DEATH AT THE END OF THE RAINBOW

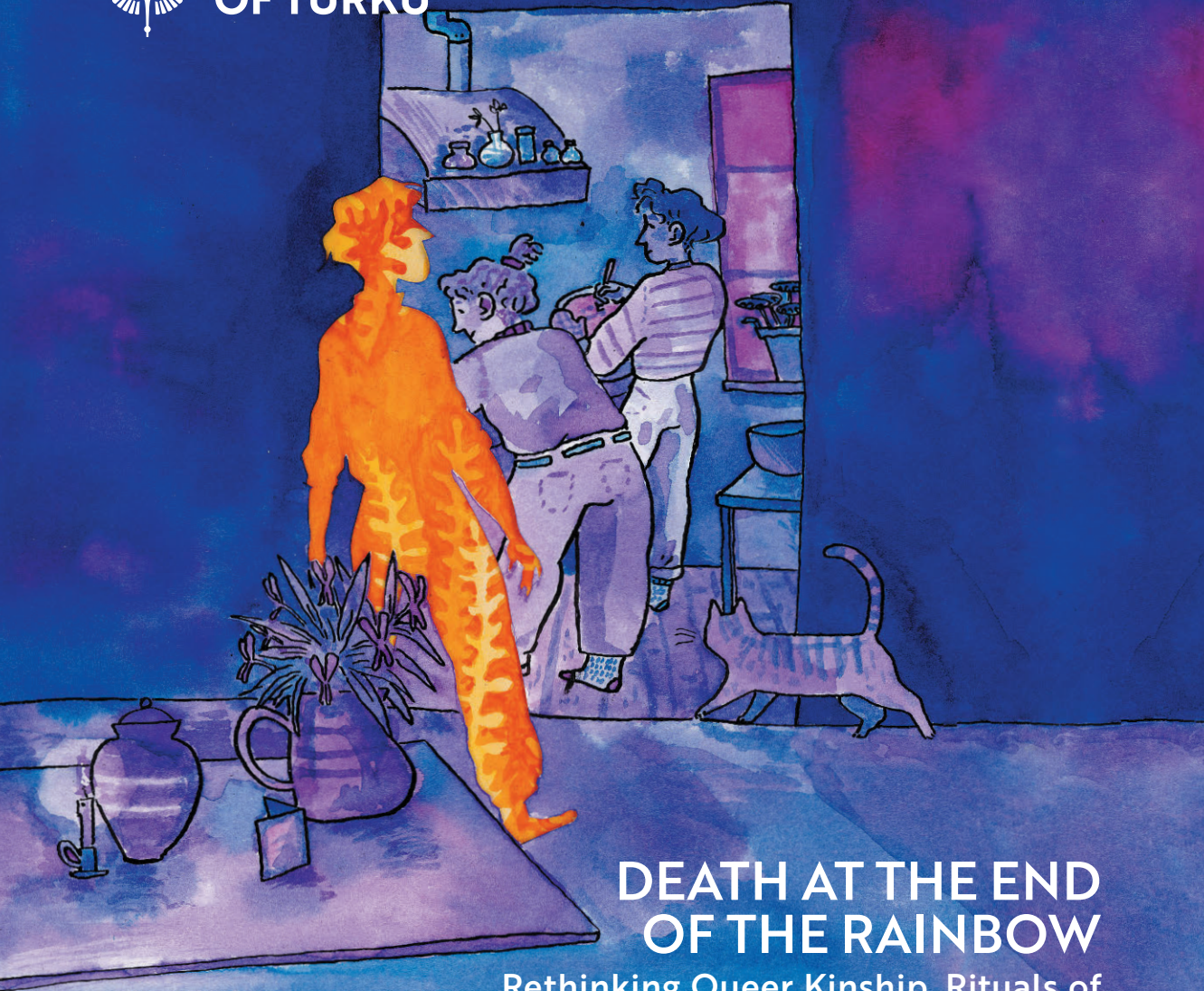### Rethinking Queer Kinship, Rituals of Remembrance and the Finnish Culture of Death

Varpu Alasuutari

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Varpu Alasuutari

University of Turku

Faculty of Humanities
School of History, Culture and Arts Studies
Gender Studies
Doctoral Programme in History, Culture and Arts Studies (Juno)

Supervised by

Professor Marianne Liljeström
University of Turku

Professor Ulrika Dahl
Uppsala University

Reviewed by

D.Soc.Sc. Riikka Taavetti
University of Helsinki

Professor Tora Holmberg
Uppsala University

Opponent

D.Soc.Sc. Riikka Taavetti
University of Helsinki

UNIVERSITY OF TURKU
Faculty of Humanities
School of History, Culture and Arts Studies
Gender Studies
VARPU ALASUUTARI: Death at the End of the Rainbow – Rethinking
Queer Kinship, Rituals of Remembrance and the Finnish Culture of Death
Doctoral Dissertation, 272 pages, 6 appendix pages
Juno Doctoral Programme
June 2020

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I study death and loss as part of queer and trans lives in Finland, focusing on queer kinship, rituals of remembrance and the Finnish culture of death. Theoretically, the study draws on feminist affect theories, queer theory, death studies and bereavement studies in an interdisciplinary fashion.

Methodologically, the study utilises in-depth interviewing informed by feminist methodologies, scavenger methodology and qualitative content analysis. The main data of this study consists of interviews and written narratives of 14 bereaved LGBTQ people living in Finland. The recounted losses had taken place within the time period between the 1980s and the 2010s. In addition, the data includes e.g. legislative texts, church guidelines and online ethnography to contextualise the personal narratives of the interviewees with their larger cultural and societal context.

The study produces new knowledge not only on death and loss, but also on the conditions of living queer and trans lives in Finnish society, particularly in terms of kinship, rituals and the different kinds of affective normativities related to them. The study reveals that the affective complexity of meaningful relationships affects LGBTQ people in a variety of ways when they experience losses within their families of origin, romantic partnership and other meaningful relations. Moreover, the study indicates that there are two institutions that have a prioritised role in the context of death in Finland: the official family and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. They are supported by Finnish legislation and church guidelines, but also by the positive affects of familiarity and appropriateness attached to them, providing them with affective power. This shows up, in particular, in traditional Finnish death rituals, in the domain of which the interviewees had experienced feelings of inclusion and exclusion. In addition, the interviewees had created private and shared rituals of remembrance. Following queer theory, I read them as examples of melancholic attachments that help the bereaved to live with grief.

Furthermore, this study contributes both theoretically and empirically to the emerging field of queer death studies and raises a discussion on the possibilities of queer and trans culture of death in Finnish society.

KEYWORDS: LGBTQ people; death; grief; loss; rituals; remembrance; the Finnish culture of death; feminist methodologies; scavenger methodology; feminist affect theories; queer death studies.

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tutkin väitöskirjassani kuolemaa ja menetystä osana queer- ja transihmisten elämää Suomessa. Tutkimukseni keskeisiä teemoja ovat queerit läheissuhteet, muistelurituaalit ja suomalainen kuolemankulttuuri. Teoreettisesti tutkimukseni nojaa feministisiin affektiteorioihin, queer-teoriaan, kuolemantutkimukseen ja suruntutkimukseen yhdistellen niitä monitieteisesti.

Metodologisesti tutkimukseni hyödyntää feminististen metodologioiden ohjaamaa syvähaastattelua, keräilevää metodologiaa ja laadullista sisällönanalyysiä. Tutkimuksen pääaineisto koostuu 14 Suomessa asuvan HLBTQ-ihmisen haastatteluista ja kirjoituksista. Menetykset, joista haastateltavat kertoivat, olivat tapahtuneet 1980–2010 -luvuilla. Lisäksi aineisto sisältää mm. lakitekstejä, seurakuntien hautausohjeita ja internetetnografiaa, joiden avulla sidon haastateltavien tarinat osaksi laajempaa kulttuurista ja yhteiskunnallista kontekstia.

Tutkimus tuottaa uutta tietoa kuolemasta ja menetyksestä, mutta myös HLBTQ-ihmisten elämisen olosuhteista suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa. Tutkimus paljastaa, että läheissuhteiden affektiivinen monimutkaisuus vaikuttaa HLBTQ-ihmisten kokemiin menetyksiin synnyinperheen, parisuhteen ja muiden läheisten ihmissuhteiden konteksteissa monin tavoin. Lisäksi tutkimus osoittaa, että virallinen perhe ja evankelis-luterilainen kirkko ovat suomalaisen kuolemankulttuurin priorisoituja instituutioita. Niiden asemaa tukee paitsi Suomen lainsäädäntö ja seurakuntien hautausohjeet, myös niihin kiinnittyneet tuttuuden ja sopivuuden kaltaiset positiiviset affektit, jotka antavat niille affektiivista valtaa. Tämä näkyy etenkin perinteisissä kuolemanrituaaleissa, joiden parissa haastateltavat kokivat mukaan ottamisen ja ulos sulkemisen tunteita. Haastateltavat olivat myös luoneet omia, yksityisiä ja jaettuja muistelurituaaleja, jotka luen queer-teoriaa seuraten esimerkeiksi melankolisista siteistä, jotka auttavat surevia elämään surun kanssa.

Lisäksi tutkimukseni tarjoaa teoreettisen ja empiirisen kontribuution queerin kuolemantutkimuksen kehittyvälle kentälle ja herättää keskustelua queer- ja trans-spesifisen kuolemankulttuurin mahdollisuuksista suomalaisessa yhteiskunnassa.

ASIASANAT: HLBTQ-ihmiset; kuolema; suru; menetys; rituaalit; muistelu; suomalainen kuolemankulttuuri; feministiset metodologiat; keräilevä metodologia; feministiset affektiteoriat; queer kuolemantutkimus.

Acknowledgements

I wrote the first research proposal for this dissertation in 2014 during a cold and rainy summer, thinking that this would become a study on queer widow(er)hood in Finland. Now, as I'm finishing this dissertation in the spring of 2020 during the exceptional times of the COVID-19 pandemic, it can be said that it has ended up becoming something quite different than what I initially planned. Life and research, it seems, are full of surprises.

Compared with those early days, my research focus has widened and shifted quite significantly, as I started to see the larger potential of this study and the multitude of aspects related to kinship, death and loss relevant when studying them as parts of queer and trans lives. A huge thanks in this regard goes to my supervisors, Professor Marianne Liljeström and Professor Ulrika Dahl, as well as to my research seminar co-attendees (especially to my colleague Sade Kondelin), who have encouraged me to see further and to ask broader questions than what I initially dared to ask.

In addition, I would like to thank Marianne for her unwavering support, being outspoken both in her compliments and critique, and believing in me and in my research every step on the way, ever since those early days. Ulrika I would like to thank for her encouragement, guidance, meticulous comments, insightful critique and for always challenging me to think further. Both of their input has been essential for me in so many ways when conducting this study, and I appreciate it dearly. Moreover, my supervisors have read through and commented on a considerable number of pages that were not included in this dissertation, which is why I also thank them for their patience and dedication (and for putting up with my wordiness).

I wish to express my deepest gratitude to the pre-examiners of my work, Dr. Riikka Taavetti and Professor Tora Holmberg. Their reviews have been extremely helpful in finalising this dissertation. Riikka Taavetti I would like to thank for a deeply attentive examination of my work, encouragement and constructive, detailed and helpful critique. Tora Holmberg I would like to thank for making me polish my arguments once more and for showing where I needed to be more consistent in my writing. Moreover, I thank both of them for making me see where I needed to justify my choices better and where it was, instead, better to be more concise. In addition, I

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1   Death Do Us Part

1.1   Specific and Universal Death

> KUURA: I have been thinking that maybe it ends up being like, kind of, an everyday thing. Because death really is quite an everyday thing. It happens. Each and every one will lose someone at some point. There is no such, there is no chance that you will come out of this without a loss. Except if you die very young yourself, which is another type of tragedy.
> VA: And then it is a loss for others.
> KUURA: Yes. There is no such life that would not contain something like this.

In this dissertation, entitled *Death at the End of the Rainbow – Rethinking Queer Kinship, Rituals of Remembrance and the Finnish Culture of Death*, I examine death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finland from the 1980s to the late 2010s. Death is a universal experience and therefore part of the human condition. As one of the interviewees of this study, Kuura, states above, eventually someone we care about will die and we will die as well. The title of the dissertation calls attention to the fact that as death is always part of life, it is also part of queer and trans lives.[1] The subheader illustrates the main themes I focus on and aim to rethink in the course of this dissertation. This study sets out to unravel what it means to live queer and trans lives in proximity to death. My core argument is that by looking at the queer and trans particularities in relation to death in Finland, it is possible to produce new knowledge not only on death but also on the conditions of living queer and trans lives in Finnish society, particularly in terms of kinship, rituals and the different kinds of affective normativities related to them. Through a nuanced analysis that pays attention to previously unasked questions and seeks to find new theoretical,

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1   The word rainbow in the title refers to the rainbow symbolism often used to symbolise such lives, especially in Finland, where, for example, families of same-sex couples and their children are called rainbow families [*sateenkaariperheet*] and people leading queer and trans lives are called rainbow people [*sateenkaari-ihmiset*].

methodological and empirical pathways to answer them, this study fills a gap in research on queer and trans lives, which only seldom focuses on death and loss.

Whereas people who are dead are no longer affected by the world, at least not according to the secular worldview, those who experience death as a loss of another are deeply affected by it. Thus, the study of death is always, at some level, the study of the living. The main focus of this study is on the personal stories of loss shared with me via in-depth interviews and written narratives by 14 people living in Finland, who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (referred to as LGBTQ people). Moreover, because of death's deeply cultural and societal nature, when studying death, it is important to study the cultural and societal surroundings in which it occurs. To tie the personal narratives to their wider context, I have gathered complementing data, focusing on the rules and norms around death and death rituals in Finland as well as the rituals of remembrance publicly taking place in Finnish LGBTQ communities. In my data collection process, I have used what queer theorist Jack Halberstam (1998) has called a scavenger methodology, in which various types of data are collected in differing and sometimes surprising ways to produce new information on understudied or marginalised topics. The central aim guiding the data collection process has been to gather data that helps to understand what is (and is not) going on in queer and trans lives in terms of death and loss in Finland, both privately, on the level of personal narratives, and publicly, on the level of Finnish society and LGBTQ communities.

My study intersects with multiple research fields. Being a dissertation in the discipline of gender studies, it draws on the theories and theoretical traditions included under the discipline's wide umbrella, including feminist affect theories, feminist methodology, queer theory and trans studies.[2] Moreover, my study contributes both theoretically and empirically to the emerging field of queer death studies in the sense of 'searching points of exit from hegemonic narratives' describing death and loss, which often have been focused on the normative understandings of losses that matter (QDSN 2019; Radomska, Mehrabi & Lykke 2019). Whilst engaging with and contributing to the qualitative research on queer and trans lives as well as to the study on death and loss, the research traditions of which are interdisciplinary, I have drawn inspiration also from death studies, bereavement studies, social sciences and anthropology. I have found such an interdisciplinary approach not only useful but also necessary in analysing and understanding the versatile and entangled issues related to death and loss in queer and trans lives.

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2   On the interconnections between gender studies and queer theory see, for example, Liljeström (2019) and between gender studies and trans studies see, for example, Enke (2012).

Through an interdisciplinary approach and diverse data, I look for answers to the following research questions:

1. What do the stories of death and loss among LGBTQ people in Finland tell us about queer kinship?

2. How are the lost ones grieved and remembered, and how do bereaved LGBTQ people keep on living after losing meaningful others to death?

3. How does the Finnish culture of death affect these experiences – and is there queer and trans culture of death to be found in Finnish society?

In the empirical chapters of this study, I discuss these questions in relation to the themes that repeatedly occur in the empirical materials, including the role of closets and coming out in bereavement (chapter 3), the affective power of death rituals (chapter 4), how grief is experienced and lived with (chapter 5) and how the lost others are privately and publicly remembered (chapter 6).

According to the trope of 'unhappy queers' – especially frequent in the early depictions of queer life in Western fiction (Ahmed 2010) – queer lives will always end in tragedy. Compared with such a trope, studying LGBTQ people's stories of death and loss may not seem a very novel idea. As gender and sexuality studies scholar Heather Love (2007, 1) has argued, 'The history of Western representation is littered with the corpses of gender and sexual deviants'. However, Love has also argued that the critique of such a trope has resulted in the dismissal of negative or dark aspects in the study of queer lives. According to Love, this is particularly so in the study of queer histories and representations. As other feminist scholars, including Sara Ahmed (2010) and Ulrika Dahl (2014), have pointed out, the focus on the positive, or the happy, has more widely become a standard in the study of queer lives and relationships, leaving the narratives of loss and failure with less attention. This study, thus, contributes to the call for research on queer and trans lives that 'does not overlook the negative' (Love 2007, 127) and the research tradition that has started to emerge around negative affects in queer studies.[3]

Although earlier research on death in queer and trans lives is scarce, it does exist, especially outside the empirical context of Finland. In queer theory, queer grief has been discussed in terms of ungrievable lives and losses (Butler 2004a; 2009) and the Freudian concept of melancholia (e.g. Butler 1997; Crimp 1989; 2003; Cvetkovich 2003; Eng & Kazanjian 2003; Muñoz 1999). The topic has also been raised in feminist affect theories (e.g. Ahmed 2014). Internationally, many studies on death in queer and trans lives focus on queer and trans necropolitics and/or the public

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3   This tradition builds also on the earlier works of Cvetkovich (2003), Eng and Kazanjian (2003) and Muñoz (1999), among others.

remembrance of victims of violence, such as the Transgender Day of Remembrance movement (e.g. Haritaworn et al. 2014; Snorton & Haritaworn 2013; Edelman 2018). In these studies, the focus is on grief as a public feeling and on the public rituals of remembrance that are widely circulated internationally. Although these discussions are undoubtedly important, they do not focus on personal experiences, which are, following feminist scholars Marianne Hirsch and Valerie Smith, 'as politically revealing in their own way as any event played out in the public arena' (Hirsch & Smith 2002, 12). Previous research focusing on personal experiences of loss in queer and trans lives has mainly examined same-sex partner loss in the Anglo-American context from the perspective of gays and lesbians (e.g. Whipple 2006; Shernoff 1997; Fenge 2014; Bristowe et al. 2018). Moreover, some earlier studies exploring queer widowhood, queer grief and/or queer death rituals in other cultural contexts exist, using either autoethnography (Lykke 2018; 2015; Israeli-Nevo 2019) or ethnography and interviewing (Svensson 2007; Reimers 2011) as their method.

The present study differs from the earlier studies in terms of its empirical context and research focus. As my main focus, I have taken death and loss among LGBTQ people in the cultural and societal context of Finland, where the issue has not been previously studied from this angle. Moreover, I have combined personal stories of loss with other types of data regarding the Finnish culture of death, including public remembering in Finnish LGBTQ communities. Thus, the focus is both on the personal and the public, on their interconnections and also their lack of connections. In addition to providing new knowledge on the role of death and loss as a part of queer and trans lives specifically in Finland, I aim to widen the international discussion on LGBTQ people and bereavement. By focusing on various types of losses and social positions, I offer a wider approach to meaningful relationships and losses that matter in queer and trans lives than earlier studies, which have most often focused on the losses of romantic partners in the lives of gays and lesbians.

The types of losses recounted in the empirical material of this study were diverse, including losses of a partner, ex-partner, parent, grandparent, friend and other meaningful people in interviewees' lives, who I have termed as meaningful others. I use this term to describe the people who were either emotionally close to the interviewees or in some other way important in their lives. In Finnish, this would translate as *läheinen*, which has the same ambiguity and openness of the term but is much more established (even though it lacks a direct translation in English). Moreover, using the word meaningful instead of significant, I aim to differentiate the term from the more established 'significant other', which has strong connotations to romantic partners. By the term meaningful other, I emphasise that the group of meaningful people can be varied and wide; they are not necessarily biologically related or romantically linked, although they can be. One of the theoretical starting points of this study is, thus, that the meaningful relationships of LGBTQ people

include not only biological but also chosen kin, as is suggested in studies of queer kinship (e.g. Weston 1991; Weeks et al. 2001).

In all steps of conducting this study, from collecting and analysing the data to finally writing the study, I have followed feminist methodologies, the use of which I elaborate on in chapter 2. Moreover, regarding personal experiences of loss, I follow feminist historian Joan Scott's (1991) understanding of experiences as not pure descriptions of reality but as interpretations and narrations of what the interviewees have gone through. Thus, when shared with a researcher, experiences are always constructed as narratives that require further interpretation. In addition, I argue that narrations of experience are closely linked to memories and acts of remembering because one can only narrate an experience that is remembered and in the manner in which it is remembered (see also Hirsch & Smith 2002). In addition, what is narrated in the interview depends not only on what is remembered but also on what is considered worth telling when the interview takes place. Thus, studying experiences, or narrations of experiences, is never a simple task.

Because terminology is an important, ever-changing and actively debated issue within queer and trans studies, a few words on my terminological decisions are in order before going deeper into the topic. When referring to those whose stories of death and loss are under discussion here, I use the acronym LGBTQ people throughout this dissertation. Different versions of acronyms based on identity categories, sometimes referred to as an alphabet soup, are widely used in research on queer and trans lives; however, they have also been criticised, on the one hand, for being focused on identity politics and, on the other, for never being sufficiently inclusive (Budhiraja et al. 2010; Segal 2008). Although I acknowledge and understand the justifications of such criticism, I see LGBTQ people as a term that is applicable in the context of this study because it makes visible both the varieties and limitations of those whose stories are discussed here.[4] I do not see the use of an identity-focused acronym as a perfect solution; instead, I see it as a justified compromise in a situation in which all existing terms have their pros and cons.[5]

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4   I used a longer version of the acronym in the research call (LGBTIQ+) when searching for interviewees to make the call more inclusive. However, I use LGBTQ in the dissertation because it describes the self-identification of those who actually participated in the study. None of the interviewees identified, for example, as intersex or asexual. Thus, it would have been misleading to include I or A in the acronym used in this study, in the same way as it would be misleading to use LGBT or LGBTQ when, for example, only the experiences of gays and lesbians have been examined. The same is argued by Riikka Taavetti (2018, 16), who reminds us that researchers need to be mindful of which letters are actually addressed in the study, instead of trying to aspire to a 'comprehensive listing' of marginalised identities.

5   For example, I chose not to use queers as an umbrella term for the whole alphabet soup including all variations of non-normative identities, as it is sometimes used in queer

Instead of specific identity categories, however, I propose that the issue that makes the stories of death and loss discussed in this study stand out from the stories of the heterosexual or cisgender mainstream is more clearly linked to the different kinds of positions LGBTQ people have in life and the different types of marginalisation taking place in Finnish society. Thus, referring to identity categories is, in the context of this study, a means to refer to this difference and marginalisation. As an alternative, I also refer to queer and trans lives. By this formulation, I aim at – in addition to avoiding constant repetition – pointing out that the issues discussed in this study do in fact go beyond specific identity categories.

How the interviewees of this study are situated in the social world is affected not only by sexuality and gender but also by other differences, such as age. I aim at making the interviewees' differing social positions visible in the analysis, discussing their stories not as stories of an allegedly homogenous group of LGBTQ people but as stories having internal variation. The variation of their stories is also influenced by the various types of losses they had been through. I am not arguing, therefore, that experiences of bereavement would be exactly the same, for example, for an elderly transgender woman losing a partner, a middle-aged gay man losing an ex-lover/friend or a young lesbian losing a father. Instead, I am attentive to the differences in the interviewees' stories and pay attention to their differing positions while also trying to find recurring themes and topics within their narratives.

It must be noted, also, that despite being a dissertation in gender studies, gender is not the main analytical category of this study. Instead, what makes this study a dissertation of gender studies is its theoretical background in feminist affect theories, queer theory and trans studies – which fall under the wide theoretical umbrella of the discipline – and its methodological decisions, which follow feminist methodologies. Gender is, undoubtedly, deeply entangled with other differences impacting the interviewees' social positions and is therefore discussed within the analysis, but it is neither my main nor only focus. Furthermore, because of the high amount of internal variation in the interviewees' stories, their differing positions in the social world and their different types of losses, the empirical material does not allow answering to generalising questions focusing on particular genders and/or sexual identities, such

studies (e.g. Dahl 2014; Marple 2004). While it is, admittedly, linguistically more useful than clumsy acronyms, I found it central not to fade out the experiences of trans people by simply encompassing them within the word queer. Likewise, I chose not to use sexual and gender minorities as the main way of reference because it would emphasise the minority discourse by focusing on the minority status of such groups (see e.g. Lahti et al. forthcoming) in addition to being too lengthy to be linguistically useful. However, I use these words occasionally, when a differentiation between sexual minorities and gender minorities is needed for addressing the specificities and differences within these groups.

as 'How do lesbians grieve'? or 'How do gay men grieve'?[6] Instead of asking such questions, I focus on finding commonalities, recurrences and absences within the rich and varying stories of the interviewees while staying attentive to their internal differences.

A conceptual clarification is also needed in terms of the differentiation between grieving and mourning. Some scholars make a difference between the two or prefer using one over the other when writing about the emotions evoked by the loss of a loved one. When making such a distinction, grief has been described as a 'reaction to loss' and mourning as a gradual process of coming to terms with this loss (Granek 2010). In addition, grief has been used to describe the emotion and mourning to describe the acts performed while grieving, such as taking part in the rituals of remembrance (Gittings 2019, 54). In this study, however, I do not differentiate between grieving and mourning; instead, I use them interchangeably, which is a common solution within studies focusing on bereavement (Granek 2010). Moreover, this decision is informed by the Finnish language, in which both grief/grieving and mourning translate as *suru* and *sureminen*, making the distinction of the two in the Finnish context both unnecessary and difficult to make.

Returning to the idea of the universality of death presented in the beginning of this introduction, it has been argued that because of this universality, death and loss have unifying power over people. As queer theorist and feminist philosopher Judith Butler (2004a, 20) has argued in her book *Precarious Life – The Powers of Mourning and Violence*, 'Despite our differences in location and history, my guess is that it is possible to appeal to a "we", for all of us have some notion of what it is to have lost somebody. Loss has made a tenuous "we" of us all'. I argue, following Butler, that losing people we care about is something that appeals to everyone who has (had) social relationships despite our genders, sexual orientations or the forms of relationships we have. Being 'socially constituted bodies, attached to others', as Butler has stated, means making oneself open to the vulnerabilities of losing the other who is cared about. What Butler has proposed is that the fear and tragedy of death brings people closer and makes us understand each other on a global level because of death's power to separate us from the people we care about on a private level. Despite our differences, we understand such losses to be part of what it means to be human.

6   Such questions have, however, already been examined in international studies focusing on, for example, lesbian widows (e.g. Bent & Magilvy 2006; Broderick et al. 2008; Jenkins et al. 2014; Whipple 2005; 2006) and gay widowers (e.g. Hornjatkevyc & Alderson 2011; Pentaris 2014; Shernoff 1997).

However, despite death's unquestionable universality, I show in this dissertation that how death and loss affect people who are still alive is actually not that universal. Because death do us part, as the common expression in marriage vows and a phrase repeated in love songs suggests, I ask in this dissertation: who are the we in the 'us' and how are we actually taken apart? I argue that this does not happen to all of us in the same way because the 'we' that is referred to varies. Following the sociological tradition of death studies (e.g. Walter 1999; Holmberg et al. 2019), I argue that death is – like any other event in human lives – not free from the patterns and habits of its surrounding society. Death is thus not only universal but also very specific.

Although death is – or will become – always personal, it is also a deeply interpersonal phenomenon, affected by its specific geographical and temporal locations and the social positions of the people experiencing it (Stone 2010). People experience death and loss differently because we are aligned with the world differently from one another. As cultural anthropologist Ingeborg Svensson (2007, 17) has argued, to study death is also to study the social processes related to death and initiated by it. In other words, death is not an island that is somehow separate from the rest of the world in which it occurs, meaning that death is not separate from the power relations, hierarchies, ideals and marginalisations of the social world around it. It does matter, in the context of death and loss, how people who have died or who mourn those who have died are situated in the world, both in terms of relationships with other people and the society at large. This is the starting point, or the premise, that sparked my interest in studying death and loss from the perspective of LGBTQ people, who are often marginalised in the face of different kinds of normativities of the social world. It is, of course, possible to argue, on these same grounds, that the lives of heterosexual and cisgender people who lead unconventional or marginalised lives may also be complicated in times of bereavement. Although I focus on the experiences of LGBTQ people in this study, I argue that these experiences may function as a cultural window to a larger normativity in relation to death that may (and quite likely will) touch, in different ways, also others beyond the LGBTQ population. Those questions are, however, for other studies to focus on.

By choosing Finland as the empirical context of this study, I aimed at filling a gap in research: although there is an increasing number of studies and reports on the lives and relationships of LGBTQ people in Finland (e.g. Juvonen 2002; 2015; Lehtonen & Mustola 2004; Moring 2013; Lahti 2019a; Lahti et al. forthcoming), remarkably little has been written about death. Apart from gender studies scholar Antu Sorainen's important project focusing on queer will-writing (Sorainen 2015a; 2015b; 2018; forthcoming), death and its consequences to the social world have not been a subject of study for scholars on LGBTQ themes in the Finnish context. Moreover, as a Finland-based and Finnish-speaking researcher, I am particularly

familiar with Finland's cultural and societal setting. I chose to utilise this familiarity in conducting an empirical study, which focuses on the personal stories of loss, cultural particularities, death-related rituals, norms and power relations in the context I am familiar with.

As mentioned earlier, the experiences of loss recalled in the interviews and written narratives of this study had temporally taken place in the period between the 1980s and the late 2010s. Following queer historian Riikka Taavetti's (2018) three-layered understanding of time when studying memories, this layer of time can be called the Time Remembered.[7] Instead of being a result of conscious planning, this time frame is a result of reaching interviewees who happened to recount memories from this period. However, it is also a rich and interesting era because of the legislative and attitudinal changes that took place in Finland during those same decades. To contextualise the study with these temporal and political shifts and changes, I next offer a brief overview of the situation of LGBTQ people in Finnish society from the 1980s to the late 2010s.

In 1981, homosexuality – which had been criminalised in 1889[8] and decriminalised in 1971 – was depathologised in Finland, making it no longer defined as an illness (Mustola 2007a; Juvonen 2015). In 1999, the law that had banned the promotion of homosexuality, which was installed after the decriminalisation of homosexuality and which to some extent resembled the laws prohibiting 'homopropaganda' in contemporary Russia, was lifted. In the same year, the age of consent for homosexual acts was lowered from 18 to 16 years, making the age limit even with the age of consent for heterosexual acts (Mustola 2007b; Juvonen 2015). In 2002, the law of registered partnership of same-sex couples took effect, giving same-sex couples the possibility of gaining legal recognition for their coupledom (Juvonen 2015). In 2003, the law of gender reassignment, popularly known as the Trans Act [*translaki*], came into effect (Suhonen 2007). In 2004, the Equality Act criminalised the unequal treatment of people based on gender, sexuality or gender expression (Lehtonen & Mustola 2004). In 2007, the law of assisted reproductive technology granted female couples access to assisted reproduction in private clinics but not in the healthcare services offered by the welfare state. At the same time, surrogacy was made illegal for both heterosexual and same-sex couples. A few years

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7   The two other layers, the Time of Remembering and the Time of Researching (see Taavetti 2018, 82), fell between 2015 and 2017 when I conducted the interviews and between 2015 and 2020 when I analysed the data and wrote this study, respectively.

8   As noted by Kati Mustola (2007a), men who had sex with men could be penalised for 'sodomitical sins' also under the previous legislation. However, sexual acts with someone of the same sex (for men and women) were explicitly forbidden in the legislation change completed in 1889 and taking effect in 1894 (Mustola 2007a, 217; see also Sorainen 2005, 3).

later, the legal situation of children in the so-called rainbow families was improved by changing the law of registered partnership in 2009 to allow intrafamilial adoption for registered same-sex couples. (Moring 2013, 16-18). After a long political and public debate, the Marriage Act that allowed same-sex couples to marry was accepted in 2014 and came into effect in 2017 (Järviö 2017). The latest step in the process of legal changes in support of LGBTQ people is the new Maternity Act, which came into effect in 2019, recognising the motherhood of both mothers in a married or registered female couple without an adoption process (Äitiyslaki.fi 2018). Moreover, the policies regarding assisted reproductive technology have recently changed, giving female couples access to assisted reproduction in (some) public clinics of the welfare state as well (Sirén 2019). In addition, the Trans Act is expected to be renewed in forthcoming years, including the removal of forced sterilisation, which has been criticised as a human rights violation (Translaki.fi 2018; Alasuutari et al. 2017).

Mainstream attitudes towards LGBTQ people in Finland have also evolved during this period. According to Kai Sievers and Olli Stålström (1984), in the beginning of the 1980s, neutral information of homosexuality was difficult to come by. Although homosexuality had been recently depathologised, its media representations tended to be polemical and scandalous. Moreover, the ban on promoting homosexuality ensured that the national TV and radio company YLE was cautious of broadcasting content that represented homosexuality in a positive light (Mustola 2007b, 27). Although homosexuality was a rather silenced and stigmatised topic, the same was even more severely true with gender minorities that were often incorrectly confused with or included in sexual minorities (Suhonen 2007). During the same decade, the global AIDS epidemic reached Finland, which strengthened fear and opposition towards homosexuals among the heterosexual population, thanks to the stigmatising media representations of the illness (Huotari 1999). In the mid-1990s, a new medicine for AIDS was introduced, making HIV no longer an imminent death sentence for people infected by it (Nikkanen & Järvi 2014). As gender studies scholar Tuula Juvonen (2015) has pointed out, the 1990s marked the beginning of political debates for the legal recognition of same-sex couples, but the cause encountered strong political and religious opposition, especially in the conservative political parties and within the Evangelical Lutheran Church (see also YLE 1996). In the 2000s and the 2010s, the public discussion of LGBTQ people has increased, and the public opinion has started to become more supportive. The discussion has focused, in particular, on the reproductive and marital rights of same-sex couples as well as on the renewal of the Trans Act. The aforementioned changes

in the Marriage Act and in the Maternity Act were initiated by citizens' initiatives[9] instead of the Finnish Parliament, emphasising the supportive attitude towards LGBTQ people within the general public (Järviö 2018; Äitiyslaki.fi 2018).

By the late 2010s, LGBTQ people, who have a history of been criminalised, pathologised, silenced and stigmatised in Finland, have become a recurring topic in Finnish media. Both public figures and politicians are more or less able to 'come out of the closet' without losing their popularity or political credibility (Juvonen 2015), even though some positions and identities are seemingly more easily accepted by the general public than others, and in some contexts, coming out seems to be less stigmatising than in others.[10] The shift in public opinion shows, for example, in the annual Pride parade held in the capital of Finland, Helsinki. In 2018, Helsinki Pride attracted 100 000 participants, making it the largest Pride parade in the Nordic countries that year (QX.fi 2018). At the same time, however, Pride parades held in smaller towns in the northern and eastern parts of Finland encountered public opposition (Loukasmäki 2016; Kärki & Lunki 2018). Opposition and online hate towards LGBTQ people can also be found in the comment sections of any Finnish newspaper's website whenever LGBTQ issues are discussed (see e.g. Jantunen 2018). These issues keep causing heated discussions on institutional levels as well. The Evangelical Lutheran Church – the largest religious institution in Finland, the membership rate of which is in constant decline (Tilastokeskus 2016; 2018) – keeps debating whether the Church should marry same-sex couples or not (EVL.fi 2018; Reinboth 2019). Moreover, conservative political parties, including Christian Democrats and the Finns Party, keep resisting the renewal of the Trans Act in the Parliament. Although the leftist government elected in 2019 has decided to renew

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9   Citizens' Initiative Act, which came into effect in 2012, allows the citizens of Finland to initiate legal changes. According to the law, each initiative must include a minimum of 50 000 signatures from Finnish citizens supporting the initiative collected within a 6-month period. After this, the initiative will be discussed and either ratified or rejected by the Finnish Parliament. A campaign called 'I do 2013' [*Tahdon 2013*] aspiring for gender-neutral marriage law was the first citizens' initiative to be ratified by the Parliament in 2014. The 160 000 signatures collected during the given time period indicated a wide support for a more inclusionary Marriage Act (Järviö 2017, 213). Although many initiatives have since reached the required number of supporters, only the initiatives proposing changes in the Marriage Act and Maternity Act have thus far been ratified by the Finnish Parliament.

10   For example, priest Marja-Sisko Aalto, who publicly came out as a trans woman in eastern Finland in 2008, had to leave her job in the Evangelical Lutheran congregation of Imatra in 2010 after starting the gender reassignment process (Savon Sanomat 2010). On the contrary, the story of politician Pekka Haavisto, who is publicly out as a gay man, is quite different. Haavisto was chosen as the presidential candidate for the Green party twice, in 2012 and 2018, attracting a lot of media attention and popularity. He came second in both elections (Juvonen 2015).

the Trans Act, they have chosen to limit it only to those of age, thus leaving transgender youth outside the legislation (Teittinen 2019).

The changes in the socio-political position of the LGBTQ people in Finnish society during the past four decades may, at first glance, seem like a simple progress narrative. According to such a narrative, the situation of LGBTQ people is continuously and inevitably changing for the better, especially in Western and more or less secular countries such as Finland (see e.g. Mizielinska & Kulpa 2011; de Szegheo Lang 2015). However, I argue that the progress narrative is a simplified reading of the myriad of social changes and lack of changes taking place during a certain spatial and temporal frame. The changes in the Finnish context include simultaneous examples of inclusions and exclusions, on which I have aimed at shedding light in this brief overview. Although something might change towards a more inclusionary direction over time in some place and for some people, the same is not necessarily true for the people living in slightly different conditions within the same nation state. In this dissertation, I thus go against the grain of the popular view of Finland as a country in which equality among people, regardless of gender or sexuality, has already been achieved. Instead, I show that the lived realities of LGBTQ people in Finland continue to be complex and affected by multiple kinds of normativities, particularly in the context of death.

In public debates aiming for the aforementioned political changes in Finland, the universality of death has been utilised as an argument in support of LGBTQ people. As a result, real or potential deaths and losses among LGBTQ people have received public attention. For example, a plea for a shared understanding on the basis of loss – or the fear of it – was made in Finland in the mid-1990s by the activists and politicians who lobbied for the law of registered partnership for same-sex couples. In a heated political discussion televised by YLE in 1996, titled The Gay Partnership Night [*Homoliitto-ilta* in Finnish], the viewers were asked to stop and think about death and the personal tragedies that followed when same-sex couples could not make their coupledom, nor their widow(er)hood, official. In this debate, the inevitability of death and the interpersonal tragedy it involved was an argument for inclusion, which aimed at creating understanding and sympathy even among those who opposed the legal recognition of same-sex couples in Finland (YLE 1996).[11]

Stories of death and tragedy of unofficially widowed lesbians and gays, both real and imagined, were also circulated in the Finnish media when lobbying for the law

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11   It did not, however, prevent religiously aligned opponents, such as Päivi Räsänen, a member of Parliament in the Christian Democrats Party, from continuing to argue against same-sex couples' need or entitlement to the legal recognition of their partnership (YLE 1996).

of registered partnership in the 1990s and later when lobbying for the new Maternity Act in the late 2010s (Äitiyslaki.fi 2018).[12] The emphasis on the political aspects of death is also visible in how the international Transgender Day of Remembrance movement (TDoR 2019), born in the USA, has landed in Finland. In the annual remembrance events held in Helsinki and other Finnish cities, the deaths of transgender people, taking place far away from Finland, are made visible when they are a result of violence and murder. At the same time, these remembrance events are used as platforms to call for changes in the Finnish Trans Act. Predating all these struggles and campaigns for legislative changes, deaths of gay men were publicly discussed in the 1980s in relation to the AIDS epidemic in Finland to stop social stigmatisation and to call for better medical care (Nikkanen & Järvi 2014).

Returning to Butler's (2004a, 20) argument on the unifying power of loss, it seems that because of its universality, death can create understanding between people. Therefore, it has political potential to cause change. In this dissertation, however, I argue that death is more than just a political tool used by those who seek social change. It is a deeply (inter)personal and affective phenomenon; thus, the stories of death and loss in queer and trans lives are also important to study when they bear no striking political purpose, gain or agenda. As I show in this study, talking about death has significance outside the eminent political struggles and at a more private level as well. The private is, however, always linked to the public through the culture and society in which the loss occurs.

In the remaining sections of this introduction, I introduce the theories and frameworks that have inspired my analysis. In section 1.2 Disenfranchised and Ungrievable Losses, I discuss earlier studies of queer grief and loss by focusing on the theories of disenfranchised grief and grieving rules by sociologist Kenneth J. Doka and the theory of ungrievability by Judith Butler. In section 1.3 Affective Families, I discuss the role and power of the concept of family by turning to feminist affect theories, particularly those by Sara Ahmed and Lauren Berlant. Finally, in section 1.4 The Structure of the Study, I briefly outline the contents of the remaining chapters of this dissertation.

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12   In terms of the Maternity Act, lobbyists argued it to be problematic that to legalise the parental position of the non-birth mother, an intrafamilial adoption process was required after the baby was born. It was pointed out that the family would end up in a vulnerable position if the non-birth mother died before the adoption process was completed. In the new Maternity Act, the parental position of the non-birth mother is made official without a months-long adoption process (Äitiyslaki.fi 2018).

1.2   Disenfranchised and Ungrievable Losses

Despite the underlying commonness of death and loss as human experiences, some types of deaths and losses are more commonly narrated, heard and sympathised than others. In this section, I discuss this by introducing the theoretical starting point of this study. By doing so, I aim to provide examples of how grief and marginalisation have been approached in queer theory and bereavement studies and how these theories can complement each other.

Theories of disenfranchised grief by sociologist Kenneth J. Doka (2002a) and ungrievability by queer theorist Judith Butler (2004a; 2009) have stemmed from an observation that not all losses are equally treated in the social world. Instead, there are both written and unwritten rules that differentiate and hierarchise grieving. Some losses are considered more upsetting than others; as a consequence, they are more easily acknowledged, recognised and remembered both socially and legally. Whereas Doka's theory has focused more on the hierarchies appearing in social relationships, particularly within the family and on some levels of society (like the workplace), Butler has taken a broader approach by questioning such hierarchisation on a level of nation states and asking why certain losses are not publicly mourned while others are. Despite differences in scale and approach, I see these theories to complement each other in essential ways.

Doka's theory has established its position within the study of bereavement among LGBTQ people, particularly in terms of queer widow(er)hood[13] (e.g. Whipple 2005; Green & Grant 2008; McNutt & Yakushko 2013). I propose that the common use of Doka's theory in this context is related to its focus on the nuclear family forms that have not always been achievable for the LGBTQ population. As argued by Doka (2002a, 7) in his influential and widely cited edited volume *Disenfranchised Grief*, within Western societies, the losses that are socially acknowledged tend to be the losses of a family member. The family, in his reading, means a traditional nuclear family formed by a married (heterosexual) couple and their (biological) children. A loss through death in such a setting is widely considered a devastating event, one in which people are expected to grieve intensely (at least for a certain amount of time) and in which they are entitled to specific rights by the state,

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13   I use the term queer widow(er)hood as an umbrella term to refer to both lesbian widowhood and gay widowerhood used in previous studies (e.g. Whipple 2006; Shernoff 1997), without, however, excluding other sexual orientations or genders, such as bisexuality or pansexuality or nonbinary genders. The term is inspired by Nina Lykke's (2015) term 'queer widowhood', but it includes the suffix '-er' to point out (and to question) the gendered nature of the terms widowhood and widowerhood, the former of which is used to refer to women and the latter to men.

such as bereavement leave from work and the right to inherit the property of the deceased, often with lower inheritance taxation than others.

Such expected emotional reactions and state-sanctioned practices are termed by Doka (2002a, 6-7) as grieving rules. These rules comprise not only clear-cut laws and regulations, such as the inheritance legislation or workplace-specific policies about bereavement leave, but also unwritten social expectations related to family and kinship. The grieving rules define, for example, who is expected to grieve for whom, how long the grief is expected to last and how intense it is expected to be. Grief that fails to conform to these rules in one way or another is considered to be disenfranchised grief, meaning that it does not receive similar acknowledgement, acceptance and sympathy from others as the grief that is in line with the society's grieving rules (the latter being termed as enfranchised grief).

Doka's grieving rules can be linked to a broader theory of feeling rules, coined by sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild (1983), which can be roughly divided into emotional obligations and improper affects. Feeling rules, as well as grieving rules, direct our emotions and actions by telling us how others expect us to feel and to act. In terms of grief, this may mean that we have an emotional obligation to grieve for the death of a (nuclear) family member, and if we do not – or if we grieve intensely for someone else – our grief may be deemed as improper (Hochschild 1983, 56-59; see also Alasuutari 2018, 189-191). Doka (2002a, 6) has argued that in addition to feeling rules, grieving rules contain rules that govern thinking and spirituality; so, in total, grieving rules give instructions regarding how the bereaved should (and should not) feel, think and believe. Moreover, Hochschild (1979, 572-573) has pointed out that the rules defining appropriate and improper affects are inherently gendered, requiring different types of emotion management from men and women. This results, in part, from the essentialist expectation of women to be more emotional than men (see also Thoits 2004). In the context of grief, in particular, men and women are expected to express their emotions differently. Whereas women are allowed (and expected) to grieve openly, men are expected to be more reserved (Martin & Doka 2000).

Owing to the heavy emphasis on the nuclear family within the written and unwritten grieving rules in Western societies, it can be stated that death is traditionally seen as a family matter. Moreover, what counts as a family in the context of death is strictly restricted. Although family models can and do vary (e.g. Weston 1991; Eerola & Pirskanen 2018), according to Doka's theory, losses that exceed the nuclear family model are generally seen in Western societies as less significant. This view does not take into account how close the bereaved person has been with the deceased in reality, which indicates that the grieving rules behind the state-sanctioned or enfranchised grief are rather normative in nature. For example, according to this view, losing a biological parent is automatically considered to be a

more devastating loss than losing an aunt, an uncle, a grandparent, a step-parent or a neighbour, even if the lost person had actually been *like* a parent to the bereaved instead of the biological parent.[14]

Similar underestimation is, according to such grieving rules, attached to losses of friends – visible, for example, when a person who has lost 'just a friend' is by default offered less support than a person who has lost a nuclear family member (Smolinski & Colón 2006) or when friends are ignored in funeral rituals that tend to focus on the loss experienced by nuclear family members (Doka 2002b, 137). Underestimation of this kind can also be seen with deaths of non-human animals. Pets are often seen as family members during their lifetime, but despite this, their loss may be more acceptable to mourn in privacy than to share with others (Meyers 2002). The only chosen (instead of biological) relationship that is, according to this view, considered to cause pain of a similar scale as the loss of a parent, child or sibling is the loss of a married spouse, which neatly fits into the domain of a nuclear family. Interestingly, disenfranchisement may also include losses of relatives that are generally considered to be part of one's extended family, such as grandparents, whose deaths as elderly people can be seen as both expected and timely – a textbook example of a good death (Walter 1999, 74) – and thus as something that is not expected to cause intense or prolonged grief.[15] Doka has argued that the aim of grieving rules is to not only reaffirm and strengthen the idea of a traditional nuclear family but also avoid the confusion and 'organisational burdens' that would follow if all losses were assessed in terms of their worthiness for social and legal recognition (Doka 2002a, 8; see also Robson & Walter 2013). Furthermore, I argue that the question of what counts as a family in terms of grieving rules is related to the question of affects and what relationships are expected to have affective or emotional importance. I discuss these questions further in the following section 1.3, entitled Affective Families.

In his theory, Doka has not addressed how societies' underlying heteronormativity shapes grieving rules. I further develop Doka's argument by adding that heteronormativity is, indeed, closely tied to the phenomenon of disenfranchised grief in Western societies. Moreover, although Doka's theory is useful in the manner it gets hold of the (nuclear) family-centeredness of accepted or

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14 On the emotional complexity of losing estranged biological parents, see Pedersen (2019).
15 For example, the loss of grandparents is occasionally made fun of in the academia by suggesting that university students use the death of a grandparent as an excuse for not attending final exams (e.g. Reed 2017). The commentators of the so-called dead grandmother syndrome not only claim that students are likely to lie but also reinforce the idea that losing a grandparent is not such a big deal that it should affect one's academic performance.

appropriate grief and points its finger towards a certain kind of normativity, it does not take us much further than that. It also does not answer questions such as how disenfranchisement affects people or why does it matter. Thus, I complement Doka's argument by suggesting that Butler's (2004a; 2009) concept of ungrievability is a relevant tool for further elaborating the issue of grieving rules and disenfranchisement by focusing on the norms behind such rules and how these norms affect the mourners. Following both Butler (2009) and philosopher Michel Foucault (1978, 144), I see norms to function as the mechanisms of power that govern the recognisability of the subject and measure and hierarchise the phenomena of the social world and the behaviour of people in it.

Ungrievability is a reoccurring theme in Butler's writings, most notably discussed in her books *Precarious Life – The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a) and *Frames of War – When is Life Grievable?* (2009). According to Butler, lives are divided into those that matter and are worthy of public grieving when lost (grievable lives) and those that are not (ungrievable lives). Butler's account on ungrievability – which can be linked to the broader themes of livability and cultural intelligibility often present in her writings (Lloyd 2015) – is strongly entwined into questions of norms, normativity and recognition. As pointed out by gender studies scholar Sanna Karhu (2017, 3-4), ungrievability is one of the key topics in Butler's theorisation and critique of norms. Although Butler's enduring interest in grief and ungrievability has been criticised as a turn towards sentimentality, merely focusing on lamenting the ungrievability of certain losses (Honig 2013, 42, 63-64), it has been argued that it should be read, instead, as a theorisation of resistance (Karhu 2017, 16-17) and as a theory that makes visible the politics of mourning (McIvor 2009).

As Butler (2009, xxix) has argued, a life that 'conforms to the norm of human life already established, is then more of a life' whereas other lives are 'either no life, a shadow-life, or a threat to life as we know it'. Although norms create the frames of being human, inside which subjects become recognisable as persons (and outside of which they may lack this recognition), as Butler has argued, neither norms nor frames are unchangeable. Instead, they reflect the hierarchies and power relations of the society in which they occur (Butler 2009, 3-4). When studying such normative frames that define and produce a recognisable life, Butler has argued that it is important to look beyond the norms themselves to see their functions and outcomes. The task is not simply to aspire towards wider inclusion but to examine how the norms around ungrievability affect the social world and the people in it:

> The point, however, will be to ask how such norms operate to produce certain
> subjects as 'recognizable' persons and to make others decidedly more difficult
> to recognize. The problem is not merely how to include more people within

existing norms, but to consider how existing norms allocate recognition differentially. (Butler 2009, 6)

In her more recent writings, Butler has focused on ungrievability in terms of war and nation states.[16] I argue, however – following Butler's earlier writings on the topic – that ungrievability is a useful theoretical tool also when examining losses experienced by marginalised populations, such as LGBTQ people, living their lives in the margins of the (hetero- and cis-) normative social world. In her books *The Psychic Life of Power* (1997), *Antigone's Claim – Kinship between Life and Death* (2000) and *Undoing Gender* (2004b), Butler has discussed how questions of kinship, recognition and ungrievability affect the lives and losses of LGBTQ people. Using the AIDS epidemic and its lack of public recognition in the United States as an example, she has criticised the way in which love that does not fit into certain social norms is not regarded as real love and thus the loss of that love or loved one is not regarded as a real loss (Butler 1997, 27, 138-139; see also Butler 2000, 24; 2004b, 26-27, 104). As a consequence, the forms of love and desire that exceed social norms, such as homosexual love, become ungrievable in the public discourse. This means that the loss is not publicly recognised, even though people need this kind of recognition to live a satisfactory life in their social surroundings (Butler 2004b, 2-4). According to Butler (2004b, 26-27), the manner of defining love either as real or as unreal can be seen as a Focauldian form of exercising power. The question of whom we are allowed to grieve will then lead to other essential questions such as who is counted as a person, what is considered a grievable life or a relationship and what is or who are excluded from these categories. Whereas Butler's arguments essentially follow a very nation-focused approach and emphasise public feeling, I argue that these same ideas are applicable on the level of personal experiences as well.

By studying personal stories and public traces of death and loss in queer and trans lives in the context of Finland, in an era during which the legal and social recognition of LGBTQ people has significantly improved, I aim to show that disenfranchisement and ungrievability are not either/or questions. Instead, they can

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16   In her post-9/11 writings, Butler has directed the discussion of ungrievability into questions of war and the US military, focusing on arguments such as how lives destroyed in state-legitimated wars may not be 'apprehended as lost' if people living in the affected areas are not first understood as living (Butler 2009, 1-3, 41-42). In a keynote lecture given in 2016, Butler has expanded the discussion into a recent question of refugees drowning in the 'Graveyard of the Mediterranean' and argued that a systematic abandonment takes place in European governments, resulting in a situation in which certain populations – that are seen as ungrievable by the same governments – are left to die (Butler 2016; see also Karhu 2017, 103-104).

manifest in more subtle forms as well. Instead of seeing the two as something absolute that happens either in full force or not at all, I propose that they are context-bound, varying and gradual phenomena that do not appear in a similar fashion in everybody's life whose significant relationships fall outside the nuclear family model – nor in a similar fashion in every context for a single bereaved individual. By defining disenfranchisement and ungrievability in this way, I take into account the critique that Doka's theory, in particular, has received for being too black and white and simplistic to reflect the actual lived realities of bereaved individuals in complex situations (see e.g. Green & Grant 2008, 281-284; Robson & Walter 2013, 113).

In addition to these two theories, there are other interesting crossings between queer theory and bereavement studies that I build on in this study, particularly in relation to the Freudian concept of melancholia. Sigmund Freud's work in terms of mourning and melancholia has inspired Butler both in her discussion on subject formation and her early writings on ungrievability (1997), in addition to which it has been repeatedly utilised by other queer theorists. Scholars such as David L. Eng and David Kazanjian (2003), Jose Muñoz (1999) and Ann Cvetkovich (2003) have challenged Freud's well-known and persistent definition of melancholia as a pathological inability of 'letting go' of the lost other. I see this to resonate closely with the theory of continuing bonds in bereavement studies (Klass et al. 1996; Neimeyer et al. 2000), which challenges, likewise, the Freudian view of a clear-cut, linear grief and suggests that bereaved people may actually benefit from maintaining emotional bonds with the lost others. I return to this discussion and further disentangle the crossings between queer theory and bereavement studies in chapter 5, entitled Living with Grief.

1.3   Affective Families

Here, I turn to another theoretical starting point of this dissertation: the concept of family and its relation to affects. Building on the observations made in the previous section, I argue that what makes the family-focused, written and unwritten rules of grief so powerful, appealing and effective are the affective power and social hierarchies related to family and kinship – and the differing positions people have in relation to them. I first discuss the concept of family through the lens of feminist affect theories, then proceed to discussing queer kinship studies and the concept of chosen families and, finally, offer my own explanation of how the term family is used in this dissertation.

Before diving deeper into the discussion of the affectivity of families, it must be explained what it means to pay attention to affects or the affective. The study of affects has attracted increasing interest both within and beyond gender studies to the

extent that the approach has been named as the affective turn (Liljeström 2016). This turn to affect is a diverse one: Gregory J. Seigworth and Melissa Gregg (2010, 3-4) have argued that there can never be 'a single, generalizable theory of affect' but 'there can only ever be infinitely multiple iterations of affect and theories of affect'. In this study, I draw on feminist affect theories, particularly on Sara Ahmed's (2010; 2014) and Lauren Berlant's (2011) ways of theorising affect and affectivity, in which the idea of sticky affects and the promises stuck to some things more than others are central – ideas that I later elaborate on. Moreover, the affects examined in this study can be seen as ordinary affects, following feminist anthropologist Kathleen Stewart's (2007) way of theorising. According to Stewart (2007, 1-2), ordinary affects are 'the stuff that seemingly intimate lives are made of', happening in sensations, hopes, habits and forms of attachment in the social world that 'catch people up in something that feels like something'. Being seemingly intimate and personal, affects have the 'capacity to affect and be affected' (Stewart 2007, 4), making them an important topic of analysis when studying human lives.

Within feminist scholarship, the definition of affect varies and, for example, its theoretical separation from emotions remains debated.[17] In this study, I follow Ahmed's definition regarding the separation of emotions and affects, in which the two are not clearly separated but instead are seen as stuck together and intertwined and thus as words that can be used more or less interchangeably (Ahmed 2010; 2014; Schmitz & Ahmed 2014). Ahmed (2010, 230-231, n1) sees affects and emotions as slightly different aspects of a shared phenomenon and has argued: 'While you can separate an affective response from an emotion that is attributed as such (the bodily sensations from the feeling of being afraid), this does not mean that in practice, or in everyday life, they are separate. In fact, they are contiguous; they slide into each other; they stick, and cohere, even when they are separated'. Similarly, Stewart (2007, 3) sees the significance of affects to lie in 'the intensities they build and in what thoughts and feelings they make possible', emphasising their connection to emotions. Following these arguments, I use both terms, affects and emotions, in this study because I consider them to work closely together, making their separation not always necessary. I also use the term affective when referring to things that operate, and affect us, by appealing to emotions either on an unconscious or a conscious level. When using the verb 'to affect', I refer to an impact or an influence that operates affectively.

Following Ahmed, I also see affects as socially produced and contingent. As Ahmed (2010, 231) has suggested, we are affected in certain ways and not others because 'things are already in place that incline us to be affected in certain ways

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17   For detailed discussions about defining and differentiating affects and emotions within and beyond feminist studies, see Liljeström (2016) and Gorton (2007).

more than others'. Therefore, to analyse affects, one also needs to analyse what is already in place in a society and how this 'in place' may vary contextually or between people. Ahmed has further emphasised that something being already in place does not mean that everyone is affected by it in the same way. Rather, affective responses are contingent because how people react to these 'in places' may differ based on personal and social elements (Ahmed 2010, 230-231; see also Liljeström 2016, 34.) In other words, previous experiences in life – and the affective value attached to certain objects or places – contribute to the ways people are affected in different situations.

I argue that the centrality of family is one of the things already in place in the context of death. To understand this centrality, we must also understand the affects stuck to the concept of family not only in relation to death, but also to life. As thoroughly argued by Ahmed (2010) in her book *The Promise of Happiness*, the family – understood as a nuclear family – is typically seen as a 'happy object' that promises a happy life. Because of the affective promises attached to happy objects, people come to desire things because they desire what they are said to bring along: 'We desire x, and we desire x because we desire y, where y is happiness' (Ahmed 2010, 30). Thus, for Ahmed, objects are not neutral but instead already attached to, or sticky with, positive or negative value and 'saturated with affects as sites of personal and social tension' (Ahmed 2010, 44).

To be happy is, thus, to belong to a family – but not to any kind of family. The scholarship on queer kinship points out that what counts as a family tends to be limited to the realms of nuclear and biological families, even though the family discourse has been expanded to include the notion of a chosen family, too. These chosen family forms, often featured in the queer kinship literature following anthropologist Kath Weston's influential study *Families we Choose* (Weston 1991; see also Weeks et al. 2001; Butler 2002), are based on non-biological and both romantic and non-romantic, sexual and non-sexual attachments to others. They do not, however, usually count as families in the legal sense or in the public discourse of the mainstream population (Shapiro 2010). As Ahmed has pointed out, the expected lack of a nuclear family in the lives of LGBTQ people has resulted in the formation of the lonely figure of the 'unhappy queer', reaffirming the idea that it is the traditional nuclear family that makes one happy – and that LGBTQ people, allegedly, cannot have it. This notion has, however, started to change in societies such as contemporary Finland, where legal changes have made marriage, assisted reproduction and adoption – and thus legally recognised nuclear families – possible for same-sex couples, resulting in the era of so-called rainbow familism (Kuosmanen 2007).

Despite the alluring connection between family and happiness, there are also other, more complex and conflicting affects stuck to the concept of family,

particularly when it comes to LGBTQ people. To argue this, I turn to Berlant's (2011) discussion on optimism. Berlant has observed that although certain things may be loaded with positive affects and may seem to promise happiness, or the good life, they may not always do so in reality. In her book *Cruel Optimism*, Berlant (2011) has argued that people have a tendency to stay attached to things they imagine or fantasise to bring them happiness, even if in their lived realities these same things may actually be wearing and troublesome. Although Berlant (2011, 1, 27) sees all attachments to be optimistic, this optimism becomes cruel indeed when people imagine achieving the good life by staying attached to something that actually gives them a bad life. In Berlant's view, what is interesting in this phenomenon is 'how fantasies of belonging clash with the conditions of belonging in particular historical moments' (Berlant, as quoted in McCabe 2011).

Although family bonds may be close, warm and mutually rewarding, one can also experience emotional clashes when trying to achieve a sense of belonging in a family. Various studies of queer kinship have pointed out that the relationship between LGBTQ people and their biological families, termed also as families of origin, may be a conflicting one – or break altogether – due to heterosexual and cisgender family members' difficulties in dealing with LGBTQ issues (e.g. Bertone & Pallotta-Chiarolli 2014; Oswald 2002; Weston 1995a). Ahmed (2014, 166), too, has suggested that families of origin are 'crucial spaces for queer experiences of discomfort'. However, as social scientists Kaisa Ketokivi (2009a) and Kirsti Suoranta (2006) have noted, even when there are conflicts, LGBTQ people may decide to hold on to their relationships with their families of origin. In studies of rainbow families – that is, families formed by same-sex couples and their children (Moring 2013) – it has been observed that having children and creating a nuclear family of one's own may ease these conflicts or make both same-sex couples and their families of origin more willing to endure them (Nay 2015; Suoranta 2006). I argue that the affective value placed upon the concept of family – here meaning its imagined possibility of making people happy – is a reason why even conflicting family bonds may be maintained or even cherished by those who may, in actuality, feel them to be burdensome and problematic instead of happiness-inducing, safe and secure.

This potential friction between LGBTQ people and their families of origin also has its effects on losses experienced by LGBTQ people within such families. Therefore, it is worth emphasising that not everyone mourns those who they are expected to mourn in an expected manner (see also Pedersen 2019). Given the pervasiveness of grieving rules, this may cause complex affective reactions. For example, how to mourn a mother, who you are expected to love and to mourn, and who you kind of love and mourn, but who has died by suicide after you came out to her as homosexual – and you end up feeling guilty for it for decades? Or how to

grieve for a father, with whom you always thought you were close and who you always thought had accepted your lesbianism, when you find out following his death that this might not have been the case and you have no possibility to discuss the matter with him anymore? The friction or the feeling of discomfort described in these cases is not, of course, related only to families of origin. Similar affective complications can follow other losses, too. How to mourn, for example, a wife of forty years, who has questioned your gender identity and opposed your desire to transition, and for the sake of whom you have agreed to remain closeted as transgender, when her death means that the phase that you consider to be the best part of your life can finally start?

These examples, drawn from the stories of the interviewees of this study, signify something that may seem self-evident but is sometimes forgotten: that not every loss through death is similar or causes similar emotional reactions. Another thing often taken for granted is the expectation that loss is always linked with love: when talking about losses, it is expected that the bereaved had loved the lost person, which is why the loss hurts. But what could the loss and grieving be like if there was no love but anger or indifference instead – or something more complex? As I show in this dissertation, because of the complexities of social belonging, often muddled and complicated with different kinds of affects attached to different forms of familial bonds, the affective realities following losses may end up becoming quite muddled, too.

