for people.[324] These interactions are usually mediated through the work of public employees, making it hardly comprehensible risk, as the source of risk might be originating from the structure or a public employee.[325] The asylum process can also be a risk.[326]

The risk that has arrived during the asylum process had no easily detectable source, referred to by Göttsche as hardly comprehensible risk.[327] For the first and third interviewees, the source is difficult to determine, and for the second interviewee, it arrived from the migration officer.

For the first two interviewees, vulnerabilities were reflected through private and intrusive questions and questioning one's identity. Herlihy and Turner's psychological study on the difficulties of asylum interviews pointed out that stories told by queer asylum seekers should be observed as an involuntary recollection of the past.[328] Gröndahl and Jansen also noted that interviewees face questioning about their subjective identities and what makes gender, as the first interviewee has experienced.[329] The ethnographical study by Chossières mentioned the existential necessity of queer refugees negotiating their identities when dealing with authorities.[330] For the third interviewee, it could be said that that vulnerability was reflected in not being able to live a life with a partner in Sweden. Interviewees'

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[324] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 17, 18, 24.
[325] *Ibid*, pp. 18, 19.
[326] *Ibid*, p. 22.
[327] *Ibid,* p. 19.
[328] Herlihy and Turner, 2007, p. 3, Berg and Millbank, 2009, pp. 2, 4.
[329] Jansen, 2013, p. 16, Gröndahl, 2020, p. 86.
[330] Chossière, 2021, pp. 1 - 5, 8.

vulnerabilities here need to be acknowledged and understood because of the inability of interviewees to act on them. They are restricted and unable to respond.[331]

With structurality risk, the forces or structures have left a narrow field of navigation for the interviewees, as they are able to do almost nothing as the authorities make the decisions. According to Katz, the first and the third interviewee's agency reflected resilience, getting through a difficult situation, as nothing more was possible.[332] The second interviewee acted in the form of an agency that is reworking, as they managed with the help of a lawyer to make the asylum process easier.[333]

Katz's understanding of resistance, which wasn't mentioned so far, can be seen here in traces due to the inapplicability of the data. Resistance is seen as a rare act of conscious confrontation and opposition to the core of the problem.[334] Firstly, the queer refugees have managed to leave persecution from their countries of origin and arrive in Sweden, which in itself is an act of resistance.[335] Also, their readiness to speak about their experiences, selflessly share, and their activism constitutes a path toward resistance, with the aim of tangible outcomes in resolving problems, by improving the lives of queer refugees in Sweden.

The intersectional approach to the third interviewee concerns their refugee status, as having a right to live with a partner in Sweden but unable to achieve it due to interviewees and their partner's gay identity as an obstacle outside Sweden.

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[331] Göttsche, 2021, pp. 3, 4, 5.
[332] Katz, 2012, pp. 239 - 244, 245, Katz, 2004, pp. 247 – 251.
[333] *Ibid*, *Ibid*
[334] Katz, 2012, p. 239, Katz, 2004, pp. 251, 252, 254.
[335] *Ibid*, *Ibid*

5.6. Summarizing discussion

The analysis of the data on queer refugees in Sweden has presented several risks: In society, interviewees experienced a sense of togetherness, belonging, pride, and general security in Sweden but the risk (risk of sociality) appeared in the communities from the countries of origin of queer refugees living in Sweden. The second risk from culture (culturality) was experienced in the forms of both stereotypes associated with gay cis men, racism, perception about refugees in the employment, as well as a risk that is connected with the risk from society: feeling as 'other', and lack of belonging. The risk for the body (corporality) was reflected in accommodation arrangements, lack of access to trans healthcare, and risk from those who disagree with those who live a gay life in Sweden. The risk of liminality appeared in waiting for a decision on the refugee status, fearing being sent back. Structurality risk appeared as a more or less comprehensible risk from a public employee or the structure, in questionable practices in the asylum process and others.

Some new insights have emerged: the risk from communities from the countries of origin of queer refugees firmly remained an obstacle for queer refugees, learning that the biological family support is sometimes possible, and a new way of support was seen through having a new Swedish family, learning about trans healthcare access issue, stereotypes associated with gay cis refugee men, and perceptions about refugees in employment.