When considering the empirical material of this study and the interviewees' ways of defining families, their concepts of family were not reduced to the nuclear family. When defining what family meant to them personally, they gave varying statements. In many cases, the interviewees' notions of a family closely reminded the chosen families described by Weston (1991). Instead of, or in addition to, biological family relations, their families did include a variety of chosen others, such as friends, partners, ex-partners and their children. Although chosen family is widely used as a concept for describing the close, meaningful relationships that are not biological in nature, it can be argued that these kinds of relationships are not always chosen either. As one cannot choose one's parents or sibling, one similarly cannot choose, for example, the ex-partners of one's partner or all the people associated with a circle of friends, even though these people may end up becoming a part of the group one considers one's family. Moreover, sometimes people who are indeed chosen, such as one's partner, become a part of the traditional model of a nuclear family through the legitimation provided by marriage or registered partnership, thus blurring the lines between the chosen and the nuclear family. Therefore, it can be argued that there is conceptual ambiguity around what is chosen and what is not regarding family relations.

Within queer theory, the notion of a chosen family has also been criticised. Jaqcui Gabb (1999), who has studied lesbian motherhood, has argued that the theory of chosen families casts too readily away both biological ties and the queer family formations that actually do conform to the nuclear family model. The notion of chosen families has also been criticised for being overly individualistic and middle class and thus not available to all LGBTQ people in an equal manner. For example, Elizabeth Freeman (2007) sees kinship as caretaking that people have unequal access to. To Freeman, kinship is 'private, unevenly distributed social security' (Freeman 2007, 298). She has criticised Weston for failing to take into account the economic, racial, gendered and national privileges that make chosen families an option for some but not for others. Christopher Carrington's (1999) arguments share Freeman's concern. He has argued that those who are able to do family this way usually are well-educated, affluent and middle class, with more time and socioeconomic resources to invest in shared domesticity with friends. In other words, according to Carrington, alternative family structures are not only based on choice but also on better resources, which give more possibilities to choose and create such families. People with less resources lack the time, money, kin networks and energy to create chosen families. Moreover, if one's relations with relatives are difficult or broken, this may result in minimal family and feelings of isolation for those LGBTQ people to whom chosen families are not a realistic option (Carrington 1999, 211-213). However, this kind of critique, although raising important concerns, does not pay attention to Weston's (1998, 85-86) explanation that choice in her theory is often understood too simplistically and that chosen families in her theory are not, in fact, freely chosen. Instead, both social forces and individual agency affect and shape the structure these families can take. According to Weston, choice is always constrained by social structures and is not as individuated and colour- and class-blind as the critiques have claimed.

Although Freeman's and Carrington's critiques are important reminders of the complexity of choice and its relation to social privilege, they do not directly resonate with the data of this study. On the contrary, chosen families were not seen by the interviewees as something that would require 'well-furnished dining rooms, fully equipped kitchens, and inviting spaces for entertaining' or other privileges offered by a bourgeois life, as argued by Carrington (1999, 211). Instead, the interviewees saw chosen families as something they could rely on when relationships with their families of origin were emotionally complicated. Chosen others offered them support and care, particularly when they were living in vulnerable, unprivileged situations and needed emotional, economic or practical support, especially in times of bereavement. However, what did resonate from Freeman's and Carrington's critique of chosen families in the interviewees' narratives was the discussion about the

freedom of choosing one's family members, which was not always considered free at all.

Because of the aforementioned complexities related to the term chosen family, in this study, I use a less established but also less ambiguous term 'unofficial family' when referring to the people who the interviewees found meaningful in their lives but who were not, in the legal sense, counted as their family members. In addition, I call the legally recognised family as official family, thus combining family models that can be termed as biological, nuclear, traditional, legal or biolegal[18]. Since the law on registered partnership came into effect in 2002 in Finland, same-sex partners have had the ability to be included in the official family as well. Although social recognition often follows legal recognition, it must be noted that legal and social recognition do not always go hand in hand, as I show in detail in the analysis of this dissertation.

Thus, in this terminology the focus is on legal recognition or the lack thereof. I use these terms to point out existing dichotomies, differentiations and hierarchical practices taking place in many contexts of death-related losses, guided by legislation and cultural traditions. Moreover, using this terminology has the advantage of not having to differentiate between the family members who are or are not freely chosen. In addition, it helps to overcome the shortcomings related to terms such as biological families or blood relatives, which do not cover legally recognised family forms based on adoption. For the purposes of the current research, more important than focusing on choice or biology is focusing on the differentiated positions people have in each other's lives depending on whether their relationship is legally acknowledged as familial. In addition to having significance in legislation, this differentiation has significance in the context of death because of the grieving rules discussed in the previous section, limiting the enfranchised grief and grievability into the realm of the official family, and because of the affective value attached to (legally acknowledged) families. Keeping this in mind, it can be argued that the official family is seen as the happy object, but the unofficial family is not necessarily seen in the same light. This affective inequality[19] related to official and unofficial families can partly explain why certain losses are by default considered to be more devastating than others.

18   Biolegal is a term coined by Carrington (1999) denoting a combination of biological and legal families and making visible that some family relations, such as marriage, are made official through legislation instead of biology.
19   By affective inequality, I refer to the inequalities that are 'known affectively, as they are felt interpersonally and made tangible in interpersonal encounters' and operating through 'the hardly recognizable, unthoughtfully mundane or otherwise complex and messy power dynamics through which people experience their relationships' (Kolehmainen & Juvonen 2018, 1).

That said, close relationships are complex, and one terminological differentiation is not sufficient to dig into all this complexity. Although making legal and affective differences in different types of families explicit, this terminology conceals the internal differences within the official family, in particular, because it includes the parents, siblings and other relatives, as well as the registered or married partner and biological or adopted children. Sometimes in my discussion, it is necessary to focus only on some of these relationships. Therefore, I also refer to families of origin when discussing interviewees' relationships with their parents, siblings and other relatives separately from other official family relations. With this term, I refer to a particular kind of family history and its affective intensities in addition to its legal recognition.

It has been questioned within anthropological kinship studies, why the term family should be used at all when talking about meaningful relationships outside the official family, defined in this tradition as non-procreative kinship or fictive kinship (Shapiro 2010). Admittedly, my argument about different types of relationships and the affects attached to them could be made without expanding the term family – for example, using terms such as queer belonging or relationality (e.g. Freeman 2007). However, I find that there is no reason why the term family could not be used in an expanded way. On the contrary, the fact that terms such as chosen family are established and widely used both within earlier research on queer kinship and within LGBTQ communities indicates that the term family is contingent and can be used to denote different things. I argue that by refusing to acknowledge the expansion of the word family, which has already taken place both theoretically and empirically, and using it only when referring to the official family would further emphasise and strengthen the prioritised role such relationships have. Thus, although I do not see it absolutely required to rely on the family discourse when examining meaningful relationships in the lives of LGBTQ people, I find that the differentiation between official and unofficial families makes visible something crucial about the hierarchisation of different relationships in the context of death. For me, it is a practical differentiation within a variety of meaningful relationships.

Through my reading of (different types of) families and their relation to affect in this section, I have demonstrated that there are interesting affective specificities in the meaningful relationships of LGBTQ people within both official and unofficial families. For this reason, I have neither limited nor prescribed the nature of the relationships that count when studying bereavement among LGBTQ people in Finland. Although the official family indeed seems to have a prioritised position within the established grieving rules, I argue that the losses that matter include losses of unofficial family members, too.

1.4 The Structure of the Study

The remaining chapters of this dissertation include a chapter on data and methods, four empirical chapters and a concluding chapter gathering together the results of the study. The data and methods are introduced in chapter 2, entitled Vulnerable Stories. I start by introducing personal narratives and my interviewing method (open-ended, thematic interviews) and discussing what kind of knowledge detailed, in-depth interviewing offers and what are its methodological benefits and restrictions. Then, I introduce the data gathered using the scavenger methodology and the process leading to these data collection decisions. I also introduce the qualitative content analysis employed and describe how and with what logic the thematic coding of the data was conducted. I conclude the chapter by discussing the research ethics of telling the stories of others from the perspective of vulnerability and feminist methodologies.

In chapter 3, called Skeletons, Closets and Coming Out, I proceed with analysing the personal narratives, focusing on the theme of the closet. I argue that previous research on LGBTQ people and bereavement offers a rather simplistic account of the significance of the closet at times of loss, suggesting that being closeted leads to problems in bereavement, which could be avoided by being out. Following the studies that emphasise the ambiguity of closets and the continuous nature of coming out (e.g. Sedgwick 1990; Švab & Kuhar 2005), I demonstrate that the situation is often much more complex and that the logics of the closet affect, in fact, also those bereaved LGBTQ people who considered themselves as 'out'. I argue that focusing on (the variety of) closets and coming out stories reveals the affective complexity and friction experienced in the interviewees' relations with their families of origin. This friction, in turn, had affected how interviewees mourned deaths within their families of origin and how the families of origin had responded to interviewees' losses of same-sex partners and ex-partners. Moreover, I show how heteronormative and cisnormative expectations deeply rooted in Finnish society made it necessary for the interviewees to continuously out themselves to the professionals they met following loss, such as morticians and priests. In this process, they had to be prepared to encounter confusion and discriminatory behaviour (even though this did not always occur). I propose that this can be considered as a form of microaggressions and affective inequality.

In chapter 4, entitled The Affective Power of Rituals, I examine death rituals[20] and their affective power in Finnish society. Using the interviewees' stories, Finnish

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20 By the term death rituals, I refer to socially shared and culturally prescribed post-death rituals in Finnish society, in which the intent is to bid farewell to the lost person, including funerals and burials and other ritualised practices with the same intent, such as publishing a death notice in a newspaper.

legislation and the guidelines of local congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as my data, I present an overview of traditional Finnish death rituals and discuss LGBTQ people's possibilities of finding their own place within this (often normative) matrix. I show that the role of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is the largest religious institution in Finland, remains central in the interviewees' stories on death rituals, even though they were not always particularly Christian themselves, falling often into the categories of semi-seculars or post-Christians instead (af Burén 2015; Thurfjell 2015). Moreover, I argue that death rituals were family-centric, with a focus on official families. However, the interviewees possibilities to participate in death rituals depended both on the legal and social recognition of their relationship to the lost person. Because recognition was not always guaranteed, death rituals evoked feelings of inclusion and exclusion in the interviewees. I also ask why it seemed to matter to the interviewed LGBTQ people to be recognised and included within such rituals. I propose, drawing on feminist affect theories, that in an affective situation of losing someone to death, especially in an environment with fixed cultural traditions that usually follow such a loss, opting out of these traditions would cause negative emotional reactions, such as the feeling of exclusion. Thus, even those LGBTQ people who may live their lives following unconventional paths may find themselves in a situation of wanting to be included and recognised within the framework of traditional death rituals. However, interviewees also reported having changed and personalised death rituals while not entirely removing the official family-centred or Evangelical Lutheran frames around them. I end the chapter by describing these changes and personalisations and discussing how the ability to make such changes (or the lack of it) had affected the interviewees and their sense of personal agency.

In chapter 5, entitled Living with Grief, I examine how the interviewees talked about grief and how they managed to keep on living following their loss(es) of meaningful others. First, I discuss the interviewees' descriptions of grief in relation to the theoretical crossings of queer theory and bereavement studies in terms of grief and melancholia. Following the queer theoretical readings on melancholia and the sociological theory of continuing bonds, I argue that the grief described in the interviewees' stories was something they learned to live with but did not necessarily aim at getting over or letting go of, thus challenging the Freudian view of grief as a linear, clear-cut process. I also examine the support (and lack thereof) received from the interviewees' official and unofficial families following loss. I argue that although the support received from others, particularly from friends, was considered valuable, not everyone received as much support from others as they had hoped for. The support did decrease as time went by, and it was also strongly affected by the differing views on grief and grieving rules. In addition, I discuss the conditions of grieving in a welfare state in terms of healthcare and social services available for

bereaved individuals and how well (or badly) these are suited for bereaved LGBTQ people. In particular, I discuss sick leaves in bereavement, therapy and peer support groups. In the end, I discuss enduring as agency. With the concept of enduring, I refer to the interviewees' decision to endure the pain caused by the loss and to keep on living despite it, or with it. Because of the changing amount of support from others and the lack of suitable support services, the personal decision to endure was sometimes the only thing that helped the interviewees in living with grief. In the end, I argue that the interviewees actively looked for ways to survive during the vulnerable time of bereavement.

In chapter 6, called Queer Remembering, I focus on the questions of remembrance through private and public rituals of remembrance by following a trajectory that starts from the private narratives and proceeds, step by step, towards public remembering in Finnish LGBTQ communities. First, I follow the idea of a queer afterlife to discuss how the interviewees wished to relate to certain others in terms of spiritual, embodied and material afterlife. I argue that the stories of whom they wished to share the spiritual afterlife with, be buried with or share their property with after their own deaths point to whom they wanted to keep on relating beyond death, creating a feeling of post-mortem futurity. I call this type of relating a ghostly dimension of queer kinship, showing how the feeling of kinship[21] may continue beyond death. Second, I examine how the interviewees continued and altered their relationships with their lost others and how they commemorated them by creating remembrance rituals of their own, which were either kept in private or shared with (certain) others. Third, I introduce the theories of queer monumentality and cultural memory and discuss the lack of queer monumentality in the empirical materials of this study. In particular, I explore why there is such a lack and what does this lack tell us about the Finnish culture of death. Finally, I discuss the absence of LGBTQ communities in the interviewees' narratives in times of bereavement and how death and loss have been publicly discussed in those communities. I show that death is often raised as a topic of discussion in Finnish LGBTQ communities but in ways that focus on politicised deaths and public remembering of geographically and/or temporally distant others. Through public remembering, queer and trans deaths and losses become, as I suggest, part of the cultural memory and participate in creating what I call the queer and trans culture of death in Finland. However, as I conclude,

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21 By the term feeling of kinship, I call focus to those aspects of kinship that are experienced on the level of affects and emotions. Following Eng (2010), from whose book *The Feeling of Kinship* I have borrowed the term, I suggest that it 'pays particular attention to structures of feeling, not just to formal concepts, structural analyses, and systematic beliefs, but also to the more ephemeral, intangible, and evanescent feelings of kinship as they are "actively lived and felt"' (Eng 2010, 15).

a wider public discussion on death and loss in queer and trans lives is needed, focusing on death not only as a distant, politicised issue but also as an inseparable part of all queer and trans personal lives.

In chapter 7, I provide a conclusion of the issues and arguments discussed in the dissertation. Here, I return to and answer the research questions, map out paths for further research and offer concluding ideas about how this study contributes to its main research fields, to research on queer and trans lives in Finland and to international studies and theories related to death in queer and trans lives.

2   Vulnerable Stories

2.1   Interviews and Written Narratives

> SUSANNA: When you talk about the tragic things in life, or such like, the atmosphere always turns so bad. Then you try to avoid it… It's not… In that sense this [interview situation] is quite refreshing and even [--] like resting in an armchair… Even with [my son], we don't talk about… these things.

Although the empirical materials used in this study are broad and varied, my main data consists of interviews and written narratives of 14 self-identified LGBTQ people living in Finland, discussing their experiences of losing meaningful others to death. The stories told had not necessarily been widely shared before, or they were stories which the interviewees had at some point stopped sharing, as Susanna puts it above. I start this methodological chapter by describing the process of interviewing in relation to feminist interviewing methods. I also discuss the nature and limits of the narratives and the role of emotions in the research process. Next, I discuss how I have utilised the scavenger methodology (Halberstam 1998) for collecting contextualising data around the Finnish culture of death, including legislation, church guidelines and public rituals of remembrance in Finnish LGBTQ communities. Then, I reflect on the method of analysis I have employed, called the qualitative content analysis, and describe how and with what logic I have conducted the thematic coding of the empirical materials. In some ways, the personal narratives of loss discussed in this dissertation can be considered vulnerable or sensitive stories. Therefore, in the concluding section of the chapter, I explore the topic of vulnerability by discussing the ethics of telling the stories of others in the context of research and by outlining how the questions of vulnerability and power have been dealt with in feminist research in general and in this study in particular. As a methodological contribution, I aspire towards self-reflexivity and a transparent description of the research process, which have also been termed as vulnerable writing (Page 2017a).

Conducting interviews

The main data of this study consists of in-depth interviews and written narratives of 14 self-identified LGBTQ people currently living in Finland. All interviewees had lost a meaningful other (or many of them) to death, including partners, ex-partners, parents, grandparents, friends and other people who they found meaningful in their lives in one way or another. The Time Remembered in the interviewees' stories took place between the 1980s and the late 2010s, whereas the Time of Remembering and the Time of Researching, respectively, fell between 2015 and 2017 when I conducted the interviews and between 2015 and 2020 when I analysed the data and wrote this study.[22] Because of practical and theoretical reasons, the interviews were conducted in two phases, first in 2015 and later in 2017. The two-phased process was related both to my initial difficulty in finding interviewees and to the fact that the focus of my dissertation has widened along the way: in the first phase in 2015, I aimed at contacting only LGBTQ people who had lost a partner to death, thinking back then that I would conduct a study of queer widow(er)hood in Finland. Following that call, I conducted five interviews. After realising the potential of studying multiple types of losses beyond partner loss, I widened the topic to cover all types of losses. I circulated the updated research call in 2017 and interviewed nine people who had experienced a variety of losses with different types of meaningful others.

In the research call (Appendix 1), which I circulated through the mailing lists of Finnish non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focusing on LGBTQ issues,[23]

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22 This three-layered understanding of time in studying memories is created and named by Taavetti (2018). I will utilise this temporal differentiation because I consider it to explain and make visible the different perspectives to time that are and have been relevant in conducting this study.

23 The list of NGOs circulating my call included the largest LGBTQ organisation in Finland, Seta, and its local member organisations in different Finnish cities. In addition, the call was forwarded by organisations focused on transgender rights (including Trasek and Transtukipiste), an organisation focused on rainbow families (Sateenkaariperheet) and organisations focused on elderly lesbians and gay men (Mummolaakso, Suomen karhut – Finn bears). In addition, I contacted NGOs with a focus on bereavement. Of those, only Suomen Nuoret Lesket ry [The Young Widow(er)s of Finland] and The Finnish Death Studies Association answered to my inquiry and reported of forwarding the call to their mailing lists. I also sent the call to a Christian LGBTQ organisation, Malkus, and organisations focused on polyamory and non-monogamy, HIV work, crisis therapy and bereavement and mental health in Finland; however, because I did not receive a response from them, I am unsure of whether they sent the call forward. Most of the interviewees reported hearing about the study through Seta or its member organisations, but some also contacted me after hearing about the study from other NGOs or other sources, including our mutual acquaintances and social media.

social media and my website,[24] I offered two alternative or supplementary methods of participation: writing a narrative and/or participating in an interview. This decision resulted from my awareness of previous research on bereavement, in which written narratives were recommended as a less emotionally demanding data collection method for the research participants (e.g. Whipple 2006; Pulkkinen 2016). However, and to my initial surprise, everyone participating in this study specifically wanted to participate in an interview. Five interviewees also wrote a narrative before the interview, and one wrote to me after the interview to answer my further questions. Sometimes a narrative was written only because I asked to. Although the written narratives provided me, as a researcher, useful background information of the situation and helped me to be prepared in the interviews, the interviewees themselves strongly prioritised the interview over writing about their experiences and often found writing impossible, difficult or emotionally distressing. After realising this, I stopped encouraging people to write if they did not spontaneously do so and focused on interviews instead. In-depth interviewing proved to be a fruitful method for conducting a study on death and loss in queer and trans lives. The interviews of 14 individuals with differing experiences constitute a rich set of data that is thick with diverse, affectively powerful stories of loss, grief, rituals, remembrance, kinship and care, among other things.

Short introductory vignettes of each interviewee are provided in Appendix 3. All the interviewees were white, Finnish-speaking Finns, with one interviewee being a Finland-Swede.[25] They thus represent 'the general prevalence of normative whiteness in Finland' (Kondelin 2017, 18), with mainly Evangelical Lutheran background, which is typical for the hegemonic or mainstream Finnish culture. Therefore, other cultural, ethnic or religious groups are not represented in this study.[26] However, the interviewees did constitute a diverse group in other ways. Their ages ranged from 30 to 70 years. Some had academic or artistic education, some had well-paying jobs, and some were unemployed or retired. Some had long-term illnesses that limited their capabilities to work. Most of them currently lived in

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24   I used a website for offering more information about my research when circulating the research call (www.hlbtiqsuru.wordpress.com).

25   Although coming from a Finland-Swede family, Maria, the interviewee in question, did speak Finnish with her family of origin and as her first language. Thus, I include her into the category of Finnish-speaking Finns, although I make her Finland-Swede family background visible in the analysis.

26   More research is thus needed to discuss death and loss in the lives of LGBTQ people belonging to racialised and/or religious minorities in Finland. By making visible that the interviewees represent the white, Finnish-speaking mainstream, I aim to avoid over-generalisations within my analysis and point out the research gaps that still remain and require further study. I discuss this argument further in section 7.4, called Paths for Future Research.

different cities of southern or western Finland. However, some of them had previously lived in smaller cities or towns in eastern or western Finland, and some of them still did. In addition to demonstrating the diversity of demographic variables, this background information is returned to throughout the analysis when discussing how it contributed to the interviewees' situatedness in the social world.

The names of the interviewees and their meaningful others used in this study are pseudonyms.[27] The categories describing gender and sexual orientation are collected from the background information forms filled by the interviewees themselves (Appendix 2). Gender and sexual orientation were asked with blank boxes, in which each interviewee filled whatever they felt suitable. Although no one specifically wrote being cisgender, it can be expected that people referring to themselves either as a man or as a woman and not referring to personal transgender histories in their interviews were cismen and ciswomen. Gender categories provided by the interviewees also included non-binary [*muunsukupuolinen*], other [*muu*] and transwoman. Because the Finnish language has no gendered personal pronouns, I asked the people of non-binary genders about which pronouns to use in English. Regarding sexuality, the interviewees with non-monosexual orientation sometimes described their orientation with multiple words, such as bisexual, pansexual, queer and/or unlimited [*rajaton*] (c.f. Callis 2014). Although I aimed at avoiding tight, pre-defined categories by providing blank boxes for answers, I was sometimes criticised by the interviewees for asking them to categorise themselves in the first place. My reason for such a practice was to find out what words the interviewees themselves used so that I could use the same vocabulary when writing about them within the study. Despite the good intentions, it appeared that being asked to verbalise these issues in any fixed way was sometimes considered restricting. As a result, the given words were sometimes compromising at best.

As pointed out by feminist scholars studying interviewing as a research method (e.g. Ribbens 1989; Cotterill 1992), interview situations are an odd combination of both personal and impersonal elements. During an interview, one may end up sharing very personal stories with a person who is, and remains, more or less a stranger to the person telling the stories. Thus, interviews are always to some extent hierarchical and unnatural communicational situations with one person sharing a story and the other person listening, recording and asking questions.

My position as a researcher in this study is that of a partial insider, which I also shared with the interviewees and which has, undoubtedly, affected the research process itself in various ways. Although I was not directly asked about my position

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27   The interviewees were given an option of choosing the pseudonyms themselves, which some of them did. The rest of the pseudonyms were invented by me as I transcribed and anonymised the interview narratives.

or identity by the interviewees, I aimed at sharing it with them nonetheless. Before each interview, I offered the interviewees a chance to ask me questions. Most often, the questions were related to my motivations for conducting this study and how I had come up with the topic. Being a multifaceted issue for me personally, I told how I had previously worked on research projects focusing on death and suffering and how I found such topics to be important, even though they remain rather unpopular in research and thus deserve more attention. Moreover, I added that as a person identifying as queer, I saw myself as a partial or potential insider even though I had not yet personally encountered major experiences of bereavement. As pointed out by Juvonen (2002, 72), letting the interviewees know that the researcher is 'one of us' may be pivotal in creating trust and understanding between the interviewer and the interviewees when studying LGBTQ themes. However, at the same time, I was admitting that I was not 'one of us' when it came to bereavement. Therefore, I had a double role as an insider/outsider: a researcher who might personally know something about queer lives[28] but who would be, regarding grief and loss, dependent upon theoretical knowledge instead of extensive personal experience.

Although the division between an insider and an outsider is often used to situate the researcher in terms of their research topic, situating oneself is not always an easy task. According to Dahl (2010, 154), 'we are neither fully at home nor fully outside of any community we aim to study'. Thus, we do not necessarily need this binary division. As feminist scholar Donna Haraway (1988) has put it, situating oneself is a question of partiality, simultaneity and contradictions instead of stable identities that would automatically produce a certain kind of vision to do a certain kind of research. According to her, 'Subjectivity is multidimensional; so, therefore, is vision. The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly, and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another' (Haraway 1988, 586). Through critical positioning that reveals its own partiality, the researcher can, therefore, aim to make visible with what kind of vision one 'sees together' with the interviewees.

It can then be asked, as one of the interviewees did following the interview, what kind of vision does the position of a partial insider offer me and does it make me a 'better researcher' of this topic than someone who does not share this position. Instead of making truth-claims about being a better or worse researcher because of this, I see it as a question of difference. My position as a partial insider (and more broadly, how I act as a researcher and who I am as a person) has quite likely affected

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28 Given the internal diversity of LGBTQ people, it is clear that I am also an outsider in relation to many of the identities included in the acronym. Hence, I find it important to emphasise the partial view of being an insider.

how I do research, how attentive I am to the stories of others and what I pay attention to both during interviews and when analysing the data. It has quite as likely affected how people participating in this study have related to me as a researcher, how professional, compassionate and trustworthy the interviewees assessed me to be, how at ease they felt in sharing their stories with me and, as a consequence, what they wanted to include in or exclude from their stories. Another researcher, with a different kind of position (either a full insider or a full outsider – if there is such a thing – or a partial insider/outsider in a different way), might have had a different vision and thus conducted the study differently, ended up with different kinds of stories and paid attention to different themes during the data analysis.

I am aware of Haraway's (1988, 584) warning of glorifying the position of the subjugated or seeing it as an innocent or objective position; however, I am inclined to see my researcher's position as a partial insider as a strength in the context of this study. By creating mutual trust and understanding, this position has given me access to the stories that might not have been shared to this extent with outsiders of queer lives. It has also given me access to the communities through which my research call has been circulated and has made it possible for me to circulate it through my own social networks. Moreover, by being familiar with the Finnish culture, the public discussions related to LGBTQ people in Finland during the past decades, Finnish LGBTQ communities and the fields of queer studies and trans studies in Finland, I have the cultural and academic knowledge necessary to analyse and understand the collected data and to combine the narratives into a larger cultural context and theoretical discussions of queer and trans lives and deaths. However, the fact that I am also a partial outsider in relation to grief and loss has quite as likely affected the research process: the stories told and the analysis produced could have been different had I shared that part of the interviewees' lives as well.

My interviewing method followed the idea of open-ended, in-depth, free-flowing thematic interviews typical for feminist methodology (Preser 2016). This method gives space to differing narratives instead of following a strictly structured list of questions, the order of which would remain the same in every interview. What is crucial in such an interviewing style, according to gender studies scholar Ruth Preser (2016, 19), is that it enables 'interview-partners to speak for themselves, using their own definitions, constructing sequences and storylines'. My role as an interviewer was that of an empathetic and attentive listener who did not strongly interfere in the stories told but who did, instead, encourage people to share whatever they felt like sharing and ask further questions about their stories.

Prior to the interviews, I emailed each interviewee a short list of five themes that I wished to discuss during the interview but emphasised the interview's free-flowing nature. The themes included background knowledge of the relationship, the death of the meaningful other, the funeral and other practicalities following the loss, the grief

felt and support received from others and the reconstruction of one's life after the loss.[29] The same themes were also included in my research call and presented on my website, as I wanted the interviewees to be able to prepare for the interview if they so wished. However, I encouraged them to focus on the issues that had been important to them personally and explained that I would mainly ask clarifying questions. I also mentioned that I would have a checklist of questions with me during the interview to ensure that certain issues are covered or to use as a reference if the interviewee preferred me to ask direct questions.

Interviews were scheduled according to the times and locations of the interviewees' preferences. Except for one interview conducted through Skype, the interviews took place in person, either at the homes of the interviewees or in a university setting. Compared with the university context, which can be seen as a rather impersonal venue for such personal discussions, the homes of the interviewees provided more intimacy, privacy and freedom of schedule in addition to a more casual atmosphere. This required, however, that the interviewee either lived alone or was able to meet me during a time when the home would be empty. Not everyone had shared their decision to participate in the study with the person(s) they lived with; thus, having the interview at a location other than their home offered them privacy in that regard. Although the interview locations varied, whether the stories were recounted in the interviewees' own living rooms, through Skype, on the couch of an empty office or in seminar rooms of different universities did not seem to affect the interviewing process considerably. The narratives were all rich and detailed, regardless of the location in which they were told. However, what worked for one interviewee would not necessarily have worked for another.[30] For the interviews to be successful, I thus find it important that the interviewees themselves have a chance to decide in which location they would feel most comfortable to share their stories.

I interviewed each interviewee once, and the length of the interviews ended up ranging from 1,5 to 4 hours. Choosing one fairly long and often rather intense interview instead of a sequence of shorter interviews was not something I had strictly

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29   The five themes I chose for the interviews loosely followed Vicky Whipple's (2006, xii) thematic questions in her study of lesbian widowhood in the USA, conducted in the form of a written questionnaire. Compared with her study, however, I was more interested in hearing not only about the loss and grief but also about the practicalities and rituals related to death. Moreover, instead of recovering from grief used by Whipple, I used the term reconstructing when asking about interviewees' lives at the moment of the interview to emphasise that I did not expect a linear healing process from loss to recovery.

30   For example, one interview was completed in a café, as it ended up lasting longer than my reservation in a seminar room. Although a public place such as a café would not have been a preferred place of interviewing for other interviewees, it was suitable for the one in question.

decided before the interviews took place but was negotiated together with the interviewees. Although it can be argued that a long one-time interview on a sensitive topic can be emotionally demanding, I believe that asking interviewees to return to the topic of loss with follow-up interviews would not be any less demanding. As argued by gender studies scholar Tuija Saresma (2004), who has studied autobiographies written by bereaved people, it would not necessarily be ethically sustainable to ask the participants to return to topics of death, loss and bereavement in a recurring manner for the purposes of a study.

At the beginning of the interviews, I often informally chatted about the study with the interviewees while, for example, one of us was preparing tea to drink. Before starting the interview, I asked the interviewees to fill the form of background information and to sign a consent form describing the research process and the anonymisation of data, both of which I had sent them beforehand. When turning the recorder on (for the use of which I had asked their consent), I offered a short description of my project and its aims and repeated the five broad themes I was interested in discussing. To get the interview going, I asked the interviewees to describe their relationship with the lost person (or lost people, if they wished to talk about multiple losses, as some of them did). In addition to providing background information of their lives, relationships and past experiences, this question eased the interviewees into the interview as they first recalled and described something else (and usually something less distressing) than death, loss and grief. The interviewees were sometimes unsure of how far they should start their stories, in which case I encouraged them to start by describing how they had met the lost person or, in case of parents and grandparents, what kind of relationship they had had in their childhood.

Given the open-ended and free-flowing nature of the interview method, interviewees could decide how much or how little they wanted to share. I did not strongly push them to talk more or less about certain themes, even though I did ask clarifying questions whenever I felt that it would be important to know more about certain issues or when I needed clarifications to follow the story. However, at times, I failed in honouring the narratives of the interviewees by insistently asking about issues I personally considered to be important (only realising from their answers that these might not be equally important to them) or by not following the narrative order chosen by the interviewee. Although the narratives were not usually strictly chronological, sometimes the interviewee had a clear sense of what they wanted to tell me and in which temporal order. In such cases, my questions might have been out of place or wrongly timed, as was evident with Lauri's interview:

VA: But you had looked for help then?
LAURI: Yes…

VA: Would you tell me about that?
LAURI: I wouldn't; I would actually like to tell about Eeva's death now.
VA: Okay, well let's go to that, let's go to that.

Because each interviewee was a different kind of storyteller, the amount and manner of participation they expected on my part varied for each interview. Some of the interviewees asked me to ask more questions, but oftentimes it seemed to be best that I remained mainly quiet, participating only with minor gestures, such as nodding, maintaining eye contact (or politely avoiding it, if the interviewee preferred to look the other way instead of looking at me and the recorder between us) and providing small affirmative sounds and utterances, such as 'mmm', 'yes', 'aha', 'indeed' and 'I see'. Through this minor participation, I wanted to both show that I was actively listening and to encourage the interviewee to keep telling their story. The clarifying questions often took the form of 'Would you like to tell me more about x'? or 'How did you feel back then'? The checklist of topics or questions I had considered important to cover (and which I had with me as a backup plan) was often useless in the sense that most of those topics came up in the narratives of the interviewees already without asking. Sometimes, however, the interviewees got lost in their own narratives, not knowing what to say next, and asked me to ask them something instead. In those cases, the checklist proved to be useful.

Over the course of the interviewing process, I learned that what I had anticipated to work when interviewing people about possibly painful experiences did indeed seem to function in the sense that despite the pain, interviewees were willing and fluent in sharing their stories. However, I also learned that each interview situation was different, and being an empathetic listener and interviewer (or a vulnerable observer, as I later suggest) required that I remained open and attentive to these differences at all times, pondering my own role as an interviewer during the interviews and making changes in my interviewing style when necessary (e.g. asking more questions or having the patience of remaining quiet and just listening, depending on which style the interviewee seemed to prefer).

Given the topic of the study, the interviews would not have been successful if the interviewees had not found the study and me as a researcher worthy of their trust. Some made explicit their general unwillingness to talk about bereavement (like Susanna, quoted in the beginning of this chapter), especially with the people who they did not find trustworthy. One of them was Pirre, who explained in the following way how the lack of trust usually influenced her narrations:

PIRRE: I may ramble. But for you, for example, when I like trust, I can talk openly. Like this. But if even one person came here [who I don't trust], then I would talk about this and that and I would sugar-coat it a bit and… those things

I would leave out entirely, and those and… So, it's like that. And it's the same in the groups [of Alcoholics Anonymous] even today. If even one person who I don't trust comes there, I don't speak so openly.

Like Pirre (who had found the limits of her willingness to share her life story with strangers in the meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous), many of the interviewees emphasised that they found it easy to talk to me. Although it is difficult to ascertain what made me trustworthy and easy to talk to in the eyes of the interviewees, I believe that this was affected by the interviewing method that respected the interviewees as the experts of their own experiences, was sufficiently flexible to fit different ways of narrating and allowed the interviewees to actively engage in deciding, for example, the location, length and contents of the interview. Similarly, I believe that the formation of trust was also affected by my position as a partial insider, which may have created a feeling of mutuality, and my aspirations to openness, empathy and supportiveness in the interview situations.

Narrative (in)coherence

With free-form and broad themes – and given the fact that the interviewees and their stories were very different from each other – the narratives produced in the interviews were very versatile. They were both detailed and vague, coherent and incoherent, at times proceeding chronologically and at other times jumping from time to time and theme to theme, occasionally dwelling long on one topic and barely touching another. When referring to how the interviewees have recalled and verbalised their experiences, I use the terms narrative and story interchangeably (see e.g. Hänninen 1999, 15). Contrary to what is often expected from stories and narratives, I do not assume that each narrative would need to have a coherent and temporally linear structure with clear beginnings, middles and endings (Plummer 2013; see also Hyvärinen et al. 2010). Instead, following Butler (2001), I suggest that there is inevitable incoherence in personal narratives. As Butler (2001) has written in her article *Giving an Account of Oneself*, we are not always able to describe verbally what we have experienced, how or why we have experienced this and how our thoughts about our experiences have been formed. Moreover, the stories we tell of the events in our lives may change and vary depending on when, where and to whom we are telling them. Butler (2001, 34) has defined this inability to narrate oneself and one's life as a simple, linear narrative as a part of human behaviour and has argued that instead of trying to find seamless narratives, we should learn to appreciate these interruptions and incoherences that are present in any account of oneself.

Although the thematic structure of the interviews, created by me, encouraged chronological storytelling (starting from the early memories regarding the deceased and ending in life reconstruction after their passing), the interviewees' stories were not necessarily complete life stories that would follow a sequential order, aiming at making clear sense of what the person had lived through. Similarly, although the interview design encouraged thematic coherence, this was not what the interviews always ended up being like. In this sense, the stories told in the interviews differed from sociologist Ken Plummer's (2013) idea of people aiming to create coherence in their life stories to compensate the lack of coherence in their lives. Instead, the interviewees' stories were partial descriptions of what had happened and what was remembered, bearing in mind the situationality of telling, temporal effects on tellability and memory and how the interviewing method and questions asked influenced the stories told (Saresma 2007, 90-91). As argued by gender studies scholar Anna Moring (2013, 20), the things people say in interviews in a certain time and place may not reflect how they think and feel – and remember – as times change. Therefore, the interviewees' stories are context-bound, incoherent, fragmented and partial, or in more positive terms, *lively* descriptions (Ochs & Capps 2001; see also Hyvärinen et al. 2010) of what the interviewees had experienced, the production of which is influenced by the spatio-temporal situation of the interview itself.

Although the words denoting incoherence tend to be loaded with negative connotations (as if coherence would always be somehow inherently better than incoherence), I do not see incoherence as a lack, failure or damage in the data. Therefore, my reading of incoherence differs, for example, from the view of Preser (2016, 20-21), who has written about a 'methodological failure' and the 'methodology of damage' in relation to incoherence. When discussing her study of lesbian separations wherein interview narratives describing the separations did not offer coherent stories of how and why the breakup had happened, which were the questions Preser was trying to find answers for, she considered this as a failure or damage in the methodology. Although Preser (2016, 26) has also argued that the methodology of damage denotes remaining open for different outcomes and not asking interviewees to create simplified 'comfort stories' of the experiences that are actually quite messy, thus becoming closer to my reading of incoherence, I would not name this type of approach as a failure or damage. Instead, I read the incoherence in the data as an unavoidable fact that follows when trying to verbalise events or phenomena, such as bereavement, that are not in themselves coherent or linear.

For some interviewees, the decision to participate in an interview instead of writing was a preference that had much to do with resisting the demand of coherence that is implicit in the task of writing, as emphasised by Aaro:

AARO: Yeah yeah, yeah. I felt immediately [preference of interviews] when there were these two options given, like either to write or or to talk. Because now I am not able to [produce] such a coherent…

VA: Yes, yes.

AARO: Coherent expression… at all. So, this feels like an easier way to me.

VA: Yes, yes.

AARO: And like I… said before, one thinks maybe too much about oneself. So, when I heard about this [study], I absolutely wanted to participate in this now. But specifically in this manner [by being interviewed].

I read the interviewees' preference of interviews over writing as an act of resistance towards the demand of coherent narratives. By preferring interviews, they preferred a manner of oral narration that enables and accepts disruptions, repetitions, pauses and temporal shifts better than the more fixed task of writing. However, resisting coherence was not the only reason for preferring interviews. Participating in an interview also ensured that the interviewees would meet the researcher, be able to ask questions, be asked questions in return, feel less alone with their narration, make better assessments of the purposes of the study and therefore be able to participate in ways the researcher had intended. This multifaceted reasoning was demonstrated particularly poignantly by Mika, who wrote to me before the interview when I encouraged him to do so:

My text is today's description of what I have experienced. On another day it may sound very different, and I may emphasise different things. Emotional states change daily and a writing process like this one opens up memories and emotions I did not have a moment ago. Therefore, the focus of my writing may have changed from that what I previously intended. The experience has affected my life so thoroughly that it is difficult to verbalise in such a short text. I could write about the topic endlessly from different perspectives, but in my description, I try to stick somehow to the frames intended by the assisting questions.[31] Because I don't clearly see to what questions my text is searched for answers, I cannot direct it more precisely. I may thus not write about important things and focus on issues that are totally irrelevant. That is why I would also like to participate in an interview. I write this on a one go, letting it come what will come, because

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31   I had listed some assisting questions for written narratives on my website and in the research call (Appendix 1). The questions listed largely followed the themes that were used in interviews as well.

I don't want to keep wrestling with the issue for too long on a one go. (Mika, a quote from a written narrative)

Mika's text reflects both the incompleteness and contingent nature of the produced narrative and the emotional difficulty of producing a coherent, written narrative of one's experiences and memories of bereavement. It also points towards the performativity of autobiographical narration, theorised by Marja Kaskisaari (2000, 8-9, 25), in which the subject comes to be in different ways depending on the narrative choices made. The performative reading of autobiographical narration challenges and complicates the view of written narratives as coherent, fixed narrations of one's life. However, realising the contingent nature of written narratives may also be why writing one, allegedly all-encompassing narrative of complex life-events can feel difficult.

Moreover, as argued by Anni Vilkko (1997), autobiographical writing is guided by what she calls an autobiographical contract. On the writer's part, this entails expectations of honesty, openness and offering understandable or rationalistic explanations of one's behaviour. The reader of such a narrative, on the contrary, is expected to be trustworthy and to understand what the writer has intended to say (Vilkko 1997, 78-80; see also Kaskisaari 2000, 56). I propose that when narrating complex and highly emotional experiences related to bereavement, this contract may be, for some people, easier to negotiate not in writing but in the oral narration conducted in person, face to face with the person it is narrated to. In this way, the narrator can make better assessments of the trustworthiness of the recipient and feel more at ease in open and honest narration compared with written narration to a faceless stranger the narrator has never met.

Seen in this light, it is no wonder that the participants preferred the interviews over writing. These observations somewhat differ from the previous studies in which written narratives are, conversely, encouraged when collecting data about bereavement experiences (e.g. Whipple 2006; Saresma 2007; Pulkkinen 2016). Based on my research, I argue that it is important to offer different options, to listen to the research participants and their preferences and to respect their decisions regarding the methods of participation. Moreover, I find it important to respect narrative incoherence and not to find it less valuable than coherent narratives. Instead, accepting incoherence might be the way through which verbalising (and thus also examining) the experiences and memories that are not inherently coherent becomes possible in the first place.

It is important to note that, like the experiences under scrutiny in this study, the analysis I produce as a researcher is yet another narration. I argue that one way of taking into consideration the concerns related to the ethics of telling the stories of others, which I discuss at greater length at the end of this chapter, is to acknowledge

and make visible that both the interviewees and researchers are working with and producing narratives, which never tell the complete story of anyone's life. Therefore, it is important to think through and discuss how these narratives (and not others) are constructed, what has affected their creation, what kind of version they offer of the issue under discussion and what may remain unmentioned or undiscussed. In short, it is important to make visible the contingency related to the narration of experiences, regardless of whether they are one's own experiences or the narrated experiences of others. For example, because the interviews were conducted in Finnish, the interview excerpts used in this study are my translations. When translating the excerpts, I have aimed to retain elements that express uncertainty, repetition, pauses and emotions while also trying to make spoken language readable in a written, translated form. Sometimes, compromises had to be made to retain readability. In terms of idiomatic expressions, I have included the original Finnish expression in square brackets.

In addition, the temporality of narration matters in the interviewees' narratives as well as in terms of the narrative produced in this research. The story of the research process I produce in this dissertation is, unavoidably, a retrospective one. In this sense, it is similar to the narratives produced by the interviewees, who also talk about their experiences of loss in a retrospective manner, recalling and narrating what has happened in the past. In writing and rewriting this chapter, I am looking back to the data collection decisions, making sense of the sometimes messy process of how this study has come to be and making decisions of how to describe this process to make it both informative and reader-friendly without sacrificing the messiness and making it sound overly clear-cut. This is also where these two types of narratives, the one of the interviewees and the one of the researcher, differ. Although the interviewees did not necessarily aspire to coherence in their narratives, coherence is required in a description of a research process and a dissertation in general. I have aimed at making visible the decisions taken when conducting this research as well as the messiness and contingency of the research process (which, I believe, is inevitable to all research). I have also aimed at making this story a coherent, readable and informative one, being aware of the expectations of academic writing and a dissertation as a genre. It is, therefore, my job as a researcher to bring coherence into the stories that are not necessarily temporally or thematically coherent and, by doing so, combine them into a larger framework of the Finnish culture of death and queer and trans lives. By aspiring to transparency when describing the research process, I aim at making visible the decisions influencing the research narrative I produce. Although it, admittedly, makes the methodological discussion rather extensive, I consider it an important part of the methodological contributions of this study.

Emotions in research

When studying death and loss, emotions cannot be avoided. Emotions were indeed in many ways at play within the research process, particularly during the interviews. Some researchers studying bereavement – such as counselling studies scholar Vicky Whipple (2006), who has studied experiences of lesbian widowhood in the USA – have discouraged people from participating in the study if the loss had happened less than a year ago, suggesting that emotions are at that point 'too raw' to be discussed in a research setting. Likewise, to avoid emotionality that was considered too intense both for the participants and the researcher, Whipple stopped conducting interviews and encouraging people to send her recorded audio tapes of their experiences. Instead, she collected data in the form of written narratives only, justifying her decision in a following manner:

> After interviewing Maureen, I transcribed the tape and discovered that she had basically told me verbally what she had already written. Plus, the interview had taken a great deal of time since we kept going off on tangents. I also found myself emotionally drained by the encounter. [--] No one wanted to be interviewed, I think because they knew it would be too emotional for them. I had a graduate student assist me with transcribing some of the tapes sent to me, and she said that the women on the tapes kept stopping and crying. (Whipple 2006, xii)

Whipple's decision was in part informed by her research participants' preference to write instead of talk, which is of course a well-justified decision. In addition, it was informed by her own discomfort and exhaustion in an emotional interview setting. Contrary to Whipple, I did not find emotions or expressions of emotions (such as sobbing, crying or taking pauses) in the research context to be a hindrance to the research process itself. In fact, emotions were what I found interesting. Moreover, I considered emotions (much like the incoherence of narratives, also criticised by Whipple above) as an inevitable part of studying death and loss. Therefore, although collecting data in a written form might be emotionally easier for the researcher (see also Laitinen & Uusitalo 2007, 321), I was not afraid of facing emotions in an interview setting. Moreover, I found it patronising to predefine time limits on behalf of the participants or to prevent them from participating if they were being 'too emotional'. Instead, I encouraged the potential participants in the research call and when communicating with them to evaluate their personal situation in life and ask themselves whether they wanted to and were able to share their stories with me. I also made explicit that participating in the study could cause strong emotional reactions, the nature of which could be difficult to predict (Laitinen & Uusitalo 2007, 318). In addition, I explained that it was possible to withdraw from the study at any point if the participant later had a change of heart regarding their participation. This

happened twice: a person contacted me and expressed a tentative wish to participate, but before actually participating, they stopped answering my emails. Out of respect for their apparent decision to decline from the study, I did not try to contact them after that.

In most of the cases, the losses shared with me had happened approximately 3–5 years prior to the interview. In addition, some recounted losses from 10, 20 or even 30 years ago. Three interviewees had experienced a loss less than a year ago, one of them having lost a partner only few months prior to the interview. When proceeding with the interviews, I noticed that emotions could indeed be raw after such a short time but, in addition, they could be raw years later. Moreover, having strong emotions regarding what had happened did not prevent people from telling their stories. On the contrary, interviewees sometimes reported that sharing their stories was rather cathartic. Interestingly, this was particularly the case with the people who had recently experienced the loss. One of them was Inka, who had lost her wife less than a year before the interview:

> VA: Thank you very much for participating, and for contacting me, and for telling your story.
> INKA: Thank you. Sure, really, thank you for this. Because this has been… been, like surprisingly… it has felt surprisingly good.
> VA: Well, that's good. I have been thinking about it, and I do always ask after the interview like how did it feel. And like… since this is, after all, such a sensitive topic and it might be difficult to talk about it, but like…
> INKA: Yeah like is it intruding, or is it like somehow..?
> VA: Yeah, that too. Yeah. But it's very good to hear if it feels like you can get something out of it, too.
> INKA: Yeah. I feel that at this point it was quite therapeutic. *laughs* So yeah.
> VA: Well good. Yeah.
> INKA: Not bad at all.

Contrary to Whipple's concern of making people talk about their raw emotions too soon after the loss, it seemed to me that raw emotions were indeed what people felt the most desire to talk about. It can even be argued that people who had strong emotions about their experiences of loss were the ones who were most likely to participate in the study because, for them, talking about the loss had personal relevance. None of the interviewees expressed that the loss they narrated had been insignificant to them or that it had not affected them strongly. This was something the interviewees seemed to share, regardless of how much or how little time had passed since the loss.

Hence, the stories shared in this study are stories of losses that have been meaningful, affecting and life-changing for those sharing them. This also means that the losses that had not touched and affected people in the similar manner are missing from the empirical material of this study. There were also two other aspects that united the interviewees: as I elaborate on later in the analysis, none of them considered themselves as closeted regarding their sexuality, gender or relationships, and all of them had been able to endure living with the loss. Following the observation that survivors are often the ones participating in research including life writing and life narrating (e.g. Taavetti 2018, 58), it means that the stories that are likely to remain untold in studies like this are those that are the most painful and most difficult to tell. Then, what is likely missing from the personal narratives of this study is both the stories that had no emotional importance to the narrators themselves and those that were too painful, or too personal, to tell a stranger conducting research.

The question of time and temporality was also central in terms of what the interviewees reported feeling during the interview. When taking place relatively soon after the loss, the interview focused on the issues that the interviewees kept frequently thinking about in their daily lives. In those cases, an interview, in which one was allowed and even encouraged to tell all they wanted about their lost relationship, was a situation wherein the interviewees did not need to worry about being a burden for others for wanting to dwell on the loss and the memories of the lost person. Indeed, many interviewees stated that although they usually had been able to share their stories of loss with others in their lives, people eventually (and actually quite soon) became uncomfortable listening and expected the bereaved person to move on – or at least to start talking about other things in addition to the miserable reality of bereavement.

Moreover, not all interviewees had people in their lives with whom they were comfortable discussing death and loss extensively. Against this backdrop, I eventually came to understand the gratitude expressed by the interviewees, who compared the interview to a 'free therapy session', even though I had, at first, felt rather puzzled when hearing this comparison. Like Inka, Maria, who had lost her father less than a year ago, expressed that she had found the interview to be therapeutic. When further discussing with her and emphasising that I was no therapist, she explained that she had liked the interview better than actual therapy indeed because of this:

VA: Mm. How has it felt now to talk about all this?
MARIA: Very useful.
VA: Is that so?
MARIA: Yes.
VA: Well good.

MARIA: Because… *laughs* I think it's great that you get a salary for listening to me, or at least some kind of monetary compensation. I don't… as I don't have, that kind of, a family or… a support network… that in ideal imaginations… and maybe in reality some people have, then… Then this is good.

VA: Well, that is good to hear. Even though I am not an educated therapist, and in that sense, I cannot maybe offer… anything but a listening ear at this point.

MARIA: Yeah. But you know I'd rather have that than [listen to] psychological jargon that means nothing, only so that some psychiatrist could fill their own interests. Mm. And because I think… it is, it is important that this is studied. It is important work.

The therapeutic effects of sharing one's grief in a research setting are, in fact, in line with earlier research on bereavement (Kaunonen 2000, 44). However, what is striking here is Maria's way of differentiating this study and the interview context from psychological therapy sessions by referring to the 'psychological jargon' and 'own interests' of psychiatrists as a bad thing and me, as a non-therapist, listening to her while getting a salary as a good thing. It seems that she acknowledged the power relations of the interview settings (me as an interviewer getting a salary for listening to her as an interviewee) but considered that she, too, got something out of it (someone to listen to her).

Although I could apparently offer something 'therapeutic' to the interviewees who had recently experienced the loss, the situation was sometimes different in case of interviewees who had experienced the loss a longer time ago. Having a longer time period between the loss and the interview meant that the interviewees were not necessarily very strongly focused on the losses in their daily lives. Although the losses continued affecting them and no one reported having 'forgotten' or 'gotten over' the loss (on the contrary, the interviewees were rather critical towards such discourses), they also had other things in their lives to focus on. For them, the interview meant returning to dwell on issues they were otherwise no longer dwelling on that much. Contrary to my expectations based on previous research that emphasised the hazards of interviewing people with recent losses, it was the less recent losses that created sometimes unpredictable emotional reactions. As expressed by Mika, who had lost his partner a few years[32] prior to the interview, returning to his experiences of loss and recalling and narrating them to me both through writing and then in the interview had been quite demanding experiences,

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32   Although this can be considered a relatively recent loss, I find this differentiation meaningful, given the idea provided by earlier research that the bereaved should be interviewed only after the first year of experiencing loss (e.g. Whipple 2006).

leaving him with a lingering, undescribed feeling of uneasiness, which he had not expected:

> VA: And how do you feel now after this interview?
> MIKA: Well quite good, this was somehow… nonetheless, a bit harder than I thought. It was the same when I wrote… Then I thought that writing can be a bit heavy somehow, that I will somehow get stuck to those things. I thought already beforehand that talking would be easier because then… then the things just flow forward, and you cannot influence it that much. Like when you write you maybe want it somehow to be very clear, the overall picture that you have created. Then when I wrote, I was also thinking that ok, well I can write after all, that these things don't affect me at the moment so much. And then when I had written it, I was for the rest of the day somehow quite like on hot bricks [*pistoksissa*] about it. So, it was a surprisingly hard experience. And I guess like… or I feel already now that this was quite like hard, like you end up talking nonstop quite a lot about all this. Like even though I have talked about these things, I think there was nothing like new that I had not worked through and talked about. But kind of, just like… squeezing it out in one go, like so much, and then of course to an unknown person and so on. So, it is always quite…
> VA: It is hard.
> MIKA: It is quite hard.

Although Mika initially indicated feeling 'quite good', he described in length in what ways the process had been harder for him than he thought. Despite what has been argued within narrative theory about the beneficial effects of creating a more or less coherent life story to 'turn personal chaos into order' (e.g. Plummer 2013, 211), Mika's narrative makes clear that such efforts are not only or not always beneficial, but they can create negative emotional reactions as well.

How the interviewees felt before, during and after the interview depended not only on the time between the loss and the interview but also on the interviewees' own stances regarding the loss. For example, Veikko, who recounted events from the 1980s and 1990s, expressed his post-interview emotions in a more positive tone than Mika. In a spontaneous text message he sent me the next day, he described the interview as 'such a nice evening'. Veikko's delight of participation was conveyed in the interview situation as well. Despite the undoubtedly painful contents of his story, he recounted his experiences with a certain ease and enthusiasm. Unlike others, however, he explained having told his story in other similar contexts; so, in a way, he had already formed a polished and practiced life story with coherence and causal connections. Therefore, the interview situation might have been a different kind of experience for him than it was, for example, for Mika.

On my part as a researcher, emotions appeared as occasional surges of researcher's guilt (which, according to feminist scholar Angela McRobbie (1982, 55), may feel like 'holidaying on other people's misery'). The guilt made me cautious, which shows in the interview transcriptions whenever I clumsily express gratitude for the interviewees sharing their stories. The guilt I realised feeling was, however, eased by interviewees' statements emphasising the positive emotions caused by the interview situation. Being aware that what I was asking the interviewees to share with me was quite a lot, I tried to make the interviews as comfortable to the interviewees as possible. This often seemed to work, but I had to accept that it was not only up to me as a researcher how the interviewees experienced the interview situation or going through memories of loss. Like I had instructed the interviewees, I realised as well that sometimes the emotional reactions could not be predicted. The interview situations were, at least according to my interpretation, never excessively emotional but calm encounters with a warm atmosphere in which it was always acceptable to cry or laugh (and, in fact, there was a considerable amount of laughing). However, there were emotions at play, both on interviewees' and on my part. There is no denying that the stories they shared were emotionally touching to share and to listen to. In particular, the moments when the interviewees shared details of the death itself were sometimes emotionally charged, and in those moments, I noticed being particularly careful of not intruding with my questions but instead giving space for pauses and the narrative to flow on the interviewees' own terms. Because of the thematic structure of the interview, these moments took place in the middle of the interview. Not starting from and not ending the interview with the most emotionally loaded part of the story was, retrospectively thinking, a good decision. It allowed the interviewees not only to get used to the interview situation and assess my trustworthiness as an interviewer but also to ease out from the situation when moving on with the narrative towards less painful topics before ending the interview.

The question of emotions and what they do to a research process and the people involved in it is complex. Although the interviewees expressed gratitude and satisfaction caused by participation and the interview situation in particular, some of them expressed an emotional difficulty of talking about the loss. In research on bereavement, the common way of solving potential emotional complications following research participation is to offer contact information to support services (e.g. Kaunonen 2000, 45). Although this was my initial plan as well, it proved to be an issue of more complex ethical concerns. When discussing about the existing support services for the bereaved in Finland, it was revealed that the interviewees considered them largely inaccessible or unwanted either for bureaucratic, economic or social reasons, some of which were specifically related to queer and trans lives. Although some of them had, at the time of the interview, existing connections to

therapists or other support services, these services had not been easy to get access to, as I elaborate on later in chapter 5.

With a shortage of accessible support services, I could not offer the interviewees something that did not seem to exist. Moreover, recommending services that were deemed inaccessible or unwanted by the interviewees seemed unethical to me. Thus, I propose that although offering contact information to external support services can be an easy way out of a situation where a research process may cause complex emotions, it is not a solution that fits all kinds of research and research participants; thus, it is a practice that requires further problematisation. Instead of relying on external solutions only, I suggest that emotions can be taken into account in the research design and interview situation itself in various ways. As reported above, I did this by offering information that allowed interviewees to prepare emotionally for the interview, by including them in decision-making regarding the location, length and contents of the interview, by staying attuned to the emotions they expressed during the interview and by adapting my interviewing style accordingly. In addition, I offered the interviewees a platform for explicitly talking about their emotions at the end of each interview.

It can be argued, following Dahl (2014) and Love (2007), that it is dangerous to give in to the contemporary discourse of compulsory happiness by 'erasing all traces of grief' (Love 2007, 54). Given the unavoidable fact that talking about grief and loss may be painful, it should not be expected that grief and loss can be studied only if it does not create any negative emotions in the interviewees, in the researcher or even in the audience hearing about or reading the study. In contexts of death and loss, pain cannot always be entirely avoided. However, as the above discussion shows, talking about painful events did not cause only negative emotions; instead, sharing such experiences could also be in different ways emotionally rewarding. Furthermore, the interview encounters made me extremely grateful to each and every interviewee for contacting me and sharing their stories. The people I met and the stories they shared made me deeply committed in writing a dissertation worthy of their trust. As a consequence, I argue that (despite or in addition to the negative affects of guilt and pain) the gratefulness experienced on both sides of the tape recorder, by me as a researcher and by the interviewees as storytellers, emphasises the affective importance of the study at hand.

2.2   Scavenger Methodology

To understand and contextualise the personal stories of loss shared with me, I have complemented the narrative material by collecting different kinds of data about death in Finnish society in general and in Finnish LGBTQ communities in particular by following the principles of the scavenger methodology formulated by Halberstam

(1998). This methodology, in short, denotes the aspirations to find data about a certain topic in various and often unexpected places or with varying and unexpected methods. The scavenger methodology, which according to Halberstam (1998) is typical for queer studies, uses 'different methods to collect and produce information on subjects who have been deliberately or accidentally excluded from traditional studies of human behavior'. Moreover, the scavenger methodology, which Halberstam also names as a queer methodology, combines different methods in sometimes surprising ways and therefore questions 'the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence' (Halberstam 1998, 13). As further elaborated on by Jason P. Murphy and Catherine A. Lugg (2016), this scavenger/queer methodology is based on the interdisciplinary methods of collecting and interpreting data and reimagining what can be used as data. According to them, this practice is related to 'queer theoretical notions of anti-essentialism' and to the often-encountered challenges of finding sufficient data when studying issues related to queer and trans lives (Murphy & Lugg 2016, 369).

The scavenger methodology is applied both to my data collection process and to my manner of combining theories interdisciplinarily in the data analysis. In the course of this dissertation, I utilise previous research within many different fields, including feminist affect theories, feminist epistemology, queer theory, trans studies, anthropology, death studies and bereavement studies, among others. Through this method, which is in line with Halberstam's (1998, 10-13) critique of clear disciplinary boundaries, I aim to provide a comprehensive theoretical background for the topic rarely studied in any specific discipline and to find the most suitable theories to think through the varieties of issues that appear in the empirical materials. Moreover, because the issues discussed here have not been extensively studied and because cultural specificities need to be explained to make the discussion understandable in relation to its cultural and societal contexts, I refer to a variety of newspaper articles, online sources, biographical literature and quide books when necessary to contextualise the discussion further.

Although personal stories of loss are the main focus of this study, I suggest that they cannot be entirely separated from the society or the public. The scavenger methodology widens the scope of the research and allows in-depth analysis wherein the personal narratives' connections and lack of connections to the surrounding society are taken into consideration. Following this idea, I have analysed Finnish legislation focusing on death and burial as well as the guidelines created by congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church focusing on death rituals. Instead of producing juridical analysis, I have focused on examining how the legislation and guidelines have framed and affected the experiences of loss recalled and narrated by the interviewees.

The Cemeteries Act (Hautaustoimilaki 457/2003) and the Church Law (Kirkkolaki 1054/1993) create the legal foundation for death rituals in Finland.[33] The Cemeteries Act is given and ratified by the Finnish Parliament, whereas the Church Law is given by the General Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and ratified by the Parliament. Therefore, the Church institution has legislational power in matters of death. In addition, the laws give the Church, as the maintainer of cemeteries, power to define the details and specificities of burial practices and gravesite memorials. In addition, the Church offers guidelines for funeral etiquette. Because of this, I have included into the analysis the guidelines of 45 congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church focusing on death rituals, representing a diverse selection of congregations all around Finland.[34] These guidelines, later referred to as church guidelines, are found online on the congregations' websites. This data is discussed in chapter 4, entitled The Affective Power of Rituals, and in chapter 6, called Queer Remembering. By turning the analytical gaze from the personal narratives to the structures behind them, defined by the laws and the church guidelines, it becomes possible to deepen the analysis and to point out how interviewees' stories are connected to the public, for example, by being entwined into larger questions of state and church governance in the context of death.

In addition, I have collected data on death and loss in the public activities of Finnish LGBTQ communities through online ethnography and an expert interview.

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33   In addition to these two laws that are analysed in greater detail, I also refer to other laws when necessary for the analysis, including e.g. the Inheritance Act (Perintökaari 1965/40), the Freedom of Religion Act (Uskonnonvapauslaki 2003/453) and the Church Order (Kirkkojärjestys 1991/1055). The legislation is listed in the List of References.

34   Although finding and gaining access to the laws defining matters of death in Finland was easy (thanks to the online law archive Finlex.fi), collecting and choosing church guidelines was a more complicated process. To gain a diverse and comprehensive understanding of the guidelines guiding death rituals, I went through the guidelines of every Lutheran congregation in Finland whose guidelines were openly available online. For a more detailed analysis, I chose the guidelines of 45 congregations or congregational consortiums. I aimed for a diverse selection, both in terms of geographic location and size of the place, by choosing congregations from each of Finland's 19 regions. In addition to the capitals of the regions, which represent the largest municipalities in those regions, I chose one or two smaller places from each region. With this practice, I aimed to capture the possible differences in guidelines between urban and rural congregations and between the congregations at different geographical locations. When choosing guidelines for in-depth analysis, I paid attention to the comprehensiveness of the offered guidelines, prioritising the congregations that offered lengthy online guidelines or downloadable booklets. If various congregations met these criteria within a certain region, I chose two congregations in addition to the capital of the said region. The guidelines were collected for analysis in 2017. The analysed guidelines are listed in the List of References.

This was inspired by three observations. First, public rituals of remembrance in LGBTQ communities are internationally circulated and discussed at length in international studies of queer and trans death (e.g. Lamble 2008; Edelman 2018). Second, these public rituals of remembrance also exist in Finnish LGBTQ communities: the very same public rituals discussed internationally (including, for example, the Transgender Day of Remembrance) are annually celebrated in Finland. Finally, although LGBTQ communities were often mentioned in the interviewees' stories as part of life, they were only very rarely mentioned as part of death and bereavement. These observations suggest that instead of focusing on private losses of local community members, death and loss seem to manifest in Finnish LGBTQ communities as expressions of grief in the form of a public feeling, focusing on internationally circulated losses.

The second observation resulted from my position as a partial insider, as I made it when taking part in the public activities of Finnish LGBTQ communities as a private person. Because being a researcher is not something that simply switches off during other moments of one's life, the researcher in me realised that this has significance in terms of my research. In those moments, queer and trans deaths and losses were all around me, but these were not the kinds of deaths and losses recounted in the interviews I had conducted. These deaths were public and politicised, not private and personal. This realisation resonated in me with the ideas of the scavenger methodology, emphasising how finding data about a certain topic may happen in unexpected places and in unexpected ways. However, I hesitated, at first, to include the discussion of public remembering in LGBTQ communities in this dissertation. Would the discussion be too far from the original topic? Would it even be relevant? Eventually, I came to the conclusion that not only a possible connection but also a lack of connection between the private and the public is a matter of interest. Moreover, there seemed to be less self-evident connections between the two, specifically in terms of what I call a queer and trans culture of death. By including public remembering in this study, it became possible to widen the scope of this research and to discuss what is going on, in terms of death, not only among LGBTQ people in Finland on a private level but also in Finnish LGBTQ communities on a public level – and why these two seem to be so separate from one another.

Public rituals of remembrance discussed in this study include the Transgender Day of Remembrance (referred to as TDoR) event held in Helsinki in 2017, the Marching for Those Who Can't block participating in the Helsinki Pride Parade in 2017 and a public memorial held in Helsinki after the Pulse night club shooting in Orlando in 2016. Although I had attended the first two events in person, it was not in the form of a planned ethnographic fieldwork. Therefore, in my analysis, I focus on the materials publicly posted online, including the recorded speeches of the TDoR event in a video format and photographs of the block. Moreover, the focus on the

online traces of memorial events allowed me to observe the Pulse vigil, which I had not attended in person, thanks to the visual and audio material archived online by the Ranneliike.net website. I call the process of finding and observing these online traces as online ethnography. However, instead of participating in and observing ongoing online communities, as online ethnography sometimes is described (see e.g. Haverinen 2014), my method is better described as following the traces of past events left online. Temporally, these events coincided with the years of data collection of this study (2015–2017). More importantly, they are included in the data because they reflect the most prominent forms of public remembering of queer and trans lives and deaths currently taking place in Finnish LGBTQ communities. I analyse them further in chapter 6, in section 6.4 Public Remembering.

Traces of public remembering – in this case, a newspaper article archived online – also led me to conduct an expert interview with queer historian Kati Mustola and art historian Juha-Heikki Tihinen. Mustola and Tihinen have held queer historical cemetery tours in Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki, the capital of Finland, in the early 2000s. Being part of the Helsinki Pride Week, the purpose of the tour was to make local queer history visible to LGBTQ people in Finland. Through this interview, I widen the analysis of the politics and practices in Finnish cemeteries and the public rituals of remembrance in LGBTQ communities by taking a look into the past. I discuss the tour in chapter 6, in sections 6.3 Queer Monumentality and 6.4 Public Remembering.

Being an eclectic combination of different types of materials, all the data collected through the scavenger methodology serves the purpose of contextualising, complementing and deepening my discussion of death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finland. Even though this somewhat breaks, or disentangles, the coherence that studying only personal narratives would produce, I argue that the benefits of using different types of data justify these slight interruptions. Using the scavenger methodology, I can produce a more nuanced and ambitious analysis of the topic at hand without forgetting the inevitable connections between the private and the public.

2.3   Qualitative Content Analysis

My chosen method of analysis is qualitative content analysis and its thematic coding (e.g. Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2017; Leavy 2007). I consider this method to be best suited for analysing diverse data consisting of personal narratives and materials collected through the scavenger methodology because it honours variations and enables both

data-driven and theory-informed analysis. Moreover, I regard it as the best method for providing answers to my research questions.[35]

Qualitative content analysis is a flexible method for textual analysis, in which the basic steps of analysis include getting familiar with the data, thematically coding the data, merging the identified codes into meaningful units and combining the coding results into a larger perspective through theorising and discussing with previous research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2017). The themes of analysis can be chosen either based on earlier research on the topic (deductive approach) or by identifying the themes that repeatedly occur in the data (inductive approach) (Leavy 2007, 16). As pointed out by Jouni Tuomi and Anneli Sarajärvi (2017), however, often the division of these two approaches is not so clean-cut. Instead, there is a third model of analysis called abductive approach, in which the inductive coding is complemented with theory and earlier research findings. As argued by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2017, 81), in the abductive approach, it is acknowledged that theory often implicitly influences the inductive coding. Although coding in the abductive approach is mostly data-driven, the implicit links to theory and earlier research are also made visible. In addition, abductive coding makes it possible to discuss possible silences and absences in the research data, which might go unnoticed by mere inductive coding.

Within this study, I followed a deductive approach during data collection of personal narratives, whereas in the analysis of the data, I followed an abductive approach. What I mean by having a deductive approach to data collection is that, I have, as an interviewer, participated in the production of the narratives by giving certain themes to be discussed in the interviews.[36] These themes were deductive in the sense that they were inspired by earlier, international research conducted particularly on queer widow(er)hood (e.g. Shernoff 1997; Whipple 2006; Fenge 2014; Svensson 2007; Reimers 2011; McNutt & Yakushko 2013). The deductively designed themes discussed in the interviews, including the background information of the relationship to the lost other, the description of the death itself, the funeral and other practicalities, support received from others and the reconstruction of one's life, created a basis for the topics covered in the personal narratives. Therefore, these specific topics repeatedly came up in the personal narratives because of the deductive interview design.

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35 Had I formulated the research questions differently, other methods of analysis could have been considered. Narrative analysis, for example, could have been a potential choice if I had aimed to find narrative coherence or specific types of stories, characters or narrative structures within the data, which is typical for narrative analysis (Plummer 2013; Hänninen 1999).

36 Likewise, by providing assisting questions for written narratives, I have similarly participated in their production.

When coding interviewees' stories, I paid attention not only to these wide, deductively chosen themes that were present and already named in the interview situation but also, more importantly, on all the themes and subthemes that appeared within, in between or outside them. I complemented this data-driven coding process by paying attention to silences and absences in the data and by comparing the themes found and not found to theories and earlier research. Therefore, in the coding process, I used the abductive approach and aimed at identifying the themes that either recurred or were lacking in the interviews and written narratives. For example, when the interviewees shared background information of their relationships to the lost others, I paid attention to how the discussion of different forms of family and kinship repeatedly appeared in the narratives or how the interviewees positioned themselves in relation to the closet discourse, defining how openly they had disclosed details of their lives to others, which might have varied at different points and in different contexts of their lives. Moreover, I noticed that the same themes emerged in various parts of the interviews and not only in relation to, for example, the background information. For example, kinship and family were often discussed when discussing the support received from others, and the question of the closet (and its varied forms) came up when discussing the funeral and other practicalities. Furthermore, in terms of absences and silences, I paid attention to the issues that were frequently mentioned in earlier studies and theories related to queer and trans death but were not mentioned (or only sporadically mentioned) in the interviewees' narratives. These included, in particular, LGBTQ communities and queer monumentality.

Despite the fact that the deductively designed interview themes have directed the production of interviewees' narratives by encouraging them to focus on some themes instead of others, these themes have been sufficiently loose to include variations. The deductive interview themes did not, therefore, dictate the contents of the interviews; instead, there were other recurring themes to be found within, in between and outside them through abductive coding. Moreover, I found the abductive approach for coding to best capture the nuances of the personal narratives, by both allowing me to pay attention to what frequently occurred in the material itself and by making me notice what was missing, compared with previous studies and theories.

When coding the interview transcripts, I utilised NVivo software for keeping track of the themes and subthemes I identified within the interviewees' stories. By carefully reading through the transcriptions,[37] I first aimed at identifying the themes that seemed to function as wide umbrella themes, such as the aforementioned family

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37   I transcribed the interviews myself. Despite being rather time consuming, this considerably enhanced my familiarity with the personal narratives and as a result made me better prepared for the coding process.

and closet. Other wide themes of this category included grief, rituals, (Lutheran) religion[38] and remembering.[39] Then, when going through the narratives again and meticulously reading them in relation to the wide themes already identified, I continued coding on a more detailed level, paying attention to the issues discussed (or strikingly not discussed) in relation to each of these larger themes. Given the incoherent nature of the interviewees' stories, the coding was not always entirely coherent either. It included careful reading and rereading, thinking and rethinking, going back and forth and trying to find repetitions and silences. The coding was, therefore, a lively process. I consider it as an ongoing discussion with the narrative material: trying to find and name the elements most crucial within the stories while staying attuned to their differences and multiplicities. The names or the structure of the themes I had initially identified often needed to be changed as the analysis proceeded and when merging the list of themes identified within the stories into larger categories. For example, sometimes I realised only in the later stages of the analysis that the two themes I had at first considered to be separate (say, grief and support) were actually very closely linked together and therefore one of them (support) ended up becoming a subtheme of the other (grief). Likewise, although the theme of religion came up in the stories, it usually appeared as a subtheme to a larger theme – the Evangelical Lutheran Church as an institution.

Some of the main themes identified in the analysis – families and the Church, to be precise – seemed to be more far-reaching than others: being in one way or another often present when the interviewees discussed other topics. Therefore, families and the Church are discussed throughout this dissertation, whereas other main themes have formed the structure for the empirical chapters. Subthemes related to the theme of the closet are discussed in chapter 3, called Skeletons, Closets and Coming Out, including silence, transparent closets and continuous coming out. In chapter 4, The Affective Power of Rituals, I discuss the themes related to what I first had named as practicalities but later realised was better captured by the term ritual, given the culturally bound elements strongly related to the practices and events following loss. These include interviewees' levels and types of religiosity, feelings of inclusion and exclusion and personalisation of death rituals. In chapter 5, entitled Living with Grief, I discuss the themes related to grief, including support received from others,

38   When writing about religion and being religious in this study, I mostly refer to Evangelical Lutheran Christianity, as it was the context the interviewees referred to when using such words. That said, religion and being religious can, obviously, refer to other religions as well. Therefore, I aim at being explicit in the analysis about the issues discussed being tied to Evangelical Lutheran Christianity in particular.

39   Initially, this list included more themes than the ones currently mentioned. However, in the later stages of the analysis, the list got shorter when I realised that some of the themes were actually closely interrelated and should therefore be discussed together.

bereavement support services and personal enduring. In chapter 6, called Queer Remembering, I discuss remembrance through the concept of afterlife and the private rituals of remembering. In terms of silences and absences, I pay attention to queer monumentality and death and loss among LGBTQ communities, which frequently appear in international queer theoretical research but not in the interviewees' stories.

In addition to the interview material, I analysed the data collected by the scavenger methodology through a similar process of familiarising myself with the data, coding it, merging the codes into meaningful units and combining them into larger theoretical frameworks. Some parts of this data were already in textual format (legislation and church guidelines). In addition, I transcribed the expert interview using the same method and scale of transcription as the personal interviews. Regarding public rituals of remembrance, I transcribed and analysed the speeches held in the events, which were publicly available online either in a video or audio format. Like with interview transcripts, I used NVivo software to keep track of the analysis. I combined the coding results with the analysis results of the interviewees' stories to widen the scope of my research and to cover areas (such as the structural aspects of the Finnish culture of death, queer monumentality and LGBTQ communities) that were not extensively covered in the personal narratives.

The advantage of qualitative content analysis with in-depth interviews as its core data is that the method enables studying new or understudied topics that would be difficult or impossible to study using other methods and other types of data in a nuanced way. Death and loss in queer and trans lives is, undoubtedly, such a topic. The analysis has revealed issues undiscussed in previous research, thus proving the benefits of abductive approach over deductive approach. Furthermore, each type of data has its place in this research, and together they make it possible to analyse death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finland in a fruitful and multifaceted manner. The analysis offers new perspectives and tools for understanding LGBTQ people's experiences of bereavement and, at the same time, queer kinship, remembrance and the Finnish culture of death in comprehensive and insightful ways.

2.4   Vulnerable Storytellers?

Research topics that are considered private, secretive, norm-breaking, silenced or prohibited can be seen as sensitive or vulnerable and therefore as requiring special attention in terms of research ethics (Laitinen & Uusitalo 2007, 317; see also Nikunen 2008). Following this line of thinking, the topic of this study can be considered sensitive and its participants potentially vulnerable because of the private and emotionally painful nature of grief and loss and the marginalisation faced by LGBTQ people. Thus, the stories of death and loss discussed in this study can be

considered as stories of vulnerability, and as it follows, the interviewees can be considered as vulnerable storytellers. Here, I discuss the research ethical concerns related to this study in regard to feminist methodologies and feminist understandings of vulnerability.

Vulnerability is a topic that has gained increasing attention in feminist and queer theorising (Koivunen et al. 2018). Being vulnerable is argued to be a universal human condition touching all of us and resulting from the sociality and interdependency of human life. When writing about ungrievability, Butler (2004a, 29) has written about corporeal vulnerability, noting that a human body is vulnerable in and of itself, resulting in the fact that 'we can be vanquished or lose others'. Within Butler's argumentation, vulnerability, loss and grief are often tied together, suggesting that loss and grief result from this inherent vulnerability of human beings. However, vulnerability is also seen as a condition of specific individuals or groups that are considered 'more than ordinarily vulnerable' and thus in need of special care and protection (Mackenzie et al. 2014, 2; Koivunen et al. 2018, 2, 4-5; Butler 2004a; 2009).

As argued by feminist philosophers Catriona Mackenzie, Wendy Rogers and Susan Dodds (2014), vulnerability matters in terms of research because it creates moral obligations and is closely related to questions of power. Seeing someone as vulnerable (in the 'more than ordinarily' sense of the term) creates in others a moral duty to help them. This duty especially falls on those who are in a position of power in relation to the vulnerable (Mackenzie et al. 2014, 12-14). Given the inevitable power relations between the researcher and research participants (Stanley & Wise 1993, 168), it is no wonder that the question of vulnerability and research ethics has been widely discussed in feminist research. Within the study of sensitive topics and marginalised people, feminist scholars have written much around the ethics and researchers' entitlement to utilising other people's life stories when conducting their studies (e.g. Behar 1996; Lather 2007; Page 2017a; 2017b). The debate has focused on whether the researcher has the right to use, tell and analyse the stories of vulnerable others or whether the research process and research reporting is, from the perspective of research participants, a question of 'a vulnerable population' being 'used and abused' by a researcher's interest and analysis (Lather 2007, ix). First and foremost, the discussion is about whether studying other people's stories of vulnerability can be considered as appropriating these stories and the people telling the stories. This discussion is not only limited to research: activists and journalists using the stories of vulnerable others have also been criticised for appropriating or stealing the pain of others for purposes unrelated to the interests of those who are actually suffering (Lamble 2008; Razack 2007; Sontag 2002).

However, when discussing vulnerability, I find it worth pointing out that what counts as vulnerable (or sensitive) is up for discussion. For instance, the interviewees

of this study did not necessarily consider themselves as vulnerable. On the contrary, they usually rejected the simple victim narrative that is often related to bereavement, particularly to widow(er)hood (Martin-Matthews 2011), and refused to present themselves as suffering martyrs. However, people hearing about my study have often thought otherwise. As feminist scholar Patricia Lather (2007, ix) has argued, sometimes, what is found troubling in studies of 'sensitive topics' is in fact more troubling to the audience than to the actual participants of the study.

To further illustrate the issue, I offer a personal example. Once, in an academic conference, I was asked during the Q&A about the research ethics of my project. A person in the audience was concerned – not only in relation to my project but also in relation to others' in the same session studying different types of sensitive topics (probably combined together because of the expected sensitivity) – about the ethical boards of our universities and how they had allowed us to study such topics in the first place. According to this person, 'These vulnerable people must be protected', apparently, from researchers like us. The tone of the question made me wonder whether our studies indeed seemed, on the outside, unethical towards the people who had participated in them. I knew that I, as a researcher, took questions of research ethics seriously and that regarding institutional evaluation, research ethical questions had been included in my research plan and thus were evaluated among other aspects of the study before I was granted a position as a PhD student. However, something in that question stuck with me. What I found troubling in the question was the tone of victimising the research participants. The question implied that, instead of the participants themselves, a board of academic experts would be more able to evaluate and decide who can and cannot participate in a study that is in some sense seen as sensitive. For me, it was important that this decision was up to the interviewees themselves. I trusted that people who decided to contact me were able to make an informed decision of participation based on the information I gave them, despite their grief or other vulnerabilities they might have in their lives. Despite the potential emotional burden caused by the topic, they had found the study worth participating in. To question this would be, in my mind, patronising towards them.

When forming this view, I have been inspired by the research ethical discussions of feminist scholars of different fields. Feminist anthropologist Ruth Behar (1996) has described in the following way the dilemma related to the ethics of observing and recording the tragedies of others in her influential book *The Vulnerable Observer – Anthropology that Breaks Your Heart*:

> In the midst of a massacre, in the face of torture, in the eye of a hurricane, in the aftermath of an earthquake, or even, say, when horror looms apparently more gently in memories that won't recede and so come pouring forth in the late-night quiet of a kitchen, as a storyteller opens her heart to a story listener, recounting

hurts that cut deep and raw into the gullies of the self, do you, the observer, stay behind the lens of the camera, switch on the tape recorder, keep pen in hand? Are there limits – of respect, piety, pathos – that should not be crossed, even to leave a record? But if you can't stop the horror, shouldn't you at least document it? (Behar 1996, 2)

Although the present study, in which I have interviewed consenting individuals about their undoubtedly painful experiences of bereavement, is very different from conducting ethnographic research in the areas of natural disasters described by Behar, I see this dilemma as one that every researcher studying sensitive or vulnerable topics will come across in one form or another. Given the moral obligation to help those in vulnerable positions of life (Mackenzie et al. 2014), the question then becomes: how can it be justified to make people live through painful experiences once more for research purposes if the researcher cannot ease the pain or offer something in return?

However, as Mackenzie et al. (2014, 16-17) have argued, these discussions entail a danger of slipping into the unnecessary victimisation of the research participants who are deemed as vulnerable. They argue that vulnerability is often linked with stereotypes of victimhood and incapability, thus overwriting the inherent autonomy and agency of people living in vulnerable situations of life. Instead of seeing it simply as one's duty to try to protect vulnerable people, they suggest that researchers need 'to promote the autonomy and capabilities of vulnerable persons wherever possible' to avoid victimising them further. Likewise, McRobbie (1982, 52) has noted that the idea of 'giving something' to research participants in return – and especially the idea that the researcher could know on behalf of the research participants what they need or want – is patronising in itself. Following this logic, focusing only on protecting (while assuming that the researcher knows best who and how to protect) instead of respecting the autonomy and agency of the people willing to share their vulnerable stories for research purposes can be seen as a problematic and simplifying practice that needs further consideration.

Relatedly, another issue that can be seen as patronising is the common discourse of researchers 'giving voice' to the silenced experiences of marginalised people, as if they had no voice of their own. Being aware of the critical discussions of this discourse in feminist research (e.g. Coddington 2017), I do not suggest that I as a researcher have given the interviewees a voice to tell their hidden stories. Instead, I emphasise the agency of the interviewees and argue that they already had their voices and actively and deliberately chose to use those voices when sharing their stories in the context of this study. In other words, the stories that had not necessarily been

tellable in every context and at all times of their lives were tellable for the interviewees in the context of this study.[40]

Therefore, when situating myself and my research in relation to these discussions, I have opted to trust in my interviewees' agency and autonomy in the desire to tell their stories, regardless of whether they are seen as 'more than ordinarily vulnerable'. In addition, I have been methodologically inspired by what Behar (1996) and other feminist scholars have written about making the researcher vulnerable and, particularly, what Tiffany Page (2017a) has, following Behar, termed as vulnerable writing. This practice, which Page (2017a, 13) has argued to be central to feminist methodologies, aims at remaining 'open and receptive to what will always resist sense-making, while continuing to respond to the demand that we do justice to the lives of others'. Moreover, she sees vulnerable writing as an aspiration to expose the 'fragility of knowledge assembly' and to question what is and can be known or represented when it comes to lives other than our own (Page 2017a, 13-14). Page (2017b) has argued that when studying sensitive topics, one ought to avoid becoming 'an invulnerable researcher researching vulnerability'. I have kept this advice in mind when collecting, analysing and writing about the stories of others. Page's view on vulnerable writing resembles what feminist scholars Liz Stanley and Sue Wise (1993, 168) have written about making the researcher vulnerable by 'displaying her actions, reasonings, deductions and evidence to other people'. In line with the tradition of feminist scholarship (e.g. Haraway 1988), Stanley and Wise have argued for locating oneself in relation to one's research process and making visible the decisions that influence the story the researcher tells about the participants (Stanley & Wise 1993, 164-165). By being self-reflexive about the research process, I have aimed at both being a vulnerable observer and writing vulnerably about my observations. I have utilised the method of vulnerable writing especially when describing my methodological decisions and the processes of data collection and analysis in this chapter. However, it is an approach that I have also kept in mind when writing the empirical and concluding chapters, aspiring to make my thought process visible in the analysis and concluding remarks as well.

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40   My use of the word tellable here is inspired by narrative scholar Matti Hyvärinen's (2014) definition of the word, in which something becomes tellable when it surprises the person experiencing it or when it differs from the ordinary state of things. However, contrary to Hyvärinen's view, I add that sometimes the issues that surprise and differ are the ones that remain untold because they would somehow shake or question the expected status quo. In such cases, the story of differing may become tellable later, when the status quo (or the context in which the story is told) has changed in a manner that the story would no longer be considered, for example, offensive, impolite, stigmatising or depressing. Moreover, what is tellable for someone in a certain context may not be considered tellable by someone else.

Although being vulnerable and locating oneself is, according to Stanley and Wise (1993, 177), 'hazardous and frightening business', it is a way of dealing with the power relations between the researcher and research participants. According to Stanley and Wise, these inevitable power relations place participants in a vulnerable position in the sense that their lives, stories and memories become research material, which the researcher analyses and ties into larger theoretical discussions to produce new knowledge.[41] Thus, as researchers, we must 'be prepared to show ourselves as vulnerable too' (Stanley & Wise 1993, 177). Although the willingness to show vulnerability and be self-reflexive is not 'the magic key that enables us to enter other people's experiences and emotions' (Stanley & Wise 1993, 168), I argue that it can be used as a tool for enhancing transparency within the research process and therefore increasing the reliability of the research and offering the reader of the study means to evaluate its results.

Although I take the issues of vulnerability seriously within this study, I do not see the sensitivity of the topic or the potential vulnerability of the participants as a factor that would negate the possibility of conducting this or other studies focusing on vulnerability. On the contrary, I argue that questioning the ethics or the entire possibility of studying topics that may be seen as sensitive, vulnerable or causing negative emotions can be problematic in its own right. Instead of focusing only on the good and positive sides of queer and trans lives, or any lives, I find it important for research to also include the more difficult or emotionally burdensome issues of such lives. My argument is thus in line with various scholars arguing in favour of studying the unhappiness within queer and trans lives, including Ahmed (2010), Dahl (2014), Love (2007) and Preser (2018). Furthermore, following Behar's (1996) line of thinking, if the horror exists and researchers cannot stop it, does it really help if it is not documented and studied either? I argue that it does not. I propose that although research cannot simply erase the problems within the social world, it can contribute in widening the picture of how certain issues and lives are represented, making research of vulnerable topics, as such, important.

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41 This does not mean, however, that the analysis conducted by the researcher would automatically be harmful to the research participants whose life stories are analysed. On the contrary, Lather (2007, 29) has argued that if the research is conducted in a reflexive and sensitive manner, the way in which the researcher combines participants' stories 'into larger frameworks' can be seen as a 'gift that an academic can give' and therefore as potentially empowering to the participants.

3 Skeletons, Closets and Coming Out

3.1 Skeletons in and out of the Closet

> VEIKKO: I haven't; it's a bit bold to say never, but I don't remember that [I would have] ever during my life – which has been quite long, and maybe also because I've worked with [art] – so, I have never experienced discrimination… on the basis that this person is just this gay. That's why I wonder it when people say that there is such a strong stigma towards gays even nowadays, or when people are closeted, especially in a small town like this. [--] Because to me, that is completely incomprehensible. I haven't been in the closet like ever. Since the 1970s. I think it's quite unbelievable that some people need to play a straight person; it's like completely mystical to me. *laughs*

I begin the analysis by discussing the concept of the closet and its significance in times of bereavement. Being in the closet and coming out of it are central concepts when discussing queer and trans lives (Sedgwick 1990). Those who have disclosed their sexual orientation, gender or romantic relationship to others are considered to be out,[42] whereas those concealing or not having openly disclosed this information are considered to be in the closet.[43] Here, I argue that the concept of the closet is relevant in the study of death and loss in queer and trans lives in ways that go beyond the arguments of earlier studies of LGBTQ people and bereavement. In the previous

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42 As observed by Jukka Lehtonen (2003), it is not always clear what is disclosed in coming out moments. According to Lehtonen, it can be a question of love, relationships, personal characteristics, self-identification, belonging to a specific community or simply 'details of life' (Lehtonen 2003, 160-162). In the context of this study, the question was often about a sexual orientation, gender or a romantic relationship with a same-sex partner as well as details of life linked to such matters.

43 Originally, the term 'coming out' was ironically used by gay men to refer to coming out into the gay community in the same manner as debutantes come out into aristocratic communities, indicating that they are old enough for marriage (Hekanaho 2006, 14; Schweighofer 2016, 226).

research that strongly focuses on queer widow(er)hood, being closeted has often been discussed as one of the central reasons for various complications faced in bereavement (e.g. Bristowe 2016; Whipple 2006; Shernoff 1997). This chapter widens this thought by opening up the concept of the closet, building on earlier studies that pay attention to various degrees of outness and various kinds of closets (e.g. Sedgwick 1990; Švab & Kuhar 2005; Davies 1992; Lehtonen 2003). I suggest that the closet is a central theme when exploring the affective complexities of the interviewees' meaningful relationships and how these complexities affected and complicated their experiences of bereavement. In addition, I argue that the multiplicity and persistence of closets make coming out an ongoing and ambiguous practice, with complex consequences not only on queer and trans lives but also on the experiences related to death and loss.

The closet can be described as a discursive space defined by public secrecy and strategic silences (Hekanaho 2006; Sedgwick 1990) or as a metaphor for discrimination, denying and silencing practiced by a heteronormative society (Pakkanen 2007a). By hiding something that does not quite fit in the heteronormative and cisnormative ways of being, the closet participates in structuring cultural normality (Hekanaho 2006, 22). Coming out of the closet and thus ending the practice of active hiding has been considered as a political and liberating act (Chirrey 2003, 24; Seidman 1998, 185), as the last stage of self-acceptance for LGBTQ individuals (Orne 2011, 683) and as a necessity for living a happy and full life (Plummer 1995). Based on the architectural definition and the purpose of material closets, a symbolic closet can also be defined as a space that 'protect[s] the home from disorder and conflict' (Pavka 2017, 176), thus making visible the symbolic closet's close relation to home and family.

In previous research on queer widow(er)hood, especially that conducted in English-speaking countries,[44] being in the closet has been argued to complicate the life of the surviving partner by causing various emotional, economic and material burdens and difficulties, whereas being out is seen to protect the bereaved from these difficult situations (e.g. Almack et al. 2010; Bristowe 2016; Whipple 2006; Shernoff 1997). Many of the problems following closeted life in bereavement are suggested to result from the lack of recognition of the lost relationship. Being closeted about a same-sex relationship either to friends, family of origin or co-workers – or all of these groups – results in a situation in which the loss of the partner is not necessarily

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[44]   Most of the studies discussed here were conducted in the USA (e.g. Bent & Magilvy 2006; McNutt & Yakushko 2013; Shernoff 1997; Whipple 2006), the UK (Almack et al. 2010; Fenge 2014), Ireland (Glackin & Higgins 2008) and Canada (Hornjatkevyc & Alderson 2011).

recognised as a partner loss. Instead, it can be seen as a loss of a friend or a flatmate, which is not considered to be as devastating or to cause as much grief as the loss of a partner (Whipple 2006, 108-109; Seabold 1997). Thus, the loss becomes invisible and its pain becomes mitigated or, as Doka (2002a) and Butler (2004a; 2009) would call it, disenfranchised and ungrievable (see also Fenge 2014; McNutt & Yakushko 2013). This has been argued to result in various problematic situations, which in turn complicate the bereavement itself. For example, if the closeted partners have not been able to make their relationship legally recognised (as was often the case in these studies), they may not be allowed to visit the dying partner in a hospital (Green & Grant 2008, 286). Similarly, they are not entitled to bereavement leave from work after the loss (Seabold 1997). Moreover, because of the lack of social recognition, they are likely to be excluded from the funeral planning and not openly acknowledged in the funeral rituals (Smolinski & Colón 2006, 56; Reimers 2011, 256). The surviving partner may not even be invited to participate in their partner's funeral, and if they are, they may feel the need to hide the intensity of their grief so that others would not wonder why they are grieving 'too much' (Siegal & Hoefer 1981, 519; Hornjatkevyc & Alderson 2011, 803). Being closeted also limits the possibilities of receiving support from others. This may result in the increase of personal vulnerability and force the bereaved to deal with their grief in isolation (Shernoff 1997; McNutt & Yakushko 2013, 96). In addition to the emotional burden, being closeted may result in financial and material losses. For example, the property that was once mutually shared but legally owned only by the deceased partner may be inherited by the official family of the deceased, leaving the surviving partner in a financially difficult situation (Bristowe 2016, 9)

Sometimes, surviving partners remain closeted following the loss because they do not wish to out their partners posthumously (Almack et al. 2010, 914). In this case, the respect for the deceased partner's decision to remain closeted is seen as more important than the surviving partner's own need to be recognised as a person who has lost their partner. However, Lee-Ann Fenge (2014, 295) has suggested that sometimes the death of the partner forces bereaved LGBTQ people to come out in order to be seen, heard and supported. Coming out this way may feel like an extra burden in a time that is already emotionally difficult, especially if coming out has negative consequences within one's family of origin or wider social networks (see also Jenkins et al. 2014, 282; Smolinski & Colón 2006, 57). Researchers have also been worried that the risks of coming out may not be thoroughly assessed by the bereaved individual if the disclosure happens soon after the death of the partner (Broderick et al. 2008, 231).

Based on previous research, it is evident that being closeted has the potential to create a variety of difficulties after the loss of a same-sex partner. At the same time, these studies have suggested that being out protects the surviving partner from many

of these difficulties as long as the coming out takes place prior to the loss. This, I add, depends on the social surroundings of the bereaved LGBTQ individuals because outness does not always lead to acceptance or recognition. On the contrary, outness can lead to overt disapproval among one's social surroundings, which may lead to many difficulties similar to those faced by closeted LGBTQ people. In a literature review on same-sex partner loss, Katherine Bristowe et al. (2016, 10-11) have divided the positions of surviving same-sex partners into four categories, including overt acceptance, unspoken acceptance, overt exclusion and invisibility, thus further elaborating on the question of the closet in bereavement. The grief felt by closeted surviving partners was categorised as invisible. Another difficult position was being out but unaccepted within one's social surroundings (overt exclusion), which could include open hostility and homophobia or transphobia on behalf of the official family of the deceased partner. In a better situation were those who were either unspokenly or overtly out and accepted within their social circles. In the best position were those who were actively and openly accepted among their families of origin, friends and co-workers. According to Bristowe et al. (2016), all those who were not overtly out and accepted were at a risk of disenfranchisement. However, in the remainder of this chapter, I question what it means to actually 'be out' and whether such a condition can even be achieved once and for all. Moreover, based on my research and earlier studies that emphasise the ambiguity and variations of closets (e.g. Sedgwick 1990; Švab & Kuhar 2005), I suggest that the realities of my interviewees were rarely black and white in this regard. Thus, I argue that earlier research gives a rather simplistic account of closets and their consequences in times of bereavement, leaving the more implicit and affectively operating logics of the closet underanalysed.

I argue that closets can be continuously built and rebuilt upon practices of silence, non-communication and family secrets that are difficult to overcome or control. My argument follows queer theorist Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's (1990) discussion on normative presumptions in her seminal book *Epistemology of the Closet*:

> Furthermore, the deadly elasticity of heterosexist presumption means that, like Wendy in Peter Pan, people find new walls springing up around them even as they drowse: every encounter with a new classful of students, to say nothing of the new boss, social worker, loan officer, landlord, doctor, erects new closets whose fraught and characteristic laws of optics and physics exact from at least gay people new surveys, new calculations, new draughts and requisitions of secrecy or disclosure. (Sedgwick 1990, 28)

Drawing on this view, given the heteronormative and cisnormative expectations persistent in Finnish (or any) society, LGBTQ people need to consciously out

themselves whenever meeting new people if they wish to be out. In addition, being in the closet may not only mean people not knowing but also people being unwilling to see, understand or openly discuss the lives and relationships of those who somehow differ from the heterosexual or cisgender majority (Davies 1992; Lehtonen 2003). This approach to closets contrasts the popular progress narrative (also visible in Veikko's narrative in the beginning of this section), according to which the social circumstances of LGBTQ people have been – and still are – consistently improving to the extent that there is no longer discrimination or oppression left in the Western countries (Mizielinska & Kulpa 2011; de Szegheo Lang 2015). This understanding of progressive time also assumes that the need for closets will disappear, or has done so already. Contrary to this view, I argue that even the most open LGBTQ people may and will continuously end up in situations in which one is not 'out' by default and in which one thus has to decide whether to make direct disclosures about one's life – and what to do if this information is not well-received. As I demonstrate in this chapter, in times of bereavement, such situations occur frequently.

The themes of closets and moments of coming out came up in various ways in the interviewees' narratives. On the explicit level, it seemed that the interviewees saw the closet in a rather binaristic way. Moreover, they often described closets as something unneeded or even shameful, like Veikko quoted in the beginning of this section. When explicitly asked as a clarification to their relationship background stories, none of the interviewees considered themselves as closeted. It is worth noting that the people who are generally open about their non-normative sexual orientation, gender and/or relationships are more likely to approach a study with a focus on LGBTQ people. Moreover, the fact that the research call was mainly advertised through Finnish LGBTQ organisations produces a preliminary requirement that a person who hears about the study has to be already involved with these organisations or at least to know someone who is. Thus, the lack of interviewees who considered themselves as closeted is likely to stem from the difficulties of reaching them as well as their possible unwillingness to participate. Although comparing the experiences of the people who consider themselves as out and closeted with the data of this study is not possible, I argue that the data offers interesting insight into the different degrees of outness and the ways in which the themes of death, closet and coming out do intertwine even in the lives of those LGBTQ people who consider themselves as out.

In previous research, common narratives of coming out have been argued to create the ideal figure of the 'good, out queer', whereas non-disclosure or selective disclosure has been seen, in the same narratives, as a result of shame and internalised homophobia or transphobia (Klein et al. 2015; Orne 2011; Pakkanen 2007a). In this view, being closeted becomes similar to the idea of having a skeleton in the closet, an idiom defined in dictionaries as 'a secret that would cause embarrassment if it

were known' (Cambridge Dictionary 2019a) or a fact that is 'kept secret because of shame or fear of disgrace' (Collins Dictionary 2019). Emphasising how they had no skeletons in their closets in this regard, the interviewees of this study seemed eager to show that they followed the idealised figure of the good, out queer. At the same time, the difficulties they had before experiencing any coming out moments were often unmentioned or mitigated. Despite this seeming consensus, when looking beyond the explicit level of narration, the degree of interviewees' outness did indeed vary. In most cases, there were people in their lives who had for a long time not known or still did not know details about their lives and relationships. Being out or being closeted was thus not absolute in any of the cases.

The interviewees' stories also confirmed the observations of earlier studies, according to which the experiences of closets, coming out moments and (in)visibility greatly differ within the LGBTQ community itself. Whereas sexual minorities are often argued to be invisible or less visible than other minorities, such as the racialised ones (Platt & Lenzen 2013, 1014), the questions of visibility and invisibility are quite different for transgender people, to whom they entail complex questions of authenticity, self-protection and 'passing' (or not) as a non-transgender and whether this is desirable (e.g. Stone 2006; Green 2006), in addition to different kinds of coming out experiences prior to and post transition. As pointed out by Lal Zimman (2009), coming out as transgender is a very different experience based on whether it happens prior to or post transition: prior to transition, one may disclose one's gender identity, but after the transition, the disclosure is more about 'a particular kind of gender history'. Moreover, many may prefer not to out their transgender past after transition (Zimman 2009, 54-57). Coming out is observed to differ from dominant (gay or lesbian) coming out narratives also in the case of bisexuals, who often face invisibility both among straight and queer communities owing to the persistent binary logics of sexuality (McLean 2007; Watson 2014).

In this study, the logics of the closet differently affected the interviewees in bereavement depending not only on how they were positioned in terms of sexuality and gender but also on the people they had lost. This came across, in particular, in the interview with Saara, a bisexual/pansexual/queer woman, who had lost a male partner at a very young age. At the time of the interview, Saara was in a registered partnership with a female partner. As the following narrative shows, the loss had made her very self-reflexive about her sexuality and the differences that could follow after losing a partner to death, depending on the gender of the partner in question:

SAARA: And well… but maybe it was like, I hadn't told it [sexual orientation] to my family at that point, somehow. And I remember that when he died, it was quite harsh, that I was pleased that he was a man. *laughs* Which is like a terrible thing to say, and in a way it's entirely impossible that… I don't see

anything positive in that incident or anything, but well, I have been thinking, without underrating the experience, that it was like… I remember that I thought, it was quite difficult… in that [student] community to talk about it afterwards. There were many kinds of problems anyway, like it was difficult for people to handle. So well, I thought that if there had been, in addition, this queer… or if I had been closeted, I would probably have shot myself really or something. So, I wonder how people, like… well yeah.

Being closeted about one's sexuality when in a relationship that appears as straight is rather common among bisexuals. This is reasoned by a thought that bisexuality will be talked about if it becomes necessary – for example, if having a same-sex partner in future (McLean 2007, 162). Saara, too, was closeted in terms of her sexuality from her family of origin at the time of the loss; however, losing a male partner did not activate the discussion about it in the same manner as losing a female partner could have. Thus, being (in some contexts) closeted as a bisexual/pansexual/queer was not a complicating factor for her when losing a partner with whom she appeared to others as heterosexual, but it could have been if she had lost a partner with whom her non-heterosexuality would have become visible.

In the following sections, I dig deeper into the complexities of closets in the personal narratives. I start by discussing how the interviewees' disclosures were often met with silence and strategic non-communication in their families of origin – and how this had affected them when the said family members died. Next, I further analyse how different types of closets created by silence and non-communication, such as transparent closets and family closets (Švab & Kuhar 2005; 2014), affected the interviewees' lives when losing partners to death. Then, I discuss how coming out was experienced following the loss, including coming out to relatives during funerals and coming out to professionals in various contexts. Throughout this chapter, I argue that despite the seeming outness of the interviewees, the culture of silence and ambiguity around closets remains an integral part of the lives of the LGBTQ people in Finland. This had affective consequences on the interviewees' lives in times of bereavement.

3.2   The Culture of Silence

When providing background information of their meaningful relationships, the interviewees often shared how they had initially come out to their families of origin.[45] In these stories, the information of the sexual orientation, gender or same-

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45   Coming out stories can be considered a typical narrative shared by the people leading queer and trans lives (e.g. Plummer 1995). As noted by Nan Alamilla Boyd (2008),

sex relationship of the interviewee was often met with silence by their family members, revealing (and producing) affective complications in their mutual relationships. These complications in turn complicated grieving when the said family member died, thus making these experiences integral in understanding LGBTQ people's experiences of loss within their families of origin.

According to previous research and autobiographical literature on LGBTQ people in Finland, silence around LGBTQ issues, lives and relationships has been characteristic of Finnish society and family life (e.g. Juvonen 2015; Korhonen & Östman 2014; Lehtonen 2003; Lehtonen 1999; Mustola & Pakkanen 2007; Parkkinen 2003; Heikkinen 1999; Sievers & Stålström 1984). This has particularly been the case in the past, during the decades of criminalisation and pathologisation of homosexuality (Juvonen 2002; Hagman 2016).[46] As I argue in this chapter, the difficulties of talking about LGBTQ people's lives and relationships have not entirely disappeared from Finnish society in the more recent decades, despite the legal and societal changes that have taken place from the 1980s to the 2010s discussed in chapter 1. Contrary to the findings of Bristowe et al. (2016), silence within this study did not always signify unspoken acceptance. In fact, it seems that negative reactions to coming out within families of origin were often concealed by remaining silent. Silence was used both as a means of getting more time to digest the new piece of information regarding someone's life and as a more permanent shield between the disapproving family member and the interviewee. By remaining silent,

interviewees may share their coming out stories even when not explicitly asked by the interviewer, who might be more interested in other aspects of queer and trans lives. As Boyd (2008, 188) argues, this could stem from the interviewees' expectations regarding what the interviewer wants to know and what proves 'their authenticity as a speaking subject'. However, contrary to Boyd, I saw coming out stories relevant to my topic, as they seemed to reveal a lot about the affective specificities of the interviewees' meaningful relationships. Thus, even though I was not expecting to encounter coming out stories to this extent, I did, as an interviewer, see them as important and encourage their telling by asking further questions.

46   However, silence of this kind has not always been considered a negative thing. As noted by Juvonen (2002), who has studied the history of homosexuality and lesbianism in Finland, silence was considered an act of discretion and sophistication in Finland in the decades of criminalisation and pathologisation. Open discussion about homosexuality, on the contrary, was seen as an attempt to denigrate and criticise the homosexual individuals in question. According to this logic, instead of talking about someone's homosexuality, a civil person would remain silent about it. As Juvonen points out, this created a culture of open secrets, which left no space for positive discourse (Juvonen 2002, 161-164). Even though the intentions of this kind of silence may have been good in the cultural climate of their time, I argue that the lack of positive discourse of homosexuality has reinforced the idea of seeing it as something inherently shameful that cannot be talked about out loud.

both the interviewee and their family members were able to avoid discussing topics that could have created friction in their relationship.

When silence followed a moment of coming out, it sometimes hid or prevented a potential conflict. Later, as time had passed, the attitude of the family of origin could turn into overt acceptance. Sometimes, however, silence remained permanent, and the sexual orientation, gender or same-sex relationship of the interviewee was never further discussed. Silent reaction ended up being more or less permanent, for example, in the case of Maria, a Finland-Swede[47] woman in her early thirties, who described in the following way the reaction of her father after she came out to him as a lesbian in the 2010s. Maria was about to leave on a trip abroad with her father when she decided to tell him that a woman he had previously met was actually her girlfriend:

> MARIA: I remember it; we had a week-long trip ahead of us… just the two of us. And I was quite an idiot when I told him just before: 'Well *pappa…* do you remember Milla'? I don't remember what… we had done something together, like the four of us… Anja [father's wife] and Milla had been with us. And then I said that she is my girlfriend. And I was very persistent. This happens now. *She is my girlfriend!* And then he was shocked. And then he was, he…
> VA: What kind of reaction was it?
> MARIA: Well, we were out smoking… in front of his door and… and then we just smoked. I think we smoked two cigarettes there quietly side by side.
> VA: How did you feel back then?
> MARIA: It was a bit, I did, I… bursted into tears. Because it was somehow such a big… relief to say it out loud and, and like… a hell of an anxiety… if I get punched in the face. What's going to happen? And then we just stood there quietly side by side and smoked cigarettes and… And then he just smacked his lips the way he used to do… 'Well aha… aha, I have to chew this over now'. And then we did not talk about it for the whole week, no, no, not a word.
> VA: Okay. Would you have wanted to talk about it? Like more, or how did you take it?

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47   In English, Finland-Swedes are often called Swedish-speaking Finns. However, Maria had not spoken Swedish with her parents and siblings when growing up. She had used Swedish only with her father's parents. Although Swedish was not her everyday language, her background in the community of Finland-Swedes was important to her and her parents in terms of a shared cultural heritage. This came up, for example, in her mother's wish that, despite her lesbianism, Maria would eventually form a 'proper Finland-Swede family' with a Swedish-speaking man. In Maria's narrative, her cultural background as a Finland-Swede is visible in the manner how she calls her father with the Swedish word *pappa* instead of the Finnish word *isä*.

MARIA: Well, I would have wanted to dig it up from him like, 'What do you think, how do you feel and are you, are you disappointed?' Maybe that. 'Can you still be proud of me?'

In a highly affective situation (full of fear but also relief and anxiety on Maria's part), Maria's father relied on silence, making the situation even more tense for Maria. I interpret the reaction of Maria's father in the framework of non-communication – that is, intentional silence with strategic purposes. Non-communication is a term coined by anthropologist Gregory Bateson (Bateson & Bateson 1987)[48] and further developed, for instance, by Finnish cultural studies scholars Kimmo Ketola (2002) and Seppo Knuuttila (2002). Non-communication does not stand for just any kind of lack of communication but specifically the kind that is somehow meaningful in a communicational context. As Ketola et al. (2002, 8) have put it, non-communication has functions, effects and outcomes: it may, for example, protect or sustain something that is important to the one who decides not to communicate. Protection as the main function of non-communication is also emphasised by Bateson, who has pointed out that people remain silent about the things that would hurt them or others (Bateson & Bateson 1987, 89). The goal of this kind of action is thus to preserve and protect their feelings. In this sense, non-communication can also be seen as an act that contributes to constructing and maintaining social reality (Ketola et al. 2002, 29) and may even be inevitable for it (Bateson & Bateson 1987, 80). Non-communication is particularly meaningful when communicating a certain thing would have an undesirable impact on social reality or social relations (Ketola et al. 2002, 9; Knuuttila 2002, 73-73). For example, the continuity of family relations may require that the dissatisfaction or disappointment in a family member who comes out is not stated out loud (e.g. Watson 2014).[49]

As Janet B. Watson (2014, 112) has described, non-communication can create 'a protective cloak of silence' and function as a coping strategy in difficult situations. By remaining silent, Maria's father avoided the discussions that could have created ruptures in his relationship with his daughter, with whom he otherwise had a close connection. Further discussions about the matter never really took place between them, even though the father got to know (and also seemed to like) Maria's partner and future wife Milla. Discussions concerning Maria's lesbianism were mainly

48   Gregory Bateson's theory of non-communication is discussed in a posthumous book titled *Angels Fear*, edited and commented on by his daughter, anthropologist Mary Catherine Bateson (Bateson & Bateson 1987).

49   Likewise, the decision not to disclose the details of one's life can be seen as an act of non-communication, the purpose of which may be to maintain at least some sort of relationship with the people who would assumedly not react well if they knew these details.

vague discussions about grandchildren. According to Maria, in her father's conservative mindset, being a lesbian meant not being able to have kids. The possibility of not necessarily having (biological) grandchildren by Maria was thus the only disappointment Maria's father ever openly expressed.

Because silence hides traces of disapproval, it can seem like silent acceptance. In such cases, the underlying disapproval could come as a disappointing surprise when it is finally revealed. To Maria's surprise, she found out after her father's death that he had resigned from the Evangelical Lutheran Church because he considered the Church to be too tolerant towards same-sex couples:

> MARIA: I was maybe more surprised [than of the resignation itself] when *laughs* when Anja, Anja told me that *pappa* had resigned after Irja Askola [a bishop] had publicly said that, that… rainbow families, or rainbow couples should be able to get married in church.
> VA: So this was the reason?
> MARIA: This was the reason.
> VA: To resign from church?
> MARIA: Yes. And the next day he had marched into, even quite physically, and like old people do, they march into the parish office and declare there out loud that they will resign from church. No website is enough.[50] He took his wife with him and went to the parish office and declared that he will resign from church.
> VA: Even though he had reacted positively, like, to your and Milla's relationship?
> MARIA: Even though.
> VA: That's quite surprising.
> MARIA: To me, it was surprising.

Following Sarah Schulman's (2009, 19) argumentation, the act of Maria's father can be seen as an act of familial homophobia: he secretly supported religious policies that hurt and marginalise LGBTQ people while acting in a seemingly accepting manner towards Maria and her partner. The significance and seriousness of his act is highlighted by the fact that in the 2000s and 2010s, the reason behind church membership resignation in Finland has been more often related to the intolerance of

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50   The website mentioned in Maria's narrative is eroakirkosta.fi [resignfromchurch.fi], which is the easiest and nowadays also the most common way to resign one's church membership in Finland. Going to a parish office in person is no longer necessary. Since the website was established in 2003, it has been possible to resign one's church membership by filling out a resignation form online. Nowadays, over 90% of the people resigning from the Evangelical Lutheran Church do so via the website (Mansikka 2019).

the Church towards LGBTQ people (Juvonen 2015, 121, 129), but not vice versa. Therefore, the act of Maria's father links him with the conservative Christians who have resigned from the Church as a protest towards individual priests and bishops supporting same-sex marriage (Lehto 2016). This new piece of information challenged the seemingly accepting attitude Maria's father had performed in the company of Maria and Milla. Finding out that her father was not necessarily as accepting as he had appeared was both surprising and disturbing to Maria, who had no longer the ability to discuss the matter with her father.

Silence and non-communication did not always, however, signify silent disapproval or result in affective complications in bereavement. For example, Jarkko, a gay/queer man in his forties, narrated how he had implicitly come out to his grandmother in the 1990s when the two of them lived as flatmates.[51] Compared with the direct verbal disclosure that Maria used with her father, Jarkko did not really need to verbally come out to his grandmother. Jarkko realised that his grandmother had already made her conclusions based on the phone calls he received from other men. Verbal disclosures of identity categories were also not needed when Jarkko later introduced his partner Marko to her grandmother:

> JARKKO: But it was the circle of life! It wasn't entirely unproblematic, but she did not well… freak out or anything. But instead she pondered it quietly. And then, at that point when I had… I did not even have to say it anymore that this is my boyfriend, but it was just: 'You will see Marko. Marko will drive you there'. It was a thing about driving. 'Marko will come, Marko has a car', or like 'We will be glad to drive you there'. And then afterwards, I guess it was the same day when she called me to say that 'You have a lovely boy'! And it was all clear. *laughs*

In Jarkko's story, the initial silence of his grandmother ended up turning into overt acceptance of his same-sex partner. Over the years, Jarkko's partner Marko became so dear to Jarkko's grandmother that when the couple later broke up, they decided not to tell her to save her from worry and sadness (which is a case of strategic non-communication in its own right). When Jarkko's grandmother died, Marko played the piano at her funeral, which speaks for the continuity of kinship ties not only between Jarkko and his ex-partner beyond their breakup but also between his ex-partner and his grandmother beyond death. Moreover, because the relationship between Jarkko and his grandmother had been warm and supportive, and because

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51   This type of living arrangement is quite atypical in Finland, and Jarkko stated that his relationship with his grandmother had been closer and warmer than the people around him seemed to expect.

the death did not reveal new information that would challenge this view, the loss did not generate similar doubt of a hidden disapproval as that generated by the loss experienced by Maria.

Silence could also follow a hostile initial reaction. This happened to Lauri, an other-gender gay/bisexual person, who in his youth had identified as a gay man.[52] Neither of Lauri's parents took it well when they individually found out about Lauri's homosexuality in a rather abrupt manner in the early 1980s. The father heard about Lauri's homosexuality by a sudden phone call from the police. In his youth, Lauri had moved to a big city from a small, rural town where he had remained closeted from his parents. For reasons unexplicated in the interview, the police had called Lauri's father to confirm Lauri's identity. Although homosexuality was no longer seen as crime or a disease in Finland – and despite the fact that Lauri was 19 years old and thus of age when considering the higher age of consent for homosexual acts at the given time (Juvonen 2015, 35) – the police decided to out him to his father when confirming his identity:

> LAURI: Father, father found out that I was in [a city]... The police called him and asked him if the father knows where his son is. And father then stated like 'Well... so [you are] interested in dicks'. But well... we did not talk about it anymore, so it was just... that one time only. And when I returned from my trip, he... father then, well... he just stated that, he did not, [there was] no no discussion, so it was quite, quite a rude manner...

Looking at the father's blunt reaction when he talked to Lauri and his unwillingness to discuss the issue later on, it seems that the father did not take the news very well or lightly. In this case, the initial negative comment was followed by years of silence. Non-communication around the matter became an unvoiced agreement: as long as it was not mentioned, there was no need to argue about it. According to Shulman (2009, 24-25), these kinds of agreements of silence and avoidance are common when trying to deal with familial homophobia.

A few years later, when Lauri's mother found out about his homosexuality, her reaction was more overtly disapproving. Instead of hearing the news from her husband (or from Lauri's two siblings, who also knew about it), she learned it through a nationwide published media, in which Lauri openly told about his

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52   As Finnish language does not have gendered pronouns, I asked Lauri which pronouns to use when writing this study in English. He opted for he/his/him. Although Lauri's identification had been fluidly changing over time in terms of both sexuality and gender, in what follows I discuss his sexuality in his youth as homosexuality, following the manner he narrated it in the interview himself.

homosexuality. Such a public coming out as a gay man was a shock to the mother, who saw homosexuality as an illness. Although Lauri later tried to discuss the matter with her and even gave her books to read (such as the first non-fiction book about LGBTQ issues ever published in Finnish, *Rakkauden monet kasvot* [Many faces of love] (Sievers & Stålström 1984)), she did not change her view. Eventually, she refused to discuss the issue any further.

> LAURI: But for my mother it was... It was not really discussed, and then it was left out and... And she could not, like, mom could not talk about it; it was a too painful topic for mother; she could not process it with me then.
>
> VA: So you remained silent about it?
>
> LAURI: Yes, and it is very, I think it has been a very typical strategy within my family, remaining silent, so that... when we don't talk about something, it doesn't exist.

Lauri's way of describing the situation highlights the strategic aims of non-communication: when difficult topics are not talked about, it is easier to maintain conflicting family bonds. Similar discourses were also found in other interviews. However, the pattern was not limited to LGBTQ issues. Topics that were considered too difficult to talk about within the family of origin included, for instance, death, grief and emotions in general. Thus, silence and non-communication were often relied on when dealing with issues that could cause strong emotional responses. On a broader perspective, this may reflect the Finnish cultural ethos of 'solitary self-control' and surviving on one's own (Honkasalo 2014, 175), which is typical to the Finnish culture in general and to the Finnish culture of death in particular, as pointed out by Mari Pulkkinen (2016). Therefore, relying on silence in emotionally complicated matters with one's family of origin is not an issue relevant only for LGBTQ people; instead, it is a cultural practice that may manifest in different ways among the heterosexual and cisgender population as well, particularly in times of death and loss.

Lauri's already complicated affective attachment to his parents considerably altered when his mother died by suicide in the mid-1980s and when his father died owing to a long-term illness in the early 1990s. Although the inability to discuss the details of his life with his parents had not intensely bothered him while the parents were alive, this changed following their deaths. Losing his parents had greatly touched Lauri and made him look back to his parental relationships, remembering what had been good in them. At the same time, with their deaths, silence around Lauri's life became permanent: he no longer had even a theoretical ability to discuss his life with his parents in some distant future. Both of the losses were painful for him but for different reasons. After his father died, Lauri had no parents left, which

made him feel like an orphan and made him look for other parental figures both among his co-workers and therapists to sort out whatever was left unsettled in his relationship with his biological parents. However, Lauri's mother's suicide was shocking in itself and made Lauri suspect his own complicity in it because her suicide took place in the same year she had found out about Lauri's homosexuality. Despite the fact that the mother had suffered from mental health issues that could explain the sudden suicide, Lauri had felt intense guilt after her death:

> LAURI: And well… there was no, I have carried so much guilt about it because I have, like… first I left home and mom stayed there with her disease… I have abandoned mom while she was ill, and then the coming out. I have like… publicly disgraced the family or… or, in a way, so that… mom could not take it. But, on the other hand, it is like difficult, it's terribly difficult to say what, what caused it. Mom had fallen ill in [the early 1980s] and maybe she never healed properly.

Lauri's guilt, which stemmed from his fear of both abandoning his mother by moving away and triggering the suicide by publicly coming out of the closet, greatly resembles the fears and negative emotions expressed in the coming out narratives of LGBTQ people and their parents in a Finnish non-fiction book *Ulos kaapista* [Out of the closet] compiled by Marja-Leena Parkkinen (2003). Nearly two decades after Lauri's experience, the autobiographical stories in Parkkinen's book tell about people's anxieties of revealing their own or their child's non-heterosexuality to conservative relatives in fear of deadly reactions such as heart attacks, as if sheer coming out could shock people in a lethal manner (Parkkinen 2003, 63-66, 139). According to these narratives describing shock, anguish and shame, being something other than heterosexual has been, in some instances, seen as a life-ending tragedy. I propose that such negative affects were also at play in Lauri's guilt, which had had long-lasting effects on his life. He had, for example, ended up processing the guilt and his parental losses with therapists for two decades. At the time of the interview, the guilt had finally started to ease up.

To understand the power of disapproving family members to affect LGBTQ people, particularly in bereavement, I return to feminist affect theories focusing on the family's central role in the fantasies of the good life (Berlant 2011; Ahmed 2010). As argued by Ahmed (2010), families (understood here in a traditional sense as families of origin or nuclear families) are sticky with positive affects linking them with happiness. Thus, choosing a different strategy than enduring disapproval within such a family, such as cutting off contact or not caring about the disapproving attitudes, can be difficult or even affectively impossible in a social world where being in contact with, and preferably being close to, one's family of origin forms an

integral part of what is generally considered to be the good life. Indeed, similar findings of LGBTQ people adjusting to the complicated or even condemning reactions of their families of origin to preserve such family relations are presented in earlier Finnish studies as well (Suoranta 2006; Ketokivi 2009a). Ketokivi (2009a, 55) has pointed out that although disapproving family relations cause emotional pressure, individuals may feel social pressure to keep holding on to these relations.[53] Believing that the relationship might improve one day and agreeing to maintain silence over 'difficult topics' might be an emotionally easier approach than cutting off contact altogether or continuing to discuss the matter repeatedly, thus renewing the conflict and family drama. This pattern can be understood as holding on to cruel optimism, which Berlant (2011, 27) has defined as 'the affective attachment to what we call "the good life", which is for so many a bad life that wears out the subjects who nonetheless, and at the same time, find their conditions of possibility within it'. Because of the simultaneous experience of wearing out, hoping for the better and seeing one's conditions of possibility within the relationship structure that causes the wearing out, caring about and being affected by what one's family of origin thinks is not necessarily a conscious choice, nor is it a matter where one necessarily has options to choose from. Rather, such situations are affected by the social and cultural structures in which such family relations are often prioritised over other types of social bonding.

Although complicated situations in families of origin can be endured – and conflicts can be mitigated or hidden through silence and non-communication – when all the involved parties are alive, the stories discussed above reveal how distressing these situations may end up becoming for LGBTQ people when a member of their family of origin dies. The interviewees who had experienced losses of this kind found themselves in situations where they grieved not only the loss itself but also losing the ability to ever openly discuss about their lives with the lost family member – or even finding out what the lost person had actually thought about them while being alive. This had complicated the interviewees' losses within their families of origin in considerable, affective ways.

3.3   The Variety of Closets

Based on earlier studies of queer widow(er)hood described in section 3.1, it would be easy to argue that being out as an LGBTQ person is always a protection against the disenfranchised grief or ungrievability followed by a closeted life. However, this

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53   As Ketokivi (2009) has pointed out, this applies not only to LGBTQ people but also to all adult children and their parents who have, for different reasons, confrontational or estranged relationships.

kind of statement would not take into account the complexities of queer and trans lives – or the fact that 'being out' does not necessarily mean that other people accept this information and are willing to acknowledge it, as I have pointed out in the previous section. Following this thought, I argue that there are various kinds of closets or closet-like phenomena, which complicate the lives of bereaved LGBTQ people even when they consider themselves as out. Next, I focus on transparent closets and family closets, as named and defined by sociologists Alenka Švab and Roman Kuhar (2005; 2014). As I suggest here, the varying logics of the closets, operating especially within the family of origin, affected the interviewees particularly when losing same-sex partners or ex-partners to death.

Examples of silent reactions presented in the previous section largely follow the idea of the transparent closet. Such closets appear through silence and discomfort around different kinds of non-normativities in queer and trans lives, such as those related to sexual orientation, gender or relationships: although the issue is known, it is neither mentioned nor discussed any further (Švab & Kuhar 2014, 19). In this way, such matters become a public secret, usually a family secret, because – as Švab and Kuhar point out – the context in which transparent closets most commonly appear is the family of origin. Transparent closets may manifest themselves, for example, as demands not to bring the issue up again 'for the sake of peace in the family' or not to bring a same-sex partner to family events (Švab & Kuhar 2005, 85).

Although the interviewees stated that they lived their lives out of the closet, their narratives contained frequent descriptions of silence and silencing also beyond coming out moments, especially when they had lost same-sex partners or ex-partners to death. The transparent closet had manifested most severely in the life of Hannu, a gay man in his fifties, who had originally come out to his family of origin as a young man in the 1980s. His family had met his disclosure with anger and disappointment, and his father and brother had even forced him to break up with his lover of the time. The relationship between Hannu and his family of origin had been difficult ever since. Although Hannu generally seemed to be rather indifferent regarding his family of origin, he still held on to these relations and had allowed them to affect his life choices: for example, he preferred long-distance relationships, which he was able to keep away from his family's eyes. When Hannu's long-term, long-distance partner Juha died in the 2010s, Hannu did not share the news of his passing with his family of origin and did not invite them to the funeral. Although he was regularly in touch with his family of origin, he left his loss and grief unmentioned:[54]

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54 In Hannu's story, the transparent closet was something that both parties constructed and actively kept up. In this sense, my reading of transparent closets slightly differs from the original idea of Švab and Kuhar (2005). Instead of being something that only the family of origin creates and maintains by remaining silent about queer and trans

VA: How about now after Juha's death, have you told your family members about it?

HANNU: Well, I guess they… have somehow realised it, because… I have been more at home.

VA: But they did not support you then?

HANNU: No. And I didn't long for that either, so…

What is worth noting in Hannu's narrative is how he explicitly denies expecting, or wanting, support from his family of origin in his loss. In contrast, what I as an interviewer expected, based on his active relationship with the family, was that Hannu would get something out of this relationship, too. (Moreover, I expected that this 'something' would be support following the loss of his partner.) This, however, conflicted with the way Hannu himself saw his family of origin. Contrary to my discussion on holding on to conflictious family relations as a form of cruel optimism, there seems to be no optimism in Hannu's story. When making sense of Hannu's familial relationships and his willingness to maintain them despite the condition of silence and the requirements of hiding this posed on him, I propose that this can be understood as an affective obligation, a term that I borrow from sociologist and anthropologist Pierre Bourdieu (1996, 22). To consider the family of origin, even when it is unsupportive and condemning, as an affective obligation is to see it as something that one cannot get rid of, or challenge, even if one has to actively hide parts of one's life from them to let the relationship continue without conflicts. Within such a context, Hannu's loss can, indeed, be seen as ungrievable (Butler 2004a).