Vulnarabites emerged in different forms, depending on the risks. Whether it was about the body's vulnerability due to its public dimension producing fear and feeling of threat, deep uncertainty of being sent back, or intrusive, private questions and questioning trans identity in the asylum process.

Using the holistic content mode of analysis with Göttsche's view of vulnerability as a tool for identifying risks has enabled an analysis of the data but found it challenging to include some positive outcomes, such as activism or bother discussion on health. Yet, health-

related risks would require knowledge from the field of psychology. Contrasting to some previous research,[336] not all the interviewees discussed religion as relevant.

The results allowed for a deeper understanding of the issues using other theories. The theory of social navigation by Vigh showed the significance of risks and their influence on how much queer refugees could respond, resolving immediate issues or those that matter for the future. The theory showed that sometimes there were no responses (stereotyping a gay cis man or racism), how challenging it was to respond to the risks (avoiding the communities from the country of origin), or even impossible (not being able to act on refugee status decisions that are made about their lives).

Katz's theory expressed agency through the responses of queer refugees to risks of vulnerabilities. The differentiation of resilience, reworking and resistance showed how much of the interviewee's responses remained constricted by the risks and how much they managed to respond, all telling about their agency. Sometimes it was possible to make it through the day (resilience: enduring accommodation arrangements), and sometimes it was possible to respond with some tangible outcomes (reworking: fighting perceptions about refugees in employment and taking hormones) or even try to change the system (resistance: being outspoken and an activist).

Finally, Crenshaw's and Rosenblum's theory of queer intersectionality provided a holistic understanding of queer refugees: fearing communities in society had to do with being queer as well as a refugee, a stereotype of a gay cis man that concerned sexuality and gender as well as refugee identity, and probably most important: a queer refugee is a refugee but a queer one – going back means persecution or death.

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[336] Alessi, 2016, p. 209

6. Conclusion

This research has set out to answer the following questions:

1. *What are the risks causing vulnerability of queer refugees in Sweden?*
2. *How do queer refugees in Sweden address vulnerability? How much queer refugees in Sweden can address vulnerability?*
3. *What kind of agency do queer refugees from Sweden embody?*
4. *How is intersectionality reflected with queer refugees in Sweden?*

In order to answer these questions, the research design of this thesis consisted of a qualitative study by conducting life history interviews with queer refugees in Sweden, together with ethnographical observations from an internship at RNM. The interview data was analyzed using the holistic content mode together with an analytical tool on vulnerability from Göttsche, which required detecting risks causing vulnerabilities by asking queer refugees. This thesis showed the experiences of gay cis men and non-binary trans refugees through interviews and other identities through observations.

The results provided knowledge on risks, vulnerabilities, and responses queer refugees had, some already seen in previous research but also with the novelty of findings. Using the theory of social navigation by Vigh, obvious were influences of social forces (risks) as well as how they played a significant role in how much queer refugees were able to respond to risks and how challenging that was, sometimes not possible, or with no response. Katz's theory described the queer refugee agency according to their responses, showing not only the limitations in how much queer refugees could respond by being constricted by risks but also how much they managed to respond as well. Crenshaw's and Rosenblum's theory of queer intersectionality provided an understanding of intersection for queer refugees on their queer and refugee identity together with nationality, race, the specificity of one's sexuality, and gender.

This research aimed at detecting the risks of queer refugees' vulnerabilities, uncovering vulnerabilities, how queer refugees address their vulnerabilities, how much is possible to

address those vulnerabilities, what the limitations are to that, as well as to provide an understanding of the agency based on the responses to vulnerabilities, and intersectional experiences of queer refugees in Sweden.

On the basis of this research, it can be said that queer refugees faced risks from a range of sources, producing various vulnerabilities, risks which have been significantly influential in how much they were able to respond, but also the responses they have managed to provide which tells of their agency, while their singular identities intersected their queer refugee identity. Queer refugees' vulnerabilities require acknowledgement, understanding and compassion, not to be seen as a deficit, regardless if they offered responses or not, and also knowing that sometimes there is no possibility of responding.

Further research can examine the experiences of other sexualities and genders in larger-scale research or by focusing on a specific group of queer refugees in Sweden.

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