The transparent closet was also present, although more discreetly, in the story of Reino, a gay man in his seventies. Reino had been together with his ex-partner Erkki for two decades. Although their romantic relationship had eventually ended, they had continued living together in a co-owned apartment. Reino explained that the homosexual nature of their relationship had gradually become understood within both his and his ex-partner's families of origin through tacit acknowledgement (Glackin & Higgins 2008), similar to Jarkko's coming out story described in the previous section. For example, his ex-partner had always accompanied Reino in family gatherings. Even though they had had seemingly separate rooms in their apartment – a practice of concealment that may be used to hide the homosexual nature of the relationship from the relatives (Heikkinen 1999, 133) – Reino considered it to be self-evident that his relatives knew that Erkki had been his partner. However, there was a strong habit of remaining silent about their relationship within

lives, I argue that LGBTQ people may also participate in creating the transparent closet by agreeing to this silence. Instead of passive conformity, this can be a consciously made decision and a coping strategy (see also Watson 2014, 112).

his family of origin, which he felt sorry for. This silence became even more poignant after his ex-partner died:

> REINO: I didn't actually receive any kind of support from the kin then.
> VA: Did you tell your relatives that Erkki was dead?
> REINO: Yeah, yeah. They knew about it.
> VA: How did they react to it back then?
> REINO: Well, there was actually no reaction. I don't remember anything else but my cousin calling me, I guess it was soon after the death, and she yelled, like: 'I thought that you are dead'! I said: 'No, I'm not dead, Erkki is dead'; I told her that then. And then she kind of fell silent. We don't call each other that often, I don't know why. We have never had that kind of a habit. Maybe it is also somehow… related to this… behaviour that I have.

It remained unclear why the cousin thought Reino had died,[55] but after hearing that someone actually was dead – and that this someone was Reino's ex-partner – the cousin fell silent. Reino interpreted this silence to be related to a larger lack of communication between him and his kin, which he believed to stem from his homosexuality (euphemistically referred to as 'this… behaviour that I have'). Although it is not possible to know based only on Reino's story what his relatives actually knew or thought about the situation, the silence following the loss suggests that the relationship between Reino and Erkki was not an entirely neutral matter to them. Even if they would have considered Reino and Erkki to be friends, it would have been polite to give their condolences. It seems, thus, that the silence around the nature of the relationship transformed into silence around Reino's loss, which the relatives did not necessarily know how to define.

Other older gay men in my study also described their homosexuality as something they expected their families of origin to know, even though it was not directly discussed that much. Remaining silent also usually meant that they did not encounter direct discrimination or homophobia. Veikko, who strongly wondered why anyone would feel the need to be closeted, recalled that his relationship with his partner Matias was seen as 'so normal, so ordinary and so familiar' by all his and his partner's relatives that it caused no problems. According to Veikko, the lack of confusion around it made it feel like a marriage or a registered partnership – in a time when neither of these was legally possible for same-sex couples in Finland. However, it became clear elsewhere in the interview that Veikko realised that his

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55 At the time of the interview, I did not realise to ask a clarifying question regarding the cousin's surprising comment. Retrospectively thinking, it is possible that the cousin's comment was meant to be a joke after not hearing from Reino for a while.

homosexuality was not an easy thing to discuss for his father, who he described as emotionally withdrawn. As a consequence, Veikko dearly appreciated it when his father broke the silence to state a few kind words about Matias after he had passed away because of AIDS in the late 1990s:

> VEIKKO: And dad said at some point, maybe it was after the funeral when I came to visit, that… that Matias had been nice, and it had been nice to talk to him. And when dad is, after all, from a different generation and… he had come to eastern Finland as an evacuee,[56] and he himself said about my gay friend that he had been nice to chat with and he was such a nice lad, so, so those kinds of memories will keep me warm for the rest of my life.

What is interesting in Veikko's narrative above is the underlying expectation that behind the silence, his father might be disapproving towards Veikko's same-sex partner owing to the generation gap and his father's personal history, which greatly differed from Veikko's own. Compared with this presupposition, his father saying something nice about Matias, even in the most casual way, had a great emotional significance for Veikko: he was acknowledged as a gay man who had lost his partner and met with warmth by his distant father, even just this one time. The significance of his father's comments can be interpreted in terms of the affective power of families and the importance of being acknowledged and recognised within one's family of origin as who one is.

Another example of variations of closets that came up in the interviewees' narratives is the family closet. According to Švab and Kuhar (2014, 19), coming out functions like a contagion: when LGBTQ people come out to their families of origin, the families need to decide with whom else within their larger social networks they should share this new piece of information. Steven Seidman (1998, 187) has named the same phenomenon as the reproduction of the closet: the act of coming out reproduces the condition of the closet for someone else. If the family of origin has a difficult time accepting the sexuality, gender or relationship of their family member, they may wish to remain in the family closet and not to tell anyone else about it. In this way, they may end up hiding things from relatives, friends, co-workers and other acquaintances. The decision to remain in the family closet could be a result of negative affects, such as shame and uneasiness, circulating in a society in which

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56   By referring to his father as an evacuee [*evakko*], Veikko indicates that his father had lived in Karelia, an area between Finland and Russia that ended up being on Russia's side of the national border after the Winter War in 1939–1940 and the Continuation War in 1941–1944. The wars resulted in over 400 000 Karelians evacuating into Finland (Jarva 2014).

homophobia and transphobia as well as heteronormative and cisnormative expectations are common. This may also lead to gatekeeping, in which family members ask the person not to share the details of their life with others (Švab & Kuhar 2014, 19-20, 28; Seidman 1998). Family closet is also closely related to the act of closeting (Juvonen 2015, 20), in which others non-consensually hide information of the people who aim at living their lives as non-heterosexual or transgender as openly as possible.

In the case of transgender people, like Tiina, the family's wish to keep the issue hidden may mean that they try to prevent the person from starting the gender reassignment process. Tiina had come out to her wife as a transwoman in the 1970s, but the wife, Kaarina, had regarded her gender only as transvestism or 'a sexual hobby'. Although Tiina was able to live as a woman 'part time'[57] with her wife's acceptance and support, Kaarina wanted to keep the doors of the family closet closed. As a consequence, Tiina was neither able to come out more widely nor able to begin the gender reassignment process prior to Kaarina's death in the early 2010s. Thus, Tiina had lived a semi-closeted life for over 40 years, with only a selected few knowing about her gender. Even her daughter did not know about it because Tiina's long-term family friends had advised her not to tell her.[58] Before the death of her wife, however, Tiina gradually began to alter her looks: she had started hormone treatment[59] and regularly wore makeup and nail polish not only in private but also at work, with otherwise masculine outfits. When Kaarina died owing to a long-term illness, Tiina decided that the time had finally come to begin the gender reassignment process and to come out to her complete social network. First, however, she decided to fulfil the demands of the family closet one more time at Kaarina's funeral, where she wore men's suit and dropped all femininity from her looks. Being halfway out of the closet was met, however, among Tiina's relatives and friends with uneasiness, which created an atmosphere full of tension at the funeral. One of the gatekeepers was, this time, her daughter:

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57   The discourse of living as a certain gender either 'part time' or 'full time' is often used when describing the lives of transgender people (e.g. Fabbre 2014). However, it can also be seen as problematic in terms of questioning the authenticity of gender, as if being of a certain gender would depend only on the way one dresses and not on the internal reality of the person in question. Here, however, living as a woman 'part time' was Tiina's own choice of words.

58   This example shows how unofficial family, such as close friends, may also participate in creating or maintaining the variety of closets. However, because the examples of transparent and family closets most often appeared in the context of families of origin or official families, my analysis is more focused on them.

59   Hormone treatment is tied to the gender reassignment process and thus controlled by medical gatekeepers in Finland. Tiina, however, had acquired her estrogen treatment from a gynaecologist while living abroad.

> TIINA: I assumed, assumed that… at the funeral it would have been a more
> sympathetic atmosphere on behalf of close relatives and well, close friends, who
> were there. So, it was, it was like mostly formal and fearful, because I had
> already started, I had already half a year ago, after all, I had had gel manicure
> and well, I used mascara every day and so on, so… So, even though I was
> wearing the norm- normal men's dark suit there, so I didn't go to my wife's
> funeral in a women's black suit and high heels. It was my daughter's wish. And,
> and a bi- a bit of that was my own thinking as well, because it was not such a big
> deal to both of us, after all, because it was a bigger thing to me than to my wife.

At the time of the funeral, the long-kept secret of Tiina's gender was no longer
entirely hidden, leaving Tiina into a liminal space, in which she chose to postpone
her coming out a little longer but in which people behaved suspiciously towards her
because of her previously perceived gender non-conformity. I read Tiina's decision
to dress up in men's clothing at her wife's funeral as a form of affective obligation
(Bourdieu 1996): remaining in the family closet until the funeral was over was not
necessarily something that she would have wanted to do herself but which she felt
obliged to do because of the normative expectations of her late wife, her daughter
and the larger network of friends and relatives.

The family closet may manifest itself in relation to not only a non-normative
sexuality, gender or relationship but also other issues that are seen as somehow
shameful within the family of origin, such as AIDS. As John M. O'Brien et al. (2002,
323) have noted, dying of AIDS has been particularly stigmatised, especially in the
1980s and 1990s in the USA. In their study, gay men stated that being out about
AIDS was not wise if they wanted to keep their jobs, friends and families. In my
study, people who discussed their experiences with AIDS in Finland – all of whom
were gay men (or, in the case of Lauri, identified so at the time) – raised similar
concerns. For them, however, secrecy in relation to AIDS was not something they
chose but something that was expected of them by someone else. Hannu, who had
lost many friends and acquaintances to AIDS in the 1980s, recalled that these losses
had included a considerable amount of secrecy concerning the true cause of death.
According to him, it was the families of origin of the deceased who considered it
shameful to die of AIDS or, as also could be the case, by suicide following the AIDS
diagnosis. For Hannu, the secrecy, stigmatisation and keeping the cause of death in
the closet appeared as an extra burden. He and his friends also had to worry about
whether they were welcome to participate in such funerals, which were organised by
the relatives of the deceased. Hannu's experiences in the 1980s in Finland resemble
the experiences of gay men in Sweden during the same era, which have been studied
by Svensson (2007). Svensson has noted that especially in the beginning of the
epidemic, families of origin often wanted to keep AIDS and the homosexuality of

their sons a secret. As a result, gay men who died of AIDS were often taken by their families of origin to be buried in their hometowns, without inviting friends or partners to the funerals and without mentioning AIDS as the cause of death (Svensson 2007, 107-112; see also Crimp 1989).

Veikko, too, found himself in a new kind of closet when his partner Matias was diagnosed with HIV in the late 1980s. Because Matias demanded that no one should know about his disease, Veikko spend the next seven years being the only one who knew about the diagnosis and could support him. According to Veikko, it had been 'the most horrible time' because of all the secrecy. After much persuasion, Matias finally agreed on sharing the information with his and Veikko's families of origin, who seemed to take the news of the disease rather well. Veikko did not experience secrecy or disenfranchisement on the part of Matias's family of origin in terms of his illness and death, making his experience of losing a partner to AIDS very different than those described by Svensson (2007). However, after the loss in the late 1990s, Veikko again found himself in a situation in which someone else wanted him to stay quiet about the stigmatised disease. This time it was his mother, who strongly disagreed with Veikko's decision to use his experiences of an AIDS-related loss as material for his art project. A public representation of grief after losing a gay partner to AIDS was difficult to bear for Veikko's mother, who had previously been very proud of Veikko's artistic career and who had seemed (after an initial shock following Veikko's coming out in the 1970s) to accept Veikko's homosexuality and his relationship with Matias quite well. However, Veikko's decision to create the art project despite his mother's concerns caused a rupture in their relationship:

> VEIKKO: And then I said: 'Come on, you have known about Matias's disease for four years, you have been to his funeral, you have known about my homosexuality for twenty years. If you cannot accept me the way I am, you do not have to accept me at all.' And then I hung up on her. And it was followed by two years of silence.

Veikko's story is an example of how homosexuality and other stigmatised issues, such as AIDS, can be at the same time accepted within the family context and unaccepted when they are made visible to a larger public. The persistence of Veikko's mother's anger towards Veikko's decision to go public with his experience of loss illuminates how important the illusion of the closet can be to the family of origin and how strongly ashamed the family members may be about the issues they seem to accept as long as they remain within the family context. Although Veikko chose to cut off contact with his mother instead of listening to her disapproving comments, letting her die without reconciling with her was something that he did not wish to happen. They finally reconciled a year before her death.

Here I have argued that the unwillingness of families of origin (and in some cases, other official or unofficial family members as well) to talk about different kinds of non-normativities related to queer and trans lives had created a variety of closets in the interviewees' lives. In particular, when losing same-sex partners or ex-partners, this could enhance the ungrievability of such losses within their families of origin. In such cases, the silence around the relationship could turn into silence around the loss. The logics of the closet complicated the interviewees' lives in bereavement also in other ways, as seen in Tiina's story of having to attend her wife's funeral in a men's suit and Veikko's story of his mother trying to make him hide his AIDS-related loss. Therefore, I argue that bereaved LGBTQ people may be in different contexts and in different ways affected by the varying logics of the closet, regardless of their personal aspirations of being out.

3.4   Coming Out after the Loss

Next, I discuss how the logics of the closet resulted in various kinds of coming out moments following the loss. In my analysis, coming out is not limited to coming out with one's family of origin, friends or people in the workplace, as it is commonly framed in earlier studies of queer widow(er)hood. Instead, following Sedgwick's (1990) idea of 'the deadly elasticity of heterosexist presumption', I call attention to the various situations in bereavement in which this presumption was made and bereaved LGBTQ people had explicitly to challenge it. The heterosexist or heteronormative presumptions, alongside cissexist and cisnormative presumptions (Nord et al. 2016), suggest that everyone a person ever meets is heterosexual and cisgender, although this is not always the case (see also Lehtonen 2003). As Ahmed (2014, 148) has argued, this kind of normativity acts as a 'form of public comfort' for those who fit in it but creates discomfort for those who do not. In the interviewees' stories, these moments were often related to meeting relatives at funerals and encountering different types of professionals such as morticians, priests and bank and insurance clerks, who meet bereaved people as a part of their profession.

As Kuhar (2011) has pointed out following Foucault's analysis of power and mechanisms of control, wide-reaching normative presumptions of gender and sexuality function as a heteronormative panopticon (and cisnormative panopticon, as I would add), creating hidden control mechanisms and making LGBTQ people self-control and self-police their behaviour in both private and public contexts to get along in a heteronormative and cisnormative society (see also Švab & Kuhar 2014, 22). Presupposing everyone to be straight and cisgender is often defined as a classic example of microaggressions encountered by LGBTQ people, meaning subtle, common and ignorant comments or expressions that are derogatory towards a certain

minority, even if the intention of the speaker is not to be offensive (e.g. Sue 2010; Platt & Lenzen 2013; Haines et al. 2018).[60] To give a truer account of oneself, or to point out the harmful nature of such normative presumptions, requires repetitive coming out in various situations with various people. One may, of course, also decide not to openly question the normative assumptions made of oneself and thus remain closeted in some contexts, even if one is out in others. This can function as a strategic tool of self-protection (Bacon 1998; Pakkanen 2007a) or stem from the exhaustion felt at the face of continuous coming out, wherein coming out to strangers one is not likely to meet again may seem unimportant. Thus, the outness of 'out' LGBTQ people is likely to be context-depended and strategic instead of absolute and never-changing.

In the interviewees' stories, coming out after the loss of their meaningful other was most often linked to coming out to not-so-close relatives and unknown professionals. There was, however, one notable exception. This was the story of Tiina, who had come out as transgender to her entire social network following the death of her wife. In previous research, the coming out of this kind has been considered particularly difficult because it is done in a moment when the person is already in a vulnerable position because of bereavement (Fenge 2014; Jenkins et al. 2014; Smolinski & Colón 2006). However, as Whipple (2006) has pointed out, depending on the situation, it can also be a bittersweet relief. This is especially the case when the deceased person has been the one who has prevented or complicated the decision of coming out. In Tiina's case, the loss can be regarded, as Whipple (2006) has put it, a 'mixed blessing': although she felt immensely sad about the death of her wife, she was relieved about the possibility to make her future decisions based only on her own needs and wishes. Tiina explained her previous life, which was controlled by the family closet, in the following way:

> TIINA: [Starting a life of my own] was not possible, possible in that time when we were, were in a relationship. So, it wasn't possible to have such a perfect life that I have now, like, like I have this so-called personal freedom… to dress how I like, the way I find right, to use makeup the way I like, to meet people who I like to meet and so on. So, it was always… of course in a relationship it is more about us. That's why the relationship exists.

60   The term microaggression has been used in this meaning when referring to the casual derogation faced by multiple socially marginalised groups, including not only LGBTQ people but also racialised minorities and people who are disabled, for example (Sue 2010).

According to Tiina, the years after the loss had been the best time of her life, despite the fact that coming out as transgender had broken some of her relationships. It had created a temporary rupture into her relationship with her daughter, who cut off all contact with her for three months. Later, however, the positive attitude of Tiina's grandchildren changed the attitude of her daughter, and they started getting along even better than before. On the contrary, the friends who had already known about Tiina's gender for decades never really accepted her decision to come out more publicly and to finally transition. After realising this, Tiina stopped being in contact with them. Luckily for Tiina, other people in her life had been very supportive, and she made new close friends by being an active participant in LGBTQ events and online communities. For her, the loss of her wife thus signified a beginning of a new life outside of the family closet.[61]

Coming out after the loss was directly related to the idea of the family closet in other narratives as well. Although the interviewees did not see themselves as closeted, most of them had not disclosed the details of their lives to all of their relatives. The members of their families of origin, to whom they had intentionally come out to, had not always done that either. This was made possible by the fact that many of the interviewees had moved away from their childhood hometowns, usually from rural areas to larger cities. The interviewees' life trajectories thus often followed the pattern of queer urbanisation (Weston 1995b)[62] but also the general pattern of increased migration from rural to urban areas in Finland (e.g. Tervo 2005). Migration to an urban space – or, as sometimes was the case, from an urban to a rural space – and the geographical distance that followed made it possible for the family of origin to maintain a family closet in interviewees' hometowns. Moreover, by living elsewhere than one's relatives, it was possible for the interviewees to have only minimal contact with them and to follow, more or less, what Peter Davies (1992, 79-80) has called the strategy of compartmentalisation, where some people know the details about their lives and others do not (see also Lehtonen 2003, 153). However, family events such as funerals were a venue where such compartmentalisation no longer worked.

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61   I have analysed Tiina's story in greater detail elsewhere, focusing on the themes of the good life, life course and queer time (Alasuutari 2017a).

62   Previous research has noted that LGBTQ people often move to cities because living queer and trans lives is considered to be easier and to offer more possibilities in urban space than in rural settings (Weston 1995b). Queer urbanisation and the research focus on urban queers has been criticised, for example, by Marple (2005) and Sorainen (2014), who have argued that the focus on urban queers renders rural queers invisible, idealises urban spaces and enforces the narrative of a compulsory migration to cities to live a satisfactory life as a queer or trans person.

As pointed out by Ramona Faith Oswald (2002), who has studied LGBTQ people's experiences in rural family weddings, LGBTQ people may feel estrangement and discomfort when participating in family rituals, especially if they feel invisible and closeted in them. Whereas it is possible to skip other family events and celebrations to avoid inconvenient contact with relatives, not participating in a funeral is considered ill-mannered behaviour, given its nature as the last possibility of saying goodbye and paying respects to the deceased (Woodthorpe & Rumble 2016). Moreover, as it is often emphasised in grief literature, participating in the funeral is seen as an integral part of coming to terms with loss for the bereaved person themselves (Doka 2002a, 9). Thus, attending the funeral can be regarded as affectively important both in terms of saying goodbye to the lost meaningful other, and in terms of kinship, as an affective obligation to be present in a farewell ritual with one's relatives.

In Finland, funerals are usually family events, to which a larger network of relatives, such as aunts, uncles and cousins, are traditionally invited (Pulkkinen 2016, 182; Pajari 2014). Given the strong representation of relatives among funeral guests, some of whom the LGBTQ people attending the funeral may not have met for years or decades, funerals are a potential venue for conflicts within family closets. If information regarding someone's non-normative sexual orientation, gender or relationship has not been shared with the larger network of relatives, it may come as a surprise to them during the memorial service. As Oswald (2002, 333-341) has pointed out in her study of weddings, the invisibility of LGBTQ people can be broken by different forms of resistance in family events, such as subverting heteronormative traditions (e.g. women dancing with women instead of men) or direct verbal disclosures. I propose, however, that coming out in family rituals can also be a spontaneous result of not actively hiding oneself or one's life. For example, in case of transgender people like Tiina, relatives may meet the person for the first time mid- or post-transition at the funeral of a shared family member. Likewise, in the case of people belonging to sexual minorities, the relatives may be for the first time introduced to someone's same-sex partner in a funeral setting.

In my study, funerals were indeed a site for spontaneous moments of coming out. It was not necessarily planned; instead, it happened when the interviewees realised that some of their relatives had not known certain aspects of their lives before the funeral of a shared family member. Therefore, having to come out to one's relatives at funerals was also experienced by those LGBTQ people who had lost a parent, grandparent or other relatives and not just by the people who had lost a same-sex partner. According to some of the interviewees' stories, avoiding coming out after the loss could be impossible if one was going to attend the funeral and did not want to start actively hiding one's life, relationships or oneself. Jarkko, for example,

described in the following way how people behaved after finding out about his homosexuality at his mother's funeral, where he was accompanied by his partner:

> JARKKO: I remember that there were some relatives and mom's old friends to whom the thing came out as a piece of news there at the funeral, that this person has that kind of a man there. So well, I remember that although it is easy, easy in a normative world to talk about a girlfriend and a wife and so on… So, then they used these exaggerating… characterisations. Like… 'Jarkko's life partner and soulmate'. They mean well but in a way that… Keep calm people! This cannot be that weird. *laughs*

Even though the funeral guests had good intentions and aimed at respectful behaviour towards Jarkko and his partner, the exaggerated politeness made it clear that encountering a same-sex couple was, after all, something unusual to them. If not familiar with LGBTQ issues, finding out about a same-sex couple could also be a cause for gossiping for relatives. Inka, a bisexual woman in her forties, and her late wife Tepa came out in a similar manner at Tepa's funeral. The funeral was held in Tepa's childhood hometown in a rural area and most of the funeral guests were her relatives. Before registering her partnership with Inka, Tepa, who also was bisexual, had been married to a man and had two children from that relationship. Whereas everyone among her relatives had known about the ex-husband and the children, many of the relatives had not known that she had a new, female partner. The confusion and gossiping about Tepa's family relations began already prior to the funeral, when her death notice was published in the local newspaper:

> INKA: And, indeed, when we were standing there [by the grave] and there was like [the ex-husband] and me and the boys, so of course these relatives wondered – and apparently it had been talked about already around the town – because in this death notice, because there is this specific order how family members are expressed there. So, I was, I was of course the first [mentioned] there. And then there was, maybe it was [the ex-husband] on the next line, and then the boys. And then of course… [Tepa's cousin] had indeed heard [gossiping] at the hairdresser or somewhere, like: 'What on earth, what did that mean? Why were the names put like that? Who, who was that woman there'?
> VA: Did people know about your relationship there?
> INKA: Well, the people in the town of course did not know.
> VA: Not in the town, no.
> INKA: Because we did not have any official, because we did not have our wedding there, so the information did not reach them through any ritual. So yeah,

and I guess some relatives knew and some did not and some then asked and wondered and so on. *laughs*

Inka reacted to the relatives' confusion and curiosity with humour. Later, when the guests entered the memorial service venue, Inka greeted them by the gate with Tepa's cousin, with whom she had organised the funeral. By taking the position traditionally reserved for the widow in the death notice, at the funeral and in the memorial service, Inka made it clear to the funeral guests by tacit acknowledgement that she was Tepa's widow. This way, the information of their relationship reached the relatives, indeed, through a ritual. No one confronted Inka to enquire about her relationship with Tepa, and no one was disrespectful towards her either. On the contrary, the funeral was a warm and comforting event both for her and the guests, and many had thanked her later for organising the funeral in a way that respected Tepa's personality.

Considering the ease and laughter with which both Jarkko and Inka recounted these experiences, it is worth noting that coming out to one's relatives, or partner's relatives, with whom one does not usually socialise is likely to be emotionally easier than coming out to family members or friends with whom one has a closer emotional bond.[63] What makes, or has the potential to make, coming out difficult is the expectation or fear of disapproval. Thus, I argue that when coming out to someone with whom one is not usually in contact with, a potential disapproval may not have as far-reaching outcomes as when coming out to people with whom one regularly interacts. However, coming out to distant relatives following the loss may be emotionally burdensome as well, especially if the need to come out is repetitive or if the relatives react negatively to this new piece of information. Maria, who had been out as a lesbian to those relatives who mattered to her in her day-to-day life, realised following the death of her father that suddenly she had to be in contact also with other relatives, who had mattered to her father. Moreover, having to be in contact with the relatives did not end with the funeral because the relatives decided to re-establish a more active relationship with Maria after losing her father. They started having constant contact with her, wanting to get to know her better. By doing so – and by having heteronormative expectations regarding Maria's life – the relatives constructed a new closet around her:

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63   According to previous research, it is indeed coming out to one's family of origin that tends to cause most distress among LGBTQ people (Švab & Kuhar 2014). It is worth noting, however, that coming out is not always difficult, not even among the family of origin, especially in cases where one can safely assume that the response will be positive.

MARIA: But they… hmm. I guess other people are also asked, people who have lost someone, and, and other distant relatives like… 'Well what have you done lately?' and 'Did you ever graduate?' And… 'What do you do for a living?' And… 'Well, do you have a man at home?' And then because I have not participated in it, like… like: 'Yeah, yes, but Johan could not make it [to the funeral] because Johan is, is, now, as a, as a peacekeeper'! Yeah, or something else great or cool. Because I have not participated in that… role… so… then it has just come out.

VA: Mm. What kind of reactions have there been?

MARIA: They have fallen silent. Especially because it has been like… first they lament my father's death… and then… 'Goddamnit, she's a lesbian, so… aa, hmmm, more cake, more cake, goodbye'. Something like that, as difficult as it has been in other conditions. Mainly for older people. Not for everyone, but… [it is] unnecessary.

VA: Yeah.

MARIA: Mm, unnecessary. Somehow.

Maria's story suggests that what appears as a casual chat for people, who live according to the traditions and expectations of the heteronormative and cisnormative world, can be an affectively troublesome situation for those who do not fit in these expectations. Indeed, as Ahmed (2014, 147) has argued, heteronormative (and cisnormative) presumptions strongly direct casual conversations, and people who are oriented differently from the norms may get tired of fighting against them. Such situations accumulate feelings of discomfort, especially when repeated over time. Moreover, such discussions create a situation of sudden tension, where one needs to decide whether to conform to such normative expectations by lying (as Maria jokingly expressed when referring to the possibility of talking to her relatives about Johan, an imaginary husband) or to come out on the spot. When telling her relatives about her life, Maria realised that she could not tell them anything significant if she did not tell them about her ex-wife and her female partner of the time. Even though the relatives in question were not emotionally close to her, Maria found their confusion and judgement to be stressful and upsetting. The need to come out to her relatives caused, therefore, negative emotions in her in times of bereavement.

Coming out after the loss was also linked to professionals such as morticians, priest and bank and insurance clerks, who meet bereaved people as a part of their profession. The heteronormative and cisnormative presumption was prevalent in those encounters, as many interviewees recounted. Contrary to coming out to relatives at funerals, which often happened tacitly through the presence of a partner or through the adaptation of certain positions in established rituals, coming out to professionals required more direct disclosures and active work of breaking down the

walls of normative presumptions. The interviewees also had to calculate the risks and benefits of coming out – and plan how to do it – whenever they met different types of professionals. For example, Mika, a gay man whose live-in partner[64] Tapani had died by suicide, realised the necessity of coming out to professionals multiple times following the loss: when the police came to get his partner's body from their shared apartment, when he tried to get sick leave following the loss, when he visited the mortician's office with his partner's mother, when he was trying to find a priest for the funeral who would be respectful towards sexual minorities and once again when calling the doctor to ask about Tapani's autopsy report, which he had no legal right to receive as he was not part of Tapani's official family. The constant need to explain and re-explain what his relationship to the deceased had been was a stressful process, especially because Mika felt anxious about the possibility that the professionals he met would negatively react to his homosexuality. Even though this had never happened, he described it as emotionally draining to prepare himself for possible negative reactions and to plan ahead for how he would come out to each and every one of them:

> MIKA: But there was always, always… I mean, even though I did not end up in those [homophobic] situations in any way actively, it did not mean that I did not have to always think about it in those situations… I did, every time when I contacted someone, I had to think it through. And like, when I went to the morticians' office and had to express it distinctly to them, so that I will, for sure, get that kind of a priest with whom I won't end up in any kind of situation. So, you have to think about it all the time, and anticipate it. So, in that sense, it would be interesting to talk to people who have experienced it. So, it is like dreary extra stuff in an already difficult situation, that you even have to think about things like that.

As gender studies scholars Marjo Kolehmainen and Tuula Juvonen (2018, 3-4) have argued, people can 'get affected by just the mere anticipation of affective intensity'. Following their argument, I claim that Mika, indeed, had been affected by having to be constantly prepared for the possibility of negative reactions when meeting professionals. I propose that this kind of mental preparation for negative reactions and homophobic or transphobic encounters is to be understood as a form of affective inequality, defined by Kolehmainen and Juvonen (2018, 1) as a subtle form of inequality affectively known in interpersonal encounters. As further argued by Sara

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64   By live-in partners, I refer to partners who live together without being married or in a registered partnership and are thus not officially regarded as spouses. In Finnish, such a partner would be called *avopuoliso*.

Cantillon and Kathleen Lynch (2017, 181), affective inequalities are 'a site of injustice' for those who lack recognition in society. Although affective inequality is subtle and sometimes difficult to detect, it has been argued that examining affects can produce new knowledge on the inequalities of the social world (see also Rodó de Zárate 2015). I argue that, in the context of this study, this kind of inequality is born, in part, from widely circulated heteronormative and cisnormative presumptions, which bereaved LGBTQ people had to challenge whenever meeting professionals.

A similar story of repeated coming out moments was shared by Inka, whose registered partner had died owing to a long-term illness. Inka had to face the confusion expressed by professionals, who tried to fit her and her wife into a heteronormative frame:

> INKA: It was somehow... When you yourself are... when you are in the state of mourning and so very fragile... And then you try to take care of these... obligatory bank matters. And the paper work... even though, even though Tepa did not have that much property, but still there was surprisingly much paper work to deal with. And well... indeed like, well... clearly the initial presumption is of course like this heteronormative.... which is *sighs* maybe in a sense quite understandable, like they didn't, didn't want to offend me in that situation. They just tried to understand what it was about... But still, always the presumption, the presumption that I am someone else than... Tepa's spouse. Like they don't, even though I say it… even if I said it immediately in the beginning like 'my spouse'. Still it wasn't registered [in their minds] what it was about. And then they looked for, and looked for, like 'So, you are like.... What was your relationship to the deceased exactly? So, are you her sister or...'? So, it was somehow... every time very offensive. I mean of course, each time when I explained that 'No, she was my wife, she was my wife'. Then it was like 'Aa'! Then the lightbulb was switched on. But like well, well well... Yeah, that like reoccurred.

Inka's experiences can be understood as an affective form of inequality; however, they can also be seen as microaggressions: as covert and recurring communicative or behavioural forms of discrimination against people in specific, marginalised groups (Platt & Lenzen 2013; Haines et al. 2018). Although microaggressions often are unintentional, they cause feelings of invalidation (Haines et al. 2018, 1139) and can thus be considered to operate affectively. In Inka's case, encounters with professionals were filled with seemingly small acts of ignorance and lack of recognition. Her negative affective reaction grew larger as the situations occurred

more often, and it was intensified by the fact that these encounters occurred 'in the state of mourning', which was an affective state in its own right.

As Mika's and Inka's stories point out, coming out to professionals (sometimes repeatedly) was necessary to be treated the way they wanted to be treated: as the widow(er)s of their partners. However, the need to come out to professionals following the loss was not limited only to LGBTQ people losing a partner. As Jarkko, who had lost his mother and was organising her funeral, described, coming out to professionals may also be necessary when losing someone else, including the members of one's family of origin:

> JARKKO: We of course told the priest that there is this thing that I have a male partner, not a female partner. So that it wouldn't be a surprise. 'Well, okay'. And then he said something very dumb… So, like in that situation it did surprise him, anyhow. So, he said something like this is no problem for him, as 'You probably won't be French kissing there…'. And then, well, I remember this, we are now acquaintances, but then it was from him something like, I don't know what. And well, that phone call ended quite quickly. He called again, a very guilty… and remorseful and apologetic phone call, later that night. Like, 'Oh dear what did I say, I did not mean anything like that and I'm sorry'. And then we continued from there in an ordinary fashion.

Letting the priests know that they were dealing with an LGBTQ person was a common theme in the interviews. In Jarkko's story, the initial disrespectful reaction of the priest shows why coming out to professionals matters: one can never know how they react to people who transgress heteronormative or cisnormative ways of living. In Jarkko's case, the priest, who asked him and his partner not to cause feelings of discomfort for (heterosexual) others at the funeral by showing (queer) intimacy, ended up causing discomfort for Jarkko himself (see also Ahmed 2014, 148). Coming out to priests, in particular, made many interviewees anxious because priests were expected to have, or at least were feared of having, discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTQ people. Although there are people in Christian communities in Finland who either support LGBTQ people or belong to the group themselves, the Church as an institution has a long history of discriminating against them (e.g. Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018). Because of this conflicting relationship, it was important to the interviewees to choose a funeral priest who would be respectful towards them and LGBTQ people in general. Some had chosen a priest who was a relative or a friend or who they otherwise knew beforehand, thus making it easier to guarantee their respectfulness.

For some of the interviewees, finding a suitable priest required a considerable amount of work. One of them was Mika, who was recommended a priest by the

mortician, after which he himself checked the background of the priest online and met him in person before the funeral. Another was Susanna, who wanted to make sure that the funeral priest considered her registered partnership with her late partner Vilja to be a real spousal relationship, comparable to a heterosexual marriage. To test this, she asked the priest if she had given a Christian blessing to their relationship while Vilja was still alive. Blessing a same-sex couple was an act that was considered very controversial and officially forbidden among the Evangelical Lutheran Church at the time.[65] The priest thoroughly contemplated the question before giving her answer:

> SUSANNA: An older female priest answered me the next day… with a long message… It had been a question she had really had to contemplate. And then she called me and said that because she, because there in the countryside in general, she had never had to think about it if she would give a blessing to a female couple. In that time, it was generally talked about a lot, the blessings of female couples and others and then… then she said to me that she thought it over and she came to the conclusion that she would give the blessing. And I had said to [the mortician] that the kind of a priest will not give the funeral blessings to Vilja who thinks that our relationship is not, is not like… somehow real. I mean like real in a Christian sense or something like that.

The hesitation of the priest and Susanna's persistence indicate that the question was not affectively insignificant to either of them. Although not situating herself as a particularly religious person – and defining Vilja as completely non-religious – Susanna desired them to be seen in the church setting as equally valid as heterosexual couples. This desire can be understood as a need to feel included in what feminist anthropologist Gayle Rubin (1993, 13) has called the respected charmed circle of relationships. This charmed circle includes relations that are deemed as 'good, normal, natural' and 'blessed', meaning usually married heterosexual couples. However, Susanna's attitude can also be seen as a resistance against a system in which the presence of the priest at a funeral is taken for granted even when the buried person is someone whom the priest considers to be somehow dishonourable or even sinful. This latter interpretation is reinforced by Susanna's determination to allow the priest to bless Vilja only under her own terms.

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65   In the early 2010s, when same-sex marriage was not yet legally possible in Finland, having a Christian blessing from a priest as a part of a same-sex couple's registration ceremony was the closest thing possible to having a church wedding. Therefore, it also had affective value both to the proponents and opponents of same-sex marriage.

Although many interviewees reported that it was stressful to continuously out themselves and to be wary of negative reactions in the middle of acute grieving, coming out to professionals was also considered necessary to be treated in a respectable manner. Mika described in the following way how he would advise other bereaved LGBTQ people to act when being in contact with professionals:

> MIKA: It might be clearer to yourself as well, if you dare honestly to bring it up. Somehow in that point when the… the grief and the chaos was so strong, it felt like if someone comments on a lot, like on my homosexuality, so… It felt like such a ridiculous idea that I thought that I cannot even be insulted by it, because it feels so outrageous and stupid. So, in that case I would probably have just said 'bye' and gone to the next place. I cannot imagine that something like… If you have to do business with a mortician, a medical examiner, an estate inventory and all this with different officers… for example, so… So, there cannot be an endless amount of people who are so idiotic that I cannot express the situation as it is. So, if there is a singular person who is *laughs* difficult, try not to take it personally but instead move forward. That's what I decided to do beforehand, and luckily, I did not encounter those situations. But I can imagine that those things still happen; Finland is not so advanced and completed yet.

Mika's narrative illustrates a disbelief in the progress narrative that suggests that Finland would be completed in terms of equal treatment of LGBTQ people. At the same time, Mika's narrative shows the double requirement posed on LGBTQ people by a normative society: the requirement to dare to disclose the details of one's life to promote social change, and the requirement to endure whatever reactions this evokes in a not (yet) completed world.

Here I have sought to widen the discussion of coming out in bereavement. I have pointed out that in addition to coming out to the family of origin and close friends, as focused on in traditional coming out narratives, coming out in bereavement can include coming out to relatives at funerals and to different types of professionals, who may react to the situation with confusion and need to be educated about the matter. Although mere confusion and ignorance cannot necessarily be considered discrimination, I have argued that they can be seen as forms of microaggressions (Platt & Lenzen 2013; Haines et al. 2018) and affective inequality (Kolehmainen & Juvonen 2018). As demonstrated by the examples discussed in this section, this can be an additional emotional burden for bereaved LGBTQ people, including stress, fear and frustration. Moreover, these forms of coming out touch all LGBTQ people, regardless of who they have lost, even if they have considered themselves as out prior to the loss.

My arguments in this chapter as a whole have drawn on the idea that closets keep reappearing around LGBTQ people whenever they meet someone new. The logics of the closet had affected the interviewees in times of bereavement in varying ways. Silence, non-communication and different types of closets were typical to the interviewees' experiences with their families of origin both prior to and after the loss. Although silence did not always initially bother the interviewees, it could cause affectively complicated reactions in them when members of the family of origin died, especially if it was revealed after their deaths that the silence had hidden some sort of disapproval. Moreover, the silence around interviewees' same-sex relationships could turn into silence around the loss of the partner, especially within one's family of origin, even when the family had been aware of the partner. The interviewees had also needed to come out in varying situations in bereavement, including coming out to relatives at funerals and to a variety of professionals they met because of the loss. These experiences resulted from the silence and non-communication within the family context as well as from the persistence of heteronormative and cisnormative presumptions in Finnish society at large. These kinds of coming out processes were described as unnecessary but unavoidable burdens in a time that was already considered burdensome because of the loss itself.

4 The Affective Power of Rituals

4.1 Rituals of Death in Finland

> SUSANNA: I don't have [anything] more to say… about the funeral, I guess. There was a catering service that did everything the way I had wished for; they did it very well. In the funeral ceremony itself, I wasn't so much interested in what happens. I didn't even know all those people, because Vilja's relatives, who I had never met, came from… [other part of the country]. What I do remember is that not all of them even came to talk to me. So, they focused on like… Vilja's family [of origin]. And they directed their condolences to them, in a way. At some point, someone said to me like: 'Don't you think that it's very offensive?'. And for a moment I thought that maybe it is a bit offensive, but I don't have the strength to be interested about that. Because I had never met them before, so if they… if they experienced it so that Vilja belonged to them, and I was not, then… Or like, when we organised the funeral, there were a couple of [occasions] in which I wanted to yell to [Vilja's parents] that 'This just cannot go like that'! Mostly to [her mother].

In this chapter, I examine death rituals and their affective power in Finnish society. By analysing personal narratives, Finnish legislation and church guidelines, I present an overview of death rituals in Finland, their written and unwritten rules and LGBTQ people's possibilities of finding their own place within this (often normative) matrix. I further show how the largest religious institution in Finland, the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as well as the official family of the deceased hold a prioritised position in death rituals, in which the bereaved bid farewell to the lost meaningful other in socially shared and culturally guided ways. As anthropological research has illustrated, death rituals greatly vary depending on the cultural, societal and temporal context in which they occur, meaning that they include different rituals in different settings (e.g. Huntington & Metcalf 1979). Here, I focus on the funeral ceremony, the act of burial and publishing a death notice in a newspaper because they most commonly appeared in the interviewees' stories and are, according to previous research, observed to be central in the Finnish culture of death (e.g. Jallinoja 2011;

Pajari 2014).[66] In what follows, I argue that the laws of the state and the guidelines of the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church maintain traditional death rituals and thus build on, and further enhance, normativity around meaningful relationships and produce hierarchical differentiation between official and unofficial families. This had affected the bereaved LGBTQ people in various ways.

My discussion is focused on the affective intensities evoked in the interviewees by the aforementioned death rituals. These intensities differed depending on both the type of loss and the social and legal recognition of the mourner in question. Although the differentiation between official and unofficial families was central within the legislation and church guidelines, my analysis shows that social recognition did not always follow the same differentiation. For example, as Susanna states in the above narrative, despite being the registered partner and legally recognised widow of the deceased (and thus part of her official family), she was not socially recognised as such by all funeral guests. Susanna's detached reaction when being disregarded by the relatives at her partner's funeral can be described as a flat affect, an underperformance or dissociation of emotion (Berlant 2015; Duschinsky & Wilson 2014). Although she was expected to feel offended by another funeral guest, in that specific situation, she did not 'have the strength to be interested', which points to how exhausting and emotionally loaded situations funerals can be. Under such circumstances, flat affect may function as a form of affective agency: it is not merely a passive lack of feeling but a way of living through an emotionally loaded situation by detaching oneself from it (Duschinsky & Wilson 2014, 186). However, Susanna's affective reaction described in the narrative above is only one among a larger variety of affective responses to death rituals described in the personal narratives of the interviewees. Reactions ranged from flat affect to anger and resentment, but there was also gratefulness and 'curious feelings' of being included, which the interviewees did not always know how to verbalise. Before going deeper into the specificities of Finnish death rituals, their entanglement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church and the affects attached to them, however, I briefly define what I mean by the term ritual in this context and how rituals related to death have been framed both in anthropological research and in bereavement studies.

Within anthropology, rituals are defined as social traditions or rites of passage that take place in events indicating transition and are most commonly linked to

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66   Although the terms funeral and burial are closely linked to each other, I find that differentiating between the two enables a more detailed analysis of them both. Thus, I write about funerals when referring to the ceremony held before burying or cremating the body and burials when referring to the act of burying the body. Although these often closely follow each other, practices of cremation have separated the funeral ritual from the act of burial.

events such as birth, marriage or death (van Gennep 1960; Turner 1979). In terms of death rituals specifically, anthropological research has pointed out that there is an endless variation of these rituals. Moreover, death rituals both shape and reflect the social values of the societies in which they occur (van Gennep 1960, 146; Huntington & Metcalf 1979, 5). In that way, death rituals are very informative about how not only death but also life in general is understood and organised in a given society. As Arnold van Gennep (1960, 147) has argued, death rituals function as a transitional period for the bereaved, during which they participate in 'rites of separation' and 'rites of reintegration into the society', having a liminal space in between them that differentiates the time of mourning from everyday life (see also Turner 1979).

In anthropology, it is also argued that rituals create a sense of belonging and community or, according to Victor Turner's (1969) vocabulary, *communitas*, for people taking part in them (see also van Gennep 1960; McQueeney 2003). For Turner, communitas (derived from Latin) means a community, equality and comradeship taking place in the liminal phase of rituals, thus temporarily freeing individuals from the pressures of social structures (Turner 1969, 108-110). However, as argued by Krista McQueeney (2003), this is not necessarily the case in rituals of contemporary Western societies. As she has pointed out, 'rituals, by their very nature, exalt some values – to the exclusion – of others and may be incapable of meeting every participant's expectations for belonging' (McQueeney 2003, 68). In other words, what creates a feeling of belonging and inclusion for someone in the context of rituals may create a feeling of exclusion for someone else. As I show through the empirical examples in this chapter, the social complexity of rituals and the varieties of emotions they evoked in the interviewees suggest that the death rituals in Finland differentiate between mourners and create hierarchies among them; thus, they do not function as an equal form of communitas described by Turner.

Within bereavement studies, participation in death rituals, particularly in funerals, has been considered important for the coping of the bereaved in a manifold of ways: it is seen to help the bereaved in acknowledging the finality of the loss, to provide a shared venue for mourning, to offer consolation and to give a sense of closure in a socially structured and sanctioned manner. In addition to a mere participation in death rituals, being able to have an active role in planning them has been reported to result in better grief adjustment following the loss (Gamino et al. 2000; Doka 2002b). However, individuals' experiences of death rituals may drastically differ from one another depending on whether they encounter adverse events that create negative emotions when participating in them. According to Louis A. Gamino et al. (2000), these adverse events may include conflicts between mourners, disagreements regarding the burial method, clashes between the wishes of the deceased and the wishes of the bereaved, problems with morticians or priests and financial difficulties in covering the funeral and burial costs. Therefore, in general,

death rituals as highly social and structural events are not free from the conflicts, hierarchies and privileges of the social world. On a societal level, death rituals have been argued to have quite different aims than merely comforting the bereaved, such as maintaining the social order or religious beliefs of a given society (O'Rourke et al. 2011). As pointed out by Doka (2002b), those who are not usually entitled to participate in death rituals or in their planning are the people whose loss and grief have been disenfranchised and whose relationship to the deceased remains, in one way or another, outside the official family structure.

In Finland, the traditional forms of death rituals as well as the official and unofficial family members' place in them are prescribed by both legislation and the guidelines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Despite not being the only possible way of organising death rituals in Finland (e.g. Pro-Seremoniat 2020), the vast majority of funerals, in particular, are conducted according to Lutheran traditions (Høeg & Pajari 2013).[67] This showed in the interviewees' stories as well, wherein the role of the Church was often discussed in relation to death rituals. To deepen the analysis of the personal narratives and to discuss their entanglements with the surrounding society, I examine in this chapter the contents of the two laws that create the legal foundation for death rituals in Finland – namely, the Cemeteries Act (Hautaustoimilaki 457/2003) and the Church Law (Kirkkolaki 1054/1993) – as well as church guidelines that offer guidance for following traditions.

The Cemeteries Act determines the general obligations and principles for burying the deceased. According to its principles, the deceased must be either buried or cremated without an unnecessary delay and the body or ashes of the deceased must be handled in a dignified manner that respects the memory of the deceased (section 1, 2 §). Moreover, the law states that the Evangelical Lutheran Church has the responsibility to maintain public cemeteries according to the declarations of the Church Law (section 1, 1 §; section 2, 3 §). The Church Law (section 17) defines the rules for burial, focusing on issues such as who can be buried in a certain cemetery (2 §), who can be buried with each other in the same grave (4 §) and who has the right to decide about such matters (3 §). In addition to these general principles, since 2004, the Cemeteries Act has had a strong focus on respecting the individuality and worldview of the deceased, and it encourages equal treatment of both members and non-members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church regarding burial places and burial fees (see also Kääriäinen 2011).

Although the changes made in the Cemeteries Act in the early 2000s aim to take into account the individuality of the deceased, the Evangelical Lutheran Church continues having a central role in the death rituals in Finland and maintaining

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67   According to Ida Marie Høeg and Ilona Pajari (2013, 111), 97 % of Finnish funerals were conducted in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in 2011.

homogenous cultural and religious habits related to them. Other religious institutions, such as the Orthodox and Catholic Churches and other religious communities in Finland, as well as non-denominational death rituals and burial places (Pro-Seremoniat 2020; Aurejärvi-Karjalainen 1999) exist; however, they continue having a minor role compared with the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which maintains the vast majority of cemeteries in Finland (Kääriäinen 2011, 159).[68] Moreover, the Church offers instructions regarding funeral etiquette in its guidelines. These guidelines offer a rather strict pattern of death rituals that leaves little or no space for individuality and alterations. Although the church guidelines analysed in this study often resembled one another, highlighting the hegemonic nature of the rules and suggestions they provide for funerals and burials, some of them were more conservative or liberal than others. Throughout this chapter, I return to the contents of the legislation and the church guidelines to offer cultural context for the interviewees' stories.

I examine death rituals in various ways. First, I discuss the role of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finnish society and in the lives of the interviewees. Then, I examine the situations in which the interviewees had felt either included in or excluded from the family of the deceased when taking part in death rituals. Next, I discuss how the interviewees had altered the traditional death rituals and how these alterations had made them (and others) feel. Moreover, I discuss throughout the chapter why the traditional death rituals mattered in the first place – that is, why they caused so strong emotional responses in the interviewed LGBTQ people and other mourners around them – by examining their affective power.

4.2   The Role of the Church

As indicated above, Finnish death rituals are strongly entangled with the institution of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. What makes this entanglement particularly interesting for the present study is both the tense relationship between the Church

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68   In addition to the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Cemeteries Act (section 3, 7 § and 8 §) allows the Orthodox Church of Finland as well as other registered religious communities and other registered communities to maintain cemeteries. However, this has remained as a minor practice. In addition to the Orthodox and Muslim cemeteries in some Finnish cities (which, however, are often designated parts of Lutheran cemeteries), there are ten non-denominational cemeteries in Finland maintained by Freethinkers (Vapaa-ajattelijat 2014). Furthermore, since the renewal of the Cemeteries Act in 2004, the Evangelical Lutheran Church has had the responsibility to maintain non-denominational sections in their cemeteries (Kääriäinen 2011). These sections have not, however, become very popular, presumably owing to the old tradition of family graves and the newer tradition of scattering the ashes in nature (e.g. Serkkola 2015).

institution and the LGBTQ people in Finland in particular (e.g. Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018) and the complicated affective attachments people have to religious rituals in a semi-secular society in general (e.g. af Burén 2015). Here I describe and disentangle this tensity and complexity to contextualise the discussion that will follow. In addition, by exploring the role of the Church in Finland, its relationship with LGBTQ people and my interviewees' worldviews, I contribute to the discussion on the 'messy interstices' of religion in queer and trans lives, which – according to religious and gender studies scholar Melissa M. Wilcox (2019; 2018) – often go unanalysed in queer, trans and religious studies.

Like the other Nordic countries, Finland appears to be a fairly secular country with decreasing church membership rates and a small number of active believers participating in church activities (Hjarvard & Lövheim 2012; Kääriäinen et al. 2005). Although the religious landscape in Finland has traditionally been heavily monopolised by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, during the past decades, the church membership rate has decreased from 90% of the population in the 1980s to 68,6% in 2020 (Tilastokeskus 2016; 2018; Aromaa 2019; EVL.fi 2020), leaving an increasing amount of people outside any religious communities. Moreover, the religious field has become more diverse, for example, because of immigration (Kääriäinen 2011, 155). It has been argued, however, that despite these changes, the Evangelical Lutheran Church dominates the Finnish religious landscape and holds a prioritised position in Finnish society (Nynäs & Lassander 2015, 455). Parents of a newborn child decide whether the child is baptised as a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Therefore, being a member of the Church is more or less a default state for those whose parents are members as well. If an individual is made a member of the Church during childhood, the decision of resignation can be made at the age of 18 or with the permission of one's parents at the age of 15 (The Freedom of Religion Act 2003/453).

Conflicts with the values of the Church, particularly in relation to LGBTQ people, have become increasingly important reasons for church membership resignation throughout the Nordic countries, Finland being no exception (Christensen 2012; Moberg & Sjö 2012; Kääriäinen 2011). In Finland, church membership resignation has continuously peaked following public discussions about same-sex couples and the Church, particularly during the 2010s.[69] Institutional

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69 For example, in 2010, the rights of same-sex couples were discussed in a TV panel titled The Gay Night [*Homoilta*] (YLE 2010), after which nearly 40 000 people resigned their church membership within a month, thus breaking all previous records of church membership resignation in Finland. The mass resignation was inspired by the intolerant attitudes towards sexual minorities expressed in the panel by both the official and unofficial representatives of the Church, which the people resigning did not share and wanted to oppose (Juvonen 2015, 121, 129; Moberg & Sjö 2012, 86; Kääriäinen

intolerance towards same-sex couples has deep roots in the Church: in the past decades, the Church has opposed the decriminalisation of homosexuality (Lehto & Kovero 2010, 286), the law on registered partnership and the law on same-sex marriage (Järviö 2018; Kallatsa & Kiiski 2019; Piispainkokous 2016). At the end of the 2010s, the Church kept debating whether it should marry same-sex couples following the renewed Marriage Act and was unable to make an official decision over the matter (Reinboth 2019; Tsokkinen 2019). Although the public discussion has mostly focused on the rights of same-sex couples, examples of the lack of acceptance regarding transgender people within the Church institution have also been brought to light (e.g. Savon Sanomat 2010; Aalto 2014). Given the current state of affairs as well as the recent history, the relationship between the Church institution and LGBTQ people in Finland can be described as tense. Resigning one's church membership has become one way to deal with this tension.

Gender studies scholar Nina Järviö (2017, 221) has argued that when discussing homosexuality and the Church, it must be noted that the Church is not a 'monolithic institution' that would only disapprove sexual minorities. Järviö has argued, instead, that the religious discourse in Finland around homosexuality and particularly around same-sex marriage is divided into three different voices: the approving one, the opposing one and the neutral one. Although the official stance of the Church institution remains ambiguous, individual priests and bishops may hold differing values and express them in differing ways. There are, for example, priests who fight for inclusion by marrying same-sex couples, sometimes called as rainbow pastors (Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018). These acts of approval, however, have resulted in sanctions on behalf of the Church institution (Rautio 2017; Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018), proving that the official stance of the Church is still far from what Elina Hellqvist and Auli Vähäkangas (2018) have termed as 'fully equal respect' of LGBTQ people. Nevertheless, when discussing the religious discourse regarding LGBTQ people in contemporary Finland, it must be noted that it also varies outside the Church institution itself. There are, for example, forms of religious LGBTQ activism (Nynäs & Lassander 2015) and religious organisations for Christian LGBTQ people, such as Rainbow Association Malkus (Malkus.fi 2018). However, in this study, I focus on the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a legally sanctioned institution, referring to its official statements and guidelines, as well as the Church

2011, 167-168). In 2014, mass resignations followed when the Finnish Parliament voted in favour of legalising same-sex marriage. Although the Church as an institution opposed the change, some of its representatives welcomed it. This resulted in both liberal and conservative people resigning their church membership. In this case, the Church as an institution and Christianity in general were seen either as too condemning or not condemning enough towards sexual minorities (Järviö 2017).

Law. In these documents, the picture of the Church becomes less varied and more monolithic.

Despite – or owing to – the tension between the Church and LGBTQ people, the interviewees in this study had complex and varied relationships with Christianity and the Evangelical Lutheran Church as an institution. Even though it would be temptingly simple to give exact statements regarding their religiosity or non-religiosity, such as 'x % of them were Christians, whereas y % of them were non-religious', this would not give an accurate description of the intricacies and complexities of their worldviews. Only a few interviewees defined themselves as non-religious, secular or atheists, but the number of interviewees who defined themselves as Christians was not higher.[70] Most of them were something in between these two counterparts, and no one explicitly mentioned other religions beyond Christianity. Moreover, words such as religion and religious were far from being simple matters for the interviewees. The complexity of a worldview is described, for example, by Veikko:

> VEIKKO: I have never been like, well maybe religious [*uskonnollinen*][71] to some extent but not churchy [*kirkollinen*]. I hate the Church as an institution. I think it has done so much evil… there is nothing on which account so much evil has been done as is done on the account of Christianity or the Catholic Church. That's why I cannot respect it.

Although Veikko especially referred to the Catholic Church as the historical wrongdoer, he saw the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland as a part of the same continuum. He also made a distinction between being religious or spiritual and being 'churchy', and elsewhere in the interview, he also denied being 'in any way religious'. He had resigned his church membership in the early 2000s.

Nearly half of the interviewees had resigned their church membership because of the conservative and anti-LGBTQ values of the Church. The other half were members of the Church for varying reasons, some of which were more strongly

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70   Moreover, even with such identifications, the interviewees emphasised the ambiguity of their beliefs, describing how their worldview did not always entirely fit in these strict positions.

71   In the Finnish language, a differentiation can be made between *uskonnollinen* and *uskovainen*, both of which can be translated as religious. The latter refers to active devotees of Christianity, whereas the former is a broader way of referring to having (some forms of) religious or spiritual beliefs. None of the interviewees referred to themselves with the word *uskovainen*. Instead, it was sometimes used to describe others.

related to cultural or societal issues than to a religious belief itself.[72] One of the interviewees belonged to another Christian church than the Evangelical Lutheran one,[73] and one did not explicate their worldview or church membership status. The interviewed LGBTQ people who explicitly identified as religious or non-secular and those who participated in church activities pointed out the affective complications related to these co-existing positions. For example, Pirre explained how she had decided not to have relationships with women anymore because of the negative attitudes towards her lesbianism expressed by other people in her congregation in a relatively small city in eastern Finland. For Inka, however, spirituality was an 'unfinished issue' because of the complex relationship between her two social peer groups: the LGBTQ community and the congregation. Contrary to Pirre, she felt that she had to be, in a way, closeted about her spiritual beliefs (which were not, as she explained, simply equated with Christianity or the word religion). Pirre's and Inka's narratives point out that not only non-religious (or not particularly religious) LGBTQ people but also those whose worldviews (more or less) align with Christian beliefs, or who participate in church activities, may have conflicting thoughts about the Church institution. All in all, although LGBTQ people are often considered to be mainly secular and non- or anti-religious, this is not the whole truth (Wilcox 2019), as indicated by the complexity of worldviews of the LGBTQ people interviewed in this study. Although religion has often been disregarded and sometimes even ridiculed in queer studies (e.g. Halberstam 2012),[74] I argue that it needs to be taken into consideration when studying queer and trans lives.

The complexity of the interviewees' worldviews is in line with the research conducted on the religiosity of people living in the Nordic region, in which it has been suggested that the general populations' relationship to Evangelical Lutheran Christianity could be understood in terms of semi-secularity (af Burén 2015) and post-Christianity (Thurfjell 2015). I propose that most of my interviewees fell into these categories as well. What is common to both of these terms is the emphasis on

72   The cultural and societal reasons included an appreciation of the charity work done by the Church or a wish to make the Church institution more inclusionary by changing it from the inside.

73   To enhance anonymity, I do not specify the interviewee or name the Church, the membership rate of which in Finland is small. Because the interviewee in question did not, at the time of the interview, identify as religious and did not participate in the activities of the Church and because the experiences the interviewee recounted were not related to the said Church, I consider it more important to secure the interviewee's anonymity than to include further details into the discussion.

74   Halberstam, for example, has written in his book *Gaga Feminism*: 'When it comes to gender norms and sexual mores, religion really is the root of all evil, and that cuts across many religions… religion is a no-no and God has to go-go' (Halberstam 2012, as quoted by Wilcox 2019).

the notion that although the Nordic countries seem secular on the outside, people in these countries may be culturally or affectively attached to Christian beliefs and traditions, even if they do not necessarily see themselves as Christians. Ann af Burén (2015, 52) has defined semi-seculars as 'people who [are] neither active participants in a religious denomination, nor outrightly hostile or indifferent towards religion'. David Thurfjell (2015), on the contrary, has defined post-Christians as people who avoid calling themselves as Christian, even if they belong to the Christian Church, practice Christian rituals, celebrate Christian holidays and may share some of the Christian beliefs. Both semi-seculars and post-Christians fall between the two extremes of strictly religious and strictly non-religious people, the number of which remains rather low in the Nordic countries, forming a wide and varied middle ground between them.

Semi-secularity also sheds light on what af Burén calls the Swedish paradox (which I argue to also be the Finnish paradox) of people's enthusiasm to participate in Christian rituals at life's turning points, including baptism, marriage and funerals, despite the reported decline in Christian beliefs in Sweden (af Burén 2015, 87). Semi-secularity can therefore also be termed as life-rite-religiosity – a pattern found both in Swedish and Finnish studies – in which the Christian traditions mainly come to matter in the rituals performed at major life events including birth, marriage and death but not necessarily elsewhere in life (af Burén 2015, 87; Kääriäinen et al. 2005; Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018).

In Finland, the phenomenon of semi-secularity is commonly referred to with layman terms *tapauskovainen* [believer out of habit] or *tapakristitty* [Christian out of habit], emphasising that people may remain as members of the Church or participate in its rituals out of cultural habits, even if they do not find the teachings of the Church personally meaningful. It may seem that out-of-habit Christianity is not particularly important to those having these views because the term itself suggests such a worldview to be based on mere habits instead of a strong personal faith or conviction. However, my study offers a different kind of reading. In the interviews, it became clear that this kind of out-of-habitness in terms of Christian death rituals may also cause strong emotional reactions. As I show in the following section, interviewees could, for example, feel intense gratefulness if they felt included in Christian funeral traditions or resentment, sadness and anger if they felt excluded from or marginalised in them. I suggest that this results from the affective power of such traditions, which, in turn, results from the positive affects attached to them.

These affects may include the feeling of familiarity and appropriateness of such rituals or the feeling of comfort produced by such familiarity and appropriateness. Returning to Ahmed's (2010) argumentation on affect explored in chapter 1, I argue that the established role of the Church in rituals related to life-changing events, such

as death, is one of those things that is already 'in place' in Finnish society, guiding the ways people can and will feel and behave. Because of this in-place, it is presupposed that certain rituals, such as funerals, are (and should be) organised according to the established religious traditions. Through the positive affects stuck to a certain ritual that has been set as the norm or an ideal, participating in such a ritual becomes persuasive, whereas deviating from the norm or an ideal becomes less appealing because it is attached with negative affects of deviation. Thus, following established rituals may become, in some situations, emotionally more appealing than abandoning them and inventing new ones.

However, depending on one's position in relation to the Church, religious traditions may create not only comfort but also discomfort. Following Ahmed (2014, 147) further, norms and traditions are comfortable only for those who can fit in them. As I have argued above, what complicates LGBTQ people's relationship with Christian religion in Finland is the 'not fully equal' (Hellqvist & Vähäkangas 2018) attitude the Church as an institution demonstrates towards them. This has the potential to create feelings of discomfort among LGBTQ people in Christian contexts, regardless of their personal worldviews. However, I also suggest that the positive affects attached to the rituals organised by the Church in a semi-secular society further complicate the question of comfort and discomfort. As a result, the rituals of the Church have the potential of creating both feelings of comfort and discomfort among the bereaved LGBTQ people taking part in them, causing affective complications and revealing the affective inequalities (Kolehmainen & Juvonen 2018) working in the background. In what follows, I further explore these complications.

4.3   On Feeling Included/Excluded

In my analysis of the interviewees' stories of death rituals, I particularly focus on the feelings of inclusion and exclusion these rituals created. Both inclusion and exclusion are significantly related to recognition or the lack thereof. As Ahmed (2012, 163) has argued, inclusion can be understood as a 'technology of governance', pointing out how inclusion only works if the people searching for inclusion will consent to the terms of inclusion and be grateful for what they receive as a result. I propose that by studying the affects related to inclusion and exclusion, we can analyse this technology of governance and start understanding why marginalised people may occasionally wish to hold on to the normative structures of the social world – such as traditional death rituals – and search for inclusion within them instead of abandoning them altogether. Although the 'politics of inclusion' have often been criticised in queer theory for leading into assimilation and homonormativity (e.g. Warner 1993; Duggan 2002), I take a different stance,

focusing on why inclusion matters on the level of affects. In what follows, I contextualise the interviewees' stories with earlier studies of death rituals and analyse the longing for recognition in relation to feminist affect theories.

I argue that aiming to achieve a feeling of inclusion through culturally established death rituals can be understood through Ahmed's (2006) idea of 'following lines that are before us'. I read Ahmed's idea of following lines as following the existing pathways formed by established traditions, helpful especially when navigating 'in a strange room' of death (Ahmed 2006, 7-15). Because death is often feared (Stone 2010) and considered 'unknown and ineffable' (Stanley & Wise 2011, 953), having a familiar line or a path to follow in times of bereavement may feel safe. Such lines tell us what to do, offering comforting familiarity. They are tempting because they are easy to follow, and because they are easily followed, they keep existing, thus forming a path well-trodden. As Ahmed has pointed out, lines are created, maintained and made visible by repetition. People are aware of the existence of such lines because the lines stay the same. Another crucial point in Ahmed's argument is that lines are strongly related to norms and normativity. What are repeated by following lines are the norms and conventionalities on which the lines are based (Ahmed 2006, 16). In other words, by taking part in and repeating the death rituals that are considered traditional, one not only follows but also maintains the norms behind them.

Normative lines are also tempting because they work affectively. As Ahmed (2006, 17) has further argued, following lines does promise us something in return by appealing to our emotions. To further analyse what is this something that is promised, I turn to Berlant's discussion on affective attachments. As Berlant (2011; 2012) has argued, people tend to desire conventional things (in Ahmed's vocabulary: to follow lines) because of the promises of social belonging attached to them. In Berlant's argument, a central concept is optimism: people follow lines, or conventionalities, because they feel optimistic about the social or emotional rewards they will bring along. As she has argued, 'the *affective structure* of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way' (Berlant 2011, 2; italics in the original). When applied to death rituals, I argue that in times of bereavement, nearness to traditions can be seen as something that helps us through the strange room of death by offering us a feeling of belonging and inclusion in the social world and also by helping us to domesticate what is strange in death (see also Stanley & Wise 2011). Sometimes, however, this kind of optimism regarding things, like death rituals, that seem to promise something good in return ends up being cruel. As Berlant (2011) has pointed out, such cruel optimism makes people stay attached to things and look for affirmation in places that may not be so promising after all. Hence, I argue,

following both Ahmed and Berlant, that the experienced importance of established death rituals, and the affective reactions caused by being either included within or excluded from them, is to be understood as an affective and optimistic attachment to the conventions that promise social belonging and inclusion, even though this is not always what is achieved as a result.

What the established death rituals promised to the interviewees of this study was, indeed, a feeling of inclusion through recognition. To be recognised meant, for example, that a person who had lost a same-sex partner was treated in the same way as a (heterosexual) widow(er) would traditionally be treated. Recognition in death rituals created positive emotional reactions in the interviewees, such as feeling grateful for the sense of inclusion, belonging and respect received. However, being recognised was not always self-evident in the interviewees' stories, and a lack of recognition or having to negotiate for recognition caused negative emotional reactions. This is demonstrated in Susanna's story of drafting a death notice for her partner Vilja with Vilja's parents. Here, both parties aspired for recognition:

> SUSANNA: We wrote a shared death notice and… [Vilja's father] had written a poem that was included there. But then I would have wanted to stamp my foot on the ground. Mari [the mortician] was with me when we went to [Vilja's parents'] place to write the death notice. I wanted, on my behalf, to put on the notice the same poem by Edith Södergran[75] that is on the front page [of a funeral programme leaflet]. And then… when [Vilja's mother] said that… we were sitting at the dining table and she said that she wants that… their poem is before my poem because they are Vilja's parents. So, in that moment, I… sat there at the table and screamed internally like '[You] fucking lousy hillbilly idiot, it's not going to go like that'. That I was, after all, Vilja's partner.

A death notice [*kuolinilmoitus* in Finnish] is a short announcement, traditionally published in a local newspaper, stating the death of a person and expressing the grief of the mourners who have outlived the deceased. Unlike an obituary [*muistokirjoitus*] that usually includes a biography of the deceased, a death notice is more concise in its form, including only minimum information of the deceased, such as the name, the date and place of birth and death, information about family relations

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75   Edith Södergran (1892–1923) was a Finland-Swede poet who has had, according to Pakkanen (2007b), a great significance in the Finnish lesbian culture with her poems of sisterhood, which offer a possibility for a lesbian reading. Adding her poem in Vilja's obituary can thus be seen as an act that implicitly queers the tradition of death notices by making queer intimacy visible in its domain for those who are aware of Södergran's significance and legacy for the lesbian culture. It can also be considered as an ephemeral form of queer monumentality, discussed later in section 6.3.

and sometimes an occupational title. It also includes a list of mourners and poems or religious hymns describing grief and longing. Contrary to obituaries, which are usually written by the editorial staff, death notices are drafted by the surviving family of the deceased.[76] Death notices, as expressions of private feelings in a public forum, are considered to be at the border of public and private grieving (Linturi 2009, 44). Although the order of names and poems described in the narrative above may seem like a minor issue, Susanna's affective response that manifested in a desire to stamp a foot, to scream and to swear when having to negotiate about her position demonstrates what a delicate and deeply emotional matter it can be. Compared with the flat affect Susanna demonstrated at the funeral, described in the beginning of section 4.1, this time her reaction could be described in terms of anger and being offended. Similarly, the fact that Vilja's mother wanted the parents' poem and names to be listed first in the notice signifies that it was not an affectively insignificant issue for the mother either.

To understand the affective reactions described above, I return to Ahmed's idea of lines. As observed by sociologist Riitta Jallinoja (2011), there are strict traditions – or lines, as Ahmed would call them – describing how and in what order mourners are to be mentioned in death notices in Finland. Traditionally, 'the spouse appears first, after this the children, then grandchildren (or parents and grandparents), siblings, aunts, uncles, nephews, nieces and cousins' (Jallinoja 2011, 81). In Eva Reimers's (2011) terms, the person mentioned first is considered the primary mourner of the deceased. According to traditional lines, parents come first only for those who do not have a partner or children. Hence, Susanna's desire to be mentioned first in the death notice is to be understood as a desire to be socially recognised as her partner's partner and widow and therefore as the primary mourner. For her, it was a question of being publicly included in Vilja's family. Not being mentioned first would have implied that her coupledom with Vilja was not socially recognised. Thus, being legally recognised as Vilja's partner and being included in her official family was not in itself emotionally rewarding without having social recognition as well, made public through the conventions of a death notice and other rituals.

Wanting to follow the line that defines traditional death notices thus means wanting to be included in one's place in the normative hierarchy of mourners. Although this kind of practice means adhering to norms, it makes the relationship publicly visible in a way that promises, in return, feelings of validation, inclusion and social belonging. As discussed earlier in chapter 3, this was the case with Inka, who was mentioned as the primary mourner in her wife's death notice and therefore

76   Although the term obituary is sometimes used also to refer to death notices (e.g. Jallinoja 2011), I prefer making a distinction between the two because they are two different text types in Finnish culture.

was socially recognised as a widow of her partner at the funeral. To be denied this ritualistic position, sticky with positive affects, may create feelings of exclusion and lack of recognition, like it did in Susanna's case. Although she eventually got her name and poem mentioned first in the death notice, having to negotiate for it had affected her negatively. Moreover, Vilja's parents did not contribute in paying for the notice, leaving the costs to be covered by Susanna alone, which she also felt bad about. However, and similar to what McQueeney (2003) has argued, the example shows that sometimes the search for recognition of one mourner was considered to be a lack of recognition by another mourner. This could create conflicts between bereaved LGBTQ people and other people mourning for the same person, like it did for Susanna and her partner's parents.

Given the traditional hierarchy of mourners and its affective importance, I argue that death notices can be seen – in addition to a death ritual – as a ritual of family making. Much like family photographs, they function as a way of displaying familial relationships, thus creating recognition and a feeling of inclusion for those admitted to participate in the family assemblage of this kind (Gomila 2011, 65, 75; Jallinoja 2011, 78). They show, most importantly, who belongs to the family of the deceased. They not only reflect the existing family relations but also direct and shape what counts and what is publicly recognised as a family. As Jallinoja (2011, 84) has further argued, the hierarchy of mourners in death notices stems from both the 'rule of genealogical proximity' and the 'rule of monogamy'. According to the former rule, the closer the genealogical link between relatives is, the higher the level of interaction and emotional closeness is expected to be between the relative and the deceased, thus granting them a higher position in the hierarchy. The latter rule, on the contrary, guarantees that the partner will, indeed, have the highest position in the hierarchy of mourners. This applies, as the rule of monogamy generally requires, only to one partner at a time. Ex-partners, for instance, are usually either excluded from the list of mourners or given an inferior position compared with the existing partner, usually at the end of the list (Jallinoja 2011, 84-87).[77] Moreover, when looking at the list of people approved as mourners in the death notice, it becomes clear that some groups of people are missing altogether: those who do not belong to the genealogical or monogamous order in the first place and those whose relationships are not recognised by the laws of the state. Although not mentioned by

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77 However, there are some exceptions to this rule. As Jallinoja (2011, 86) has pointed out, if the deceased has entered into a second marriage in an old age or if the second marriage has been childless, the children of the deceased from the first marriage may be considered as the primary mourners who will be listed first in the death notice, before the existing spouse. Thus, the rule of genealogical proximity seems to overcome the rule of monogamy in certain situations.

Jallinoja, the last position on the list of mourners is usually held by 'other relatives and friends', without individual names (see also Svensson 2007, 115-118). Following my terminology, the hierarchy of mourners thus tends to recognise only official and not unofficial family members.

The same rules focusing on genealogical proximity and monogamy, although with slightly less detail, are repeated in the church guidelines. Publishing death notices does not belong to the tasks of congregations per se; nevertheless, their guidelines offer instructions in this regard. For instance, the congregation of Kajaani describes the practice of writing a death notice as follows:

> A death notice usually includes information about the familial relationships of the deceased (e.g. my husband; our daughter) and a profession or a title. These are usually followed by the full name of the deceased, the date and place of birth and the date and place of death. Because the purpose of the death notice is to be informative, the next of kin can be mentioned by their full names. The notice can contain a phrase from the Bible, a verse of a hymn or other appropriate text. If the notice functions as an invitation to the funeral and the memorial service, their time and place are clearly expressed. (Kajaani, *Avuksi surukotiin* [Help for the Home in Grief], translated by VA)

In addition to suggesting that familial relationships (such as spousal and parental relationships) are to be mentioned in the notice, the guideline guides the contents of death notices by suggesting Christian phrases or hymns to be added in the notice, thus emphasising the importance of not only the (official) family but also the Church in the context of death.

Other death rituals, in which the interviewees sought recognition, include the funeral ceremony and the act of burial. I propose that they, too, were guided by familial recognition and the hierarchy of mourners, focusing on the rules of genealogical proximity and monogamy described above. Church guidelines, in particular, offer a homogenous image of the lines that are to be followed during funerals in Finland, prioritising the official family over other mourners in a number of ways. For example, traditionally, the widow(er) and the children of the deceased – or, if the deceased did not have them, parents and siblings instead – are the ones who will enter the church first, who will see the deceased in their coffin before the funeral ceremony starts, who will sit in the front row on the right side of the church during the ceremony (the left side being reserved for those who do not count as kin – meaning friends and colleagues) and who will first lay flowers on the coffin and bid farewell to the deceased. Moreover, in the case of a ground burial, the genealogically closest male relatives will carry the coffin to the grave, showing the

gendered nature of funeral etiquette.[78] Furthermore, the official family members are the ones who are, according to the guidelines, expected to organise the funeral and the memorial service and to choose the burial method (either ground burial or cremation).

The strong emphasis on official family within church guidelines is partially in contrast with the current Finnish legislation, which gives more leeway for people to make individual choices over such matters before dying. By emphasising the role of the official family and taking it for granted, church guidelines disregard the fact that according to the Cemeteries Act, each person can, in fact, freely decide who they want to organise their funeral and what kind of burial method and funeral rituals they prefer. However, if there is no evidence of such a decision, the default right and responsibility for organising the funeral is legally granted either to the spouse[79] or to the closest heirs of the deceased (The Cemeteries Act, section 1, 2 §; section 8, 23 §). Thus, contrary to what is said in the majority of church guidelines analysed in this study, the funeral organiser does not have to be a member of the official family. However, given the ambiguity in legal texts regarding how, where and when such personal decisions should be expressed so that they would count after one's death, the wishes of the deceased are often left open to interpretation. If there is ambiguity regarding such wishes – or if these wishes were expressed only orally or only to people other than the official family – it may be difficult to prove that such wishes have been expressed in the first place. Therefore, the manner of prioritising the official family by default, existing both on the level of legislation and church guidelines, may complicate the life of the unofficial family that wishes to participate in organising the funeral of the deceased, even if the deceased had wished so when alive.

Thanks to the funeral traditions that prioritise the official family, being able to participate in the funeral planning and the funeral ceremony itself posed no difficulties for the interviewees who had lost an official family member, such as a registered partner or a parent.[80] This was the case with Jarkko, Lauri, Maria and Pirre

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78   In some of the guidelines studied (e.g. Hausjärvi, Kauhajoki), however, it is mentioned that female relatives can also participate in this task, indicating that such a gendered tradition may have a potential to change.

79   As specified in legislation, the word spouse refers, in this context, either to a married or registered partner or a partner living 'permanently in a shared household in marriage-like arrangements' with the deceased at the time of their death (The Cemeteries Act, section 8, 23 §), thus meaning mainly a long-term, monogamous live-in partner and excluding short-term partners, non-monogamous partners and partners who do not live together.

80   A parent, in this regard, refers to biological parents or legally recognised parents through adoption. However, as I later argue, a parent can, in some other circumstances,

during their parents' funerals and Tiina, Susanna and Inka during their partners' funerals. However, in the case of those interviewees who had no legally recognised relationship with the deceased, being able to participate in the funeral and its planning depended on the official family of the deceased. All the interviewees who had lost an unofficial partner (including Mika, Aaro, Veikko, Hannu and Saara) had been invited to the funeral and most of them had also been invited to participate in the funeral planning. This indicates that the relationships between romantic couples were seen as significant among the official families of the deceased, even if the relationship would not have been made official by registered partnership or marriage.[81] In this sense, the situation of the interviewees of this study was better than that reported in international studies of queer widow(er)hood, according to which the exclusion of the unofficial same-sex widow(er) from the funeral ceremony is known to occur (e.g. Pentaris 2014, 38; Smolinski & Colón 2006, 57). However, the same was not always true with other interviewees, whose relationship with the deceased was recognised neither on a social nor a legal level.

This was the case with Kuura[82], who had lost their unofficial father at a young age.[83] Instead of being an LGBTQ-specific question as such, Kuura's story calls attention to the vulnerable forms of relating between children and their stepparents in general. Because Kuura's biological mother was no longer together with Kuura's unofficial father at the time of his death, he was no longer socially recognised as Kuura's family member; moreover, he was not legally recognised as Kuura's parent either. Kuura did not get any information about his death before the funeral was already held. They had learned about the death by chance: a friend of Kuura's mother

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also belong to one's unofficial family if not legally recognised as a parent either through consanguinity or adoption.

81   This applied not only to monogamous couples, but in Veikko's case also to non-monogamous lovers. Veikko told how he had been invited to the funeral of his lover Louis, who lived abroad and died of AIDS in the early stages of the global AIDS epidemic. Although the invitation arrived by mail so late that he was unable to attend, Veikko described being 'very flattered' by being invited and thus being socially recognised as a meaningful other in his lover's life.

82   As Finnish language does not have gendered pronouns, I asked people of non-binary genders, including Kuura, about which pronouns to use in English. Kuura opted for singular they.

83   The lost person was Kuura's mother's ex-partner, who was not Kuura's biological father. Kuura called him father rather than a stepfather to emphasise the emotional importance of the relationship and to challenge the norm of parental bonds that prioritise biological relations. Here, I call him Kuura's unofficial father to make visible that the relationship was not legally recognised and that it was based on other ties than biology while also acknowledging and appreciating Kuura's choice of naming and describing the relationship.

had happened to see his death notice in the newspaper and informed Kuura's mother about it. Being excluded from the funeral ritual had negatively affected Kuura:

> KUURA: And then, funerals are a bit like… or because it is a ritual that we do, indeed, in order to let the grieving process start, or something like that, it is a part of that. And of course, some people don't want to go to a funeral and it may be their way of handling the situation, somehow. But then, if you don't have a possibility to go there, or [if you don't] even know about the issue until afterwards so, so… It has been a thing that I have been thinking about, somehow, as an adult, like… how like… cruel it is somehow, that you don't have any, like… possibility or opportunity to say goodbye to the [lost] person in any way.

The importance of funeral participation expressed here by Kuura is in line with the research on death rituals and their significance in bereavement: to be able to participate in the funeral may ease mourning and provide a sense of closure (e.g. Gamino et al. 2000; Doka 2002b.) Although being non-binary and queer, Kuura's gender and sexuality did not play a significant role in their story of funeral non-attendance. Therefore, their story is also an example of a situation in which the difficulties encountered following the loss did not stem from being an LGBTQ person as such, but from having unofficial family relations that were not legally or socially recognised. Such relationships can greatly matter to individuals, even though others may fail to see their significance. Similar experiences of exclusion can also be encountered by cisgender and heterosexual people if they have family relations that exceed, in one way or another, the borders of the official family (see also Doka 2002a). Indeed, it has been suggested elsewhere that changing family relations and increase in divorce, remarriage and blended families in Finland cause social complications in death rituals for people beyond the LGBTQ population, too (Rautio 2019).[84]

Although funeral participation was considered important by the interviewees, the question of inclusion and exclusion in the context of funerals has also other, more complex layers. Usually, the feelings of inclusion and exclusion the interviewees felt were subtle and caused by specific elements of the funeral ceremony itself. Simply being invited was not necessarily sufficient for the bereaved LGBTQ person to feel included and recognised. Instead, the feelings depended on whether the person was treated according to the social position they considered appropriate within the hierarchy of mourners.

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84   This has been noted in an ongoing research project, *Meaningful Relations – Patient and Family Carer Encountering Death at Home*, led by professor of theology Auli Vähäkangas, as interviewed by Rautio (2019).

Funeral arrangements were seldom planned ahead by the interviewees and their meaningful others. This resonates with Sorainen's (2015a) observation that marginalised people often do not plan funeral rituals beforehand, even though pre-planned funerals that explicitly make the queerness of the deceased visible are also known to occur (see also Svensson 2007). Among my interviewees, when death came as a surprise, there were typically no wills or burial contracts[85] made beforehand that specified the wishes of the deceased in terms of funeral arrangements. Even when the death occurred owing to a long-term illness, there were no official documents made about the funeral plans. If the person who was dying had expressed their wishes regarding the funeral, this had only been done orally. Sometimes, funeral plans were not discussed at all, which the interviewees explained as the general unwillingness to talk or think about the approaching death. As a result, funeral planning was often done only after the death – and as the church guidelines suggest – led by the official family of the deceased. The interviewees who were not part of the official family could be invited to participate in the planning. Mika, who had lost a live-in partner, described the situation as follows:

> MIKA: So, then… we started quite soon… immediately after his death, like, to organise [the funeral]. And then, quite quickly… we decided that the main organisers are me and Tapani's mother. And it suited me very well. [--] And it did not feel any at all distressing; I wanted to organise it myself because I had clear visions about, like, the kind of music I wanted there. And then also because… my, some kind of… [it is] like my nature, I like it that if there are difficult issues, [I like it] that I personally know what is going to happen, and when, and so on. I think it was nice that I was able to organise the funeral myself. So, then I could somehow like control it. There were no, like, surprises in that situation itself. And it suited Tapani's family [of origin] very well because I was like, and I still am, on very good terms with all his family. And well, it suited them very well. So I was, I was like physically with [them]… in the mortician's office.

As Mika repeatedly emphasises here, being an active participant in the funeral planning had felt important to him. Moreover, Mika was socially recognised by Tapani's parents as his partner and widower. Legally, however, he was considered

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85   By a burial contract, I refer to a contract an individual can make with a mortician's office while alive. In these contracts, wishes regarding the funeral ceremony and burial method can be expressed. In Finnish, such contracts are called *hautaussuunnitelma* or *hautaustestamentti*.

nothing more than Tapani's subtenant because they had not been in a registered partnership. Like in Mika's story, the decision to share funeral planning responsibilities between the official family and an unofficial partner was often a result of negotiations. If the relationship between the negotiators was good, the official family quite readily gave the unofficial partner the possibility – and responsibility – to plan the funeral. Similar patterns were described by Veikko and Hannu, who had also lost unofficial partners:

VEIKKO: I guess we talked about that openly with [Matias's sister], like well… And she said that 'You have been together for so long' and that she completely trusts my abilities to organise [the funeral] and to [know] what Matias had wanted. And the priest also started [his talk at the funeral] like 'We have gathered here on Matias's birthday, and these, this event is organised like Matias had wanted'. Like it was, for the most part. He said what music he wanted to hear, he chose the poem. I just had to find a person to read it, or to recite it. And well… everything went like… exactly like I wanted, and well. So, it was like magnificent.

VA: Mm. Did Juha's brothers arrive then?
HANNU: Yes. And then we agreed with [Juha's brother] that we'll meet up and… we went to the same mortician's office where Juha's mother's [funeral] had been taken care of, like… And so on. I was allowed to organise the funeral… like I wanted to, so they were indeed supporting me there, like…
VA: Was there any discussion about that or was it self-evidently clear that…?
HANNU: No, no, they did not, they did not even suggest; they knew that I wanted to organise and…
VA: Yeah.

As was the case with Mika's story above, Veikko and Hannu expressed the importance of being able to organise the funeral the way they personally wanted to. Being invited to the funeral but not being in charge of its planning would not have created the desired sense of recognition. In all of these cases, a long-term partner of the deceased was considered to know best what kind of a funeral the deceased would have wanted to have, in a situation where no written documents existed that would have confirmed these wishes. Most importantly, a good and trusting relationship between the unofficial partner and the official family of the deceased guaranteed that there were no disagreements regarding the arrangements.

In some cases, however, the relationship between the interviewee and the relatives of the deceased had rapidly changed after the loss, as described by both Susanna and Reino. Susanna had had a difficult relationship with her mother-in-law,

but they had managed to overcome the difficulties over the years of her relationship with Vilja. However, the tension between them came back soon after Vilja's death, which made their post-death negotiations affectively complex. Although Susanna had, as Vilja's official partner and widow, the legal right to arrange the funeral (The Cemeteries Act, section 8, 23 §), the tension came through in specific situations, such as when writing the death notice (as discussed above) or when choosing Vilja's burial place and deciding who would be buried in the same grave. Even though both Susanna and Vilja's mother strongly wished to be buried with Vilja in future, Susanna had later given up on this wish to avoid sharing the same grave with Vilja's mother.

In Reino's case, on the contrary, his relationship with his ex-partner's relatives had always been mutually respectful before the death of his ex. After Erkki's death, however, Reino had a heated dispute with Erkki's relatives regarding his will, in which Reino was the main beneficiary. Even though the will existed, it did not contain wishes regarding funeral arrangements. As Erkki's heir, Reino was responsible for paying for the funeral, but he was not asked to participate in the funeral planning, which was taken care of by the official family members with the greatest genealogical proximity to Erkki: his siblings, who decided to bury Erkki in their rural hometown instead of his current urban hometown.

> REINO: And then my lawyer, lawyer wondered so much about it, that I don't…
> take care of the funeral even though we have, I am like the… his heir, kind of,
> heir.
> VA: Mm, mm, mm. Would you have wanted to organise the funeral?
> REINO: I guess I could not have known how to, or or feel up to it at that point…
> to do that because… because I had to work with myself a bit so…
> VA: Of course. Would you have wanted to participate if they had somehow
> asked you to?
> REINO: Well, it would have been difficult since it was far away there so…
> VA: Yeah, yeah, yes.
> REINO: But it was the thing that they asked like nothing.
> VA: Yeah. That they did not take you into account.
> REINO: No. They just did everything… like they wanted to. And they had taken
> a catering service for it… they did not ask about that either… So they just sent
> the bills to me.

Despite the uncertainty of whether he would have wanted to participate in the arrangements himself, Reino was offended by the fact that the siblings of his ex had not asked his opinion about the matter. Reino's story thus differs from the narratives in which the official family saw the unofficial long-term partner as the best expert

with regard to the funeral wishes of the deceased, regardless of their unofficial status. Reino's narrative does not explain whether this kind of exclusion stemmed from the fact that Reino and Erkki were a same-sex couple or that at the time of Erkki's death they were, indeed, ex-partners. In any case, neither the rule of genealogical proximity nor the rule of monogamy (Jallinoja 2011) applied to Reino, whose relationship with Erkki had been more complex than that.

Although they were romantically separated, Reino considered himself as Erkki's 'shadow widower' [*varjoleski*]. He saw their relationship as a partnership that had not ended, even though some aspects of the relationship had changed. Erkki also had had a new partner at the time of his death. My reading is that both Reino and the new partner, Niilo, can be seen as unofficial widowers of the deceased because both of them had been, in their own ways, in partnership with Erkki and neither of them had a legally recognised relationship with him at the time of his death. In Reino's case, the existence of the will and his role as Erkki's main beneficiary guaranteed him legal recognition as Erkki's heir but not as his widower. Reino had certain rights and responsibilities through this position, whereas Niilo was legally considered a stranger to the deceased. Both of them were, however, socially unrecognised by Erkki's siblings.

Reino felt excluded in the decision-making regarding the funeral and burial arrangements and recounted how this feeling had deepened in the urn burial ceremony following Erkki's cremation. The traditional manner of performing death rituals prioritised Erkki's siblings, setting them above Reino and Niilo in the hierarchy of mourners. This happened, for example, when the guests were about to lay flowers on the grave:

REINO: When the urn was buried, we [Reino and Niilo] laid [the flowers] last. Of course.
VA: So, there were first… these siblings or… or who laid them first?
REINO: Siblings first and then the whole other kin and townspeople and…
VA: Yeah.
REINO: After that, we were allowed to lay them last.

The tone and manner in which Reino narrated the situation reflected disappointment. However, referring to the situation as something that 'of course' would happen indicates that for him this was to be expected. What is also noteworthy in the interview excerpt above is the idea of allowing: because of the fixed and normative kinship hierarchy traditionally followed in death rituals, it was the siblings who allowed Reino and Niilo to participate in the burial in certain ways while preventing them from participating in others. Instead of being able to choose their role in the burial themselves, they were given roles by Erkki's official family. The flower laying

ritual – and the low position given to Reino within it – caused negative emotional reactions in him. I argue that the hierarchical order given to mourners in various contexts related to death rituals is highly affective and value-laden because it differentiates the alleged importance of the mourners in the deceased person's life, recognising some people but unrecognising others.

To understand the affective power of the flower laying ritual, I examine how the matter is discussed in church guidelines. In various guidelines, the order of laying flowers at a funeral or a burial is explained in a detailed manner and presented as a recommended practice, justified by customs and traditions:

> Customarily, the next of kin lay their flowers first. According to an old tradition, the closest next of kin lays the flowers usually by the head of the coffin, on the side of the heart of the deceased. After the next of kin, other relatives, the employer, organisations and friends will follow. For the event to run smoothly, the order of laying the flowers can be taken into account when choosing seats [in the church]. [--] People who lay the flowers will step, in their turn, next to the coffin, stand quietly for a moment and one of them will read the greeting. After this, the flowers will be laid next to the coffin. After a moment of silence, the people laying the wreath will turn to face the next of kin, bow and return to their seats. (Oulu, *Läheisen kuoltua. Opas hautausjärjestelyihin* [After a Meaningful Other Dies. A Guide for Burial Arrangements], translated by VA)[86]

In addition to the hierarchical order itself, another aspect that makes the hierarchy of different kin groups particularly visible in the recommendations of the guidelines is the custom of funeral guests bowing to the next of kin after laying the flowers, as if the loss was primarily their loss, which others would respect by bowing. Furthermore, according to these instructions, it appears that by making Reino and Niilo lay their flowers last on Erkki's grave, Erkki's siblings positioned them on the last position in the hierarchy of mourners: the friends.

Given the often-noted importance of friends in the lives of LGBTQ people (e.g. Weston 1991; Galupo et al. 2014; see also Alasuutari forthcoming), positioning friends as the lowest in the hierarchy of significance is questionable in its own right. Moreover, ignoring the significance of same-sex partnership by equating it with friendship is particularly painful in such a situation, as pointed out in studies of queer widow(er)hood (e.g. Smolinski & Colón 2006; Whipple 2006). Furthermore, at

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86 The same paragraph is found, from word to word, also in the guideline of Kajaani congregation, which highlights the fact that the same ideas and expressions were often circulated in the guidelines by different congregations, making death rituals appear as homogenous.

Erkki's funeral, there was a hierarchy at work among the group of 'friends' as well. As Reino narrated, everyone had their turn to lay flowers before him and Niilo, including the 'townspeople' who were not related to Erkki through the rule of genealogical proximity. Thus, the friends geographically closer to the siblings and Erkki's rural hometown were positioned higher in the hierarchy than Reino and Niilo, two gay men who both had been partners of the deceased and were living in the same city where Erkki had lived a large part of his life. Hence, at Erkki's burial, his role as a brother, a relative and a fellow townsman was highlighted, whereas his role as an urban gay man with multiple intimate relationships was downplayed.

Reino narrated how the separate funeral ceremony, which had preceded the burial and the cremation of the body, had differed from the burial ceremony that had caused feelings of exclusion. As pointed out by historian and death studies scholar Ilona Pajari (2014, 103-104), the growing popularity of cremation and urn burials creates confusion in Finnish death rituals, which are traditionally designed for one event only: the blessing of the deceased in church in a funeral ceremony, immediately followed by the act of burial and a memorial service. In case of cremation, however, the deceased is first blessed with Christian blessings in a funeral ceremony and then cremated. Finally, after a few weeks, the ashes are either buried in a burial ceremony or scattered in nature. According to Pajari, people tend to consider the blessing ceremony as the 'real funeral' of the deceased, with less significance given to the urn burial; however, in Reino's narrative, it was the other way around. Unlike the burial, the funeral ceremony had been held, for reasons of convenience, in a hospital chapel in Erkki's urban hometown, where both Reino and Niilo lived. Although Erkki's siblings had also been present in the funeral ceremony, they had focused more on the forthcoming urn burial. For example, there were fewer people invited to the funeral and the siblings had not brought flowers to the ceremony; only Reino, Niilo and their shared group of friends had done so. As a consequence, Reino was able to lay the flowers first in this ceremony, thus taking the position of the primary mourner. This act also made Erkki's homosexuality subtly visible in a setting in which it remained otherwise unspoken. Reino suspected that even the priest might have realised the situation – that he was blessing a gay man – by this act.

> REINO: Well like, [the priest] surely saw that a man went on first and laid flowers on a man's grave so, or on a coffin so… of course it would tell them[87] something.

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87   As Finnish language does not have gendered pronouns, the genders of the people the interviewees referred to did not always come up during the interview. In such cases, I refer to these people with singular they.

The funeral ceremony was emotionally significant for Reino because it made his role in Erkki's life visible, even if only implicitly by adjusting to a ritual. However, Reino was not included in the ritual and recognised as Erkki's widower on purpose by his official family; instead, his inclusion was made possible by his own initiative – and the fact that the official family had not taken up the role of the primary mourners themselves. Interestingly, because of the hierarchical nature of death rituals, Reino's act of taking the first turn to lay the flowers on the coffin also defined a hierarchy between him and Niilo.

Another traditional element of funeral rituals that caused feelings of inclusion or exclusion among the interviewees was the seating order in the church during the funeral ceremony. This, too, was related to the same type of hierarchisation of mourners typical of death notices and the flower laying ritual, as can be observed from the following example of church guidelines:

> According to the old tradition, the closest next of kin sit on the right side of the chapel in the front and other relatives sit behind them. Community representatives, friends and co-workers sit on the left side. (Jyväskylä, *Jyväskylän seurakunnan opas hautausjärjestelyihin* [Jyväskylä Congregation's Guide to Burial Arrangements], translated by VA)

The seating order had emotional significance to Veikko, who found it important to be granted the seat of the closest next of kin at his partner Matias's funeral:

> VEIKKO: And it is a curious feeling – and the last time in my life I will have that feeling – the feeling of going to the right side in the front row. Like, on the heart's side, sitting there alone. And then [Matias's sister] stayed tactfully behind me and… the brothers and sisters and all those who were there…

Matias died in the late 1990s, before registered partnership of same-sex couples was possible in Finland; therefore, Veikko was not legally recognised as his partner or, after Matias's death, his widower. However, being able to participate in the funeral in the role of the widower made him socially recognised and gave him a feeling of inclusion and recognition. This feeling was intensified by his partner's siblings respect, which they showed by remaining 'tactfully behind'.

Feelings of inclusion and exclusion were also involved in how the funeral priests acknowledged or did not acknowledge the bereaved LGBTQ person at the funeral. Traditionally, as a part of the eulogy, the priests tells about the life course and family relations of the deceased, but in the case of the interviewees who had lost an unofficial same-sex partner or an ex-partner, the interviewee was not necessarily mentioned by the priest. For example, when asked if Reino was mentioned in Erkki's

eulogy, he replied 'Absolutely not'. Mika, too, told that their relationship had gone unmentioned in Tapani's eulogy, even though he had met the priest beforehand to tell about Tapani's life. Moreover, even if the relationship and the same-sex partner was mentioned, the speech of the priest could still be a disappointment for an interviewee, who had expected a more personal tone from the eulogy:

> VEIKKO: It might not be an easy job because he [the priest] did not really know Matias but like… I do remember that for two and half hours I cried and told him about our shared life and so on, like…
> VA: Yeah.
> VEIKKO: I don't know if it was difficult [for the priest] then, that it was like, a partner of a man, or what was the problem but… I did not, in fact, like it that much. The eulogy of the priest. It had all the classic stuff of course, 'ashes to ashes' and crosses and so on but like… it did not impress me.

Here I have shown that the questions of inclusion and exclusion are central for LGBTQ people in the culturally prescribed domain of death rituals, particularly (but not only) when losing same-sex partners. As the examples presented here indicate, such questions go beyond asking whether the bereaved LGBTQ person was invited to the funeral. To feel included required being recognised within certain traditions, such as writing a death notice or following the funeral etiquette. Based on the analysis, I argue that the established death rituals in Finland serve, by default, the emotional needs of the official family. By following the rules of genealogical proximity and monogamy, the established death rituals define family in normative ways. Hence, unlike what has been suggested by Turner (1969, 110), rituals do not, in this context, create a communitas defined by equality and comradeship in which those who are 'high must experience what it is like to be low'. Instead, those who are prioritised on a legal level as the official family members of the deceased are further prioritised on a social level in death rituals. This can benefit LGBTQ people when they belong to the official family of the deceased and disadvantage them when the relationship is unofficial. However, in the interviewees' stories, social recognition could, on an emotional level, overcome the feeling of exclusion caused by a lack of legal recognition. On the contrary, despite legal recognition of the relationship, bereaved LGBTQ people could also be socially unrecognised in death rituals, creating feelings of exclusion and other negative emotions, such as anger and disappointment.

My research shows that some parts of traditional death rituals were maintained and cherished by the interviewed LGBTQ people because they promised affectively appealing things in return, such as the feeling of inclusion. Following this thought, I propose that despite the ideas of antinormativity (Wiegman & Wilson 2015) and the

failure (or unwillingness) 'to reproduce the norms' (Ahmed 2014, 152) often attached to queer and trans lives, some people leading such lives may wish to stay attached to normative things, such as family rituals, because of the affective promises of belonging and inclusion such rituals offer in return.[88] Although adjusting to traditional death rituals and finding one's place within them may not change the rituals themselves towards a more inclusionary or less hierarchical direction, I propose that such acts can, nonetheless, offer some comfort in the midst of the discomfort caused by bereavement.

4.4 Personalised Death Rituals

In addition to trying to find their place within traditional death rituals, the interviewed LGBTQ people had aimed at transforming these rituals. Although the transformations were justified by following the wishes of the deceased (instead of following the lines/traditions), changing or adjusting death rituals gave the interviewees a sense of control. Instead of merely accepting the position the traditional rituals – or the official family of the deceased – gave them, by altering the rituals, the bereaved LGBTQ people achieved something more than just a feeling of inclusion: a sense of personal agency. Next, I focus on these alterations of death rituals as well as on the practical difficulties and emotions related to these alterations.

Internationally, personalised death rituals are a growing trend, explained by the secularisation and individualisation of Western societies taking place in the 1900s and the 2000s: instead of merely following the traditional death rituals, people are increasingly interested in personalising them in ways that make the individuality of the deceased visible (Walter 2005). A similar trend has also been identified in Finland, although Lutheran traditions largely prevail (Rautio 2019). As argued by Pajari (2019, 125), death rituals are generally very persistent, which is why they are slow to change on the scale of a society, despite the growing popularity of individual alterations. Moreover, Jenni Linturi (2009, 58) has argued that a small number of (known) options and internalised ideas of what is appropriate contribute to this slowness. As I have shown above, death rituals were kept in their established forms by the affective promises, such as a promise of recognition/inclusion, stuck to them. This did not mean, however, that the death rituals were never altered by the interviewees.

Doka (2002b, 139-141) has argued that people whose grief is disenfranchised and who are therefore excluded from the traditional death rituals can create

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88   I return to the entanglement of queer theory, antinormativity and the affective promises of conforming to (some) norms in the concluding chapter of this dissertation to discuss at greater length how this study contributes to the discussion.

alternative rituals with similar functions, such as getting a sense of closure, saying goodbye and expressing and reaffirming the relationship with the deceased. However, when describing the possibilities of alternative death rituals for the disenfranchised, Doka (2002b, 146) has also argued that such rituals should not 'interfere with the rights of other [enfranchised] mourners'. According to him, such interfering could happen, for example, in terms of grave visitation.[89] I argue that Doka, in doing so, has sided with the enfranchised mourners, suggesting that their emotions do, by default, matter more than those of the disenfranchised mourners. I consider this problematic because it further reinforces the prioritisation of the enfranchised mourners and marginalises the disenfranchised ones. Moreover, such argumentation leaves no other options for the disenfranchised but to keep the alternative death rituals very separate from the traditional ones – or if following Ahmed's analogy of lines, to abandon the lines of traditional death rituals altogether.

However, as my data suggests, holding on to traditional death rituals, or parts of them, may feel significant particularly for the unofficial family members of the deceased, especially if facing (some level of) disenfranchisement. In the interviewees' stories, the alternative death rituals did not always significantly differ from the traditional ones. Instead of abandonment, it was more often a question of adaptation and alteration. For example, for Kuura, who had not been invited to their unofficial father's funeral, an alternative ritual was, indeed, visiting his grave. Although grave visitation can be described as a ritual of remembrance and can thus be differentiated from the culturally prescribed death rituals (as I discuss in greater detail in chapter 6), I suggest that for Kuura, it was a substitute for a funeral ritual, providing them a sense of conclusion similar to funerals.

> KUURA: And then I said that I want to visit the grave. Because I have never seen it, and I was not in the funeral or anything else. So, I think that I felt a bit like if, if I see the grave, then it is somehow more real.

In the case of the interviewees who had not been excluded from the funeral per se but who had not been in charge of the funeral planning, personalisation of death rituals could mean adopting the idea of an established ritual and creating another ritual with a similar function. This was the case with Reino, who had organised a memorial service for his ex-partner Erkki, together with Erkki's more recent partner Niilo and their shared circle of friends. Like traditional memorial services, the event

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89 Doka (2002b, 146) has suggested, for example, that a disenfranchised mourner should not take up the ritual of visiting the grave of their lost meaningful other if this is considered unwanted and emotionally distressing by an enfranchised mourner visiting the same grave.

took place after the funeral ceremony. When Erkki's official family headed home from the chapel, his unofficial family gathered at a local pub to honour him:

> REINO: We had no service like coffee service or anything after that; they [Erkki's siblings] just left. -- We [ex-partners and friends] had, in the evening, we went together to a pub. So that was our memorial service then.

Even though Reino managed to find possibilities of participation by adopting the idea of a memorial service, transforming traditional rituals was easier for those who were in charge of the funeral planning. This was the case when the interviewee had a legally recognised relationship with the deceased or, if not, was granted the right to plan the funeral by the official family of the deceased. The interviewees reported that under these circumstances, they had been able to accommodate death rituals in manners that respected the individuality and personal life of the deceased. For example, Veikko recounted how it had been important for him to make AIDS visible as the cause of death at Matias's funeral. He had, thus, included in the funeral ceremony a ritual that respected Matias and other people living with, or dying of, AIDS: he had red ribbons handed out to funeral guests to wear, a symbol that signifies solidarity for and draws attention to the people living with AIDS (Sobnosky & Hauser 1998).

> VEIKKO: They went and gave a rose and a red ribbon to everyone and they kindly put them on.

Later in the interview, Veikko expressed that this act, and the fact that the funeral guests had participated in it, had intensified the feeling of inclusion he had at the funeral. Compared with what Svensson (2007) has written about funerals of AIDS victims in Sweden in the 1980s and the practices of secrecy in them, Veikko's act of sharing red ribbons can be seen as a counteract that aspired to visibility, acceptance and recognition instead of secrecy, shame and hiding.

Sometimes, however, the changes made by the interviewees were subtle and private and therefore not known to every funeral guest. Such a change was described by Susanna, who had dressed Vilja for the funeral:

> [The mortician] had brought 2 burial gowns,[90] men's and women's. I chose the men's gown because the women's gown was too frilly for Vilja. We dressed her,

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[90] A burial gown [*kuolinpaita* or *arkkuvaate* in Finnish] is a piece of clothing in which the deceased person is dressed for the funeral. It is a long, white, dress-like shirt with different designs for men and women. It has an open back, making it easy to dress it on

> I combed her hair and [the mortician] left us alone. I talked to her for a while and kissed her. I put a rose and her childhood plush toys into her coffin. (A quote from Susanna's written narrative)

Whereas Veikko's example above shows how taking up space in and personalising a shared ritual may feel empowering, Susanna's story shows the affective importance of privately made alterations. Making non-normative choices in private, such as dressing her late partner in a men's rather than in a women's burial gown, both enhanced the individuality of the deceased and gave Susanna a sense of agency.

Writing a death notice was also a ritual in which the interviewees had gained a sense of agency through acts of personalisation. Death notices had affective value in the interviewees' stories not only as a family assemblage, as discussed above, but also as a farewell ritual. In addition to the order of names, the interviewees described how choosing the poem or a verse for the notice had been important for them. Sometimes the death notices, cut out from the newspapers in which they had been published, were shown to me during the interview. This was the case especially with those who had lost a same-sex partner. Although the church guidelines often suggested including a quotation from the Bible, a religious hymn or a Christian symbol in the death notice, the interviewees had chosen non-religious poems and symbols that focused on loss, longing and love, which they found both personally comforting and fitting for the deceased. By these means, death notices were personalised to reflect the life and relationships of the deceased and the grief felt by the bereaved LGBTQ person.

The personalisation of death rituals could create feelings of belonging and other positive emotions in the bereaved LGBTQ person but, at the same time, it could create feelings of uneasiness or confusion in other mourners, generally the (other) official family members of the deceased. Returning to Susanna's story on a death notice discussed above, the mortician had suggested to resolve disagreements by having separate death notices: one designed by Susanna, and another designed by Vilja's parents. As Svensson (2007) has reported, in times of the AIDS epidemic in Sweden, separate death notices by the official and unofficial families of gay men was a common practice.[91] However, whether bereaved LGBTQ people can publish

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the deceased while they are lying in the coffin. Next of kin may choose to dress the deceased in regular clothes as well, but the burial gown is the recommended option if there has been an autopsy or if the body is badly injured in other ways.

91   This practice was adopted mainly because official families (meaning here mainly the families of origin) wanted to exclude gay friends and lovers from the notice to maintain the illusion of heterosexuality of the deceased. Another reason for such behaviour was the wish to hide the true cause of death and claim that the person had, for example, died of cancer and not of AIDS. However, if the unofficial family decided to have a death

death notices of their own is also a question of money. According to the estimated prices provided by Finnish death notice services online, the price of publishing a death notice in Finnish newspapers ranges from a few hundred euros to over a thousand euros (Kuolinilmoitukset.fi 2018; Ikuisuus.fi 2018). The bigger the notice, the higher the price becomes, meaning that including various poems and an extensive list of mourners will result in a more expensive notice. Thus, personalising a death notice, or writing a separate one, may not be an economically available option to all.

Alterations in death rituals caused confusion and dissatisfaction in other official family members of the deceased also in Maria's narrative on her father's funeral. Maria recounted how her relatives had reacted when they found out that her ex-wife sat in the front row of the church, supporting the widow, Anja:

> MARIA: And the… the questions [were] like 'Who is that?' That is my ex-wife. And the silence afterwards. And like, 'Why, why this…' Milla is like a short-haired, more masculine version… of a woman. So like, 'Why this, this person can sit next to Anja?' While she [Anja] has three children of her own. And then there are we. And, and my sister did not like it that Milla was in the front row. Because, because this seating order has some kind of significance to people. Like where you sit and on what row and on which side. As long as all elderly people get a seat, that would be enough for me. So, 'Why can Milla sit there?' Because Milla is family and Milla is, is warm-hearted. And because Anja's own children take care of their own children. And Anja's own children were not *pappa*'s own children. That is why Milla sat there. And because Anja needs someone who can walk her sometimes.

By taking a seat in the row of primary mourners, Milla challenged both the rules of genealogical proximity and monogamy defining the hierarchy of mourners, as she was not officially related to the deceased, Maria's father (or Maria herself), through consanguinity or marriage. Although she did have a socially important role in supporting, both emotionally and physically, the widow of the deceased, not everyone at the funeral acknowledged and accepted this role. Hence, Maria's narrative shows how even slight alterations from traditions, such as an unofficial family member sitting in a 'wrong' place, may create opposition among those who expect the traditions to be followed.

The alterations of death rituals were often related to downplaying the Christian elements within them. As mentioned earlier, according to the interviews, legislative

notice of their own, it could lead into situations where the notices were published side by side in the same newspaper, revealing not only the truth about the death but also the official family's attempt to hide it (Svensson 2007, 118-123).

data and church guidelines, Christian symbolism is a significant part of Finnish death rituals. This proved problematic in the interviewees' stories, especially when the deceased themselves had been an LGBTQ person who had resigned their church membership because of the discriminatory attitudes expressed by the Church institution, a lack of personal faith in Christianity or both. Despite this, none of the funerals described in the interviews had been entirely secular. I argue, thus, that Finnish death rituals are so intertwined with Christian traditions that removing the Christian setting altogether would be difficult because it would require inventing a whole new set of rituals with little examples to guide their planning. Sticking to existing rituals and altering them only slightly has also been noted to happen in same-sex commitment ceremonies both in Finland and abroad (Vähäkangas 2019; McQueeney 2003). As McQueeney (2003, 68) has argued, the ability to create new rituals is controlled by 'existing norms, [and] ritualistic visions'. Vähäkangas (2019, 81), however, has observed that such rituals are a combination of both conformity and resistance.

The prioritised role of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finnish death rituals was visible in the legislation and church guidelines in many ways. Even though the Cemeteries Act demands that the worldview and wishes of the deceased must be respected (The Cemeteries Act, section 1, 2 §), there seems to be little information available on death rituals alternative to Christian traditions.[92] Moreover, whereas the majority of church guidelines mention that a person not belonging to the Evangelical Lutheran Church cannot be buried with Christian traditions against their wishes, any instructions about what to do in such a case instead of following Christian traditions are seldom available. On the contrary, the majority of guidelines analysed suggest that a deceased who is not a member of the Church may still be buried in a Christian manner if this is the wish of the deceased person's next of kin and if the deceased has not explicitly forbidden this. There are differences in how the matter is discussed in the guidelines – ranging from the statements that relatives always have the possibility of burying a non-member with Christian traditions if they so wish to the statements according to which the issue must be negotiated with a priest first. In general, however, the guidelines follow the rule defined in the Church Order (Kirkkojärjestys 1991/1055), which defines the internal affairs of the Church and is given by the General Synod of the Church:

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92   Information on secular death rituals is provided by Pro-Seremoniat (2020), a non-profit service centre founded in 1999 by the Union of Freethinkers in Finland, Prometheus Camp Association and the Humanist Association of Finland. However, the information it provides did not come up in the interviewees' stories, contrary to the information provided by church guidelines, which was repeatedly mentioned.

> A person who does not belong to the Church can be buried with Christian blessings if the next of kin or other people taking care of the burial ask for it. The blessing will not take place, however, if the deceased has clearly expressed a countering opinion or if the priest in a pastoral discussion or in other ways will come to the conclusion that there are not enough justifications for a Christian blessing. (Church Order, section 2, 23§, translated by VA)

I argue that the rule of respecting the worldview of the deceased (The Cemeteries Act, section 1, 2 §) is obscured in the church guidelines and the Church Order. Their vague expressions do not clearly define what counts as a clearly expressed refusal of a Christian funeral if not being a member of the Church is not a sufficiently strong statement in this regard. This problem was faced by Reino when the siblings of his ex-partner decided to bury Erkki with Christian traditions, despite the fact that Erkki had resigned his church membership.

> VA: What about Erkki's funeral? If he was not a member of the Church, was the funeral religious in a traditional way anyhow?
> REINO: Yeah, yes. There was a hospital priest… who blessed him here, in the chapel, so… His siblings informed [the priest] that he's not a member of the Church, but the priest said that it's not a problem.
> VA: Really? Okay… although, according to the Cemeteries Act, it says that if the deceased is not a member of the Church, they should not be buried against their worldview.
> REINO: Yeah, yeah.
> VA: But well… the relatives can try to change that.
> REINO: The relatives can do whatever they want… they can decide at that point.

Reino had not been able to take part in the decision because, unlike the siblings, he was not invited to the discussion with the priest before the funeral. The casualness with which the priest handled the situation suggests that the pastoral discussions and searching for justifications for a Christian funeral in case of non-members of the Church may not, in the everyday practice of funeral priests, always be very thorough.

Having a Christian funeral versus a secular funeral was further discussed by Mika, whose late partner Tapani had not been a member of the Church and who had wished for a secular funeral. Contrary to Reino, Mika was able to negotiate about the matter with Tapani's mother, to whom a Christian funeral was important.

> MIKA: I would have wanted, and I know Tapani would have wanted, a funeral that had nothing to do with the congregation. He had resigned his church membership ages ago. And, and he really did not believe in anything and actually

he had quite a hostile attitude towards the Church and all like religious things. But then when… it was his mother's wish anyhow that there… would be a priest. So, I did not disagree with it. And we ended up in like… He had apparently talked about death-related issues like with his mother, like somehow more directly than ever with me. And his mother was not at all as surprised about the suicide as, as I was. So well… So, he had then, reportedly like… And I think he said once to me as well that if he, that if he died, he would not want a religious funeral, but if it's important to someone from his kin, it does not matter to him, it does not matter to him at all because he does not believe in anything. *laughs* So it's kind of... He said the same thing what I have been thinking, that the funeral is more important to the next of kin anyhow. So, I did not disagree with having a churchy [*kirkollinen*] funeral.

As becomes evident in Mika's story, sometimes the decision to opt for a Christian funeral followed the wishes of the relatives, which the bereaved LGBTQ person did not disagree with. The hesitation in Mika's narrative, however, points out how difficult it is to know the funerary wishes of a person who has already passed away if there is no written proof and if the person has had differing discussions with different people.

Furthermore, Mika's story suggests that sometimes even downright hostility towards the Church could be forgotten in the context of Christian funeral rituals. The same is indicated in Veikko's narrative. He explained how he 'hate[s] the Church as an institution' and how his partner Matias had shared his non-religious worldview. Yet he had organised his partner's funeral in a church and was pleased that a hospital priest had happened to visit Matias's deathbed on the day he died; Veikko described it like a scene from a 'tearjerker movie'. I suggest, therefore, that in their stories, the Church is seen as something that culturally belongs to the scene of death, despite their earthly discontents with it as an institution.

The interviewees also described how they had downgraded the Christian elements in the funeral ceremony if they considered this to be better in line with the deceased person's wishes. This could, however, cause emotional reactions in other mourners. Susanna, for example, had decided to minimise Christianity in Vilja's funeral, which displeased Vilja's religious mother:

VA: How did Vilja's mother react, by the way, when there was so little religiosity in the funeral? Did you have any discussion about that?
SUSANNA: Yeah, we did actually. Maybe she said, like, when I said that there won't be a confession of faith… and no cross symbols on the coffin. But instead Vilja will have a sprig. So, I think she said somehow, like well… 'Aha, why not? Like, must all that be taken away?' Like well… or something. Of course she did

not use these words because it was so long ago, and I don't remember. But it was like that. She did not make it a bigger argument, but she was slightly irritated when I said to her then, like I said that Vilja did not believe, really. Like well… She did then, she did not… [argue] about that anymore.

As described by Susanna, downplaying the significance of Christian faith in funeral rituals meant, for example, removing symbols, prayers, confessions, hymns or the priest's eulogy from the funeral programme. However, some religious elements could be maintained. This could function as a compromise towards other mourners, who wished the funeral to follow religious lines.

Christian elements could be removed from funerals as well as substituted with other, secular elements. For example, instead of religious hymns, classical music or the favourite music of the deceased (or of the interviewee planning the funeral) could be played. Crosses and other Christian symbols could be substituted with more neutral ones, such as plants or birds.[93] Also, the location of the funeral and the memorial service could differ from the traditions. Inka narrated how her wife Tepa did not have a funeral ceremony in the church; instead, people directly gathered on the gravesite for her burial. The memorial service was organised, according to Tepa's wishes, in a farmhouse owned by her relatives in her rural hometown. The programme of the memorial service also challenged traditions by including a ballet dance, performed by Inka and Tepa's friend, who had promised Tepa to dance at her funeral.

> INKA: Well, of course the atmosphere was first quite tense when people came in all suited up and then we ate, and everyone was feeling hot and then no one really knew what to say, and then we read the sympathy cards and so on. But well… I think the first like [moment] when the atmosphere kind of changed was when, we were still there, in the main hall of that farmhouse; so like we all sat there on the sides. And then well [a friend and a ballet dancer] danced this… this, this… [dance]. Well then it was, it was somehow… [Tepa's cousin] said that a woman sitting next to her had like whispered to her: 'Is this really happening'? Like when you hear the tapping of the ballet shoes and… smell the sweat and, in a way, when the dancer is there so close, and then after all it is something that you don't usually see. Especially so closely. And it was somehow so emotional and… So, it was quite, quite spectacular.

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93   Although these symbols have a specific meaning in Christian symbolism, they leave space for other, less religious interpretations.

In addition to easing up the atmosphere, the dance performed by a friend was an act that made Tepa's unofficial family visible in an event that was mainly filled with official family members.[94] As a result, the funeral was quite different from, for example, Erkki's urn burial, which was also held in his rural hometown, filled with his relatives, but which had concealed his individuality and relationships outside the rural hometown.

Being able to transform funeral rituals was affectively significant particularly for those bereaved LGBTQ people who were burying their partners or ex-partners. This strengthened their agency in the context of death and highlighted their role as the primary mourners of their late partners. The rituals were also transformed by those interviewees who had lost a parent or another member from their family of origin. When discussing such transformations and their reception among funeral guests, it became clear that the idea of a good funeral was tightly attached to traditional rituals. For example, Maria, who had built her father's coffin by herself as a part of her own mourning ritual, encountered astonishment and even ridicule for building the coffin instead of buying one. Moreover, it appeared that what was traditional according to someone was not so traditional according to someone else.

> MARIA: For Anja [father's wife], it would have been even more important; she still remembers to remind me that the priest did not give a eulogy. Because everyone else… has been buried in a more traditional manner. Like, you go to the mortician's office and the morticians organise everything. I think we had a very traditional funeral for *pappa*. Because there was a coffin. There was a priest. There were organs. And there was a memorial service, where you get cake and coffee. So, I thought there was everything already. But apparently those who have been to more funerals, in the past, for them it was very peculiar that… the coffin was self-made, and… the priest did not give a eulogy. Hymns were not sung. And the priest had to even say that we don't sing hymns because the next of kin have asked so. That they are just played instead.

Maria's as well as Susanna's stories above show how traditional funeral rituals are difficult to change without someone being confused or offended by it. This indicates, on the one hand, how easily even minor transformations in them affect people and, on the other, how difficult it is to navigate through culturally prescribed death rituals in a way that would not offend or disturb anyone. Moreover, the fact that Maria and Susanna had the upper hand in a case of disagreement indicates that the rules of

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94   The lack of friends at the funeral was not because friends were not invited and welcome but because a popular LGBTQ event, which many of their friends participated in, took place during the same weekend.

genealogical proximity and monogamy, discussed in the previous section, were at work when organising funerals, too. These rules, also found in the church guidelines, secured Maria's and Susanna's positions as the primary mourners, as a daughter and as a widow of the deceased, respectively. However, how the hierarchy of mourners worked varied in different situations.[95] When the LGBTQ person was part of the official family of the deceased, like Maria and Susanna, the hierarchy could benefit them over other mourners, but in other situations, it could also disadvantage them.

Returning to McQueeney's (2003, 68) argument of rituals not bringing a feeling of inclusion to all, I call attention to the conflicts and complexities of emotions between different mourners evident in the stories discussed in this chapter. Because death rituals touch a variety of people, who all have had a different kind of relationship with the deceased that they may wish to be valued in death rituals in certain ways, satisfying the wishes of all mourners can be difficult. Moreover, when following the strictly defined hierarchy of mourners, traditional death rituals do not necessarily have space for equally recognising multiple groups of mourners at the same time. On the contrary, recognising some mourners within the hierarchy often means unrecognising others.

Changing the hierarchy, for example, to prioritise unofficial family does not abolish the hierarchy itself. Different mourners may have contrasting hopes and wishes, creating a feeling of tension among them. The affective power of death rituals is thus closely linked to the complexity of social relationships within all human lives and, as my analysis has shown, within queer and trans lives in particular, owing to varied forms of kinship and LGBTQ people's often marginalised status in society. The focus of this study is explicitly on the experiences and stories of LGBTQ people; however, the questions of the affective power of rituals can, obviously, also touch people beyond these groups. Therefore, the observations made in this chapter about the normativity of death rituals and the affects attached to them and circulated by them can also be applied beyond the group of LGBTQ people, including both marginalised and non-marginalised groups.

Despite traditional death rituals guiding the ways of bidding farewell, the interviewees had found various ways of either adapting to or altering them in meaningful ways. I argue that for the interviewees, bending the traditional lines in different ways was more common than inventing new death rituals through which they could abandon the lines altogether. Because of their differing positions in the deceased persons' lives and the differences in the amount of both legal and social

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95   For example, Maria had the final say in her father's funeral arrangements instead of Anja, her father's most recent (but not the first) wife. Thus, in Maria's case, the rule of genealogical proximity overcame the rule of monogamy when choosing between mourners' conflicting wishes regarding the funeral.

recognition they had, the interviewees had differing opportunities to control death rituals. When having less control, substitute rituals could be created, and when having more control, the traditional ones could be altered. The analysis provided in this section also shows how emotions were involved in the process of altering death rituals. The ability to alter rituals had created positive emotions in the bereaved LGBTQ people, for example, by enforcing their sense of agency and by highlighting their personal relationship with the deceased. However, the alterations could also cause negative emotions in other mourners, who expected more traditional rituals.

Throughout this chapter, I have explored the affective complexities felt by bereaved LGBTQ people in the domain of death rituals. As I have shown, these complexities were built on the feelings of inclusion and exclusion within the institutions of the official family and the Evangelical Lutheran Church. I argue that these two institutions have a prioritised role in the context of death in Finland. As illustrated above, the rules and guidelines provided by the Church strongly prioritise the official family in the context of death, thus tying the two institutions closely together. Moreover, I have shown how the prioritised role of these two institutions is supported not only by church guidelines and state legislation but also by the positive affects of familiarity and appropriateness attached to them, providing them with affective power in the context of death. The interviewees were also, at times and in part, able to either fit in and benefit from these institutions (when belonging to the official family of the deceased) or challenge them by adapting and altering the established rituals, thus enhancing their own personal agency.

5   Living with Grief

5.1   Grief in Theory and Praxis

> SAARA: You see quite many [people] who are like empty shells. [--] You know? And then I think that without these friends of mine or this good crisis therapist or like my… like my very good coping capacity, I might as well be in a similar situation.

Grief affects people in a variety of ways. Instead of understanding grief as a single affect/emotion, it can be understood to include different kinds of 'emotional, physical, cognitive, social, spiritual and existential emotions, reactions and changes' (Aho & Kaunonen 2014, 6). In this chapter, I examine how bereaved LGBTQ people described grief and how they managed to keep on living following loss. First, I analyse how the interviewees talked about grief and how this relates to the theoretical discussions of grief in various fields: I introduce and challenge psychological discourses on grief by discussing the interviewees' narratives in relation to bereavement studies, queer theoretical takes on melancholia and feminist affect theories. In the sections that follow, I examine how the interviewees had managed to keep on living with (or despite) grief, focusing on the experiences of support and lack of support within their official and unofficial families. Then, I turn to studying the conditions of grieving in a welfare state, focusing on the healthcare and social services available for bereaved individuals in Finland and how well (or badly) these services were suited for bereaved LGBTQ people. Finally, I discuss personal enduring as a form of agency when living in a vulnerable condition such as grief. In the context of this study, I define enduring as a day-to-day decision to keep on living no matter how difficult living might feel.[96] All these aspects – interpersonal support, social services and personal agency – manifest in Saara's narrative above, in which she highlights the importance of her friends, a crisis therapist and her own capacity to cope. In this chapter, I argue that, like Saara, many of the bereaved LGBTQ people

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96   See other definitions for enduring, for example, in Honkasalo (2008).

I interviewed utilised various types of support, all of which had their limitations. In addition, they actively looked for ways to endure and keep on living with grief.

Grief entered into the centre of psychological discussion after the publication of Sigmund Freud's influential article *Mourning and Melancholia* in 1917 (Freud 1917/1957; Granek 2010). Although originating from his work in the psychoanalytical framework, Freud's views on grief have become widely influential in the wider domain of psychology as well, including the early Freudian view of grief as a clear-cut, linear process that ends in getting over the loss and the lost other in a certain amount of time (which, often, is expected to be a rather short time) (Walter 1999). By separating mourning from melancholia, Freud has differentiated 'normal' emotional reactions to loss from the 'abnormal' ones. He has described mourning as a gradual process of emotionally letting go of the lost other, making it eventually possible to attach one's libido to new objects after the 'work of mourning' had been completed. On the contrary, he has described melancholia as an ongoing emotional attachment to the lost other without an appropriate ending, thus making it pathological (Freud 1917/1957). Later, in *The Ego and the Id*, Freud (1923/1961) has reconsidered his own theory, admitting the commonness of melancholic attachments and arguing that grief being never-ending does not necessarily make it pathological (see also Clewell 2004, 56-58; Butler 1997, 132-133; Butler 2004a, 20-21). As Butler (1997, 134) has interpreted, in Freud's later writings, the letting go of the lost other no longer requires breaking all attachments but instead suggests the melancholic internalisation of these attachments. In this reading, mourning and melancholia are no longer easy to separate. Moreover, some of Freud's commentators have understood his early theory of grief not to be quite as dichotomous regarding the pathological/non-pathological divide as has often been suggested (e.g. Eng & Kazanjian 2002; Crimp 1989; Granek 2010).

However, the part of Freud's theory that has influenced the psychological discourse on grief the most does focus on the differentiation between the pathological and non-pathological grief, the work of mourning and its eventual completion. This part of his theory has influenced the creation of well-known psychological models, according to which non-pathological grief follows linear stages or tasks, including denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance, and results in the eventual letting go of the lost other (Kübler-Ross 1973; see also Worden 2002; Granek 2010).[97] Likewise, in psychological discourse, grief is often referred to as grief work, which the grieving individual has to do (e.g. Stroebe 1993;

97 These stages of grief were made famous by psychiatrist Elizabeth Kübler-Ross, who used them to describe how people suffering from terminal illnesses grieved the forthcoming loss of their own lives. The theory has also become popular when describing the grief experienced when losing others (Kübler-Ross & Kessler 2007).

Granek 2010). According to this view, grief is seen as a 'debilitating emotional response' and a 'troublesome interference with daily routines' that should be dealt with, worked through and healed from 'as quickly as possible' so that the bereaved individual could return to work and become a well-functioning citizen once more (Granek 2010). Through the active circulation of these views in psychological and medical discourse as well as in popular scientific literature on grief, this version of Freud's grief theory has become part of the unwritten grieving rules of the Western world. This was clearly visible within the stories of bereaved LGBTQ people in Finland.

Based on how the interviewees of this study described their grief and how they reported others to describe grief in general, it can be argued that there are different ways of understanding grief, which often collide. The interviewees were aware that there are both announced and unannounced expectations of what grief should feel and look like and how one should function amidst it. In Doka's (2002a) words, they were aware of society's grieving rules and how their own experiences of grief differed from these rules. However, instead of simply accepting the discourses of letting go and doing grief work, the interviewees more often challenged these notions of grief. For example, Aaro, who had very recently lost his live-in partner, how he does not do any grief work, but grief does work in him. In addition, he emphasised that his goal was not to get rid of grief as soon as possible but to learn to live with it:

> AARO: I have made like… I have made a deal with myself that… since I… I believe quite strongly that grief will never go away, like well… I try to become friends with it.
> VA: Yeah.
> AARO: I try in that way, in that way, like, to proceed with this thing. I was [in my early twenties] when we met [with the lost partner Sami]… and we were together for 35 years so it is, it is a longer time than what I had lived before.
> VA: Mm.
> AARO: Before him.
> VA: Indeed.
> AARO: So, it cannot like go anywhere. And I don't try to fill the gap with anything and I don't try to feel well, and I don't try like anything at all. But I just try to, like, be able to exist at some level.

The widely circulated psychological discourses of grief do not, thus, fit into Aaro's description of grief and his goals (or lack of them). Even though he believed that grief will never pass – an idea that links his grief with the notion of melancholia – he was not a passive victim of this affective landscape. Instead, for him, even a decision to keep on existing within this affective state was an indication of agency

and something worth striving towards. Aspirations to make sense of grief, its temporality (meaning, here, how grief proceeds over time or how one proceeds with it) and one's own position in relation to grief were also present in other interviewees' stories. Saara, who had lost her partner 10 years prior to the interview and who thus had a longer personal perspective on the temporality of grief discussed the matter in the following way:

> SAARA: And on the whole, I think this 'getting over' rhetoric is all wrong. I don't think it, I don't experience it in such a way that it then [would] just, like you know, like it then would somehow disappear when you have gotten over it. Instead, there are certain things that affect your life, and then they just stay… it is not an illness that you heal from like that, instead it like keeps existing. And I think it would be very important that people would not, would not take like this moral stance regarding how long people can grieve.

Despite their different temporal perspectives, Saara and Aaro show similarities in their manners of verbalising their experiences of grief, the most obvious being the statement that grieving takes time and may never be finished. This did not mean, however, that grief would control one's life or that living with it would not become easier, or more bearable, over time. Another way of understanding how grief evolves through time was expressed by Reino, who described his grief at the moment of the interview as 'quite gentle, beautiful'. The grief he felt kept existing 8 years after the loss of his ex-partner, but it was no longer described only in negative terms.

The linear understanding of grief with an eventual ending point has been challenged not only by the people experiencing grief but also within research of different fields. In bereavement studies, the theory of continuing bonds, formulated by Dennis Klass et al. (1996) and further developed by Robert A. Neimeyer et al. (2006), calls into question the Freudian model[98] of grief by arguing that grieving is more about learning to live with grief than trying to get rid of, or to complete, it (see also Walter 1999; Alasuutari 2017b). According to this theory, a wish to continue one's emotional bonds with the lost meaningful other is not to be seen as a pathology but as something that is inherently human. Klass et al. (1996, 14-20) have argued that people react to loss and grief differently and therefore a linear model focusing on the stages that follow each other in a fixed order would be too simplistic to apply to everyone. Moreover, the Freudian model is seen to overemphasise individuality, underestimate the importance of relationality and fail to take into account people's need to hold on to the lost others. In fact, it has been argued that bereaved people

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98   When referring to the Freudian model, I refer to the earlier version of Freud's theory
      that has strongly influenced the psychological discourses and models of grief.

may benefit from continuing their emotional bonds with the lost others, which can appear, for example, in the form of remembering, telling stories of the lost person or talking to the deceased (Neimeyer et al. 2006, 717). When understood this way, the purpose of grief is no longer to let go of the lost person but to integrate their memory within the life of the bereaved in a new way (Walter 1999, 106). It has also been emphasised that neither the Freudian model nor the model of continuing bonds fits everyone's experience of grief, given the fact that grief is a very subjective experience and the needs and emotions people have following loss may differ from person to person.

In queer theory, too, many scholars have discussed Freud's psychoanalytical concept of melancholia and its potential for queer theoretical discussions of grief (e.g. Butler 2004a; Crimp 1989; 2003; Cvetkovich 2003; Eng & Kazanjian 2003; Muñoz 1999). David Eng and David Kazanjian (2003, 3) have pointed out how 'melancholic attachments to loss' can be, instead of pathological, inherently social, dynamic and political. In a similar vein, Butler (2004a) has called attention to the 'transformative effect of loss' and the relational ties between people that grief makes visible. For Butler, loss means not only a loss of another but also a loss within oneself.[99] Butler has also complicated the idea of successful grieving and disregarded the idea of grief's linearity and work-like nature (instead, she suggests that 'one is hit by waves' of grief, the effects of which cannot be pre-planned) (Butler 2004a, 20-22).[100] I propose that when emphasising the social and dynamic elements of melancholia, queer theory theoretically intersects with bereavement studies, especially with the theory of continuing bonds introduced above. In both theoretical traditions, the focus is on the social and relational aspects of grief and how these affect bereaved people, not only burdening them but also helping them to keep on living.

Although the theory of continuing bonds emphasises the different needs of different mourners, it does not dig deeper into these different needs or the relations of power and differing positions in society influencing these needs. Queer theoretical discussions, on the contrary, have focused on the relationship between melancholia

99   Butler (2004a, 22) has argued: 'When we lose some of these ties by which we are constituted, we do not know who we are or what to do. On one level, I think I have lost "you" only to discover that "I" have gone missing as well. At another level, perhaps what I have lost "in" you, that for which I have no ready vocabulary, is a relationality that is composed neither exclusively of myself nor you, but is to be conceived as the tie by which those terms are differentiated and related'.

100 In her earlier writings, Butler has also discussed melancholia in relation to subject formation and desire (e.g. Butler 1997). Here, however, I refer to her discussion on grief and melancholia in the book *Precarious Life – The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004a), in which she focuses on ungrievability, vulnerability and grief and loss as parts of a human condition.

and marginalisation, especially in queer and trans lives. As José Esteban Muñoz (1999, 74) has argued, melancholia can be seen not as a pathology but as an integral part of marginalised people's lives. Douglas Crimp (1989 & 2003), in turn, has criticised the privatising effects of the Freudian model of grief and emphasised how grief is closely related to activism in queer communities, particularly in terms of the global AIDS epidemic. It has also been pointed out that affects such as grief are different for marginalised people not only in relation to sexuality or gender but also in relation to race, ethnicity and class (Muñoz 1999; Cvetkovich 2003, 47). For example, Muñoz (1999, 74) has argued that melancholia is a 'structure of feeling' that can also be productive and positive for marginalised groups, including not only LGBTQ people but also people of colour. In his reading, such structures of feeling can help people to deal with hardships in their daily lives.[101] In addition, as argued by Ann Cvetkovich (2003, 81), having access to ways of grieving that are culturally deemed appropriate is a class privilege because appropriate grieving is defined by middle-class norms. Regarding the interviewees of this study, all of who are white and Finnish-speaking, their marginal status was restricted to their statuses as LGBTQ people and, in some cases, being unprivileged in terms of class, causing a varying scale of complications in their lives.

In other words, queer theoretical understandings of melancholia call into question the pathologising, privatising and universalising notions linked to grief in the psychoanalytical (and as it follows, also psychological) discourses drawing on Freud, thus calling attention to the intersecting differences between people that influence their possibilities of grieving and their needs as mourners. Following these theories, I therefore argue that the interviewees' melancholic attachments to those who were lost can be more than just '"grasping" and "holding" on to a fixed notion of the past' (Eng & Kazanjian 2003, 4). These attachments can function as 'a mechanism that helps us (re)construct identity and take our dead with us to the various battles we must wage in their names – and in our names' (Muñoz 1999, 74), thus making them productive instead of pathological. Therefore, the demands of the Freudian model of grief that argue for forgetting and going forward do not take into account the benefits that holding on to the lost others might have for the marginalised.

The relationality of grief and the need to hold on to lost others was visible in the interviewees' stories when they discussed their habits of remembering the lost. For example, Susanna's habit of talking to her deceased partner almost daily can be read

101 Although Muñoz has referred, in particular, to melancholia in communities of queers of colour, I suggest that his argument also has relevance beyond those communities and collectives and in terms of different types of marginalisation.

as a desire and a need to continue her bond with the deceased, even though the bond took a new, internalised form following the loss:

> SUSANNA: I tend to talk to her in my mind almost every day… I talk to Vilja… I do say to her always like 'Fucking hell that you had to go and die'. Like well…
>
> VA: What kind of things do you talk to Vilja in your mind? Or in what kind of situations?
>
> SUSANNA: Well, for example, last time, yesterday evening… [My daughter] was sitting on my lap on the couch… [--] So well… yesterday evening was the last time I sat there and… I was talking to Vilja in my mind like, 'Watch now, this could have been our baby like… if only you had given me the permission to start making a baby at some point but'… those kinds of things; I complain mainly. Mainly, or like, 'If you had not gone and died' and… sometimes I may say like 'Well, this is what my life ended up becoming *laughs* since you died', like, like well… Sometimes I think about [my son] like… I don't really talk to her, but I think in my mind that… 'This is what Teemu ended up becoming'. I nag to her about my relationship. Or I mean, I am not currently in a relationship, but… I did have a relationship…

As Susanna explained, Vilja continued to be present in her life through her inner monologues directed to the lost partner. By keeping Vilja upadated about her own life events and complications as a lesbian single mom, Susanna managed to express regrets regarding the things that did not happen with her (i.e. having a baby with Vilja) and marvel at the things that had happened without her (i.e. having a baby after her death). Later in the interview, however, Susanna belittled the importance of these monologues, emphasising how 'schizophrenic' and 'raving mad' they were and how they only happened in her mind; she was almost ashamed of how 'others talk in therapy or somewhere, and I just talk to my dead spouse'. The fact that she felt necessary to ridicule and pathologise herself indicates that there is a collision between different ways of understanding and making sense of grief not only within the social world at large but also within a subject.

I propose that Susanna's experiences of living with grief are best understood in relation to the theory of continuing bonds and queer theoretical readings on melancholia that emphasise the social and relational elements of grief, in which the continuing sense of connection with the lost other is considered important and beneficial for the bereaved. This practice was, however, in contrast with the widely known Freudian model of grief, which may have made Susanna question her own habits and deem them pathological – at least when talking to a researcher about them. She was not the only one who had continued talking to her lost meaningful other about the adverse events in her lives, however. Pirre, for instance, who had suffered

from many difficulties in her life both before and after her mother's death, including unemployment owing to long-term illness, homelessness, alcoholism and apparent homophobia in her hometown, continued to talk to her mother's photograph after her death. I propose that holding on to her mother this way can be seen as an attempt to continue their supportive and loving relationship. Talking to her mother, who had supported Pirre when she came out to her as a lesbian and who Pirre described as her 'fighting partner' against difficult family members, was thus an important resource she could rely on, even beyond her mother's death. These habits of holding on to and continuing the relationship with the lost can be interpreted in Muñoz's terms as 'taking our dead with us', important for people living lives that are in different ways marginalised.

When describing their experiences of grief, bereaved LGBTQ people also described other emotions they had felt before and after the loss. Some had found solace in the idea of stages of grief, originated from Kübler-Ross's (1973) theory and made publicly well known by popular scientific literature on grief. The focus on different stages made different emotional reactions, such as anger, acceptable in the context of grief. However, the interviewees often questioned the linear progress from one stage to another. Moreover, some emotional reactions of the interviewees, such as fear or relief, are not included in the list of stages of grief.

I argue that the varying emotions related to grief can be better understood by paying attention to the details of losses, including the varying temporalities of these losses and the different kinds of relationships the interviewees had had with their lost others. Drawing on gender studies scholar Nina Lykke's (2018) theorisation of grief and co-suffering from the perspective of feminist affect theory, I paid attention to what I call the temporality of suffering when analysing the descriptions of grief in the interviewees' stories. When, in relation to the loss, the suffering had started and whether it had started prior to the loss did seem to matter. I argue, therefore, that although death is an event that, in Lykke's (2018) words, cuts people apart from their meaningful others, it does so differently depending on whether the death has been expected. Moreover, the cutting apart happens differently depending on who is lost and what has the lost relationship been like. As is evident throughout my analysis, losses evoked different kinds of emotions, for example, when losing a partner or a parent. Furthermore, it mattered whether the lost other had been dearly loved or whether the relationship had been more complicated than that, including negative emotions.

Regarding temporality, the interviewees' stories clearly showed that those who had known to expect the loss (which was usually the case if the lost other had had a long-term illness) had started grieving the forthcoming loss prior to the death of the meaningful other. As Lykke (2018, 117-118) has pointed out, people caring for their loved ones who are living with long-term illness experience double suffering: they

themselves suffer because of the forthcoming loss and co-suffer for the sufferings encountered by their loved one during their illness and the eventual loss of life. Although death ultimately cuts them apart, in these cases, the 'unavoidable becoming-different' has started prior to the loss and it continues in different forms after the loss, when the bereaved person grieves for the lost other. Therefore, Lykke has called the loss of this kind as a 'long and continuous corpo-affective process'[102] instead of a one-time event (Lykke 2018, 119-120). Although cutting apart is always painful, I argue that it is differently so in the case of accidents and other unpredictable deaths, in which the cutting apart is more sudden and unexpected. In such cases, there is neither time nor possibility for the double suffering prior to the loss; there is only the cutting apart done by the unexpected death and the suffering that follows.

The interviewees described both types of losses. Some of the stories resembled Lykke's description of loss as a long and continuous corpo-affective process, including Veikko's story of caring for his partner while he was living with AIDS, Hannu's and Inka's stories of caring for their partners and Pirre's story of caring for her mother, who all had had long-term illnesses.[103] However, other stories illuminate that the affective reactions caused by a loss, which was in some sense either expected or feared in advance, can also include other reactions than mere suffering. This was the case in Tiina's story of caring for her partner, who also had a long-term illness, and in Mika's story of supporting his partner, who had suffered from severe depression and suicidal thoughts for years before dying by suicide.[104] In Tiina's and Mika's narratives, traces of relief can be found (in addition to the stronger emphasis on pain) when the liminal phase of co-suffering eventually ended, despite the fact that it ended in death. In Mika's case, the loss also marked another kind of end: the end of being afraid that his partner would hurt himself. In Tiina's case, on the

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102   Using the term corpo-affectivity, Lykke (2018, 116) has called attention to the material and the embodied in addition to affects, arguing that the loss of a loved one affects people not only on the level of affects but also on the level of embodiment.

103   To enhance anonymity, I do not name the illnesses of the interviewees' meaningful others unless it is significant in terms of the narrative, as it is in the case of Veikko's narrative about his partner's death to AIDS.

104   I do not claim here that it would be possible to expect someone's suicide in the same way as expecting a death by a physical illness, which is why I have added the word fear in this argument. In cases like Mika's, it is indeed more about fearing something bad to happen instead of expecting it to happen, which makes his case different from those who cared for meaningful others with physical illnesses. However, there were also similarities: Mika, too, was able to prepare emotionally for a loss that might someday come. As he explained: 'I have had, after all, as some kind of a help, like the, the long-term depression [of the partner] and I have like somehow been anticipating it and… I was afraid of the, the suicide so much like for many years before it happened. So, I have kind of like been dealing with it already then, a lot.' (A quotation from Mika's interview)

contrary, the sense of relief was strongly related to her new freedom following the loss. After decades of concealment, she was finally able to begin the gender reassignment process, which her partner had had conflicting opinions about. For Tiina, the loss therefore marked not only loss but also a beginning of a new life: her own. Thus, compared with Lykke's discussion of the corpo-affective process of loss, I argue that in addition to suffering and co-suffering, this process may include other, more complex affects depending on the overall situation of the bereaved person.

In terms of sudden deaths, on the contrary, the structure and temporality of the process was different. In contrast to being prepared for the loss, the cutting apart after a sudden death happened so unexpectedly that it can be described as violent. In stories of this kind, including Saara's and Susanna's stories of losing their partners in car accidents, Aaro's story of losing his partner because of a sudden fit of a disease neither of them had been aware of and Lauri's story of losing his mother to suicide,[105] the main affects in addition to pain and suffering were shock and perplexity. In such cases, the processing of and dealing with a loss can start only when the cutting apart by death has already happened. What is gradual, then, in cases like these that seem so brutally sharp, is learning to live with the loss or despite it, which will take time, as can be seen in the stories quoted above.

Through the analysis of bereaved LGBTQ people's stories in relation to different theories of grief, I have shown that the interviewees' descriptions of grief include complex affects and are not always in line with common, psychological discourses of grief, especially those that follow Freud's early theorising. However, because the Freudian model of grief has established its position as a part of the grieving rules in the Western countries, it influences also those bereaved individuals whose personal ideas and experiences of grief differ from this model. Moreover, I have suggested that instead of the Freudian model, the interviewees' descriptions of grief are better understood when analysed in relation to the theory of continuing bonds and queer theoretical readings of melancholia, which point out the beneficial aspects of melancholic attachments for people who are in different ways marginalised. Finally, I have pointed out that grief is not a singular affect or emotion that would contain only suffering and possibly co-suffering, but it may, depending on the context, also contain traces of other emotions, such as fear and relief or, eventually, more gentle forms of longing.

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105 Lauri's narration of his mother's suicide differed from Mika's narration of his partner's suicide, pointing out that not every loss by suicide is similar. Although both of them can be described as sudden losses, Lauri, who no longer lived with his family of origin, had not been able to fear the suicide to happen in the same way as Mika, who had lived with and cared for his partner prior to his suicide.

5.2   Un/Supportive Others

> SAARA: Well, I had this one friend; they always came to drink tea with me and then we talked about cats. *laughs* Which was quite awesome, they always came, it was kind of like, like… How would I say it? A few people, or a few people around me had the ability to function in any way normally in that situation. Like… we could talk about cats, then I could cry for fifteen minutes, and then we could talk about cats again. So, there was that. I was lucky to have it, but there was quite little of it, so…

The interviewees often named the support received from others as the single most important thing helping them when learning how to live with grief. This supports the discussions in bereavement studies showing that help from one's social networks is often essential to the bereaved (e.g. Stroebe et al. 2005; Dyregrov & Dyregrov 2008; Kaunonen 2000). However, contrary to literature that emphasises the support received from the families of origin and nuclear families in addition to close friends (Dyregrov & Dyregrov 2008; Aho & Kaunonen 2014), among my interviewees, mostly the friends were considered helpful, strongly needed and irreplaceable in the midst of grief. Friends providing care for LGBTQ people has been widely highlighted and discussed in the study of queer and trans lives (e.g. Weston 1991; Weeks et al. 2001; Roseneil 2004; Galupo 2007; Galupo et al. 2014; see also Alasuutari forthcoming). Here I examine the nature of this support without forgetting its limitations. Although the support received from others had been important for the interviewees, sometimes the support had been insufficient or not very consistent, as Saara describes above. When discussing support, I am therefore discussing both supportive and unsupportive others. These others include not only friends but also partners, lovers[106] and members of the family of origin, whose roles were discussed in the interviews.

As social scientist Raija Julkunen (2006) has pointed out, in Finland, the legal responsibility to provide and care for one's family members is restricted to nuclear family. Care and social support that take place within other relationships, such as friendships, remain invisible in sociopolitical studies of care, even though such care does have sociopolitical significance. According to Julkunen, this results from not

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106   I use two terms, partners and lovers, to take into account the semantic differences with which the interviewees referred to their different types of romantic and/or sexual relationships. By partner, I refer to a more conventional form of a romantic relationship, and by lover, I refer to a less conventional form of a romantic and/or sexual attachment. The interviewees themselves differentiated the latter group from partners using different terms to describe them, including a lover, a companion and a fuck buddy.

seeing friendship as a reliable source of social support (Julkunen 2006, 108-110). In international studies of queer widow(er)hood, however, it has been pointed out that the support received from friends is essential for people losing a same-sex partner (e.g. Walter 2003; Whipple 2005 & 2006; Broderick et al. 2008). According to Kath Weston (1991; 1995) and Sasha Roseneil (2004), LGBTQ people tend to rely on networks of friends and partners in times of crises when they need emotional, financial and/or practical support. The significance of support given by chosen, or unofficial, families dates back to the AIDS epidemic and gay men in the USA in the 1980s and 1990s. Back then, friends, partners and ex-partners often became primary carers, who took care of the emotional and material needs of those living with the chronic illness. For instance, they offered emotional support, accompanied the patient during medical appointments and took care of cooking, pets and household chores. Sometimes this was done together with the parents and siblings of the person who had fallen ill, in which case the family of origin and unofficial family members had to find ways to get along and cooperate. Because kinship ties to the family of origin were often already broken because of homophobia – or because the family of origin could not handle the stigma related to the disease – in many cases, it was only the friends and other unofficial kin who supported people with AIDS (Weston 1995a; Hays et al. 1990). In my discussion of the topic, I aim to avoid glorifying or simplifying the support received from friends in the lives of bereaved LGBTQ people or merely repeating the arguments introduced above. Instead, I deepen the discussion of care provided by friends by scrutinising what kind of care and support they offered, who were the friends (and others beyond friends) that were particularly supportive and what were the limitations of support (or access to support) provided and not provided by these groups of people.

An examination of the behaviour of supportive others within this study showed that friends, in particular, often spontaneously offered their support to bereaved LGBTQ people. This was warmly welcomed by the interviewees because intense grieving could make it difficult for them to actively ask for help from others. Most often the support received from friends was described in terms of them being physically present and offering emotional support by listening and talking. In addition, they helped the bereaved in practical matters. In particular, when the lost other had been a partner, friends often created a spontaneous support network around the bereaved person immediately after the loss, taking turns in keeping them company during the first days or weeks after the loss. This resembled the care networks of gay men living with AIDS that took place in the 1980s, as argued by Weston (1991). In this study, however, it was not only gay men but also people of different sexualities and genders who were supported by their friends in this manner. Mika described in the following way how both his friends and his partner's friends had provided support immediately after Tapani's death:

MIKA: That kind of, that kind of support I received at that point. It was entirely because I happened to have a friend *laughs* who organised it. Overall, the support from friends was like the most significant [thing] at that point. So, so… so my… my friends, and there were also those who clearly were more like Tapani's friends, so they somehow immediately joined forces on the day Tapani died… Probably, I guess it was this, this Jenni who [booked] also the doctor's appointment, so it was organised by her and, and they like… At least for the next month, the whole month, I was not, for example, alone a single night but instead they took like turns. It was like, I never really had to like, ask or anything… Always someone just informed me that someone is coming like today… like there… mostly to our home for the night.

The shared crisis of Tapani's death brought two friend groups together and made them collaborate to support Mika. This indicates that grief may also create new forms of kinship or strengthen existing bonds. Later in the interview, Mika emphasised how grateful he felt for the spontaneous efforts of his and his partner's friends. Saara and Susanna, too, reported having had a very active support network keeping them company almost all the time during the first weeks following the loss. Whereas in Mika's and Saara's cases the group consisted of friends, in Susanna's case the most active supporters included friends as well as her parents. She was, in fact, one of the few who had had significant support from her family of origin. Her father even moved in with her for a while to take care of her son, Teemu. When Susanna herself was paralysed by grief, the people around her adopted different supportive roles:

Memories of the following weeks have mixed up. I remember that I had to call endlessly to different places. Someone was in our home all the time. My dad stayed with us and drove Teemu around. Vilja's brother came by every day. I went to a bank and to meet a lawyer. Even though my friend Sini took care of the insurance and other stuff, I needed to try to stay up to date with that. Then the bills started to come in. For towing the car and such like. I got money from my father. I ordered funeral stuff without knowing how to pay for it. Sini had found out that I would get insurance money. [--] I did not sleep, so I got a prescription for sleeping pills from a doctor. Usually I took it around 3 AM. I still don't really remember who made food for Teemu. I lived on chocolate, Coca-Cola and cigarettes. I ate if someone reminded me, but mostly plain coffeebread and vanilla pudding; they were easy because they did not taste like anything. (A quotation from Susanna's written narrative)

In Susanna's narrative, the supportive roles of friends and members of family of origin (both her own and Vilja's) were neatly combined, with everyone doing what

they could to help her. Her story shows that the care and support received from others immediately after the loss focused on maintaining the daily routine (such as eating, cooking or driving around) and on taking care of the long list of post-death practicalities, including visits to banks, lawyers, mortician's offices and doctors as well as sorting out insurance matters and planning the funeral.

Regarding the practical help in post-death matters, the most helpful were those friends who had occupational or other kind of insightful knowledge and resources to help the bereaved. For example, Mika's friend Jenni was a social worker who had contacts to mental health services and crisis therapy. In addition to organising the support network of friends, she managed to arrange appointments with a psychologist for Mika soon after Tapani's death and searched for information about peer support groups for the bereaved. As I later show in greater detail, finding support services that would suit LGBTQ people was not always an easy task, which made the help received from friends particularly needed in this regard. Moreover, some interviewees were friends with or acquainted with professionals of death, such as priests and morticians, which made it easier for them to deal with post-death practicalities. Being acquainted with the priest or mortician meant less need to come out to them or to find out how they would react to LGBTQ people, as these things were already known. Hannu, for example, recounted that the priest at his partner's funeral had been his partner's cousin, which had made the funeral a 'warm-hearted encounter'. Similarly, Susanna was friends with a mortician, Mari, who was of great help to her in the funeral planning. Moreover, a familiar mortician effectively mediated conflicts between Susanna and her late partner's parents. I argue, therefore, that friends with information, occupation or connections related to bereavement support or post-death practicalities and rituals were regarded as particularly important because they shared their knowledge to help the bereaved LGBTQ people. The interviewees also expressed feeling lucky to have such friends, being aware that this was not always the case.

Another group of friends who the interviewees considered particularly helpful, especially in terms of emotional support, where those who had themselves gone through different kinds of losses. Ketokivi (2009b) has termed such people as fellow sufferers, suggesting that people with difficult life experiences may face social isolation and reach out to those who are 'sharing the same fate'. This was the case, for example, with Maria, who had found no emotional support from her family of origin and very little support from her circle of friends when her father died. However, she got support from her ex-wife Milla, who she had, in turn, supported when her father had died.

MARIA: And then Milla came, in the evening. Or in the afternoon. She just left, like, everything. Her job and… and everything and came.

VA: How did it feel, to you, then?

MARIA: That's how it's supposed to go. And terrible, because a year ago the situation was vice versa. [--] Like she calls to tell me that her father has died and…

VA: So you supported her then?

MARIA: Yeah, I dropped everything, and it was clear. Of course, I mean, it was so self-evident. Of course I will go. Even though we had broken up and… Yeah but, of course I will go. Because, because she is my best friend. And she is my family. No other words [needed].

In addition to sharing the experience of losing a father to death, the fact that Maria and Milla were still emotionally close despite their divorce – to the extent that Maria included Milla into her definition of a family – contributed to the fact that Maria was able to rely on her ex-wife in her loss. This observation is in line with previous research that has pointed out the importance of ex-partners in the lives and kinship networks of lesbian women (e.g. Weinstock 2004; Degges-White 2012; Juvonen forthcoming). Although Maria and Milla shared similar losses, being fellow sufferers did not necessarily require that the experienced losses were similar per se. Hannu, for example, told how his friend Riitta, who had lost three husbands, had been of great help to him in listening to, talking about and sharing experiences of bereavement without forgetting to have fun together. Similarly, Susanna emotionally relied on her friend Emma, who had lost a child. The fact that the friends themselves had experienced a loss of some kind helped them understand the nature of grief as an emotional state that is not necessarily going away fast. Shared experiences, therefore, made friends more understanding towards the intensity, temporality and endurance of grief. Moreover, a fellow sufferer did not have to be another LGBTQ person, even though, as Mika expressed, 'it would be interesting to talk to people who have experienced it', referring here to the microaggressions and affective inequality he had faced especially when dealing with professionals following the death of his partner, as discussed in chapter 3. However, the interviewed LGBTQ people did not always know other people who had experienced bereavement in the first place and knowing other bereaved LGBTQ people was even rarer.

Support did not always have to be received in person. Instead, the interviewees described having received emotional support from friends through phone calls or social media, which was also considered a valuable form of support. Such acts also made emotional support more accessible for those who, like Tiina, lived in small places and did not have a supportive social network locally or who, like Aaro, had friends living both near and far.

AARO: I was up all the time and… watched what my friends had commented on Facebook. I put everything there immediately. Because I thought that it, it, it… is my style. That things are clear, and they are told as they are. And it was… it was quite unbelievable the, the, the influence it made. I got a tremendous amount of empathy and… understanding that carried, carried me and and… sharing and… it was like, quite unbelievable, the beneficial effect, the beneficial effect of Facebook.

Aaro's narrative points out the affective value of social media in bereavement that had surprised even himself. Social media also allowed for finding new, supportive friends if the existing social network proved to be less supportive. This was the case with Tiina, who actively looked for new friends online. Starting the gender reassignment process following her wife's death, Tiina needed support for her grief, the transition and the difficulties that followed when her (heterosexual and cisgender) friends and daughter could not deal with her transition. She had indeed found new, supportive friends online both among other transgender people and trans allies.[107] These relationships were not limited to communication on social media. In fact, she had actively aspired to meet her new friends in person, which had resulted in mutual visitations across Finland. In addition to supporting her in her transition, Tiina's new friends had supported her in situations that were difficult for her because of her bereavement, such as the first Christmas following her wife's death. In bereavement studies, holiday celebrations such as Christmas are described as potentially painful events for the bereaved, particularly during the first year following the loss (e.g. Collins 2014). Because of her daughter's initial disrespectful attitude towards Tiina's transition, Tiina was not welcomed to celebrate Christmas with her daughter and grandchildren. Instead, Tiina decided to spend Christmas with one of her new friends, who had been shut out from Christmas celebrations with her official family for similar reasons.

TIINA: So then we decided that well, what about it, we shall have our own Christmas. We had a Trans Christmas here then.

For Tiina, the most supportive fellow sufferers were thus not other bereaved people but – as Sally Hines (2007) and M. Paz Galupo et al. (2014) have suggested – other transgender people, who had also encountered difficulties within their social networks following transition. By looking for people who shared (some of) her

107 A trans ally is a person who is not transgender themselves but who is, according to Kyle Scanlon (2006, 88), 'willing to stand up and fight for the basic human rights and dignity of all trans people'.

experiences, Tiina managed to challenge the risk of social isolation linked with elderly trans people (Witten & Whittle 2004; Siverskog 2014). Moreover, by relying on social media, she proved that living in a small place is not necessarily an impediment for finding supportive company for LGBTQ people (see also Sorainen 2014).

Having supportive friends was considered a privilege by both those interviewees who had them and those who did not. As Freeman (2007, 298) has argued, care provided by kinship (either by official or unofficial kin) is unevenly distributed. Carrington (1999, 211-214) has argued along the same lines that alternative familial structures of care and support are a class-related privilege, which not every LGBTQ person has access to. Therefore, it is noteworthy that the importance of friendship – and the availability of support from friends in bereavement or in other crises – is context-dependent: it is not the same for everyone within the diverse group of people represented by the LGBTQ acronym. However, among the interviewees of this study, having supportive friends was seen not necessarily as a class privilege but instead as a social privilege. Diminished support from friends did not necessarily result from not having friends at all, but from having friends who did not understand what the bereaved LGBTQ person was going through. This was the case when the friends had no personal experience of grief, when they were not sure of how and who to support and when their beliefs about grief differed from those held by the interviewees themselves. Maria, for instance, recounted how some of her close, long-term friendships had dissolved following her father's death because of her friends' inability to empathise with her loss: 'They have not known how to be close to me; they still have parents'. Earlier studies of LGBTQ people and bereavement have suggested that the lack of social support in bereavement results from the lack of recognition of the lost (same-sex) relationship or from the condition of being closeted (e.g. Smolinski & Colón 2006; Green & Grant 2008). However, this was not the case with Maria, who had indeed lost a father. The lack of support had resulted from her friends' difficulty to encounter and understand a grieving individual and from their evasive behaviour that had followed such a lack of understanding (see also Dyregrov & Dyregrov 2008, 53-54). Grief could, therefore, also break bonds between the people who grieved and the people who could not understand grief, resulting in losses of a different kind.

Reino, on the contrary, suspected that it was indeed a lack of recognition that had diminished the support he had received from his friends in a community of elderly gay men after the death of his ex-partner.

VA: When Erkki died, did you get support from someone or somewhere? Like were there people you could talk to?

REINO: Well, I don't really… remember it like that. Like no, I didn't really talk about it with anyone. Except like with friends we sometimes called [over the phone].

VA: Yeah.

REINO: And then this, here in the chapel, a friend took me there by a car… and took me back. So [it was] like that.

VA: So, with friends… you could [talk]?

REINO: Yes.

VA: Well could you tell me a bit more precisely in what ways the friends, like, were there [supporting you]?

REINO: I don't quite know since it was a bit like ambiguous since well… Since we didn't really, we [Reino and Erkki] didn't really have that relationship anymore so… I don't know, they did not quite know how, apparently, to react in that situation, like… like who, who now really is the… the [widowed] party here.

Reino's narrative points out that some forms of queer intimacy and loss were not always understood or recognised even among LGBTQ people. However, the lack of recognition did not stem from being closeted in his case; instead, it stemmed from the undefined nature of his relationship to the lost. Reino did not consider his and Erkki's relationship to have really ended, even though he had been no longer romantically involved with Erkki, who had had a new partner at the time of his death. In a situation where there were two people who could be considered Erkki's widowers, their shared group of friends ended up supporting neither Reino nor Erkki's more recent partner, Niilo. A similar situation was faced by Jarkko, whose relationship to the lost other, Tommi, had been fluidly changing between different categories including friends, flatmates, lovers and ex-lovers. At the time of the interview, he described the two of them as friends and 'undefined exes'. Some people around Jarkko, however, would have wanted to have clearer categories to know what kind of loss Tommi's death really was for him:

JARKKO: And, and… I had a boyfriend, who was totally out of it and didn't get it at all, like, what is this thing. And he could not really get it like… 'So, a former friend, or a boyfriend, or what?' I was like neither, no categories like that. We were queers! *laughs*

Both Reino's and Jarkko's experiences can be read as examples of the confusion that arose in their social networks when the lost relationship could not be easily described with the existing relationship categories. This indicates that the relationship norms governing queer relations operate not only on the outside but also within

communities of LGBTQ people. When they were unable to define the loss as a loss of a partner or a friend, others were unable to comprehend the kind of grief they were feeling. To make the loss understandable to others, it thus had to comply with a relationship category that was understandable in itself. Along the lines of Doka's (2002a) theory of grieving rules and Hochschild's (1983) theory of feeling rules, it was as if the relationship category would have defined what the appropriate and inappropriate affects were in the given situation.

The meaningful relationships the interviewees had lost were, however, meaningful in multiple different ways, and conventional relationship categories were not always able to grasp this multiplicity. Instead, the interviewees' descriptions of their meaningful relationships challenged how friendship, parenthood and partnership were generally understood and, in doing so, brought to the fore the complexities of queer kinship. When describing their lost relationships, they could mix multiple categories in not clear-cut ways or use existing categories in novel, norm-breaking ways. Someone who was described as a friend could also be described as an ex-partner, an ex-lover, a co-worker, a parent figure or many of these at the same time. Moreover, someone who was described as a parent could be officially and socially not recognised as a parent. Someone who was described as a life partner could no longer be one's romantic partner. Sometimes multiple people could be described as partners or lovers at the same time, thus challenging the norm of monogamy in partnership. Whereas previous research has noted that such complex and queered understandings of kinship are not necessarily understood by people outside LGBTQ communities (e.g. Weston 1995a), my research illuminates that the complexities of kinship were not always fully recognised by other LGBTQ people either. Thus, I argue that the lack of recognition of the relationship and how it affects social support is a much more complex and nuanced question than has been suggested in earlier studies of LGBTQ people and bereavement.

In case of losses taking place within a community (which, in my data, were either LGBTQ communities formed by friends, work-related communities or activist communities), support from fellow community members was not necessarily very active. In Reino's story of a lack of support within a community of elderly gay men, gendered expectations of grief suggesting men's inability or unwillingness to talk about grief (and emotions in general) could have affected the lack of discussion and support (e.g. Martin & Doka 2000). However, similar stories were also told by Jarkko and Lauri, in whose cases the communities in question had been more varied in terms of gender and sexual orientation. Jarkko, whose loss of a friend/ex-lover had taken place within overlapping friendship-related and work-related communities, recounted how the loss was talked about 'only a little, and somehow with consideration, and in some appropriate situation'. Lauri had lost a colleague/friend/parent figure within a community that was closely related to people

with AIDS in the 1990s. He explained how the loss had been one among multiple other losses within the same community, and how the losses were grieved within the community:

> VA: How did it feel like there, like, in that community to share grief? Or was it like so that it could be shared?
> LAURI: Well, yes we, because it was so varied, there was so much changing [in the community], people changed. But the people who were there in the beginning [--], we did talk about something. [--] But somehow I had, somehow it remained like we could not… we did not, like… like [grieve] together. Somehow I felt like, like [one community member] once said that people grieve here, people grieve here like everyone in their own corner, for these deaths, so [it was] not like… [--] There might have been some professional guidance of course, but… Somehow it… grief was so, like it is such an intimate emotion, grief, so how do you even share it with anybody?

Lauri's hesitation in describing the situation contrasted the hypothesis I made as a researcher that grief would obviously be shared within a community surrounded by multiple losses. Instead, his description of grief as a private feeling that was not so much focused on or shared within the community itself is more in line with Crimp's (1989) theorising of mourning and AIDS activism. As Crimp has suggested, AIDS activists themselves may remain 'silent precisely on the subject of death, on how deeply it affects us'. In such cases, the aftermath of loss(es) may be defined not necessarily by mourning but rather by militancy, as militancy calls for action that is needed in activism (Crimp 1989, 4-6, 9-10). However, as Crimp has argued, mourning is present in such communities as well, even if it is not openly talked about so much, as Lauri's story suggests. Moreover, I propose that a loss that touches the whole community may weaken the community members' abilities to support each other because everyone in the community is, in their own ways, grieving for the same loss. This interpretation is supported by an argument made in bereavement studies, according to which a shared loss within a family diminishes family members' abilities to support each other (Aho & Kaunonen 2014, 7). I argue, thus, that this phenomenon is not limited to official families but may expand to unofficial families and multiple types of communities as well.

The interviewees also talked about friends who held very normative ideas of grief and therefore talked to bereaved LGBTQ people in ways that were considered inconsiderate and hurtful. In such cases, friends' beliefs about grief often followed the Freudian model of grief as a linear model of letting go, discussed in the previous section. When friends' ideas of grief differed from the experiences of the person who was actually grieving, conflicts appeared in their relationships. Saara, for instance,

described grieving as 'stumbling forward in an invisible jungle of norms' of appropriate and inappropriate manifestations of grief. Tiina described the normative grieving rules promoted by her long-term family friends in the following manner:

> TIINA: I would say that the support from friends was too light. Because they had these so-called, here I return to these norms, like they had a so-called normative standard about how grief works and how it affects and in what ways you have to behave. And well… how long grief will last, and when it is at its worst. [--] And well, then these people, indeed, like suggested me how grief will go on and, and such like. Like, of course it is difficult always on birthdays, at Christmas and on holidays and so on, but it will ease after the first year. So, they had this kind of a template to offer me.

Often the grieving rules were related to the temporality of grief. Difficulties arose when people supporting the bereaved started to consider that sufficient time had already passed since the loss and the bereaved should already start feeling better. However, the need for support did not necessarily cease at the same rate as the support from others did (see also Dyregrov & Dyregrov 2008). Sometimes the hardest hit of grief struck only months after the actual loss. Mika, for example, reported how the support he had initially received from his very active support network of friends eventually decreased, whereas his own grief started to intensify in the form of a post-traumatic stress reaction. In situations like this, the bereaved person tried to find other sources of support, for example, in the form of therapy, as will be discussed later in section 5.3.

Sometimes, however, the bereaved were considered to 'move on' too fast. Tiina described that according to her friends, she had transgressed grieving rules (as well as cisnormative understandings of gender) by moving on too fast – and too drastically – by coming out as transgender and starting a gender reassignment process soon following her wife's death. At the time of the interview, Tiina had chosen to have only limited contact with the aforementioned friends and had made efforts to find new, more supportive ones, as discussed earlier in this section. Another example of moving on that the interviewees described as a perceived norm-transgression by friends was finding a new romantic partner relatively soon after the death of a partner.[108] However, for the interviewees, there was no binary division between 'still grieving' and 'ready to move on' by starting a new relationship. The reality was often more complex. Saara, for example, described how starting a relationship with a new, very supportive partner had been a healing and supportive

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108   Here, relatively soon means a few months, half a year or less than a year.

experience for her, even though she continued mourning her late partner. Moreover, having a new romantic and sexual relationship made her feel more attached to life. However, she received paradoxical messages from her friends: they both warned against starting a relationship too soon after the loss and expected the start of the new relationship to mean that she must no longer be grieving for the lost partner. As a bisexual/pansexual/queer person, Saara also pondered that her new partner could have created other kind of confusion among her friends, too, related not only to the temporality of grief but also to the gender of the new partner and therefore to her sexual orientation. According to Saara, the fact that her new partner was a man, like the one who had died was, had eased the situation with her friends:

> SAARA: How would I say it, there was like nothing like 'Now she has gone mad and started to be with women'. [--] There were no interpretations like 'this is caused by this trauma' or something that could have been, so like well, so so it didn't.

In general, new and/or existing partners and lovers had complex roles in the interviewees' lives following the loss. Like Saara, Mika and Susanna said that their new partners had been very supportive in terms of their grief. Whereas Mika was still together with his new partner and happy with the relationship, Susanna pointed out that grief might have affected her relationship decisions and made her choose a partner who was willing to support her emotionally in her grief but who was incompatible with her otherwise. Maria also recounted how she had, at the time of her father's death, held on to a partner with whom she was not compatible but who had emotionally supported her, resulting in retrospective feelings of regret:

> MARIA: And, and it ended. So… So, it makes me feel a bit like exploitative, given how much she helped me. And, and supported me. And… those, those nights when I cried and she stayed up next to me. And she always opened the door when I rang the bell.

Here, romantic and sexual relationships functioned as an extension of a support network, even if the relationship was not very functional or rewarding in other ways. This was also experienced by Veikko, who had practiced consensual non-monogamy[109] and had a lover, Leo, during his partner's illness:

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109 Consensual non-monogamy is a practice of having multiple romantic and/or sexual partners with the consent of everyone involved. It is and has been common in relationships of gay men and is not uncommon among other sexual minority groups either (Barker & Langdridge 2010; Moors et al. 2014).

VEIKKO: So well… it was quite peculiar that Leo had kept me like attached to life, but then afterwards when he, when Matias had died it felt completely like… who is this person and why, why does he like keep calling me this often and why would we need to see [each other] and so on… like this is not my thing at all. And back then, he [Leo] was like the most important [person] in the world; he was absolutely the last resort and a lifesaver.

Although Leo had expected them to end up as partners after Matias's death, Veikko had decided to end the relationship. When the main function of a relationship had been to support the bereaved in their grief, realising that the support was no longer severely needed made the interviewees reconsider the need for such relationships. Moreover, such relationships could be too entangled with illness, death and grieving to function outside these contexts. I argue, thus, that the combination of grief and partners/lovers contained complex affects including not only joy, relief and comfort but also remorse and guilt when the bereaved person later deemed the relationship to be dysfunctional and wanted to end it. Even though Susanna's, Maria's and Veikko's narratives showed signs of regret and guilt regarding their supportive ex-partners/ex-lovers and their own relationship decisions, they emphasised the temporary significance these people had had in their lives during the liminal phase filled with emotional suffering. Therefore, in the context of grief, it was not necessarily the length or continuity of a relationship with a partner or a lover that made it successful and important, as is commonly suggested in normative discourses of romance (Elia 2003; Cobb 2012), but whether it had been situationally and affectively significant for the bereaved LGBTQ person in a certain period of time.

Whereas support from friends and partners/lovers was often discussed in the interviews, support from parents and siblings was rarely mentioned. Some interviewees, however, reported having been supported by their parents in bereavement. For instance, Susanna's parents helped her to cover some of the funeral costs and Saara's parents paid for her bill in mental healthcare services. Susanna's parents were also present and helpful in practical matters, and she was one of the few who had also received emotional support from her family of origin. Even when losing a parent or grandparent, emotional support was sought and received more often from friends than from siblings or parents. This was the case especially when the relationship between the bereaved and their family of origin was – for different reasons – somewhat distant or tense (see also Weston 1995a; Ketokivi 2009b). Hannu, for example, preferred support from his friends instead of his family of origin and explained the situation as follows: 'I have such a big circle of friends around me that they are… they know more about me than my next of kin'. Not looking for support among one's family of origin could also stem from the culture of silence within those families, as discussed in section 3.2. and as explained by Maria:

MARIA: Because our family is, is not… One might wish, maybe, that our family would at least in situations like this come together because of grief. On the contrary, we all… drove to different addresses and [said]… 'We will see tomorrow then'.

VA: Yeah. And was it like a situation in which you needed to, like somehow, deal with your grief alone at that point?

MARIA: Well, we have maybe been taught at home that if you have a tantrum… and you cry in vain… because all crying is in vain… unless you have like fallen from a climbing frame, so all other kind of crying is in vain; if there is no blood, you cry in vain. So, so in a larger scale… We went to our own rooms and came out when we knew how to behave.

For Maria, the lack of emotional closeness within her family of origin made talking about the loss of her father impossible within that context, highlighting the ethos of solitary self-control (Honkasalo 2014, 175). When considering who the bereaved LGBTQ people could turn to for support, the experienced emotional closeness was of paramount importance. For example, Pirre had been able to talk about difficult things in her life with her mother, with whom she was very close. Following her mother's death, however, she could not turn to the rest of her family of origin for emotional support because her relationship with them had always been emotionally distant and complicated. Instead, in bereavement, she had relied on her friend/ex-partner Johanna, with whom she also lived together.

In this section, I have looked into the supportive and unsupportive relationships the interviewed LGBTQ people had in their lives in times of bereavement. I have aimed, in particular, to deepen the analysis of the role of friendship and care in LGBTQ people's lives in times of crises. Although help and support was received from new or existing partners/lovers and occasionally also from the family of origin, support from friends was more frequently highlighted. I have argued that the friends who had occupational or other knowledge and resources to help the bereaved and those who could be named as fellow sufferers were regarded as particularly helpful. However, the amount of help varied over time and was most active, spontaneous and tangible immediately after loss. However, not everyone had people to ask support from, and even the support that had initially been very active diminished over time.

Previous research on LGBTQ people and bereavement has suggested that the limitations of social support may result from the lack of recognition of the lost relationship. For my interviewees, lack of recognition was mainly linked to those relationships that could not be pinned down by one relationship category or label but that spanned across multiple categories. Moreover, their stories suggest that when a loss took place within a community of friends, co-workers or activists, it was not necessarily shared with other community members but instead was grieved in

private. All in all, relationships with others in bereavement were messy, complex and influenced by many issues, including the different ways of understanding the temporality and endurance of grief and the experienced emotional closeness or distance between the bereaved LGBTQ person and the people around them.

5.3   Grief in a Welfare State

Because the social support received from other people had its limitations and because grief manifested also in ways that required professional help (including post-traumatic stress and depression), some of the interviewees had relied on the support services offered by society. Some preferred formal support services over sharing grief with friends, whereas for others it was vice versa. Now, I take a look at the available support services for the bereaved in Finnish society and examine their accessibility[110] from the perspective of LGBTQ people.

The Finnish welfare state is one version of the Nordic welfare state model, building on the ideals of universalism and equal access to social services (e.g. Anttonen et al. 2012; Julkunen 2006; Keskinen 2011). As Julkunen (2006, 44) has pointed out, in welfare states, institutions, organisations and policies aspire to create well-being through social services to all its citizens. In the Nordic welfare state model, such services are offered by the public sector, including the services of the state and municipalities, the private sector and the third sector that includes non-governmental organisations and the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Keskinen 2011, 3; Julkunen 2006, 108). In terms of bereavement support, services related to healthcare are provided either by the public sector or the private sector, whereas peer support is often provided by the third sector. It can be questioned why a society needs to support people in bereavement or why bereaved people would want to rely on such support instead of their personal social resources. As argued by social scientist Anneli Anttonen et al. (2012, 5), according to the welfare state ethos, public services are 'normal, "first line" functions of modern industrial society'. Instead of seeing the responsibility of supporting a person in need as first and foremost belonging to the individual or their family, the welfare state model considers this responsibility to belong to the state. The existence of welfare state services, therefore, helps to fill the gap in the unequally distributed social security and support provided by (both official

110 Accessibility is often used specifically as a reference for buildings and services being accessible to people with physical disabilities; however, it also refers to 'the quality or characteristic of something that makes it possible to approach, enter, or use it' in a wider sense (Cambridge Dictionary 2019b). In addition to physical (in)accessibility, there can be, for instance, economic and social (in)accessibility, both of which are under consideration in my analysis.

and unofficial) families (see also Freeman 2007). However, despite the ideal of equal access to public services, such equality is not always achieved in reality.

In the interviewees' stories, one of the first attempts to reach out to public forms of bereavement support was related to bereavement leave. According to the collective labour agreements of different fields of work in Finland, a person who has lost an official family member to death can be absent from work for 1–2 days without losing payment (Väestöliitto 2019). The details of the bereavement leave depend on the field of work. As argued by Anttonen et al. (2012, 4), universal benefits must be publicly regulated to guarantee that they are equally distributed. Including bereavement leave in collective labour agreements can thus be seen as a means for securing bereavement leave for all workers under certain circumstances. However, such policies do not guarantee bereavement leave when the loss does not qualify as a loss of an official family member or when the bereaved needs to be absent from work for more than 1–2 days. In addition to being relevant for those who had a job, the need for bereavement leave was relevant for those interviewees who were students or unemployed at the time of the loss.[111] In their cases, however, there were no policies regarding bereavement leave.

If the bereavement leave is not sufficient or not available, the bereaved can apply for a sick leave or an unpaid leave from work. However, the latter option is not an economically viable solution for everyone (and not an option for students and the unemployed), whereas the problem with the former is that because grief itself is not considered a diagnosable illness, it is not regarded as a reason for sick leave. Indeed, in medical discourse, what makes the bereaved person incapable to work and thus entitled to absence from the workplace following the loss is not the grief itself but the depression that the 'prolonged', 'complicated' or 'pathological' grief may cause (Huttunen 2009).[112] As a result, the differentiation between grief and depression has a long history within psychological and medical research. Moreover, bereaved people's entitlement to sick leave is an ongoing debate in medical contexts (Saarni & Martimo 2008).

The interviewed LGBTQ people had applied, obtained and been denied sick leave in times of bereavement. Those who had managed to get sick leave had obtained it with varying diagnoses. Hannu and Susanna were granted a month-long

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111 In Finnish society, having unemployment benefits requires, for example, activity in applying for jobs, participating in different types of educational activities and reporting about one's activity to employment services. Students, too, are expected to fill certain requirements in activity and progress to receive student benefits. Thus, if one is unable to fill these requirements in times of bereavement, economic difficulties may follow.

112 However, the concept of pathological grief has also been challenged in bereavement studies, where it is seen as a too ambiguous and context-dependent term to be actually useful (Walter 1999, 164; Stroebe et al. 2000).

sick leave after losing their partners. Some interviewees, including Inka and Maria, had received sick leave for a couple of weeks, which they then extended with their summer holidays before returning to work. Veikko was granted a sick leave for several months already when caring for his partner before his death. The sick leave continued for several months after the loss, too, while Veikko was unemployed. Thus, it was possible for some to get sick leave on the basis of grief. Others chose not to have sick leave at all, like Aaro, to whom it had even been offered by a doctor. In his case, work helped him in staying attached to life.[113]

However, some interviewees described having insufficient sick leaves or an inability to get one. Susanna, for example, had not been able to stay on the sick leave she had been granted by a doctor because she was urgently needed in her workplace. Jarkko recounted how he had had two days of bereavement leave, granted by his workplace, following his mother's death. However, following his grandmother's and his friend/ex-lover's death, there was no bereavement leave, and he had not applied for sick leave either. At the time of the interview, he expressed regret for not applying for it when he lost his friend/ex-lover: 'Afterwards… years later, I have thought that in Tommi's case, I should have just sat down and rested. But at that moment it was quite hectic… and I did not do it'. Saara, however, was denied sick leave by a doctor, based on the argument that grief is not a diagnosable illness and that depression, which would have been the diagnosable option, could not be diagnosed until it had lasted a month.

Mika, too, had encountered problems when applying for sick leave on the day his live-in partner died by suicide. A doctor at a private healthcare clinic had behaved in a manner that Mika described as cold, prescribing him benzodiazepines and sleeping pills for the following month and agreeing to grant him sick leave only for 2–3 days. Mika, who was a student at the time, considered the length of sick leave insufficient. The doctor also gave him a phone appointment to re-evaluate the decision and discuss the medication.

MIKA: And then [the doctor] indeed called me, like the next Tuesday when I was shopping for dog food. So well… and then, I then… like… asked about continuing the sick leave and… and then, then [the doctor] started lecturing me like about like, like how grief is not an illness and… that this has been much discussed in some… conferences where they had been. And I thought that I am

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113   Continuing to work is recognised as a common coping strategy in previous research on bereavement in Finland (Kaunonen 2000, 50-51). It must be emphasised, therefore, that there are personal differences and preferences among the bereaved in terms of bereavement leave and sick leave. Whereas some people would not need them, for others they can be essential.

> not interested in their conferences now *laughs* at this point very much. Like I understand what they mean. And kind of, I even like appreciated it that… that some doctor thinks that everything does not need to be medicalised, like quite, like, normal grief and so on. But well… Yeah.
>
> VA: But they did not agree to grant you a longer sick leave?
>
> MIKA: Well, according to my memory, they did not grant me anything at all at that point.

Mika and the doctor had differing opinions about what a grieving person would need. Interestingly, it was possible for the doctor to prescribe medicine, which Mika had not asked for, for a condition that the doctor did not consider to be an illness, but it was not possible to grant sick leave, which Mika had indeed asked for. Sedative medication or antidepressants were also offered to many others either instead of or in addition to sick leave, thus making doctors' unwillingness to medicalise grief questionable at best. In both Mika's and Saara's cases, the initial denial of sick leave in bereavement did result in searching for help elsewhere and having longer sick leaves later.

When comparing the interviewees' stories of encounters with doctors, it is clear that there are significant differences in how doctors relate to the need of sick leave in bereavement. This puts the people applying for sick leave into differentiated positions, in which the help they receive depends on the doctor. This may happen, of course, both among and beyond LGBTQ people: encountering a doctor who strongly opposes granting sick leaves for bereavement may result in the person not getting a sick leave, regardless of who the person is and who they have lost. Because the current study did not focus on the attitudes of the doctors, whether and to what extent doctors' behaviour and willingness to grant sick leaves was affected by, for example, prejudice against same-sex couples, remains unknown. However, given the grieving rules that emphasise the importance and difficulty of loss within heteronormative families (Doka 2002a), it is possible that the losses taking place in such families are seen as more grievable (Butler 2004a) and are thus encountered with more empathy by doctors than the losses that do not fit in this framework.

In addition to sick leave and medication, the bereaved LGBTQ people had often relied on therapy. Therapeutic services used by the interviewees widely ranged in length and intensity. Some did not attend therapy at all, some has attended only a couple of sessions in crisis therapy, some had applied for three-year-long state-supported psychotherapy and some had attended different types of therapy for longer than that. Short-term crisis therapy was usually attended immediately after the loss, whereas long-term therapies were applied to later, months or years after the loss. For those interviewees who had attended therapy for longer periods of time, the losses of meaningful others were not necessarily their only reason for applying to the

therapy. Despite this, most of them recounted how helpful therapy had been for them, particularly in terms of learning to live with grief. Some preferred therapy over relying on friends because in therapy, they were allowed to completely focus on themselves without having to worry about the person who was listening. In addition, knowing that the discussions were fully confidential was an important factor. The importance of therapists was pronounced when the bereaved LGBTQ people did not have many others to share their grief with or did not want to become a burden for their friends or partners. Lauri, for example, told how valuable it had been to have 'someone to listen' after the years of silence following the suicide of his mother and the deaths of his father and the colleague/friend/parent figure. The losses had been difficult to talk about within his family of origin and his work/activist community; moreover, he had made a deliberate choice to talk to therapists rather than, for example, his partner, who he described as 'not emotionally open, very rational'. During long-term therapy with various therapists, Lauri described how the therapists had become like parents to him, even though they were parents whose company and advice he had to pay for.

Although individual therapy sessions were considered helpful, therapy was not always accessible for the bereaved LGBTQ people. Sometimes the inaccessibility was related to bureaucratic or economic reasons. For example, to find crisis therapy immediately after loss, one had to know where to look. Many interviewees were not entirely sure how they had ended up in crisis therapy soon after the loss or what institution had offered the therapy. They explained that someone else, usually a friend, had found the place and made an appointment for them. This indicates that the social support received from others also played an important part in finding and getting access to the support services offered by society. The crisis therapy was usually provided by NGOs such as the Red Cross, the public health services of the municipality or private healthcare clinics. Although short-term crisis therapy was difficult to find, it was often the only kind of therapy that was accessible immediately after the loss. Applying to state-supported long-term therapy, on the contrary, was described as more difficult. The interviewees mentioned about half-a-year-long waiting lists, complicated paperwork and difficulties in finding and choosing a suitable therapist. Although all these are standard issues in the Finnish mental healthcare system of the public sector (Mielenterveystalo.fi 2019), the interviewees reported that in the midst of grief, it was very difficult to complete the required tasks to be able to begin therapy. In such cases, it helped if the person was already familiar with the system and its requirements or had existing contacts to therapists. The narrative of being lucky for knowing how the system works and how therapy is applied to recurred in the interviews. However, not all were so lucky, and therefore, therapy was not always available when it was needed.

Lauri, for example, told how he had not managed to get crisis therapy following his mother's suicide. Instead, he had ended up talking about the loss to a social worker in Seta, a Finnish LGBTQ organisation. However, the help he got was not intended as bereavement support, and Lauri considered it not to be sufficiently profound for him in his situation. Later on, he also had difficulties with the economic accessibility of therapy. His therapist–patient relationships had occasionally been ended because of budget cuts of the public sector and because he personally could not always afford them:

> LAURI: But yeah, now I don't have money at this point… to get a new, like… professional mother. Like… there is not enough money, because… they are so expensive, expensive, these [therapists].
> VA: Yeah.
> LAURI: And we live in a consumerist world. Yes.

In addition to bureaucratic and economic inaccessibilities, which are encountered by people beyond LGBTQ communities as well, mental healthcare was deemed inaccessible for reasons specifically related to queer and trans lives. Given the history of pathologisation of sexual minorities (Stålström 1997) and the ongoing practice of using mental healthcare professionals as gatekeepers to gender reassignment processes in Finland (Tainio 2013), the relationship between LGBTQ people and mental healthcare professionals is not always unproblematic. For example, encountering discriminatory or marginalising behaviour on behalf of the therapists or being afraid of such behaviour may prevent LGBTQ people from attending therapy in times of grief. Tiina, who had not relied on any formal type of bereavement support, was not interested in the support provided by mental healthcare services. For her, this decision was linked to her decision to start the gender reassignment process following the loss:

> TIINA: Because, because like… I did not experience any like mental health related problem in it, if I wanted to handle grief in my own way and start my own life, the kind of [life] that I have longed for.

Previous research on trans people's experiences of healthcare services has noted that trans people may wish to avoid encounters with doctors and therapists in fear of transphobia and discrimination (Törmä et al. 2014, 184, 195; Irni & Wickman 2011, 19-20). Tiina's narrative can therefore be read as not wanting to end up explaining and justifying her gender to mental healthcare professionals, especially when it would not be the reason for her appointment.

In addition to gender minorities, sexual minorities may encounter discrimination and marginalising attitudes in mental healthcare services, too. This has not ended with the depathologisation of homosexuality that took place in Finland in 1981. Lauri, for example, told how the therapist he had gone to for the large part of the 1990s had openly opposed homosexuality and tried to guide his patients towards heterosexuality instead. As a result, Lauri's relationships with men and issues related to his sexuality were silenced in therapy. This had negatively influenced Lauri's ability to discuss his losses with the therapist, too.

> LAURI: So like, if you become like rejected, it will… it… even if you don't have energy to be like, so militant in such a way, that you don't… have energy to fight against it, or confront the therapist.
> VA: Yeah.
> LAURI: Somehow, since being gay was not the reason why I attended therapy, but instead it was like these losses and my own illness.
> VA: Yeah but it is… If you have to hide a part of yourself in therapeutic discussions, then it's hard to talk about or get help for that thing either for which you have attended it.
> LAURI: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Because there is no big picture. Humans are combinations after all, everything affects everything, it is…
> VA: Indeed.
> LAURI: It is, [I have] experienced this back then.

In addition to making it more difficult for Lauri to discuss his losses, the discriminatory attitude of the therapist had emphasised Lauri's internal difficulties of accepting his sexuality. This began to change only after he started seeing other therapists, with a different, more accepting attitude towards sexual minorities.

Maria, too, had encountered difficulties with mental healthcare personnel. Her story took place much later, in the mid-2010s. She had been given multiple diagnoses referring to depression when applying for short periods of sick leave after her father's death. Eventually, the occupational healthcare personnel had sent her to a psychiatrist to discuss her alleged depression. However, instead of focusing on her father's death, the psychiatrist had wanted to discuss her sexual orientation and short-lived marriage with Milla, which had nothing to do with her need for sick leaves. Later, another mental healthcare professional had started questioning her affectively complicated relationship with a newer partner, Laura, which Maria found inappropriate:

> MARIA: They thought that I will apply for [state-supported] psychotherapy. [Because] I have clearly… other problems, too. What was not… it was not…

but it was not the reason why I went there. And I understand that a workplace has responsibilities and their… their… occupational healthcare agreements have, have conditions. [--] But it… felt more like a burden. In addition to it.

VA: Yeah.

MARIA: And indeed, the amount of time… If it [the father's death] was already half a year ago…

VA: Even though half a year is such a short time. Really.

MARIA: Half a year is a short time. But, mm… Maybe they wanted to find other reasons than the father's death.

Maria's narrative shows how a person who mourns a death of a meaningful other for 'too long' (in her case, more than half a year) is considered, by mental healthcare professionals, as having 'other problems, too'. Moreover, suggesting that her lesbian relationships, which were more complex than the traditional marriage norm, would constitute as these other problems is problematic in its own right. Thus, compared with other interviewees' positive experiences with therapists that had considerably helped them while grieving, Maria's experiences with mental healthcare ended up only being an additional burden.

Similar problems of access and suitability also arose when the bereaved LGBTQ people discussed peer support groups, which very few of them had attended. Attendance in bereavement support groups in Finland is reportedly low in general (Kaunonen 2000; Kaunonen et al. 2000), which may stem from the ethos of solitary self-control and a wish to deal with grief on one's own (Honkasalo 2014) or simply preferring other channels of support. However, according to international studies, there are specific reasons for non-attendance among LGBTQ people in bereavement support groups, including the fear of discrimination, exclusion and expected heteronormativity (and, as I add, cisnormativity) in such groups (Bristowe et al. 2016, 10). Even though the interviewees of this study did not voice the fear of discrimination quite as directly, I argue that similar logics were at play in their narratives as well.

As argued by Julkunen (2006, 120-122), the third sector is an important provider of support services related to relationships and family matters, especially in terms of people who are not properly catered for in state-provided services. This seems to be the case with bereavement support groups, which in Finland are usually offered, indeed, by the third sector of the welfare state, especially by the Evangelical Lutheran Church (EVL.fi 2019a; EVL.fi 2019b; Kaunonen 2000, 11). In addition, support groups are offered by mental health associations such as The Finnish Association for Mental Health (Suomen Mielenterveysseura 2019) and by different

types of NGOs.[114] The organisations offering bereavement support often focus on specific types of losses or specific types of grievers. For example, there are separate support groups for those who have lost a partner, a child or a parent and for those who have lost someone by suicide or by long-term illness. Sometimes, separate support groups are also offered to men and women, taking gendered expectations of grieving into account.[115] Differentiated support groups for different kinds of losses and mourners are also recommended in bereavement studies (Dyregrov & Dyregrov 2008, 63-64). Given the regional differences in Finland, however, differentiating support groups according to the types of losses is not always possible, especially in smaller towns or in terms of less common types of losses. Moreover, the existence and lifespan of such groups is dependent on active organisers. As Julkunen (2006, 122) has pointed out, peer support groups of all kinds are often temporary because they are formed and shut down depending on the activity of their organisers, volunteers and participants. As a result, suitable peer support groups do not necessarily exist when and where one would need them.

The interviewees of this study often described how they had not found bereavement support groups that were suitable for their needs. No one had come across bereavement support tailored especially for LGBTQ people (in most cases, it had not even occurred to them that such a group could even theoretically exist). Moreover, many reported a lack of local bereavement support groups in general. Tiina, who lived in a small town in eastern Finland, told that there were no support groups whatsoever available in her hometown until half a year after the loss, which was, in her experience, too late for her. Moreover, Tiina suspected that the people in the support group, which was organised by the local congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, would be 'shy to encounter a man in a skirt and make-up', based on the transphobic and misgendering behaviour she had previously experienced in the congregation. Because Tiina described herself as a Christian, she was not suspicious about the religious content but the expected transphobia she could encounter in the group.

On the contrary, the interviewees who were not particularly religious were somewhat suspicious about the peer support groups organised by the Evangelical

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114 These include, for instance, Surunauha ry [Grief Ribbon] that specialises in losses by suicide, Suomen Nuoret Lesket ry [The Young Widow(er)s of Finland] that specialises in partner loss faced by young people and Käpy – Lapsikuolemaperheet ry [Child Death Families KÄPY] that specialises in the death of a child (see also Surevan kohtaaminen 2020).

115 As argued by Terry L. Martin and Kenneth J. Doka (2000), gender stereotypes influence gendered expectations of grieving, suggesting that men are considered less fluent in showing and expressing emotions, whereas women are expected to both feel more strongly and express their emotions more openly.

Lutheran church indeed because of their expected content. Such suspicion could remain even if church membership was not a requirement for participation in such groups. Mika explained his thoughts regarding congregational grief support groups in the following way:

> MIKA: Many of them were organised by the congregation and I was not attracted by the idea because I am not personally a member of the Church. *laughs* Even though I think that there is not necessarily, like, anything like religion-related, but like somehow, I was afraid that if there is, I will… get mad about it or something *laughs* because I was quite sensitive in that way. I did not want any support like that after all.

In addition to being wary of the potentially religious contents of the group, the interviewees were wary of talking about their losses and other personal issues to strangers, especially if they believed that they would not fit in. Mika had once attended a non-religious support group designed for people who had lost someone by suicide. He had also considered attending another group offered by *Suomen nuoret lesket* [The Young Widow(er)s of Finland] but had eventually decided not to. Susanna, too, had chosen not to participate in the online support forum of the same organisation. For her, the decision not to participate was linked to a fear of having to justify her role as a widow, based on the fact that she had been widowed from a registered partnership instead of a marriage:

> SUSANNA: I went to their website two or three times… like getting to know the material that you can [read] without registering. But then I never really registered there… I don't really know if I felt that I don't have the same right to be a widow… because I am a widow from a registered partnership. Or maybe I felt that… because of Vilja's gender I would have to clarify it more… For years, I haven't lived in a closet or anything, but still… I talk a lot about a partner. Like in a gender-neutral way, if I have to talk about a partner. For new people I say that yes, I have had a partner but not any longer… So, I don't know, maybe I thought that there would be only heterosexual housewives who… Or young fathers or something, so that… So that I would have to explain my situation too much there.

Mika's and Susanna's examples point out how neither religious nor non-religious bereavement support groups may feel accessible to LGBTQ people. However, both of them, as well as some other interviewees, reported that they would be interested in participating in a peer support group particularly designed for bereaved LGBTQ people. At the time of conducting this study, however, no such groups exist in

Finland.[116] Moreover, LGBTQ organisations in Finland do not offer bereavement support either, even though different kinds of support services are available through them for other areas of life and relationships (Seta 2020). As specified by Tiina, it was not the LGBTQ communities and organisations as public actors who had been helpful at times of bereavement, but people from those communities who she had known privately. Thus, although private support could be available thanks to private relationships in those communities, I argue that for those who lack such relationships, public forms of queer- and trans-sensitive bereavement support could be useful.

Sometimes when support groups focusing on bereavement were difficult to find, the interviewees had participated in other kinds of support groups. Veikko, for example, had in the 1990s attended a support group for people whose partners lived with AIDS. Although the group had offered valuable support to him prior to Matias's death, its meetings ended when all partners of its members had died, meaning that the group did not offer bereavement support per se. In addition, Lauri actively participated in a peer support group focusing on depression and Pirre attended a women's group of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). In these groups, both of them had been able to talk about their grief in addition to other issues. Whereas Veikko had not needed to worry about disclosing his sexual orientation to others when participating in his support group, in which the majority of participants were gay men, the situation was different for Lauri and Pirre. Support groups of different kinds were, thus, yet another venue where the bereaved LGBTQ people had to think about coming out. Lauri explained how he did not bother to make 'coming out speeches' anymore in the group; instead, he made his sexual orientation (at the time of the interview, being gay or bi) and gender (other) known to the group members by frankly talking about his life. Pirre, however, had been more concerned about others' reactions to her lesbianism in the group:

PIRRE: I said that I don't fucking dare to go, I cursed. [--] I said like, women's AA group like… I don't have anything in common with them. Then I said that they won't, if they hear about my sexuality they are already like this *makes

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116 When I started doing the interviews in 2015, Malkus, a Christian association for LGBTQ people in Finland, claimed on their website that there would be a grief support group for LGBTQ people in Helsinki, in the Kallio congregation, led by priest Jaana Partti, in which LGBTQ people could sign up when facing bereavement. However, according to Partti, no such group ever existed. In the early 2000s, the Kallio congregation had tried to establish one but due to difficulties in finding participants, aspirations to form a peer support group specifically for bereaved LGBTQ people did not continue (Partti 2016). Later, the outdated information of the group was removed from Malkus's website.

faces*. And some of them are. Because I'm usually the kind of person who hugs and so on, [regardless of] whether it's a man or a woman. It's just a hug, it's not like… it's my style. And it's the style of many people; it's not like [I'm] looking for something. So, one woman [said]… 'Don't even come close to me, like ugh'. Just like that she said it to me. And I said, 'Listen, this is not contagious'.
VA: Yeah.
PIRRE: And then I said like okay, do I have to say that I am celibate, and I am… a sober alcoholic and… what do you want from me? Like… I don't want to declare my life completely.

Whereas Lauri's strategy was not to care about what other members of the group might think of him and his life, Pirre had decided to actively confront the people who expressed discriminatory attitudes towards her in the group. Both of them, however, expressed frustration at the face of actual or potential discrimination and the recurring need to explain their lives to strangers. Although the groups Lauri and Pirre attended were not bereavement support groups, their experiences of participating in them are similar to those reported in international studies discussing LGBTQ people and bereavement support (Bristowe et al. 2016, 10; Glacking & Higgins 2008, 300-301). However, despite the aforementioned difficulties, both Lauri and Pirre found the groups they attended to be useful and continued to participate in them.

Based on the interviewees' stories, I propose that peer support groups for the bereaved can be seen as a place of vulnerability, in which it is not possible to know beforehand how the other group members or the group leader will approach grief, Christian religion and LGBTQ people in general. Because of the uncertainty attached to such groups, they were not affectively appealing for most of the bereaved LGBTQ people interviewed in this study. In addition to being afraid of discrimination, some considered peer support groups to be unsuitable for them in general as a method. For example, Reino, Hannu and Aaro reported that they felt more comfortable talking to their friends than to strangers, whereas others, including Mika and Saara, had found the support they needed in therapy and crisis therapy. The only interviewee who had attended a grief support group more than once and was content with it was Inka; she had participated in a support group focusing on partner-loss organised by her local congregation after the death of her wife. Being familiar with Evangelical Lutheran contexts and somewhat religious or spiritual herself, Inka had not considered participating in a support group organised by the Church as a problem:

INKA: When I went to, for example, to the grief support group or elsewhere, like when I talked about my loss, it did not even occur to me that someone could react in a weird way, or downgrade it or… or something. Like there could appear… any kind of… well indeed these like… wrong assumptions. Like, of

course… in our grief group… there were seven people, and like of course [there were] these older folks. There were these [people] who were close to being 90… old gentlemen who have… lost… their spouses, so, so so… They might have maybe cleared their throats [*kakistella*] a bit, a bit but, but kind of then… but but, yeah. But otherwise, otherwise for example I experienced our grief group to be very good, like we had a terribly, terribly good [team] spirit. And also there, there [was] like this empathy towards each other because everyone knows, everyone is in a similar situation, when you have lost the spouse, so kind of… The shared experience indeed breaks quite a lot of those walls.

According to Inka's narrative, the support she had received through the group mattered more than any initial confusion, which she personally did not pay much attention to. When comparing Inka's narrative to the other narratives discussed earlier, it becomes clear how much what feels accessible to LGBTQ people can vary from person to person. A support group that felt accessible to Inka may not have felt accessible to those interviewees who had decided to avoid support groups for various reasons. Moreover, Inka's participation in the group can be seen to have wider effects than only benefitting her personally. Attending a bereavement support group organised by the Church as an LGBTQ person can be a political act that makes LGBTQ people more visible in such settings. Moreover, as pointed out by Jarkko, taking part in Church-organised activities as an LGBTQ person may help to change the atmosphere within the Church towards a more inclusionary direction:

> JARKKO: There might be an LGBTQ rash[117] here and there [in the Church institution], but then it is, then on the other hand, personal is political and in that way people and the world change when you just go there and exist.

The interviewees' stories of mental healthcare services and bereavement support groups point to the fact that although the welfare states are built on the ideals of universalism and equality of services, this universalism caters for some people better than others. As argued by social scientist Suvi Keskinen (2011, 21-22), who has studied the Finnish welfare state from the perspective of racialised minorities, the practices and services that are deemed good and accessible by the majority population are not necessarily good for and accessible to those who are positioned differently. Strong focus on universalism makes invisible the differing starting points

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117 I read Jarkko's metaphor, translated from *HLBTQ-ihottuma*, as a description of the tense relationship between the Church institution and LGBTQ people, described here as an imaginary allergic reaction, in the form of a rash, caused by the exposure to LGBTQ people.

and differing needs of different groups of people. In addition to the ethnicity prominent in Keskinen's analysis, I propose that the logics of universalism in the welfare state ethos mask the differences between people in terms of gender, sexuality and class. Indeed, as argued by Anttonen et al. (2012, 9-10), there is a growing need to customise social services so that they would better take into account the diversity among the people using the services of the welfare state. Within this customisation, the needs of LGBTQ people also need to be paid attention to. Given the diversity of people included under the category of LGBTQ people, these needs may differ based on sexuality and gender. Moreover, they may differ based on other differences within the same population, including age, class and race, as well as on the types of losses they have been through. Therefore, I argue for greater attentiveness to the intersecting differences among mourners and for bereavement support services that would recognise and respect these differences. One step towards this goal is to educate grief workers, therapists and doctors on LGBTQ matters to make existing services more LGBTQ-friendly.

In this section, I have demonstrated that although many interviewees had found bereavement support services helpful, especially in terms of therapy, they reported limitations in their accessibility. The inaccessibility resulted from the lack of suitable services, economic inaccessibility, difficulty in applying to existing services and the uncertainty of whether these services would be LGBTQ-friendly, leading to social inaccessibility. Sometimes the fear of discrimination, exclusion and marginalisation prevented the bereaved LGBTQ people from participating in such services, and sometimes the experienced marginalisation was an additional burden when using them. Given how the interviewees described, on the one hand, the usefulness of therapy and support groups and, on the other, the inaccessibility of existing support services, I argue that bereaved LGBTQ people would benefit from grief support services that take mourners' differing positions in life into account and are explicitly LGBTQ-friendly. To enhance accessibility, I argue that it would be important to widen the supply of bereavement support services beyond those provided by the mental healthcare system and the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which are not always considered accessible by LGBTQ people. I propose that one logical provider of queer- and trans-sensitive bereavement support services could be LGBTQ organisations, as such organisations already offer support for LGBTQ people's relationships, for example, in the form of couple's counselling, breakup counselling and support in parenthood (Seta 2020). Adding bereavement support to the list could fill a gap in the existing services. Such support services would be particularly useful for those bereaved LGBTQ people who struggle to find support within their private networks.

5.4   Enduring as Agency

Social support received from others and bereavement support services were not the only things that the bereaved LGBTQ people had relied on in order to live with grief. In fact, the interviewees often recounted that due to the changing amount of social support received, the experienced lack of suitable support services and the inaccessibility of therapy, they had to rely strongly on their own ability to keep on living. This ability was named either as resilience or as a coping capacity.

When discussing how Reino had managed to live with grief when the emotional support he had received from others around him was limited, and when he also did not consider the bereavement support services to be suitable for him, he explained his take on the matter in the following way:

> REINO: One had to, one had to almost take care of that by oneself.
> VA: Yeah.
> REINO: Mm.
> VA: Well how did you process it, then? Did you have like some… means for it or…
> REINO: No…
> [--]
> REINO: It did, like, it puts one into terrible pressure. One needs to have that… resilience [*sietokyky*].
> VA: Yeah, indeed.
> REINO: Mm. It just had to be found in oneself.

Personal resilience and coping capacity were also central themes among the narratives of those interviewees who had received support from other people and from support services. Saara and Mika, for example, explained that even though they had been supported by others and had attended therapy or crisis therapy, the most essential thing to live with grief was to make a personal decision to stay attached to life, no matter how difficult it felt. Because the stories of the interviewees were, indeed, survival stories of different kinds, here I focus on the personal nuances of those survivals. Although this can be seen to be in line with the Finnish cultural ethos emphasising solitary survival in grief (Honkasalo 2014; Pulkkinen 2016), my intent is not to glorify surviving on one's own but to show how personal enduring was entwined with different sources of support and how it, sometimes, was the only option left.

In the context of this study, I have chosen to use the term enduring instead of the more widely used term resilience when describing the interviewees' personal coping strategies in bereavement. This terminological decision has been inspired by sociologist Sarah Bracke's (2016a; 2016b) reading of resilience, vulnerability and

resistance. As Bracke (2016a, 55) has pointed out, resilience is a much-used keyword across disciplines, which is used to describe the ability to recover from different kinds of hardships, ranging from ecological to economic and personal crises. Bracke (2016b, 851) has further argued that resilience has been linked to neoliberal subject formation, meaning that within a neoliberal world, a 'good subject' is considered to be one who can 'bounce back and return to its original shape after it has been pulled, stretched, pressed or bent'. In such a discourse, as Bracke has argued, structural inequalities causing the hardships remain invisible.

In the discourse of resilience, the changes that grieving undoubtedly causes within an individual also remain invisible. In my study, the bereaved LGBTQ people and their lives were always changed by the losses they had experienced. Even though life continued and brought along new things, there was no bouncing back to the original shape prior to the loss. Moreover, the danger of what Bracke has termed as the 'Look, I Overcame' narrative, which can be seen as postfeminist in addition to neoliberal, is the pressure it poses on others to overcome all the sufferings of life on their own, regardless of how structural inequalities (Bracke 2016a, 67) – or, as I add, affective inequalities (Kolehmainen & Juvonen 2018) – influence their suffering. Thus, instead of following the discourse of resilience with neoliberal and postfeminist connotations, which sees resilience as a stable inner characteristic indicating that people either have it or not, I use the term enduring, which more clearly focuses on the active efforts this kind of survival requires.

To highlight the activity and agency integrated in enduring, I read enduring as an act of small agency, as described by Marja-Liisa Honkasalo (2013) and Honkasalo, Ketokivi and Leppo (2014). According to Honkasalo and her colleagues' interdisciplinary theory, which combines anthropology and social sciences, small acts that may seem as passive non-action on the outside (such as enduring emotional pain, lingering in the present and remembering the past) can be read as forms of agency. This type of agency appears in states of human suffering, helping the individual to live on and 'to hold on to the world when the world does not hold on to them' (Honkasalo 2013, 42, 46). Although they appear passive, such acts 'require tremendous effort' (Honkasalo, Ketokivi, & Leppo 2014, 367). I argue that living with grief is a condition in which such efforts are required. Mika described these efforts in the following way:

> MIKA: Psyching oneself up has been very important. And, so… Well, that has maybe held me up the most. And then in addition to that, I mean I was lucky to have such a wide and helpful circle of acquaintances and the therapy. And then also that new relationship, so… And now when I have, little by little, found like more interesting work stuff so, overall, I had to like build… a life again. But I mean, it's like… altogether they are like very good and they, like, help me and

they complement each other, but in a way, one has to hold it together by oneself. So that is [the] most important [thing]. Even though it sounds like terribly selfish or self-centred *laughs*, but so it is.

Being surrounded by helpful others, Mika worried that seeing his own enduring as the most important thing in learning to live with grief would appear as self-centred. However, instead of seeing it as a sign of selfishness, I read it as an acknowledgement of the importance of personal enduring.

In addition to manifesting as private decisions to live on with (or despite) grief and mental tasks of trying to accept the loss, described in both Mika's and Reino's narratives above, enduring also took other forms. These were sometimes very practical, such as decisions to talk about the loss to others as much as possible, to read suitable literature focusing on bereavement or to write about one's grief. For example, Saara, Mika, Susanna and Aaro expressed that although they had consciously decided to talk about their losses with others to survive, they had moderated to whom and in which contexts they talked about it. Aaro pointed out the importance of protecting his friends from becoming overburdened with his grief as well as the importance of him focusing on other issues than his grief when spending time with his friends:

> AARO: I feel blue; I'm terribly sad; but then I try to keep it in that way separate, like when I am for example at work or with friends so… I don't like all the time like… chew on this.
> VA: Yes.
> AARO: Like when I, I am in those surroundings, if we go to play pétanque so then we play pétanque… like we all did together before. So, well… it is a bit wrong towards them [the friends] if I all the time just talk about this.
> VA: Mm.
> AARO: Like it does kind of like float there with [me] but I don't, I try like, keep it, it… in that way to myself.

A context-bound decision about when to talk or not talk about grief could thus be strategic and serve multiple functions. Like Aaro, others described the importance of trying to find moments or traces of joy while grieving. Those moments did not take grief away but momentarily gave space for other, more positive emotions, which were also part of enduring. The co-existence of grief and joy was particularly visible in Tiina's narrative. She rebuilt her life by starting a gender reassignment process following her wife's death and, consequently, called the years after the loss as the best time of her life. In a poem written by her and sent to me as a part of her written

narrative, Tiina described the complicated affective mixture consisting of, in part, the joy of her newly found freedom and, in part, the grief of her wife's passing:

> You are still alive and you have a chance,
> a chance to still be happy
> and push the past gently into hiding.
> You can take it out always when you want,
> but don't give it power.
> Give the power to all that is new!
> To all the love and kindness that you get and give.
> (Excerpt from a poem by Tiina, translated by VA)

The poem is written in second person and directed to Tiina herself as a self-empowering reminder to focus on living. Tiina's poem points out the importance of trying to find happiness in times of grief; in addition, it can be read as an example of transpoetics that aims to make sense of the complex, embodied and affective experiences related to being transgender (Kähkönen & Ladin 2017). I argue that the process of writing the poem and thus making sense of her affective experiences in the midst of grief can be understood as an act of small agency. Moreover, Tiina's active aspirations to find new, supportive friends, discussed in section 5.2, can also be read as small agency in the context of enduring.

Concrete forms of enduring also included the strategy of keeping oneself busy. The interviewees focused, for example, on funeral planning and post-death practicalities, such as going through the belongings of the lost other and reorganising the shared home. Keeping oneself busy has been observed to be a common strategy among the bereaved, allegedly because of its ability to distract them from grief and loss (e.g. Anderson & Dimond 1995, 311). However, I argue that instead of simply functioning as a distraction, keeping busy with planning death rituals and taking care of post-death practicalities, in particular, offered a means to focus on the loss by doing something tangible and useful in relation to it. Although this strategy was important, for example, for Tiina following her wife's death and for Jarkko following his mother's death, it was a strategy that was not possible for everyone. Whether or not it was possible depended on the legal and social recognition of the bereaved person in the life of the deceased. If the relationship to the lost other was either legally or socially recognised, the bereaved LGBTQ person was more likely included in the planning of death rituals and more easily had access to the living space and belongings of the lost.

It was also possible to keep oneself busy beyond the activities related to death rituals and post-death practicalities per se. Some interviewees kept themselves busy with planned day-to-day activities and routines or by planning minor milestones to

focus on so as not to be immersed in grief. Mika, for example, forced himself to focus on living by swimming multiple times each week when his grief was very intense and caused suicidal thoughts. By focusing on a mundane task that he had given to himself, he managed to stay attached to life one day at a time, until the intensity of grief started to ease. These personal activities and goals for keeping oneself busy were possible strategies also for those bereaved who could not keep themselves busy with death rituals or post-death practicalities. Moreover, such strategies helped to keep the bereaved busy long after the death rituals and post-death practicalities had already been dealt with.

Although there were limitations in the social and societal support available for the bereaved LGBTQ people, the interviewees were not merely passive victims of insufficient support. Instead, they were actively searching for ways to endure and to keep on living during a vulnerable time of their lives, both with and without the help of others and the support services provided by society. When analysing enduring as small agency, I am not making a neoliberal claim that having personal abilities to endure loss and grief means that no other kind of support is needed by bereaved LGBTQ people. Furthermore, I do not aim to strengthen the Finnish cultural ethos of solitary survival and idealisation thereof. On the contrary, I propose that because of the limitations of both social and societal support, sometimes the interviewees of this study had simply no other options but to rely on themselves. Moreover, being able to personally endure the loss was considered necessary also by those who were not alone with their grief. By enduring life in the midst of grief and the structural and affective inequalities following losses in queer and trans lives, discussed in detail in other chapters of this dissertation, the interviewees kept on living, grieving and staying attached to life in their own ways, thus actively resisting the normative understandings of what it means to grieve or survive a loss of a meaningful other.

In this chapter, I have discussed LGBTQ people's narratives of living with grief from various perspectives, focusing on the theoretical and empirical descriptions of grief, the importance, characteristics and limitations of social support received from others, the accessibility of and experiences with bereavement support services within the Finnish welfare state and personal enduring as a form of small agency. Many of these topics are also interesting beyond the perspective of LGBTQ people, and therefore, many of my observations can be applicable to heterosexual and cisgender individuals living with grief in specific circumstances and to bereavement studies in general. In my analysis, however, I have focused on queer and trans lives, trying to find both those characteristics in the interviewees' narratives that might be shared with other groups of people and those that are distinct for LGBTQ individuals. At many occasions, these two categories were not easily distinguishable but instead were in different ways entangled. With people being complex entities, this is hardly surprising. However, as the analysis above shows, there were situations that

reoccurred in the interviewees' narratives. These include valuing and holding on to relationships with the lost meaningful others in the form of melancholic attachments, the importance of support from friends and other unofficial family members (including partners and lovers), the limitations in social support when the nature of the lost relationship was not easily understood by others, the lack of bereavement support services suitable for LGBTQ people, the affectively operating inaccessibility of the existing services provided by the mental healthcare system and the Church (manifesting, for instance, as a fear of marginalisation, as a feeling of burden when marginalisation took place and as frustration when having to constantly out oneself to strangers and deal with its outcomes) and a pronounced need to rely on oneself when social and societal support was limited.

6 Queer Remembering

6.1 Queer Afterlife

> MARIA: This is a big question and I, I do have a theory for this!

After discussing the themes of closets, death rituals and living with grief, I now turn to examine the questions of remembrance both in the stories of bereaved LGBTQ people and more broadly in Finnish LGBTQ communities. I begin this chapter by queering the notion of afterlife as I examine the roles of kinship and remembrance in the afterlives of the spirit, body and belongings. Although afterlife is, undoubtedly, a big question (as stated by Maria), I propose that through my diverse readings of afterlife, it becomes possible to discuss kinship in the lives of the bereaved LGBTQ people in novel ways, focusing on its post-mortem or ghostly dimensions (see also Roseneil 2009), which are tightly entangled with remembrance. In the section that follows, I examine how the interviewees memorialised their lost meaningful others by creating private and shared rituals of remembrance and how they, through these rituals, continued and altered their relationships with the lost others. Thereafter, I broaden my analytic gaze from personal narratives to public manifestations of remembrance in the Finnish culture of death and in Finnish LGBTQ communities. Focusing on the lack of queer monumentality (Dunn 2016) in Finnish cemeteries, I ask what this lack tells us about the Finnish culture of death. I also discuss queer monumentality's institutional restrictions and affective and cultural significance in creating both private and cultural memories of queer and trans lives. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I discuss public remembering by examining how losses (and, more importantly, what kinds of losses) have been publicly mourned and commemorated in LGBTQ communities in Finland at the time of conducting this research. In the end, I suggest that although politicised deaths and public rituals of remembrance within LGBTQ communities have become part of the queer and trans culture of death in Finland, we also need another kind of queer and trans culture of death: one that would deal with death as an inseparable part of queer and trans personal lives as well.

Although afterlife as a concept has strong connotations with religious beliefs of the post-mortem existence of the spirit, I approach afterlife in a rather different sense (hence the title Queer Afterlife). Instead of being only a religious or spiritual concept, the notion of afterlife is, in my reading, understood and analysed in spiritual, embodied and material terms (see also Scheffler 2013; Honkasalo, Koski & Kanerva 2015). Although the post-mortem existence of the spirit is a matter of belief, I argue that because the body and the property of the deceased do remain after death, they have an afterlife of their own. My argument is inspired by philosopher Samuel Scheffler (2013), who has argued that afterlife can also refer to the continued existence of human life on earth after one's own death. As he has suggested, what matters to people in terms of afterlife is not only (or not mainly) their own or their lost others' continued existence in an imagined, spiritual afterlife, where reunion with loved ones is believed to be possible, but also the continued existence of human life on earth in a general sense. Scheffler has further argued that although death is often seen as a relational disruption that separates people from their loved ones, it is often taken for granted that the loved ones and human life in general will continue existing on earth after one's death.[118] He points out that this self-evident belief in the continued existence of our loved ones and humanity matters to people and is thus not affectively insignificant. However, being more interested in the reactions caused by the potential end of humanity itself, Scheffler does not venture into analysing in depth what this says about relationships between people or what kinds of affects are at play in afterlife beliefs. In what follows, I focus on these questions. I propose that the spiritual, embodied and material takes on afterlife (manifesting in how the spirit is or is not believed to exist after death, with whom the body is or is not buried and with whom the property is or is not shared) tell much about the affective nature of kinship, in which a sense of death-transcending futurity is also important.

In their descriptions of spiritual afterlife, the interviewees expressed varied forms of spirituality. As I argued in chapter 4, only a few of them had a strongly Christian or, conversely, a secular worldview. Most of them had a worldview falling somewhere in between the two and could thus be termed as semi-seculars or post-Christians (af Burén 2015; Thurfjell 2015). Instead of dogmatically following the theological teachings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, many reported having more faith in some undefined form of guidance, fate or intuition than in the Christian

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118 According to Scheffler, this can be confirmed by a thought experiment: if all humanity was destroyed 30 days after our own death, or if human beings gradually ceased to be through infertility, would we think about death in a similar manner as we do now, when we take it for granted that death merely separates us from others who continue to live on? Scheffler thinks that we would not. Although this thought experiment is intriguing, it is beyond the scope of this study to discuss it further here. For more detailed discussions and commentaries, see Scheffler (2013).

God, per se. Given the interviewees' varied and often unorthodox views on Christian religion, their thoughts about afterlife differed from the teachings of the Church, creating space for new imaginations of what spiritual afterlife could or could not be. This was eloquently (and half-jokingly) voiced by Maria when I asked about her afterlife beliefs:

> MARIA: When I understood, as a child, that Tove Jansson has created all the characters of the Moominvalley based on something, so what the hell are the hattifatteners?[119]
> VA: Mm?
> MARIA: M-hmm? So according to my theory, the hattifatteners are *laughs* dead people.
> VA: Yes?
> MARIA: Yes. And they have flippers [as hands], so they can… so when we are dead, we can still hug [each other, with the flippers]. [--] And then they walk together… because they are weird. And when they are in a bad mood, there will be flashes of lightning and because of that there is, is a storm. And I think this is quite a brilliant, brilliant theory.

Regardless of the details of the interviewees' afterlife beliefs, these beliefs often expressed a hope for a post-death reunion with meaningful others, like Maria's narrative of Tove Jansson's mysterious hattifatteners as dead people in the afterlife points out. As argued by Scheffler, the significance of spiritual afterlife is indeed closely tied to the idea of reunion: people want to survive death, and they want their meaningful others to survive it too (Scheffler 2013, 65-67). Belief in or a hope for a

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119 Maria's notion of spiritual afterlife can be considered queer on many levels, given the queerness often linked to Moominvalley stories and their author, Tove Jansson. Tove Jansson (1914–2001) is a Finland-Swede novelist and artist, famous for her stories of Moominvalley and for her same-sex relationship with graphic artist, Tuulikki Pietilä. She is regarded as one of the first women in Finland to lead a queer life in public (Pakkanen & Tihinen 2007). Moreover, queer themes have been both implicitly and explicitly present in her writing, including the stories of the Moominvalley. As described by Sorainen (2014, 44), 'The Moomin characters and their friends are a ragtag queer group living in the wood, being less than perfectly sociable'. Some of the characters are known to represent real people in Jansson's life, including the character of Too-ticky that represents her partner Tuulikki. Hattifatteners, which are small, white, ghostly characters with flipper-like hands, are not known to represent anything in particular in the real world. Being mute, they do not speak even though they always appear in large groups. In addition, they are capable of conducting electricity during storms. Even on the Moominvalley standards, they are considered uncanny.

reunion also influences how the lost others are remembered: if reunion is hoped for, the lost others are not considered entirely lost after their deaths.

The interviewees' beliefs in spiritual afterlife also took forms of eclecticism or liquid religion, which can be defined as a tendency to combine different forms of religions and spirituality fluidly, often in manners that break and question the established limits of religious traditions and institutions (Taira 2006). This showed, for example, in Veikko's description of his afterlife beliefs:

> VEIKKO: I would terribly much like to believe that Matias is somewhere waiting. And that Matias would look like he did when we met. Preferably with the same shirt on, which was of green Indian cotton. So well… there would be no pain and no ache and no diseases. Not that disease [AIDS] and no other diseases either. So well, I kind of like believe that… I don't know what it is then, like, reincarnation of the soul or what, so like… like there would be a place like that somewhere, and I would like to see Matias terribly much.

Veikko, who earlier had strongly expressed his dislike towards the Church institution, combined in his afterlife beliefs the Christian ideas of heaven and reunion as well as the ideas of reincarnation, which are incompatible with Christian theology (Waterhouse & Walter 2003). The pattern of combining elements from different belief systems, visible in the narratives of those whose worldview could be termed as semi-secular, can also be understood as an example of post-secularity, which has challenged the theory of ongoing secularisation in Western countries. As argued by religious studies scholars Peter Nynäs, Mika Lassander and Terhi Utriainen (2012), people in the Western societies may indeed challenge the traditional ideas of both religiosity and secularity in fluid (or liquid) ways instead of becoming increasingly secular, as has previously been suggested. Interestingly, however, whenever afterlife beliefs were spoken about, the interviewees emphasised, as Veikko did, that this was something they wanted or would have wanted to believe in, suggesting that this was not necessarily what they were able to believe in in reality. Similarly, Maria emphasised that her theory is 'a brilliant theory' but still just a theory. The theories and beliefs about afterlife were thus more about having an ambiguous hope of, or a utopian longing to, reunite with meaningful others instead of actually believing that this would be the case.

Those bereaved LGBTQ people who identified either as Christian or somewhat religious/spiritual had the strongest belief in post-death reunions with loved ones. This belief had comforting effects. Tiina, for example, believed that her wife now existed in a spiritual afterlife, where she would eventually meet her. However, Tiina's beliefs also differed from Christian beliefs in terms of post-mortem connection. She had, for example, often felt her wife's presence and experienced

other unexplicable incidents, which can be termed as uncanny (see also Honkasalo & Koski 2017; Alasuutari 2017b).[120] These beliefs and experiences soothed Tiina, resulting in the interpretation that all previous conflicts with her wife regarding her gender had now been resolved:

> TIINA: Somehow, I have become emotionally free from that, that thought… [The wife] is alright now, there is no pain and no suffering or anything else; and anyway, she is close to me and knows [me] all the time and I, I remember her. And there is no unfinished business between us and and like I just… I don't have to like apologise, apologise for living this life, for it is as it is. I just have to be myself, finally. [--] So now I have it easier, and you [the wife] also have it easier, so what about it. Here we go, and at some point we shall meet, meet, when the time comes.

Pirre, too, had a hope of reuniting with her mother in the afterlife because of her strong Christian conviction. When thinking about the people who did not share such conviction and hope, she believed that 'they must have an ungodly panic' for not knowing what happens after death. Among those bereaved LGBTQ people who reported being more or less non-religious, not believing in anything specific was, indeed, sometimes a cause for existential distress and contemplation in the context of loss. As Mika explains, bereavement could sometimes make one re-evaluate one's disbelief:

> MIKA: But, indeed, because I have been thinking about death so much, because I have, too, ended up resigning from the Church and stuff like that, so then I have thought about it like, quite, quite tremendously. Because it has been, in my mind, very difficult to end up in some like [conclusion] that… like to state that, that, that okay I am now like somehow entirely atheist, I don't believe in anything.

Following Scheffler's (2013, 70) argumentation, the fantasies of spiritual afterlife tell, first and foremost, about what matters to people when being alive. The hope of post-death reunion with meaningful others appearing in the bereaved LGBTQ people's stories, regardless of what kind of belief system it was based on, indicates that the lost others kept having significance in the lives of the interviewees long after they were gone. On the level of emotions, the interviewees kept holding on to the

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120 As I have argued elsewhere, sensing the presence of the dead is, in fact, rather common among the bereaved and can thus be seen as an ordinary part of grieving. Moreover, such experiences may help the bereaved to find peace with the loss and personally sort out unfinished issues regarding the lost other. (Alasuutari 2017b).

lost meaningful others and their relationships with them. This holding on can be understood in Roseneil's terms as haunting or as 'being inhabited by the traces of the lives of others'.[121] As Roseneil has argued, people who are dead – or rather, the memories of them – keep on affecting the lives of the living, thus making visible the ghostly dimensions of kinship (Roseneil 2009, 411-413). Therefore, even though death cuts people apart from their meaningful others (Lykke 2018), the affective links between the living and the lost are not entirely separated. In this sense, I argue that kinship does not have to end in death. Thus, I propose that the term queer kinship can be understood as kinship that not only breaks and challenges the traditional understandings of family but also challenges the idea of inevitable separation between the living and the dead.

Regarding what remains 'on this side' of existence, on the contrary, the focus of my analysis is on the bodily remains of and the property left behind by those who have died or will die. Because the latter group includes everyone still alive, death was also discussed in terms of the forthcoming deaths of the interviewees themselves and not only in terms of their already dead meaningful others. In addition to Scheffler, my analysis is inspired by Michael Cobb's (2009) discussion on the afterlife of property in terms of probate and how the circulation of material objects contributes in making, remembering and honouring different types of families, both official and unofficial ones. However, I extend Cobb's idea by arguing that the manners of disposing and placing bodies, too, may contribute in strengthening the feeling of kinship by creating the sense of being part of a social continuum that does not necessarily end in death. On the contrary, not being buried with certain others or not leaving them property can function as a final act of keeping both material and affective distance from these others.

As pointed out by Cobb (2009, 286-287), although people are generally expected to wish to continue relating to their official families after their deaths, in the case of LGBTQ people, wishes of post-mortem relating might take different kinds of forms because of their different kinds of kinship structures. In the stories of the interviewed LGBTQ people, this came up particularly as reluctance to be buried with one's family of origin in a family grave, even though some of them had an assigned burial plot in such graves. Moreover, the meaningful others the interviewees talked about had often been buried in family graves of their own. If mentioning their own burial preferences, the interviewees more often wanted their own ashes to be either buried

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121 This haunting has, as Roseneil has pointed out, nothing to do with the paranormal or the idionecrophany – that is, experiencing contact with the dead in bereavement (Roseneil 2009, 413). Instead, Roseneil's understanding of haunting resembles the idea of continuing bonds between the living and the dead (Klass et al. 1996) discussed in chapter 5.

anonymously in a memorial grove or scattered somewhere in nature, leaving no visible graves or monuments behind.[122]

With whom one is buried is not freely chosen in Finland. On the contrary, Finnish legislation supports the family grave system and prioritises official family members as decision makers regarding graves. The Church Law defines who can become the holder of the burial right [*hautaoikeuden haltija*][123] of a certain grave (section 17, 3 §) and who have the default right to be buried in the same grave (section 17, 4 §). The holder of the burial right is chosen by the closest official family members of the deceased. While the law does not specify that the holder of the burial right must belong to the official family themselves, it states that, by default, the holdership is given to the widow(er) or the closest heir of the deceased. Those who can be buried in the same grave with a deceased, in turn, include the legally recognised spouse of the deceased (meaning either a married or registered partner), relatives of the deceased either by ascending or by descending genealogy (meaning either parents or children of the deceased) and their legally recognised spouses. Moreover, if no such people exist or if the holder of the burial right agrees, the siblings of the deceased can also be buried in the same grave, as well as their children, spouses and the children's spouses. In theory, the burial order can also include people outside of the official family if the holder of the burial right so decides and if the closest official family members of the deceased accept this. The final permission is granted by the congregation, requiring 'a specific reason' for such practice (The Church Law, section 17, 4§). What counts as such a reason is, however, left undefined. If there are disagreements between the holder of the burial right and the official family, they are solved by the congregation's church council (The Church Law, section 17, 6§). In addition to the legislation that supports the family grave tradition in the above-mentioned ways, the popularity of the tradition may be linked to economic and material facts: burying a deceased into an existing grave takes up less space and is less expensive than burying each person in their own graves, especially in case of cremation and urn burials (see also Pajari 2014).

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122 As noted by Marita Sturken (1997, 197), in the USA, cremation and anonymously scattering the ashes became more common with the AIDS epidemic, resulting in the fact that the bodies of the AIDS dead are nowhere to be physically found for commemoration.

123 The holder of the burial right is responsible for taking care of the grave, representing the people who are entitled to be buried in the same grave and making decisions, for example, regarding the gravesite memorial. To become the holder of the burial right of a certain grave thus brings both rights and responsibilities. It is a particularly significant position for those mourners who wish to be able to choose the burial method or the gravestone for the deceased and who want to be able to reserve themselves an empty plot within the same grave.

As argued by Berlant (2008, 169), the institutions of intimacy (such as the family) have 'the power to organize life and the memory of life across generations'. Following this idea, I argue that the family grave tradition, designating one's place within the official family for once and for all, is one of the techniques through which such power operates. By questioning the significance of family graves and suggesting that other options would be affectively more appealing for them, the interviewees of this study gave interesting insights into questions of kinship and belonging among LGBTQ people in Finland. Hannu, for example, explained his wishes regarding post-mortem relating in the following way:

> HANNU: Personally, I have been… thinking about burial practices, so that… well like… like… I will be cremated and then… the ashes will be put… in this area that has no gravestones [memorial grove]. So in fact, my kin and Juha's kin have these family… family graves and… I understand that, but like, in fact I have been thinking that I don't really… want to.
> VA: So you don't want to end up in a family grave?
> HANNU: No. Even before… maybe it was 15 years ago when my dog died, [I thought] that if I could have myself or my ashes buried in the same place but… the kin has not yet accepted *laughs* the idea. But, it is what it is.
> VA: So does your family have a family grave or such like?
> HANNU: Yeah, my brother and my mother and my sister's son are there.
> VA: But you don't want [to end up] there?
> HANNU: No. And it's not because I am not in good terms with them; I thought so already before.

I propose that preferring to be buried with his dog instead of his family of origin makes Hannu what Ahmed has called an affect alien: a stranger who values something else than the normatively valued tradition or 'who [does] not desire in the right way' (Ahmed 2010, 240). In Ahmedian sense, the family grave tradition can be seen to belong to the same happiness script that marks (certain kinds of) families as the source of a good life (Ahmed 2010; 2008). To be buried with the (official) family would thus be an appropriate ending for such a life. For Hannu, however, the good life or the good end of a life was something else. Nevertheless, his story points out the paradox related to burial wishes: the members of the family of origin one might want to have distance from by being buried elsewhere are the ones who have the legal right to decide whether one's post-death wishes are taken into account – unless there is a legally recognised partner to do this. Moreover, even if there is such a partner, the partner cannot necessarily prevent the members of deceased person's family of origin to be buried in the same grave, as was pointed out earlier by Susanna's case, discussed in section 4.3.

Sometimes the wish to continue or to stop relating to one's family of origin through burial was more complex than the one expressed by Hannu. The wishes of post-mortem relating were affected, for example, by the interviewees' other relationships. Maria, who had been granted the holdership of her father's grave and was expected to decide its burial order, was slightly appalled by the fact that she was supposed to start thinking about her own and her siblings' future burial places soon after her father's death. She also talked about being uncertain whether she personally wanted to be buried in the family grave. Although being buried there as a single lesbian, as she was at the time of the interview, would have been acceptable for her, having a partner or children would have changed her opinion. Maria explained this as not wanting to make her partner or children responsible for taking care of her family grave. Thus, it seems that for Maria, personally relating to her family of origin after her death by means of burial was an acceptable thought, but she did not want to extend this manner of relating to her future partner or children in the fear of it becoming a forced form of relating, one that is performed only out of responsibility. Susanna mentioned children when discussing her burial options, too. After giving up on her hope of being buried with her late partner Vilja (to avoid being buried with her mother-in-law), Susanna did not seem to care that much where her earthly remains would end up. Instead, she suggested that her children 'will dump me then somewhere else'.

For some, the question of to whom one wanted to keep on relating through a shared grave was linked both to the feeling of kinship and to the question of remembrance. In other words, it mattered to the interviewees how they would be remembered after their deaths. As argued by Scheffler (2013, 69-71), people have a desire to 'preserve or reclaim one's place in a web of valued social relations' beyond death as well and thus create a sense of social futurity that exceeds death. I argue that such futurity takes place through (expected) remembrance and commemoration because being remembered by others does have value in people's lives (see also Meyer 2007).[124] These issues were pondered by Reino and Veikko when they discussed their future burial options. Reino explained his unwillingness to be buried with his mother in a family grave by a general unwillingness to be buried in a grave

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124 Although not related to remembrance in death per se, the significance of being remembered is made visible, for instance, by Michaela D.E. Meyer's autoethnographical analysis of the suffering she felt because of her queer lover's amnesia, which made the lover to forget their shared past, thus also rendering – in Meyer's mind – her own queerness questionable: 'Although forgetting can challenge our societal expectations, that forgetting can also compromise identity to the point of erasure. Without Ari, I began to question – was I ever really queer? If I am the only one who remembers these things, did they even exist in time and space the way they do in my memory'? (Meyer 2007, 28).

that no one visits[125] – or remembers. As an elderly gay man with neither children nor a partner, Reino expected that there would be no one to visit his grave, despite his efforts to teach the tradition of visiting relatives' graves to his cousin's daughter, who was also his goddaughter. Therefore, I propose that what was significant for Reino in terms of a burial place was the sense of continuation of social bonds or a sense of futurity maintained by remembrance, manifesting as visits to the grave. Interestingly, he considered this kind of remembrance to be something that only relatives would do and did not consider the possibility of his friends visiting his grave. However, given that his circle of friends mainly consisted of other elderly gay men, a more long-term remembrance would have, indeed, been secured by someone from a younger generation, such as his goddaughter.

When pondering over his options of being buried either with his late partner Matias or with his own parents and grandparents, Veikko mentioned (in favour of the latter option) that more people would visit the family grave. Regarding Matias's grave, on the contrary, he mentioned, 'no one visits, at least no one from [my] relatives'. However, what eventually seemed to matter more to Veikko was the feeling of kinship between him and Matias: 'But as an idea I think it is terribly beautiful that I would go next to Matias like… here [I] fit'. In contrast, Reino did not discuss the option of being buried with his ex-partner.[126] Instead, he had chosen another, rather atypical burial place for himself – he wanted his ashes to be lowered into a stream of a river running through his hometown: 'And I… I think it's like, quite sensible, like let it be there then. With the stream'. Instead of continuing to relate to a certain person or kin, being buried in a river crossing the hometown can be seen as a continuation of his relationship with the hometown itself. Choosing a burial method with no static, visible place for commemoration also made the lack of visitors unimportant. The fear of disappearance by being forgotten was, therefore, followed by the embracing of such disappearance.

However, lowering the ashes in the same place with a meaningful other can enhance post-mortem kinship ties with the said other, even without having a static, visible gravesite to mark this connection. For example, Jarkko wanted to be cremated and anonymously buried in the same memorial grove with his mother, thus

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125   Grave visitation is a common ritual of remembrance in Finland, especially on specific holidays, including Christmas and All Saints' Day. Different kinds of anniversaries and the birthday of the deceased are also common days for grave visitation. The practice of lighting candles on graves while visiting them has become popular in Finland after the Second World War (Pentikäinen 2005, 2).

126   Reino's ex-partner Erkki had been buried in a family grave in another town. Being buried with him was not an option for Reino because Erkki's official family, who had the holdership of the grave, started behaving in a hostile manner towards Reino after the loss.

emphasising their post-mortem connection in invisible ways. In addition, Lykke has described in her autobiographical essay on queer widowhood how kinship between her and her beloved continued beyond death through a material reunion planned to take place one day at the bottom of the sea: 'I have written a love letter to you earlier in the morning. It is about the miracle and our coming reunion among the oysters at the bottom of the sea' (Lykke 2015, 97).

The stories of the afterlife of the body have three important aspects. First, with whom the body is or is not buried is a significant matter for living LGBTQ people because the shared or unshared place of burial allows to continue or to disrupt relationships beyond death. Although the significance of such acts after one's own death may be questionable (it can be asked whether it really matters to a person, after actually dying, where their body is placed), I argue that the fact that it matters during one's lifetime – and that it matters to the others left behind – is enough to make it a question worth discussing. Moreover, I propose that the experienced significance of such decisions operated affectively, touching the interviewees' emotions and gut feelings. From the available options, they chose those that felt best.

Second, the differences in the interviewees' narratives regarding their own, future burial places call attention to not only gendered but also age-related and sexuality-related differences in kinship. It is noteworthy that whereas young lesbians like Susanna and Maria discussed their burial options in relation to their already existing or potential children, the case was different with the older generation of gay men who did not have children of their own. Here, the effects of gender, age and sexuality entwine together: because older generations of gay men have had less opportunities and access to form families with children than younger generations of lesbian women with access to assisted reproductive technology (e.g. Jämsä & Kuosmanen 2007, 13), children do not necessarily appear as a figure of continuity, kinship and remembrance for older gay men in the same way as they might for younger lesbians.[127] Post-mortem futurity, in the form of one's children remembering the dead, was either secured or potential for Susanna and Maria. On the contrary, the lack of such futurity resulted, in Reino's case in particular, into worries about a forgotten grave and an ultimate disappearance from other people's memory, which can also be termed as a post-mortem social death (Jonsson 2015). However, Reino eventually decided to embrace this disappearance.

The third aspect is related to what is lacking in the interviewees' stories. Because the burial options most often discussed included family graves, being anonymously buried in a memorial grove and scattering the ashes in nature, it makes one ask: where are the other options? Being buried with someone else, like Hannu's wish of

127 On the figure of the child as an image of the future, see also Edelman (2004).

being buried with his dog, seemed like nearly utopian longings already known to be impossible, if present in the interviewees' stories at all. As argued earlier, according to the existing legislation in Finland, being buried with someone other than one's official family (including family of origin and a legally recognised partner) is possible with certain requirements, even though it is not a common practice. In the interviewees' stories, however, the Finnish culture of death and its rules on burial appeared as socially and culturally fixed and restricted, with little opportunities to depart from them. One of the few who verbalised a wish to be buried with someone else than his official family was Veikko, who had asked and received the permission to be buried in Matias's grave. The permission was granted by Matias's siblings. Over time, Matias's grave had become a family grave as his official family members started dying and were buried in the same grave with him. Nearly 20 years later, however, one of the burial plots was still reserved for Veikko.

Another way of analysing how relationships are (dis)continued in the afterlife is to look at the afterlife of one's property, as suggested by Cobb (2009). Antu Sorainen (2018; 2015a; 2015b) and Daniel Monk (2014; 2015), who have studied queer will-writing, have argued that writing a will can be seen as an act of caring for those who have cared for the individual during their life. Sorainen (2015a) has further proposed that will-writing can be seen as a 'right to define the posthumous destiny of not only [one's] wealth but also of the well-being of people who [one] really care[s] for'. Moreover, Monk (2014, 240; 2015, 12) has argued that wills are 'sites of resistance' for those whose family relations fall outside the normative family model. In this study, property sharing was, on occasion, done through wills – especially if the property of the deceased had any considerable monetary value. However, there were also other, more informal ways of sharing parts of property in addition to the legally bound inheritance process. Although informal sharing practices were not, necessarily, economically significant, I argue that they were regarded significant on an emotional level.

Kuura and Veikko, for instance, discussed the affective potential of unofficial property sharing through the idea of keepsakes: they suggested that what mattered to them when losing someone to death was to have some kind of memento, such as a book or an LP record, to remember the lost other by. Veikko had had first-hand experiences of this kind of property sharing. His lover Louis, who had died of AIDS in a different European nation, had asked his partner to take Veikko into his apartment, where Veikko was able to choose keepsakes from Louis's property. In addition, Louis had left Veikko an envelope filled with money, a practice that allowed him to bypass the legal inheritance process and to leave money to whomever he wanted. Later, when Veikko's partner Matias died, Veikko decided to follow a similar method of property sharing:

VEIKKO: Then we had an Open Doors Day. So, all possible… all the friends who I knew came by, and I had the doors of all the clothing and linen and china closets open… So, if someone needed something they could take it away. 'Who is of the same size as Matias, if you need socks, boxers, trousers, suits, china, coffee makers, whatever there is, please take it away'. Beause I have always been a terrible cook and I still am… and well, Matias was like a kitchen person. There were like china sets for 12 people and so on, so… They took quite a lot of clothes. Thank goodness, because… what would I have, like, Matias was a bit smaller than me, and the same clothes didn't fit and… so on.

Veikko's decision to share Matias's personal belongings with their friends can be seen as a way of doing and strengthening unofficial kinship and undoing and resisting the kinship with official family, to whom Matias's belongings would have legally belonged. Whereas Sorainen (2015a; 2015b) and Monk (2014; 2015) have suggested that such deeds can be done by wills, in both cases that Veikko recounted, property sharing was done without a will. Although it remained undiscussed in the interview whether Louis's legal heirs were aware of the manner in which he had decided to share his money and belongings with his partners, lovers and friends, in the case of sharing Matias's belongings, this act was made possible by the approval given by Matias's siblings. Thus, it must be emphasised that without a will, the official family of the deceased as default beneficiaries may make it impossible to share the belongings of the deceased in any non-normative way. Not having a will, therefore, involves risks of losing all the property of the deceased to the official family. Some bereaved LGBTQ people, like Veikko, had managed to share the belongings of the deceased in non-normative ways. However, for some others, the existence of a legally binding will was the only thing protecting their claim to the property of the deceased. Some had also lost shared property because of a lack of a will.

Aaro had experienced the results of having no will in a harsh way when his live-in partner of 35 years unexpectedly died. The couple had not been in a registered partnership because Aaro and his partner Sami saw registration to be demeaning and thus no real choice at all.[128] The lack of legal recognition of the relationship and the lack of a will led to Aaro's exclusion from Sami's inheritance process because according to the Inheritance Act (Perintökaari 1965/40), he was not seen as Sami's next of kin nor heir. Instead, Sami's two siblings – and, to Aaro's dismay, his dead half-brother's two children – were the ones who inherited Sami.

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128 Aaro explained: 'Dogs are registered, and so on. I thought that, that it was somehow like worthless'. Sami died shortly before same-sex marriage became legally recognised in Finland, meaning that marriage was never an available option for them either.

>   AARO: Like… you would know them as well as I do, and us, the others. They
>   are like, complete strangers.

It angered Aaro that whereas he was excluded, the people who in reality had had no relationship with Sami were regarded as heirs based on 'a minuscule blood relation'. Because their mutual savings had been in Sami's bank account, the strangers ended up inheriting a third of that money, while Sami's full-siblings inherited the rest. Aaro repeatedly emphasised that he was not interested in the money and that his anger was merely based on the principles of the Inheritance Act that he found unfair. He also explained that the situation could have been worse. Because their shared home had been registered as Aaro's own property, he was able to keep it, similarly to Sami's personal belongings.

Given the undoubtedly painful outcomes of not having a will in Aaro's story, it can be asked: how would a keepsake matter in the larger context of property sharing? Although a keepsake clearly does not have economic significance in the same sense as inherited money or an apartment does, in terms of affects, keepsakes are not worthless objects. As media and cultural scholar Marita Sturken (1997, 12, 19-20) has suggested, specific objects can be perceived as 'technologies of memory' because of their capacity of prompting remembrance. In a similar vein, sociologist and death studies scholar Annika Jonsson (2019) has argued that objects of the dead become 'ghostly signals', signalling what she calls the absence-presence[129] of the deceased. The same idea is shared by Cobb, who has argued that 'the transfer of property, moreover, transfer[s] parts of the testator (his or her emotion, his or her wealth, his or her attention, even his or her characteristics) to the inheritor' and, by doing so, affirms social relations beyond death (Cobb 2009, 332-333). Following these thoughts, I argue that not only the material objects but also the affective value attached to those objects get passed along either by the inheritance process or by unofficial property sharing.

Thus, it seems that objects accrue affective value following the death of their owner. In Ahmed's (2004a; 2014) terms, it could be argued that such objects become sticky with sentimental affects. As a result, they cease to be mere objects and become loaded with a sense of remembrance and the continuity of kinship. For this to happen, the objects do not have to possess monetary value or be officially inherited.

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129 By absence-presence, Jonsson refers to the contradictory feeling of someone or something being both absent and present and the presence felt by someone being actually absent. As she has argued, 'the absent is evoked, made present, in and through enfolded blendings of the visual, material, haptic, aural, olfactory, emotional-affective and spiritual planes, prompting memories and invoking a literal sense of continued "presence", despite bodily and cognitive absence' (Jonsson 2019, 30).

However, as Jonsson (2019, 35-36) has argued, not every object that has belonged to the deceased accrues similar value and will function as a ghostly signal, a technology of memory or a treasured keepsake in a similar way. Instead, she has pointed out how shutting a person out from the processes of posthumous property sharing and merely handing over some items as intended keepsakes, without allowing them to choose the items themselves, may increase the feeling of exclusion and result in disenfranchised grief. According to Jonsson, then, it is integral for the bereaved person to participate in the property sharing and have agency in choosing the keepsakes themselves.

As pointed out by Heather Conway and John Stannard (2016), the affective value of the objects of the dead is often found to be the causing element of inheritance disputes. This was the case, in particular, in the narratives of Pirre and Reino, who had experienced complex and emotionally traumatising events related to the inheritance process. Pirre was strongly disappointed after not inheriting anything from her mother because all the property was inherited by Pirre's father. In Reino's case, his ex-partner Erkki's family of origin was infuriated after finding out that Erkki had left all his property to Reino instead of them. They had initially tried to annul his will but had failed in this process. The family of origin had also tried other measures to get hold of Erkki's belongings:

> REINO: Well, I got nervous and… I changed the locks… to the apartment. I had demanded that I want the… key back. But it was not given to me. They [Erkki's siblings] just said that 'We'll see'. And then… And then one Saturday morning they called me [saying] that they will come now and take everything away. I said that you cannot come here, that this is a death estate [*kuolinpesä*]. An unshared death estate, so you won't take anything from here. Yeah well, it didn't help at all; they came there behind the door but I did not open the door. And they yelled like 'I know that you are there. Open the door'.
> VA: Oh my.
> REINO: Yeah.
> VA: So what happened then in that situation?
> REINO: Well I did not open [the door].
> VA: Yeah.
> REINO: I just waited that they would go away.
> VA: And did they, in the end?
> REINO: Yes. Well, of course they had to leave.
> VA: Yes, yeah, yeah.
> REINO: I would have opened [the door] under no circumstances. I thought that it is not a market –
> VA: Well, of course not.

REINO: -- where you come and get what you want.

I read Erkki's decision to leave his property to Reino instead of his family of origin as a means of continuing and strengthening his relationship with Reino beyond his own death. His siblings' behaviour when they found this out, on the contrary, can be read as opposing his final wish of relating and as an aspiration to strengthen their own kinship with him by emphasising their own, alleged claim to his property. Although inheritance disputes are undisputedly real and not particularly uncommon, I propose that the affective value of inherited or shared objects is significant not only when there are such disputes but also when there are no disputes whatsoever. I argue that in both cases, the value of the objects of the deceased lies in their power of creating or strengthening remembrance and kinship with lost others – in addition to the economic value the property might or might not have.

Among the interviewed LGBTQ people, the tradition of will-writing was often argued to belong to someone else: people who were older than them and thus closer to death or people who had more wealth to share. This is in line with Sorainen's (2018) observation that LGBTQ people do not write wills very often. The participants in Sorainen's study of queer will-writing reported, for example, that they lacked the required information on wills and inheritance or had no significant property to share. Similar concerns have been expressed by Sue Westwood (2015), alongside the notion that legal aid to write wills may be too expensive and thus unavailable for those who are not particularly wealthy. Although these are valid reasons for the lack of wills, I propose that will-writing can also be sticky with affects, like fear, which intervene in will-writing decisions. The interviewees of this study were afraid, for example, that writing a will would lead into one's instant death. Such fearful, magical thinking made the interviewees indefinitely postpone the actual act of will-writing. Moreover, some were afraid that they would appear greedy if they showed too much interest in someone else's money. Kuura, for instance, emphasised that in the potential case of losing someone meaningful – like their two unofficial mothers, who had neither a biological nor a legally recognised relationship with Kuura – having their money or property would be unimportant to them. On the contrary, in some cases, fear had made one recognise the importance of wills: Reino, for instance, explained that the initial motivation for writing a shared will with Erkki was Erkki's fear that if Reino died, his mother would take over their shared and co-owned apartment.[130]

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130 Similarly, the fear of something bad to happen had motivated some interviewees to register their same-sex partnerships. Instead of being a romantic decision, it had often been a practical solution to secure the position of the surviving partner, should the other partner die unexpectedly.

Despite the fear related to will-writing, some interviewees regarded a will as a future option for solidifying and continuing some social relations while separating oneself from others. Veikko, for example, did not have primary heirs and therefore, without a will, his property would be inherited by his siblings or their children. In addition to the legal default of leaving one's property to one's relatives, Monk (2016, 190) has suggested that there is an affective obligation to keep 'family money' in the (official) family. This idea was visible, and contested, in Veikko's discussion of his potential will and its beneficiaries:

> VEIKKO: Because somehow it feels like, because I have quite, quite consciously even become alienated from my godchildren, who are like my sister's son and brother's daughter… so well… [--] And likewise, the sister and brother are a bit like, the brother has summer cottages and… two apartments here and a house there and… the kids buy houses and such like. And well, the sister is like, for her I would gladly give something because she is absolutely the closest to me. And then for a couple of friends. [--] So, for them it would be like, kind of like a memorial thing. And then for Harri, who was my last boyfriend. And then the rest [will go] to a foundation and so on, and that could be it.

When contemplating to whom he would like to bequeath his money, Veikko's testamentary decisions reflected the experienced closeness of his relationships. He also had varying plans to leave money to organisations supporting, for example, people with AIDS and cats, because both AIDS and cats had had importance in his life. Reino, in turn, had decided to leave all his property to an organisation supporting imprisoned gay men abroad. I suggest that bequeathing property to organisations supporting LGBTQ people can be seen as a form of strengthening the sense of belonging to a larger continuum of LGBTQ people both nationally and internationally (see also Sorainen 2015a; 2015b). In addition, kinship with non-human animals can be a significant reason for bequeathing property to organisations supporting animal welfare, which is observed to be rather common among sexual minorities (Monk 2016).[131] Therefore, strengthening the feeling of kinship through testamentary decisions and the afterlife of one's property is not restricted to relationships between human individuals but extends to larger communities and human–non-human animal relations as well.

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131 In Monk's (2016, 187) study focusing on lawyers' experiences of gay and lesbian wills, the phenomenon was jokingly described as 'lesbian cat clauses', even though organisations supporting cats and other animals were reportedly common beneficiaries in gay men's wills as well.

Here, I have argued that the ideas of afterlife, understood in spiritual, embodied and material terms, are closely linked to kinship and remembrance. The stories of who the interviewees wanted to share spiritual afterlife with, be buried with and share property with tell, first and foremost, which relationships mattered to them during their lives and therefore which relationships they wanted to strengthen and continue beyond death, thus achieving a feeling of post-mortem futurity. At the same time, some other relationships were chosen not to be strengthened and continued in the similar manner. Although people are generally expected to relate both in life and in afterlife to those who fit into the normative understanding of love, kinship and institutions of intimacy (Ahmed 2010; Berlant 2008; Cobb 2009), my analysis shows that LGBTQ people may also want to relate to someone else, to no one at all or to something more abstract (such as a town, a pet or communities of LGBTQ people worldwide). Moreover, I have shown through my discussion that continuing bonds, or melancholic attachments, to lost others can also be examined through concepts other than grief, including kinship and remembrance.

6.2   Creating Rituals of Remembrance

Above, I have argued that the interviewees wished to continue their relationships with certain others beyond their own, forthcoming deaths. In addition, they aimed at continuing their relationships with the others they had already lost. Death of a meaningful other sparked a need for commemoration, which appeared in the form of both private and shared rituals. In this section, I examine how the interviewed LGBTQ people described these rituals of remembrance and how such rituals strengthened their ties to those who had died. This section builds on the discussions I started in chapters 4 and 5 because it is linked to the affective power of rituals and the practice of continuing emotional bonds or melancholic attachments (Eng & Kazanjian 2003). However, contrary to chapter 4, which discusses culturally prescribed death rituals focusing on bidding farewell and achieving a sense of closure, here I examine the varieties of rituals the interviewees had created themselves, aiming for an ongoing commemoration of and a connection with their lost meaningful others. Thus, contrary to death rituals, these rituals served different purposes and were less strongly guided by cultural norms and rules. Moreover, here I go deeper into the issue of melancholic attachments, aiming to flesh out what this meant in the interviewees' lives on the level of commemoration. By following queer theoretical takes on melancholia (e.g. Eng & Kazanjian 2003; Muñoz 1999), I intend to show how melancholic attachments can be social, dynamic and beneficial rather than pathological in the lives of bereaved LGBTQ people.

Although rituals are often strongly related to specific communities and are socially shared and sanctioned (e.g. van Gennep 1960; Turner 1979), a ritual can also

be understood as a ritualised or repeated act of significance (Doka 2002b, 135), which differs from a mere habit because of its affectively meaningful nature. In addition to being culturally specific and shared, rituals can be personally created and private. The rituals of remembrance discussed in this section are hardly sanctioned in any conventional sense. Instead, what makes them rituals is either their repetitive and ritual-like nature, the affective impact they had on the bereaved or their appearance in transitional phases of life. Moreover, I propose that compared with the more culturally prescribed death rituals, the rituals of remembrance were a domain where the interviewees of this study had more flexibility to create rituals of their own. Similarly to death rituals, these rituals were sticky with affects but their affectivity was not related to norms or traditions. Instead, what made rituals of remembrance affective was related to the lost relationship itself.

Private rituals of remembrance were often linked to material objects sticky with positive affects. In addition to the objects that had once belonged to the lost meaningful other, similar affective value could be attached to particular places or events. The significance of such objects, places and events, which I argue to operate affectively, can be further analysed by Sturken's (1997, 9) idea of technologies of memory, or memory objects, which prompt or enhance remembrance. As Sturken has pointed out, memories do not passively exist within those objects; instead, the memory objects participate in producing the memory. Within the interviewees' stories, the memory objects – or technologies – did include, for instance, photographs, keepsake items, cremains,[132] cemeteries, homes, anniversaries and holiday celebrations. In particular, photographs, which according to Sturken (1997, 19-20) are 'equated with memory' more often than any other object, were repeatedly mentioned in the interviewees' stories. Some kept framed photographs of their lost meaningful others at home, in front of which they lit candles either as a daily activity or on specific days, such as a birthday or the anniversary of the death. As Doka (2002b, 144) has pointed out, these types of rituals are used to create a sense of continuity in the relationship with the lost. The photograph and the candle formed a shrine of remembrance, showing in a tangible way how melancholic attachments to the lost were made visible at home. Shrines were also visible to those who visited the home, thus making them not entirely private forms of remembrance. Indeed, sometimes, when the interview was conducted at the home of the interviewee, I was invited to get a closer look at these shrines. By being visibly present, the shrines enabled the lost other to keep on existing in the realm of the home, despite the lost other being physically absent, thus emphasising what Jonsson (2019) has called the absence-presence of those who are lost.

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132   Cremains means cremated human remains; that is, the ashes of the lost person (Roberts 2011).

Photographs were also the objects towards which communication to the lost other was often directed. As Tiina, for example, described: 'Each and every night when I go to bed I talk to the photograph [of the wife] and like thank, thank for the day'. According to Doka (2002b, 145), such an act could be defined as a ritual of affirming both the relationship with the lost other and the significance the lost other still keeps having in the life of the bereaved. Moreover, I propose that this act can be understood as a melancholic attachment to the wife, with whom Tiina had had a complicated relationship in terms of Tiina's gender. Pirre, on the contrary, expressed how she talked and even argued with the photograph of her mother:

> PIRRE: I always talk to mom's picture, like I still do and… When I'm angry I say like fuck, well I do swear. [--] I yelled at the picture, I put [her], then always when I'm angry I put mom in the drawer, there…

Through her continued communication with her mother's picture, Pirre continued her relationship with the mother, who had always been the one to support her in the various difficulties of her life. Hence, the relationship with the lost other could continue beyond death through emotions, even if other aspects of the relationship could not. As the interview excerpts point out, in these melancholic attachments, the interviewees reported expressing a variety of emotions ranging from gratefulness to anger and from longing to love.

Other objects such as keepsakes or clothes of the deceased could also function as memory objects, essential for commemoration. Veikko, for instance, showed in the interview a necklace he had bought for Matias during his final years, knowing that it would end up in his possession. He still continued wearing the necklace, nearly 20 years after Matias's death. Using the jewellery or clothes of the deceased kept the lost other close in a very material sense. As pointed out by Sturken (1997, 192), clothes of the dead, in particular, are strong reminders of the absence of the lost other, 'echoing the body that once filled them' (see also Jonsson 2019, 33).

If clothes and jewellery were loaded with affects, the cremains were even more so. However, they were in the possession of the interviewees for only a short time before they were buried or scattered. According to the Cemeteries Act (section 7, 18–20§), a crematorium can hand over the ashes of the deceased only for disposing them. The ashes must be disposed within a year from cremation, and the final burial or scattering place (which must be a single place) must be reported to the crematorium before the cremains are handed out.[133] Although this section of the law

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133 Cremation and ash disposal rules differ across countries and depend on local legislation. In the Netherlands, for example, multiple ways and places of disposing the ashes are allowed. As observed by Brenda Mathijssen (2017), so-called ash objects – that is,

is difficult to monitor, the interviewees who had been in possession of their meaningful other's cremains reported having buried them according to the established protocol. Before disposal, however, the existence and presence of cremains created mixed emotions:

> SUSANNA: Afterwards, I have been thinking that it's a wonder no one told me really that 'You are utterly crazy'. I kept the urn in our bedroom on top of the drawer because… I did not really know where I would have put it, or where I would have given it to be stored. Of course, I could have probably given it to the church for storing but somehow it did not, like, *sobs* even cross my mind but instead… I took the… urn home and *sobs* and well… I had it there, and at home I thought for a while, like, where will I take this, to the cellar or to the attic… or somewhere, but well… I ended up having it in the bedroom because… it felt terribly dishonouring to take it anywhere like attic or cellar or something.

Like the photographs that became extensions of the lost meaningful others in Tiina's and Pirre's stories, here the cremains quite concretely represent the lost person. At the same time, however, the cremated form makes this representation abject-like – that is, something that evokes feelings of otherness and even horror by breaking the expected order of life and the separation between the living and the dead (Kristeva 1982; Husso 1994). In doing so, the abject form seems to deem it 'utterly crazy' to want to keep such a representation of the lost loved one close to oneself. Despite recognising this disturbing otherness of human remains compared with the human that is lost, Susanna makes clear that on an affective level, it would have felt wrong to store the cremains of her partner in a place where objects are stored (the attic or cellar) instead of where a loved one should be (in a bedroom). Likewise, the only culturally valid option for storing ashes that Susanna knew – to store them in a church – was not a place to consider in case of non-religious Vilja. Similar affective complexity appeared in Veikko's narrative when he discussed how he had taken Matias's cremains home from the crematorium:

> VEIKKO: Usually, there are no instructions for how to transport the urn.
> VA: Yeah.

objects including human ashes – have become increasingly popular among the Dutch. The popularity of such a practice suggests that bereaved people find it emotionally appealing to keep some part of the lost other close to them in the form of cremains included in other objects, such as jewellery, paintings or even tattoos. In Finland, however, such objects would be, at the time of writing this study, considered illegal.

> VEIKKO: Because that is your boyfriend. [--] And then you are there, like on a winter day, like well… In the trunk or in the seat belt or between the legs in the floor, or? I think I transported it like here, so it was like between my knees and then I put the seat belt on and drove home. And then it was a thing for cats to wonder, as they did wonder about the wooden box on the table the whole night, and I burned a candle and looked at a photograph and so on.

Like Susanna, Veikko wanted to treat the cremains of the lost person not as an object that could be stored like objects but as something more human-like that deserves to be kept close. I argue that this resulted from the affects and meanings attached to the cremains.[134] However, both Susanna and Veikko expressed confusion in the situation, resulting from the lack of cultural guidance in the proper handling of human ashes. Because it remains undefined in Finland – similarly to many other Western countries (Roberts 2011) – what one should do with the cremains before burying or scattering them, Susanna and Veikko had made their own decisions guided by their emotions. According to those emotions, the lost other was not an object (or an abject) even when they were stored in a box or an urn in the form of ashes. The act of keeping the cremains close can also be seen as a ritual of affirmation (Doka 2002b, 144-145) and honouring the lost person, who no longer exists in human form. Furthermore, in addition to cremains, there is another aspect in Veikko's narrative worth highlighting: in his discussion of cats, he makes visible how he shared his private moment of commemoration with non-human animals, who also had been part of his and Matias's shared life. This points towards the diverse nature of kinship, in which non-human animals can also be significant members, reminding that rituals of commemoration do not have to be limited to humans only.

Certain places, such as a shared home or the grave of the lost other, became affectively charged and evoked feelings of remembrance because they made the bereaved person feel a connection to the lost other. For Hannu, in addition to Juha's grave, the places that induced remembrance were places they had travelled together. One of his remembrance rituals was to travel to those places by himself. A certain

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134 This reading is inspired by Lykke's (2015) discussion on cremains in her autobiographical essay, focusing on queer widowhood as her partner was dying of cancer. Before her death, the partner had said: 'When the ashes are to be spread over the sea, it's possible for the relatives to have the urn handed over to them, and then you can keep it in the double bed next to you instead of me'. Although being potentially macabre to those who see cremains as an abject, in Lykke's discussion, the idea of the physical closeness of cremains was presented as a consolation at the face of forthcoming grief (Lykke 2015, 95-96).

event, such as an anniversary or a seasonal holiday,[135] could intensify the sense of connection. At such events, the interviewees reported, for instance, visiting the graves or lighting candles at home in the memory of the lost, which are the typical rituals of remembrance in Finland in general. Because of their repeated nature, these acts can be defined as rituals of continuation (Doka 2002b, 144).

In terms of graves, however, it was not always necessary that the place of remembrance was exactly the same as where the lost other had been buried. Reino, for instance, who felt unwelcome to visit the town where his ex-partner had been buried, had the habit of lighting a candle for Erkki in a local cemetery's guest memorial, which was meant for commemorating those who had been buried elsewhere. Visiting the actual grave could, however, have a stronger affective impact, especially if the interviewee had been excluded from the funeral and burial rituals. As discussed before, this was the case with Kuura, for whom visiting their unofficial father's grave was the first tangible piece of evidence that the loss had really happened. One of the factors making gravesites affectively charged places is their ability to visualise the loss. However, their affectivity was not necessarily lessened even when there was no physical memorial carrying the name of the lost:

> MIKA: And then Tapani himself had hoped for… He did not, by any means, want a gravestone for himself but instead he wanted to be buried in the memorial grove. And later I have heard that it is quite typical for people who die by suicide; they don't want anything like that for themselves; they want precisely to disappear somehow altogether. So, it has been, I think it's nice, like I have gone to the memorial grove… and, I think it's nice when it's like… like a public space. Cemeteries generally are, but as his name is not there anywhere. There is like no such thing that you have to take care of [the grave] or anything like that, but rather I think it's nice to go there if I have that kind of feeling.

Besides making visible the wish of becoming forgotten by not leaving any physical evidence of one's existence, Mika's argumentation points out another, affectively complex issue related to graves: the feeling of responsibility induced by the idea of having to take care of the grave. If there was no individual grave or memorial, then there was no such responsibility. In such cases, it was possible to focus only on the feelings of longing and commemoration when visiting the grave.

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135 The seasonal holiday most often mentioned was Christmas. However, for some, the most important holiday had been something else, like Easter for Mika, which he had celebrated with his partner Tapani together more than Christmas as it was less burdened with responsibilities related to families of origin.

Rituals of remembrance could also be shared with others. Usually, such rituals followed the death and burial; however, if the loss was anticipated, the commemoration could start already prior to the loss. In Inka's story of her and Tepa's wedding, which took place shortly before Tepa's death, the wedding itself became a bittersweet ritual of transition, thus queering what a wedding would traditionally mean.

> INKA: But well, in that point when indeed Tepa… Tepa informed me that, that the treatment had been stopped, I started to organise things. So, so well, I found out what, what we need, what… papers so that we can register our partnership. And I kind of prepared all these things. And… then, then, then, immediately when Tepa… informed me that she gets out of the hospital, I like immediately booked an appointment in the magistrate. [--] And I also dug up from Tepa's phone, like… the phone numbers of her friends, also those who she had not seen for a long time but who I knew to be very important to her, so all of them were then invited here… to celebrate something joyful.

In addition to making them a registered couple (and, following Tepa's death, making Inka her legally recognised widow), the ritual allowed Tepa to meet her old friends and commemorate their lives together before another transition: her approaching death. Temporally, the ritual took place in the liminal phase of Finnish legislation when the law on same-sex marriage had already passed but not yet come into effect. Tepa had wished to wait until they could get married 'for real' instead of settling for registering their partnership, which they, however, eventually ended up doing as time was running out. Later, after Tepa's passing, Inka organised another event for friends to commemorate Tepa, most of whom had not been present at Tepa's funeral. The latter event was a whiskey tasting evening initially planned by Tepa herself, who had been a whiskey enthusiast and collector and had, in fact, wanted to have the event in the hospice by her bedside. Instead, it became a commemorative event held in their home after her death, where both friends and some of the relatives participated. Inka emphasised that in this commemorative event, issues important to Tepa had been talked about out loud, including topics such as kinky sexuality, which had not been openly discussed in the more formal funeral ritual. By this deliberate act of openness, Inka widened the manner in which Tepa was remembered, making sure that the closet doors, which Tepa herself had aimed to keep open, were not closed after her death either.

Similar types of shared commemoration with friends took place in other interviewees' stories, too. Reino, for example, recounted how his and Erkki's shared community of gay men had held a moment of silence and drank a toast in Erkki's honour in their next gathering following Erkki's death. Whereas these types of

commemorative rituals were often one-time events taking place soon after the loss, sometimes shared commemoration between friends took more long-term forms, such as an annual commemorative picnic that Mika's and Tapani's friends had organised to commemorate Tapani. Later, however, Mika had intentionally distanced himself from this ritual:

> MIKA: I am now in a new relationship and and… my current partner knows all these things and so on, but then it started to become like… like a bit too highlighted that this thing [Tapani's death] is always like returned to.

In the above examples, the rituals of remembrance were shared with others who had known the lost person well. However, rituals could also be shared with people who had not necessarily been particularly close to the deceased but who were close to the bereaved instead:

> JARKKO: I have visited the memorial grove at least once a year. In some suitable moment. For example, what is it… All Saint's Day, when it is beautiful and there are lots of candles. Or Mother's Day. Some of these. So I go there. It's not that far away.
> VA: Do you usually go there alone, or do you have for example your brother with you sometimes?
> JARKKO: It varies. Before there was my partner… And then there have been friends. But I have gone there also alone. Hmm, I have gone there with [my] brother, too.

As the interview excerpt illuminates, I as a researcher anticipated a shared loss (the loss of a mother) to result in shared rituals of remembrance between brothers. However, as Jarkko stated, he had chosen to share these rituals with his (now ex-) partner and friends, even though the brother was also eventually mentioned. Moreover, the above example points out that a shared ritual of remembrance did not have to be a large, intentionally planned social event. Instead, rituals that were usually performed in private could also be performed with someone else.

When shared, the rituals of remembrance created a sense of community. Although this sense of community around death has traditionally been linked to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland, it can also be searched through other routes, as Kuura points out below:

> I doubt whether the Church really is the place or community around which people will gather in the midst of grief in future. Baby boomers, in whose life the Church has remained a constant, start gradually to get older, and the young

are looking for other kind of sense of community. It is hard to believe that my own kin circle [*läheispiiri*] would even after fifty years gather in a church when loved ones face death. (Kuura, a quote from a written narrative)

Although Kuura ties the need to question the Christian rituals of death to age, I argue that this is a wider issue related not only to age differences but also to questions of values and beliefs as well as the Church institution's acts of inclusion and exclusion, discussed earlier in the chapter 4.

In sum, here I have examined the private and shared rituals of remembrance mentioned in the stories of the bereaved LGBTQ people. Although the significance of culturally guided death rituals has not ceased to exist among bereaved LGBTQ people in Finland (as argued in chapter 4), private and shared rituals of remembrance were also needed, created and narrated. The need to feel connected to the lost meaningful others did by no means end in the farewell performed in funerals and burials. I argue that such rituals of remembrance can be understood as melancholic attachments through which the feeling of kinship with the lost meaningful others remained and operated through affects. As argued by queer theorists discussing melancholia (e.g. Eng & Kazanjian 2003; Muñoz 1999), such attachments can be productive and beneficial in the midst of grief. I argue that what made self-created rituals of remembrance affectively meaningful was, indeed, the continued sense of connection with the lost others and, sometimes, the sense of community that these rituals created and helped to maintain among the living.

6.3   Queer Monumentality

Next, I discuss remembrance from a different angle, focusing on its larger cultural significance. Here I bring into discussion the themes that often remained unmentioned in the stories of the bereaved LGBTQ people themselves but which do appear in earlier research focusing on queer remembering: the significance of cultural memory and queer monumentality. Coming across and identifying silences in the interview material is a result of using the abductive coding method, in which thematic codes are identified based on both the empirical data itself and earlier research findings. Because cultural memory and queer monumentality are considered significant aspects of remembering in queer and trans lives (Sturken 1997; Dunn 2016; Taavetti 2018; see also Alasuutari 2017c), I search for ways to understand the lack of such discussions in the Finnish context. In my analysis here, I refer to the expert interview I conducted with queer historian Kati Mustola and art historian Juha-Heikki Tihinen as well as to the data gathered on the rules defining shared graves and gravesite memorials in Finnish cemeteries, including Finnish

legislation and church guidelines. Finally, I bring the interviewees' personal accounts into the discussion.

Sturken (1997, 1-2), who has studied cultural memory in relation to AIDS victims, has defined cultural memory as collective remembering, produced through cultural negotiations, which 'provides cultural identity and gives a sense of the importance of the past' but which is also 'bound up in complex political stakes and meanings' (see also Hirsch & Smith 2002). Such a collective, culturally shared memory is created by public representations and images, which are produced by, for example, memorials, art and activism. Sturken has differentiated between personal memories and cultural memories as well as between cultural memory and the canonical historical discourse. Instead of seeing them as strictly oppositional, however, she sees them as entangled. A similar entanglement has also been articulated by Taavetti (2018), who has suggested that in the case of queer memories (both personal and cultural ones) and queer history, the memories and histories are entangled in particularly complex ways. As argued by Taavetti, queer history writing strongly relies on orally narrated personal memories and rumours. The verbalisation of personal memories, on the contrary, is affected by the socially circulated cultural memories, and vice versa (Taavetti 2018, 48, 99).

Thus far, my study has mostly focused on the personal stories of the bereaved LGBTQ people in a specific spatio-temporal location. I now deepen the analysis by examining how the personal memories, narrated by the interviewees, are entangled into wider questions of cultural memory. In particular, I examine how the restrictions in the production of cultural memories affect the manifestations of personal memories in Finnish cemeteries. My analysis also draws on communication studies scholar Thomas R. Dunn's (2016) concept of queer monumentality, which, as I suggest, participates in the production of cultural memory. In Dunn's theorisation, queer monumentality manifests either as material monuments or by non-material means that aspire to make queerness and queer lives[136] visible, remembered and celebrated within both LGBTQ communities and the larger public of heterosexual and cisgender people (Dunn 2016, 13). Whereas Dunn's discussion of queer monumentality ranges from physical monuments to school books and activism, I focus here on the discussion of cemeteries as a potential platform for queer monumentality. As Dunn has stated, cemeteries can be regarded as gravescapes (combined from the words grave and landscape), in which death, personal details and kinship relations are usually presented in a rather strict, heteronormative manner. This shows, for example, in the frequency of shared graves of heterosexual couples with both of their names inscribed in the gravestone (Dunn 2016, 133, 136-144).

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136   Although Dunn has specifically written about queerness and queer lives, I argue that the concept of queer monumentality can be applied to trans lives as well.

However, Dunn has argued that despite the established traditions of the gravescape that seem to hide all non-heterosexuality from view, it is possible to make queer lives visible in cemeteries, for example, through colours, shapes, symbols and texts in gravestones that differentiate the monument from others around it.[137] Such acts give public legacy to queer lives and make them part of the cultural memory or, as Dunn has put it, participate in 'preserving a queer (after) life' (Dunn 2016, 129).[138]

Similar observations have been made by Evan Pavka (2017, 175), who has studied cemeteries from the perspective of cultural architecture. Pavka has compared the grave to the idea of the closet, indicating its ability to hide all aspects of a life that differ from the heteronormative (or cisnormative) path while having 'the potential to function as an important archive of identity, sexuality and memory' if the norms of the cemetery are subverted. Whereas Dunn has focused on tracking queer elements in the gravesite monuments, Pavka is particularly interested in the tradition of grave sharing. Pavka has pointed out that in his study, focusing on the late 19th and early 20th century, those who managed to 'subvert the authority of the cemetery by immortalizing their "romantic friendships" in the grave' by sharing the grave with a same-sex lover were wealthy and powerful individuals who were in the position of choosing their final resting place as well as the places of others. For Pavka, shared graves are archival documents and 'important, if not integral, component[s] of queer memory' (Pavka 2017, 175, 183-185). Shared graves have also been used as evidence in queer historical research going further back in time, where other sources of information are minimal. For example, queer cultural historian Tom Linkinen (2015) has studied joint graves as evidence of same-sex sexuality in Medieval England. Linkinen (2015, 306) sees joint graves with decorations depicting romantic male friendships as 'memorials that were built to last; they were addressed to future generations'. Similarly, the significance of queer monumentality lies in the future for Dunn as well. He asks: 'Whom do we remember for doing certain deeds in the past? How do we determine what sorts of symbolic and material deeds are worthy of remembering and forgetting'? (Dunn 2016, 4). Combined with the discussion of cultural memory, I propose that the value of queer

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137 As an example, Dunn has mentioned the gravestone of Vietnam veteran Leonard Matlovich, designed by Matlovich himself prior to his death. The stone is decorated with two pink triangles and the text 'A Gay Vietnam Veteran. When I was in the military they gave me a medal for killing two men and a discharge for loving one'. Matlovich's grave has later encouraged other gays and lesbians to design their gravestones beforehand and to purchase burial plots in the same area, thus resulting in a larger collective of graves that are visibly non-heterosexual (Dunn 2016, 145-151).

138 '(After) Life' can be understood here in the similar manner as afterlife in Scheffler's (2013) reading: as life that goes on beyond someone else's death. 'Preserving a queer (after) life' can therefore be seen as preserving the traces of queer lives in the life that follows when the queer individuals themselves have died.

monumentality lies in making queer and trans lives visible in death and beyond death not only in the private memory of individuals but also at the more public level of cultural memory, thus making the memories of queer and trans lives also readable to those who did not personally know the people in question.

Although Dunn's and Pavka's discussions of gravescapes mainly focus on the USA and Canada, their observations of the normative nature of gravescapes seem to be in line with Finnish family graves and therefore are a useful point of reference for my study. As I pointed out in the first part of this chapter, the idea of shared graves between same-sex couples was rarely mentioned in the stories of the interviewed LGBTQ people. Moreover, when looking back on recent history through the expert interview I conducted with Mustola and Tihinen, it appears that the tradition of grave sharing between same-sex partners has been rather non-existent in Finland in the 20th century as well. Mustola and Tihinen designed and led a queer historical cemetery tour in Hietaniemi cemetery in Helsinki in the early 2000s during Helsinki Pride Week. In the tour, participants visited the graves of 20 well-known people, who had been in one way or another significant in the Finnish queer history during the 20th century and most of whom were lesbians, gays or bisexuals themselves.[139] According to Mustola and Tihinen, none of the people included in the tour had been buried with a same-sex partner. Instead, most of them had been buried into family graves. Some were individually buried with a gravestone of their own, and some of them were anonymously buried in a memorial grove.[140]

At the time of my interview with Mustola and Tihinen, I was familiar with the theory of queer monumentality and aimed at enquiring how it had or had not appeared in Hietaniemi cemetery. In addition to grave sharing, in Dunn's reading, queer monumentality is made visible in gravescapes through conspicuous aesthetical decisions and decorations. According to Mustola and Tihinen, these practices were not visible in Hietaniemi cemetery:

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139 For example, the graves of the tour included the graves of the perhaps best-known Finnish queer cultural figures Tove Jansson, an author, an artist and a creator of Moomins as well as Touko Laaksonen, an artist famous for his homoerotic art, better known by his pseudonym Tom of Finland. Jansson was buried in her family grave and Laaksonen was anonymously buried in the memorial grove.

140 The only one who had been buried with someone outside of the official family was a professor and a co-founder of a feminist organisation Naisasialiitto Unioni Lucina Hagman; she had been buried with her maid Amanda Leppälahti in addition to her official family members. According to Mustola and Tihinen, however, this hardly signified anything else than the customary habit in the 1940s and the 1950s of burying the service staff in the same grave with their employers.

VA: Are these gravesite memorials kind of, like… or what kind of are they? Is there anything that could be interpreted as queer or like breaking the norms? Or are they very traditional?

JT: Well hmm… well [Uuno] Kailas has, like, a melancholic young, young man there [on his grave], but it is also, in a way… like an image of a poet who died young. But well, [Kaarlo] Sarkia, who was known as a beautiful, like a conspicuously beautiful man, he has a carefully [made], like a profile… profile picture there [on his grave]. So kind of like that. But no, nothing on those [graves included in the tour]. Then sometimes in other grave monuments, for example in Hietaniemi cemetery, there might be something like… well… kind of like… hmm… male angels like cuddling and all this kind of stuff that can be found. But well… there are all sorts of things but on those [graves included in the tour] there is nothing, in my opinion.

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VA: Can you remember others, something memorable in the monuments or…?

KM: Well I did not… even know to pay attention to things like that.

As it shows in the excerpt, I directly ask about the monuments, encouraging Tihinen and Mustola to remember what the monuments included in the tour were like. Hietaniemi cemetery is, arguably, the place in Finland where queer monumentality in a gravescape could be expected to be found. The cemetery is located in the capital of Finland and holds the graves of many well-known Finnish political and cultural figures (Gardberg 2003, 71) – many of them wealthy and powerful in the sense as Pavka has suggested necessary for commissioning one's grave and, as Mustola and Tihinen pointed out, some of them known or rumoured to having been non-heterosexual. However, the only examples of monuments the organisers could think of that could be read as queer in some sense ('male angels like cuddling and all this kind of stuff') were not necessarily intentionally queer, or if they were, the story behind such monuments had not transferred from the personal memories of those planting them to the wider cultural memory shared by others. Moreover, as Mustola pointed out, when organising the tour, the monuments were not something they had discussed or paid deliberate attention to.

The lack of queer monumentality in my data might stem from the fact that the issues discussed in Anglo-American queer theory do not always translate well into other cultural contexts or even describe the issues relevant to them, as Polish queer theorist Joanna Mizielinska (2006) has argued. According to Mizielinska (2006, 93), too strong focus on 'American tools, concepts and challenges' hides from view local differences and different histories regarding gender and sexuality as well as the fact that such tools and concepts are not applicable to every context.

Another contributing reason for the lack of queer monumentality in Finnish gravescapes may be the strict policies defining both grave sharing and accepted monuments. As revealed in my analysis of Finnish legislation and church guidelines, there are specific rules defining not only who can be buried together but also the accepted forms of gravesite memorials. In the Cemeteries Act, the basic rule regarding gravestones is stated as follows:

> The holder of the burial right chooses the gravestone and other monuments put on the grave. The monument must be in line with the cemetery's overall appearance and it must not offend the memory of the deceased or the dignity of the cemetery. The monument will be approved by the cemetery administrator.'
> (The Cemeteries Act, section 5, 14 §, translated by VA)

As noted earlier, the holdership of the grave is usually granted to the legally recognised widow(er) or, if there is none, to a parent, sibling or child of the deceased. Therefore, they have the power to choose the memorial, but the choice is not free from external supervision. In the case of most Finnish cemeteries, the cemetery administrator refers to the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Church guidelines, in turn, include specific instructions for suitable gravestones and other gravesite memorials. The existence of established rules and an approval process has ensured that contemporary Finnish gravescapes are unsurprisingly unanimous: the tidy lines of headstones resemble each other in shape, size and colour, with a rectangular 'suitcase model' being the most common shape of a gravestone, although other accepted shapes also exist (Gardberg 2003, 129; Pajari 2018a; 2018b).

As pointed out by archaeologist and historian Carl J. Gardberg (2003) and theologist Brita Nickels (1990), Finnish gravescapes were more versatile in the 19th and the early 20th century, having more unique memorials and differing folk traditions visible in the gravecsapes. The suitcase model has become the established gravestone model in Finnish cemeteries only in the latter part of the 20th century. This change in the memorial policy can be tracked down through a guidebook titled *Jumalan puistot kauniiksi* [Beautifying the Gardens of the God] published in 1955 (Sormunen et al. 1955). This book aimed at setting unifying rules for the Finnish gravescapes, following the orders set by the Bishops' Conference in 1929 (see also Lempiäinen 1990, 16). According to the book, the old gravesite memorials were 'testimonies of bad taste and a desire to flamboyance [*prameilunhalu*]' (Sormunen et al. 1955, 74) and therefore a practice that had to be ended by stricter control by the Church. Moreover, the book states that because 'order is also beautiful, the memorial cannot differ too much from its surroundings' (Sormunen et al. 1955, 74). In other words, cemeteries that were previously queerly versatile were standardised to be more alike. Although unique and decorative gravesite memorials still exist in

the older cemeteries dating back in time before the 1950s, the newer ones are filled with similar rectangular stones, which rarely differ from one another.

The reason given in the book for regulating the gravescape is that gravesite memorials are part of the public culture and thus not a private matter of individuals (Sormunen et al. 1955, 5, 73-74). It has been suggested that these regulatory acts resulted in the coercive power of the Church to unify the Finnish gravescapes (Lempiäinen 1990, 16) and have made the cemeteries dreary and lacking in cultural richness (Häiväoja & Nickels 1990, 45). Pajari (2018b) has argued that such a turn in burial practices is typical for protestant countries in the mid-20th century. She has called this time as the era of 'denying death' and pointed out that unified burial practices express nearly nothing of the people buried or the communities commemorated in the cemeteries (Pajari 2018b, 4). In such a setting, it is no wonder that queerness disappears from view (or never becomes visible in the first place) along with other personal characteristics of the people buried in Finnish cemeteries.

In the current guidelines of congregations, the instructions given for gravesite memorials are most often focused on the size, material and other physical parameters of the gravestone. However, some congregations make their own interpretations of the Cemeteries Act cited above. It seems that the requirement of not offending the dignity of the cemetery, in particular, is widely interpreted. The guideline may, for example, require that the gravestone does not offend 'good Christian tradition', 'general approval', 'the legacy of generations' or 'anyone'.[141] Moreover, the guidelines occasionally give instructions regarding the appropriate symbols and statues with which gravestones may be decorated, suggesting, for example, that 'possible decorations ought to be in harmony with Christian cemetery tradition', 'a gravesite memorial can include crosses, birds, etc. – symbols appropriate for a cemetery' and 'statues of peculiar shapes, representational statues or corresponding memorials are not allowed'.[142] Further, the parameters defining the accepted size and shape of the monument may render the implementation of memorial statues impossible, even if they may not be explicitly forbidden.

What counts as appropriate or not in terms of gravestone shapes, symbols and statues eventually lies in the hands of the local congregation that has to accept the memorial before it is allowed to be inserted on the grave. Despite the strong focus on not offending, what a gravestone or a symbol that offends, for example, the dignity of the cemetery, would look like remains unclear both in the legislation and

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141 In the order of appearance, these formulations were included in the guidelines of the congregations of Halsua (the first quote), Tornio (both the second and the third quote) and Rovaniemi (the fourth quote) (translated by VA).
142 These formulations were included in the guidelines of the congregations of Tampere, Kirkkonummi and Viitasaari (translated by VA).

in the church guidelines. Moreover, feeling offended is a subjective experience that varies from person to person. Respecting someone's wishes might, at the same time, be considered to be a violation of the wishes of someone else. For example, what would happen if a gravestone utilising tactics of queer monumentality and chosen by the deceased LGBTQ person themselves prior to their death (which, therefore, could hardly offend their memory but could instead celebrate it) is considered to offend the dignity of the cemetery? Given this vagueness and the possibility of contradictory emotional reactions, it matters who the rule of not offending is used to protect. In the current body of legislation and varying church guidelines, this remains unresolved.

In addition to governance of the Church, another factor that restricts gravesite memorials is their price. The bigger the stone, the more it costs. Statues, too, will likely be costly. Therefore, the observation made by Pavka (2017) of the wealthy individuals being more capable of designing their gravesite memorials applies in contemporary times, too. Thus, in addition to being governed by legislation and the Church, the ability to queer one's gravesite memorial is governed by economic resources, which are unevenly distributed.

As noted by Dunn (2016, 13-14), queer monumentality is not restricted to open declarations of queerness in monuments. Instead, it can take more indirect or ephemeral forms as well, meaning that the interpretation of such forms may be short-lived and depend on personal memories or other information not included in the monument itself. Dunn (2016 180-181) had suggested that it might be a tactical decision to express queer memories in public with caution because, contrary to what the progress narrative might suggest, the situation and safety of LGBTQ people has not always been changing for the better; it can also take steps backwards. Moreover, indirect expressions of queer remembrance may be possible also when more direct expressions would not be accepted by the society. Contrary to the monuments that directly express queerness, indirect and subtle forms of queer monumentality might not be readable to the larger public and thus may not become part of the cultural memory (Dunn 2016, 180-181). I argue, however, that these kinds of forms of queer monumentality may be significant for LGBTQ people on a personal level. For example, the personally created rituals of remembrance discussed in the previous section can be seen as subtle forms of queer monumentality of this kind. Other forms of queer monumentality, however, were not common in the personal narratives.

Designing gravestones for meaningful others, or for oneself, did not often come up in the interviews of this study. In part, this stems from the fact that at the time of conducting personal interviews, I was not yet familiar with the theory of queer monumentality and did not ask direct questions about it. Another reason is that most of the interviewees who had lost a meaningful other who was themselves queer (usually meaning a same-sex partner) were not the ones who had the entitlement to decide about or design their gravesite memorial because they were not the holders

of the burial right of the said grave. Moreover, because the deceased were often buried in their existing family graves, a gravestone already existed, which could be altered only by the permission of all those who were entitled to be buried in the grave themselves, meaning the official family members of the deceased. As Dunn (2016, 164) has pointed out, in such a case, only the names and dates of birth and death are usually added on the existing stone. Moreover, when describing their own preferred burial methods, no one explicitly described what kinds of monuments they would want on their graves.

However, one of the interviewees who had been able to design the gravestone of a meaningful other was Susanna, who had thought about Vilja's gravestone with devotion. For her, the design of the stone had personal significance, and she wanted to make it reflect, if not necessarily queerness, at least Vilja's personality and style. The church guideline left little possibilities for individualising the memorial, but by applying for a special permit from the congregation, Susanna managed to change the shape, font style and font colour of the gravestone. Instead of the default option given in the guideline (which was, for that part of the cemetery, a curvy stone with golden letters, which Susanna considered to be too feminine for Vilja), she managed to get a stone that was more minimalistic and better reflected Vilja's preferred aesthetics. Regarding the symbol in the stone, Susanna came to a compromise:

> SUSANNA: And Vilja didn't get any religious symbols [on the gravestone] but instead she got... a flying swallow. It is quite, it is included in the symbol books,[143] but I don't remember what it symbolises. But the swallow was put there because Vilja had here, on her hip, a similar swallow tattoo. She had it already when we met. A little swallow tattoo. So, I thought that it's a nice idea, because it can be found in the symbol books too, so the swallow was put there, and it passed the grave monument regulations. And well... in fact, I don't even know if Vilja's parents know that she had that tattoo on her hip. They must have known. I guess she has sometimes gone to sauna with her mother or something.

Susanna's story reflects how difficult it can be to make even small changes and personalisations in gravesite memorials in Finland. Each change was dependent on obtaining an approval from the congregation managing the cemetery, including the symbol that had to pass regulations. Although in Christian imagery a swallow symbolises resurrection (Steffler 2002, 21), for Susanna, it was not a Christian symbol but something else entirely. It symbolised a shared, embodied secret, which was not necessarily shared even with Vilja's parents – or which at least did not have

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143 'Symbol books' in Susanna's narrative arguably refer to the lists of accepted gravestone symbols that are, sometimes, included in the church guidelines describing death rituals.

similar personal significance for the parents as it did for Susanna. Thus, Susanna's decision to put a swallow on her partner's gravestone can be interpreted as a specific form of queer monumentality that is indirect and ephemeral (Dunn 2016, 14) because its interpretation depends on the private memory she had of her partner. Thus, because queer monumentality can also manifest in such deeply personal and therefore private and short-lived queer memories, it might be difficult to trace by others, with whom the memory is not shared. Having those personal memories carved in stone may, however, be deeply significant for the bereaved, as it was for Susanna.

International research has pointed out that people belonging to gender minorities may face unique difficulties in terms of the name used in gravestones and in remembrance rituals in general (e.g. Witten 2009; Israeli-Nevo 2019). Within this study, however, none of the lost meaningful others mentioned in the interviews belonged to gender minorities. Moreover, wishes regarding one's own gravestone did not come up with those interviewees who did belong to these groups. Like queer monumentality, I propose that this, too, is a silence worth discussing because the names used in gravestones participate in making trans lives visible and recognised beyond death. In international research, two examples that are often circulated are those of Brandon Teena[144] and Leelah Alcorn[145], both of whom were buried with their birth names despite having used other names in their lives (e.g. Hale 1998; Orsi 2015; Kovalovich Weaver 2020). In such cases, the birth names – which in trans communities are called as deadnames when no longer used – also became the burial names of transgender individuals. This suggests that in the case of gender non-conforming people, their power to determine their address beyond death can be restricted (see also Israeli-Nevo 2019; Orsi 2015). I argue that using deadnames as burial names is an issue of concealment and post-mortem closeting, showing who has (and does not have) the power to influence people's post-mortem legacies.[146]

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144 Brandon Teena was a transgender man, who was murdered in the USA in 1993. The story of Brandon has been widely told and circulated in what Halberstam (2005, 16) has called the 'Brandon industry' consisting of films, documentaries, books, etc. His story has also become one of those circulated in queer and trans activism, aiming for stricter hate-crime legislation in the USA (Halberstam 2005).

145 Leelah Alcorn was a transgender girl, who died by suicide in the USA in 2014 at the age of 17. Her death gained international attention because she had posted her suicide note online, naming transphobia and her parents' refusal to allow her to transition as the causes for her suicide. Although she was buried with her deadname by the decision of her parents, there has been an online petition to change the name on the gravestone to match the name she actually used (Orsi 2015).

146 Karol Kovalovich Weaver (2020) has named the rejection of someone's gender after death as 'post-mortem detransitioning'. Contrary to her, I argue that such acts are better understood as post-mortem closeting. Because transitioning indicates agency on part of

Finnish legislation does not provide specific instructions about the name with which the deceased must be buried. In addition to or instead of the official name, one may be buried with a nickname (Korpelainen 2015). Although this makes it possible to bury people with other names than their official names, the decision is up to the holder of the burial right (chosen by, and usually among, the official family of the deceased) as they have the right to choose the gravestone (The Cemeteries Act, section 5, 14 §). As pointed out by Tarynn M. Witten (2009), if there are unresolved issues around the gender of the deceased trans person within their official family, these may come up in the context of death, resulting in conflicts when choosing which name to use in the gravestone, regardless of the chosen name's official status or the wishes expressed by the deceased themselves while still alive. I argue that similar conflicts may appear also in Finland, given the decisional power the official family has in the matters of burial.

Queer monumentality can be criticised for being an Anglo-American theory that is not necessarily applicable to other cultural contexts such as Finland. Moreover, it can be seen to describe what American cultural scholar Erika Doss (2010, 2) has termed as memorial mania, meaning an obsessive attitude towards material manifestations of public memory. Although I do not claim that physical memorials in cemeteries are the only way of making queer and trans lives part of the Finnish cultural memory, I argue that they inevitably participate in such processes. As argued by Doss, memorials can be seen as the 'archives of public affect' and 'repositories of feeling and emotions' that participate in the construction of cultural memory. Therefore, it does matter who can and cannot be visible in such archives. If queer and trans lives are predestined, due to strict regulations, to disappear from view in death and in the physical monuments of gravescapes, it can make being queer or trans to be ostensibly attached only to those who are currently living. This, in turn, can make such lives seemingly ahistorical, leaving the living LGBTQ people with less history to commemorate and less tangible examples of past queer and trans lives to hold on to. Borrowing Svensson's (2007, 39) way of phrasing it, restricting the possibilities of visible evidence of queer and trans lives in gravescapes can be regarded as one of the acts that forces dead queer and trans bodies back into closets.

Nevertheless, there are also other options for queering burial traditions. Given the unwillingness to have a physical grave of one's own expressed by some of my interviewees, I argue that not wanting to have a physical grave or memorial can be seen as a practice that queers the established burial methods by diverging from the tradition in which the grave and gravestone are seen not only as evidence of one's

the person who decides to transition, a person who has died can hardly decide to detransition. Instead, such acts of rejection of gender are conducted by other people, usually by the official family of the deceased, who are in charge of burial matters.

existence but also as evidence 'of our connection to earlier generations', which is, allegedly, 'vital to every generation' (Häiväoja & Nickels 1990, 45). The unenthusiasm of having a physical grave and memorial can, therefore, be read as an intentional stepping out from this chain of generations. As observed by Pajari (2018b, 4), such a wish is a new phenomenon in the Finnish culture of death, in which graves and gravesite memorials have usually been highly valued. Moreover, although the tradition of sharing the grave with one's partner has become more easily available to same-sex couples because of the recent changes in the Finnish family law recognising same-sex partners, such acts can appear as something that belongs more to the heteronormative life course than to a queer life. Intentional opting out of such burial practices and traditions does challenge the traditional views of kinship and its continuity. Furthermore, as Sturken (1997, 7) has pointed out, forgetting always plays a vital role when memories are constructed. Although this forgetting can be 'heteronormative erasure' done by the heteronormative culture of gravescapes (Dunn 2016, 130), it must be remembered that people also have the right to be forgotten if they so wish. Gravescapes may thus be archives in which not everyone wants to participate.

Here I have looked beyond the interviewees' stories to discuss what remains silent or absent in them but what still has relevance when considering death and remembrance in queer and trans lives in Finnish society. I have shown that given the current legislation, the control over gravesite memorials performed by the Church and the decisional power of the official family in such matters, options for queer monumentality are restricted in the Finnish gravescapes. For those LGBTQ individuals, who wish to make their lives and relationships visible beyond death by carving them in stone, these restrictions may cause problems. However, queer monumentality can also take ephemeral and subtle forms in Finland, even if the stories behind such practices may remain only in the private memories of certain people instead of becoming part of the widely shared cultural memory. Moreover, remaining outside of the cultural memory and the gravescape and becoming eventually forgotten may also be a tactic that affectively appeals to people living queer and trans lives. This, too, can be seen as a manner of queering burial traditions.

6.4   Public Remembering

In Western countries, grief is often considered to be something very private (Allegranti & Wyatt 2014, 540; Walter 1999, 143-145). However, as my analysis thus far has shown, private experiences of grief were significantly affected by public matters, such as legislation, church guidelines or the type and accessibility of bereavement support services. Here, in the last section of this chapter, I continue looking further than privacy and turn my analytic gaze to LGBTQ communities,

examining how death and loss appear in their public activities. I suggest that it matters, in terms of private community members, what kind of culture of death is (and is not) created in these communities in public. I argue that currently this culture seems to be focused on grief as a public feeling and on distant deaths with political importance.

Although the interviewees of this study often mentioned LGBTQ communities when discussing other parts of their lives, these communities were only rarely mentioned in times of bereavement. For example, the interviewees had often met a same-sex partner through the public events and activities of such communities, but when losing that partner, it was not the LGBTQ communities as public actors that offered support, as discussed in chapter 5. When support was received, it was more likely through existing private relationships (either within or outside those communities), emphasising the allegedly private nature of grief.

Remembering the dead within a certain community is also a situation in which the private and public aspects of loss enmesh in affective ways. This came across, for example, through two contrasting stories narrated by Reino. As discussed in section 6.2, following Erkki's death, their shared community of gay men had a moment of commemoration in their next meeting, thus creating a venue for shared remembrance. However, Reino also told a story about the funeral of his friend, who had been a renowned member within an LGBTQ organisation. Reino recounted how the organisation in question had neither attended nor payed their respects at the funeral and how he and his circle of friends had felt offended by this non-action.

REINO: And we even, we specifically mentioned this, we told about this…
[funeral] event, so no. So, it can be found within us, too.
VA: Yeah, yeah.
REINO: This forgetting.

As the example shows, sometimes remembrance was expected from public actors such as LGBTQ communities and/or organisations. When such remembrance did not take place, it could cause negative affective outcomes in the mourners, like feeling offended and forgotten.

My following analysis is inspired by the contradiction of witnessing public rituals of remembrance taking place within Finnish LGBTQ communities at the time of conducting this study and encountering either silence or sporadic comments, such as the one above given by Reino, regarding LGBTQ communities as public actors in the interviewees' stories of personal losses. In what follows, I ask what kinds of losses have been publicly mourned and commemorated in Finnish LGBTQ communities, how and for what purposes. Through my analysis, I argue that deaths of specific kind do appear in the public activities of such communities: that is,

geographically (and sometimes temporally) distant deaths with political importance. Moreover, I show how public rituals of remembrance contribute to the formation of queer and trans culture of death in Finland. In addition, I propose that public forms of queer and trans culture of death are needed not only around distant and politicised deaths but also around death as an inseparable part of all queer and trans personal lives.

I focus here, in particular, on the international tradition of Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDoR) taking place in Helsinki in 2017, the gathering of the Marching for Those Who Can't block in the Helsinki Pride Parade in 2017 as well as the vigil held in Helsinki following the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, US, in 2016. The rituals of public remembering discussed in this section are examples that I came across through the scavenger methodology during the years working on this study and that I have payed closer attention to via online ethnography. This does not aim at being a comprehensive list of public rituals of remembrance organised among LGBTQ communities in Finland within a specific time frame, although these arguably are the most visible remembrance rituals organised within these communities in the latter part of 2010s. Moreover, to look back to recent history, I discuss the question of public remembering through the expert interview about the queer historical cemetery tour held in Helsinki in the early 2000s.

TDoR is an internationally established event, which was started in the USA in 1999 following the unsolved murder of Rita Hester. The movement consists of a web project 'Remembering Our Dead', keeping a record of the names of people who are killed by anti-transgender violence[147] each year, and an annual candlelight vigil on the 20th of November, in which the names of the lost are read out loud (TDoR 2019). It has become an annual, international event held in over 250 places around the world (Lamble 2008). In Finland, the first TDoR event took place in 2010 (Ranneliike.net 2011). Nowadays, the TDoR event is annually organised in Helsinki and variably also in other Finnish cities by activists and NGOs focused on transgender rights in particular and human rights in general. When I participated in the event in 2017, most of the 325 victims listed were from South America, most poignantly from Brazil, whereas three people were from Europe (Italy, the Netherlands and Sweden) (TDoR 2017).

As noted by Sturken (1997, 14), collective remembering is a question of not only remembering those who are lost but also of 'communicating to the nation' about

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147 It is emphasised on the event's international website that not every person listed as a victim of anti-transgender violence necessarily identified as transgender or gender non-conforming. However, the TDoR movement argues that 'each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender people', despite their personal identifications or lack thereof (TDoR 2019).

specific political agendas.[148] When people in Finland gathered on the 20th of November, 2017, on the steps of the Parliament house in Helsinki in a freezing snowstorm to light candles for the victims of violence commemorated in the TDoR, the speeches held and the names of the victims read in the event had, indeed, a strong political message directed not only to the attendees to remember the victims of anti-transgender violence but also to the Finnish nation and government to pay attention to transgender rights globally as well as locally. In the speeches of the organisers,[149] archived in a video format online by Trasek (2017), the NGOs directly appealed to the Finnish government and prime minister of the time to focus on improving transgender rights in Finland. The speeches called for changes in the Finnish Trans Act and other local laws that influence gender non-conforming people, such as the legislation regarding first names and parenthood, all of which have been much discussed in Finland during the latter part of the 2010s. In so doing, the event followed the tradition of lobbying for local, political changes in TDoR events: Sarah Lamble (2008), for example, has pointed out that in the USA, the event has been used as a platform for lobbying stricter legislation against hate crimes. Moreover, by emphasising the interconnectedness of the global TDoR movement with the local societal context, political debates and trans community, as well as by representing grief as a feeling-in-common (Ahmed 2004b, 34), the event made TDoR not only an international but also a national matter.

The interconnectedness of global and local LGBTQ communities also came up in the speeches of the Pulse vigil that took place in Karhupuisto, Helsinki, on the 17th of June, 2016, recorded and archived online by Ranneliike.net (2016). The vigil included speeches, music performances and a quiet moment for honouring the victims. In the speeches of Seta and Heseta,[150] the NGOs partaking in the event, it was emphasised how the shooting in Orlando had been an attack of mindless violence against all LGBTQ people around the world. Speakers emphasised the similarity of Finnish LGBTQ people to the victims of the shooting ('They were people like you and me'), thus making the shooting a question of global and local importance. While paying respects and condolences to the victims and their

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148 Sturken's analysis particularly refers to AIDS Memorial Quilt, a collective activist project commemorating people who have died of AIDS. Although the AIDS Quilt functions as a means of commemorating people lost to AIDS both in a private and collective manner, it also functions, according to Sturken, as a reminder to the nation of the AIDS epidemic and the history of silence and stigma around it (Sturken 1997).

149 The NGOs organising the event included Amnesty International, Trasek, Seta, Dreamwear Club, Sateenkaariperheet [Rainbow Families] and Translasten ja -nuorten perheet [Families of Trans Children and Trans Youth] (Seta 2017a).

150 Heseta is a local LGBTQ organisation operating in Helsinki, currently named as Helsinki Pride yhteisö [Helsinki Pride community]. It is a member organisation of Seta and the main organisation responsible for organising the annual Helsinki Pride Week.

meaningful others in the USA, the tragedy that took place in Orlando was rhetorically tied to the LGBTQ activist struggles in Finnish society. Participants of the vigil were encouraged, for example, to fight hate speech, to create safer spaces for members of the LGBTQ communities in Finland and to participate in the Helsinki Pride parade, which was scheduled in two weeks from the vigil.

Such public rituals of remembrance within LGBTQ communities have elsewhere been criticised for commemorative amnesia, meaning that in emphasising the internal similarity of LGBTQ communities worldwide, their differences remain unacknowledged.[151] This kind of selective commemoration, which leaves certain aspects of the lives of the lost invisible, may make it possible for LGBTQ communities around the world to feel a sense of unity when commemorating the distant dead and therefore to tie the remembrance into their own, local political agendas. This has, sometimes, been criticised as stealing or appropriating the pain of others (e.g. Lamble 2008; Ahmed 2004b, 34). Edelman (2018, 34) has suggested a solution to this dilemma by arguing that instead of imagining one global and homogenous LGBTQ community with shared hardships and sufferings, seeing different kinds of LGBTQ communities as 'coalitions struggling in tandem with another' would result in a wider recognition of the complexities of structural inequality and thus fight the amnesia of differences related to public remembering.

I propose that such a coalitionist approach has been used by the Marching for Those Who Can't block in Helsinki Pride Parade, the idea of which was copied from a similar block gathering in Stockholm Pride in Sweden (Marching for Those Who Can't 2017). In 2017, I witnessed the block in action in Helsinki: the group of people in black clothes, marching in silence, their mouths taped shut with black tape, the first two of them holding a huge banner stating the name of the block, the next four carrying a black coffin with a single red rose on top of it and others holding posters telling about the hate crimes against LGBTQ people taking place around the world

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151   For example, anthropologist and trans studies scholar Elijah Adiv Edelman (2018, 31) has argued that what is lost from the public memory of the Pulse shooting is the fact that the victims were 'young, poor or working class, queer, Latinx, black and/or gender nonconforming' and as such 'bodies that never mattered'. In Butler's (2009) terms, they were seen as ungrievable to begin with. The same has been argued to happen in TDoR events worldwide, in which only the names and countries of origin of the victims are shared, leaving them 'deliberately unmarked by race, class, age, ability, sexuality and history' (Lamble 2008, 28) and thus failing to acknowledge, in particular, the over-representation of trans women of colour and sex workers among the victims (Boellstorff et al. 2014, 428; Namaste 2009, 16-17). Moreover, it has been argued particularly in trans studies and trans activism that when anti-transgender violence is generalised, the focus easily shifts to a 'largely white, middle-class trans movement' or to 'cis, white gays and lesbians' instead of those who have died (Boellstorff et al. 2014, 428; Thom 2015).

was a striking sight within the colourful and loud Helsinki Pride Parade.[152] Their political message about discrimination and violence towards LGBTQ people taking place abroad was no less clear than in the TDoR event or in the Pulse vigil, but contrary to them, it was not tied together with a local agenda. According to one of the organisers, the reason for the block to gather annually in Helsinki Pride is simply 'to remind that the work is not yet done' (Marching for Those Who Can't 2017), which can be considered a political agenda in its own right.

At the same time, the message of the block forced people participating in the parade to encounter their own privileged position: those who were marching in a Pride parade in Helsinki (including the block itself) were able to do so, while there were people in the world for whom such acts would be impossible. Furthermore, the presence of the black, real-size coffin tied the message of the block to questions of death: some people could not march not only because it was dangerous but also because they were already dead due to transphobic and homophobic violence and legislation. In 2017, the statements on the posters carried by the participants of the block emphasised the death and murder of both transgender and homosexual people taking place in places such as Iran, Irak and Uganda, but also Europe. These statements painted a striking contrast between Helsinki Pride, which in 2017 gathered 35 000 people together, and those parts of the world where Pride parades would be impossible to organise. In doing so, the block forced the audience and co-participants of the parade to locate themselves within this contrast and to acknowledge and remember the global differences in the lives and communities of LGBTQ people.

The queer historical cemetery tour held in the early 2000s during the Helsinki Pride Week had a political purpose too, albeit a rather different kind than those mentioned above. The tour aimed at giving visibility to non-heterosexual Finnish artists, authors and other cultural figures of previous decades, who I refer to as local queer ancestors. In doing so, the tour organisers challenged the practice of post-mortem closeting of such ancestors. As explained by Mustola and Tihinen, the purpose of the tour was to give a platform to the stories shared within the oral history of the artists and authors leading queer lives, and to question the practice of removing all evidence of queerness from the written history describing their lives. Applying Taavetti's (2018, 31) terminology, the glimpses of the queer pasts of these people, circulating through oral history, were not recorded as written or material fragments within their biographies and the historical canon. In such an atmosphere, the tour aimed at pointing out that 'these people existed, and they were one of us' (KM). In

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152 Photographs of the block from the year 2017 by Pete Voutilainen are provided online by QX.fi (2017).

addition, the tour functioned as 'a certain kind of homage' to the queer people of earlier decades (JT).

The tour adopted (and queered) a ritual of remembrance typical in the Finnish culture: grave visitation and leaving flowers on the grave. The flowers chosen were bouquets of violets, referring to queer cultural codes both in their colour and name.[153] In addition, the organisers gave speeches about people included in the tour, focusing on biographical facts and their queer-historical relevance. The tours were popular, attracting 50–60 participants each time they were held. They were also written about in *Helsingin Sanomat*, the largest mainstream newspaper in Finland (Jokinen 2002).[154] Thus, what usually is a private form of remembrance became very public indeed. Returning to Dunn's (2016, 14) theorisation of queer monumentality, I argue that the tour functioned as a non-material form of queer monumentality, making the 'queer memory rhetorics' circulated among certain individuals momentarily reachable to a larger audience. Moreover, through traces left behind, such as the newspaper article archived online, the tour did not entirely disappear from the cultural memory after it was no longer held; instead, it can still be found through the article and other traces (like, from now on, this dissertation) existing online.

By introducing and analysing the varying purposes of public remembering taking place in LGBTQ communities in Finland, I have demonstrated that death and loss do indeed appear in the public activities of such communities. However, as I have shown here, these activities have been focused on geographically distant (or, in terms of the cemetery tour, temporally distant) deaths. In addition to expressing global solidarity, the rituals of public remembering functioned as a means to remind the people in Finland of the discrimination, insecurity, violence and murder faced by LGBTQ people around the world. Sometimes the public rituals of remembrance were also used as a platform for advocating legislative changes in Finland or making local queer histories and queer ancestors more visible. The rituals of public remembering had, thus, strong political undertones, on both global and local scales.

I propose that public rituals of remembrance taking place in Finnish LGBTQ communities participate in creating both cultural memory and queer and trans culture

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153 The queer symbolism of violet bouquets was explained in a handout given to the tour participants: 'The name of orvokki in English is violet, which has been the code word or euphemism for the word lesbian among English-speaking lesbians and gays. Violet is in Finnish also a colour, violetti, which is also the code colour for lesbians, whereas pink is the colour for gay men (this, in turn, comes from the identifier of gay men incarcerated in concentration camps by Nazis: the pink triangle). Another name for orvokki in English is pansy, which is a degrading name for gay men' (translated by VA). The handout was stored by Mustola and given to me during the interview.

154 The same newspaper article, archived online, led me to Mustola and Tihinen 15 years later.

of death in Finland. Currently, this culture of death, or at least its public forms, seems to be focused on distant, politicised and often violent deaths. In many ways, this culture follows the internationally circulated models of public remembering of queer and trans lives in LGBTQ activism. Without undermining the political importance of talking about death in such terms, I argue that we need to talk about death publicly not only as a political but also as a personal matter that will touch us all, both near and far. It needs to be acknowledged that death and loss are part of all lives, including queer and trans personal lives, even when this does not have a pressing political purpose, gain or agenda. Thus, personal losses, too, deserve to be acknowledged in queer and trans culture of death, as I elaborate on in the concluding chapter of this study.

In this chapter, I have examined remembrance from various angles. In my analysis, I have followed a trajectory from private to public remembering, discussing remembrance and kinship created through the afterlife of the spirit, body and belongings, private and shared rituals of remembrance, the possibilities and restrictions of making queer and trans lives visible in cultural memory via practices of queer monumentality in Finnish gravescapes and, finally, rituals of public remembering taking place in Finnish LGBTQ communities and how they participate in creating queer and trans culture of death. By focusing on both reoccurring and absent themes in the interviewees' stories and by contextualising these reoccurrences and absences with complementing data, I have produced a multifaceted and detailed reading of remembering, both private and public, taking place in queer and trans lives and communities in Finland.

7 Conclusion

Throughout this dissertation focusing on death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finnish society, I have questioned the idea of the universality of death. According to the universalistic discourse, the fact that everyone will die means that death treats everyone equally. In this logic, the social processes related to death and their underlying inequalities are forgotten. Contrary to this thinking and by seeing death as part of life, I have argued that death is not separate from the power structures, marginalisations, social positions, relationships and affects linked to life.

I have shown, through my detailed analysis of closets, death rituals, grief and remembrance, that there are differences in people's lives and particularly in queer and trans lives that matter in the context of death, in terms of both people's own deaths and the deaths of others. In the pages that follow, I provide concluding answers to my three research questions, map out paths for further research and consider the contributions of this study.

7.1 Queer Kinship in the Case of Death

The first research question of this dissertation concerns what the stories of bereavement among LGBTQ people in Finland tell us about queer kinship. Based on my analysis, I have argued that the stories of bereavement reveal the complex nature of kinship and the multiplicity of affects related to kinship and death in queer and trans lives. In each empirical chapter, I have followed the idea of kinship in different ways and aimed at unpacking the complex entanglement between kinship, death and affects as well as understanding what is specific in this entanglement in terms of marginalised sexualities and genders.

As I have shown, the question of kinship was essential to the interviewed LGBTQ people, first of all, in relation to the people who had been lost. In addition to partner loss, losses within families of origin and unofficial families (including friends, ex-partners and multiple partners/lovers) had different kinds of specificities in queer and trans lives. Although all the losses shared in the interviews were losses that mattered to the interviewees, they mattered in different ways. Many of the people lost had been emotionally close to the interviewees; however, the stories of loss also included examples of complicated or even painful relationships. These two

were not necessarily polar opposites; a close relationship could also be experienced as emotionally complex and could contain difficult aspects. This was the case, in particular, with the interviewees belonging to sexual minorities in relation to their parents, who did not deal well with non-normative sexualities, as well as with the transgender interviewee and her wife, who had made the interviewee postpone her transitioning. As a result, being cut apart by death touched the interviewees differently depending on the nature of the relationship with the lost other as well as their own social positions in terms of sexuality and gender. Although people who were simply loved were mourned and painfully missed after their deaths, the losses of people with whom the interviewees had had more complicated relationships could create other powerful emotional reactions in addition to grief, such as guilt, relief or something that was more difficult to verbalise. Death, thus, brought to light what had been complicated in the relationships that were lost. The focus on multiple kinds of relationships, including the difficult ones, distinguishes this study from earlier studies of LGBTQ people and bereavement, in which the focus has usually been on the loss of loved ones, particularly of same-sex partners, and in which the emotional complexity of meaningful relationships has often received less attention.

Gendered dimensions of kinship, death and loss were often linked to other differences among the interviewees of this study, including age and sexuality in particular. This came through, for example, in older gay men's discussions of the impact of AIDS on their communities and relationships as well as in younger lesbian women's discussions of their existing or potential children as the ones who would bury and remember them after their own deaths. In these examples, the intersections of gender, age and sexuality formed social positions that had influenced the interviewees' experiences. Furthermore, the interviewees' stories of living with grief challenged the simplistic narratives of male and female grieving when losing others to death (Martin & Doka 2000) as well as the gendered feeling and grieving rules (Hochschild 1979; Doka 2002a) operating behind such narratives. In the stories of this study, the losses of meaningful others and the grief that followed were described in vivid ways and in deeply emotional tones regardless of gender, thus questioning the normative and binary understanding of women being more emotional and having greater emotional attachment to others than men, who are, in turn, seen as emotionally reserved (Martin & Doka 2000, 104-106).

The question of kinship was also relevant in terms of the interviewees' existing kinship networks. When narrating their memories of loss, the interviewees discussed their relationships to the living. As discussed throughout the empirical chapters, it mattered to the interviewees whether the logics of the closet affected their relationships and thus also their experiences in bereavement (chapter 3), whether they were recognised as the lost person's next of kin by professionals (chapter 3) or within the established death rituals (chapter 4), whether they were supported in grief

Conclusion

by other people in their lives (chapter 5) and whether they were able to commemorate the lost with others (chapter 6). All these factors contributed to either enhancing or eroding the feeling of kinship, both with the lost meaningful others and with other people around them. Furthermore, kinship with the lost others did not necessarily end in death. Instead, the emotional bond with the lost meaningful other could continue in the form of mourning and remembrance and was therefore not entirely cut apart by death (chapters 5 and 6). These types of ghostly dimensions of queer kinship were also visible in the discussions regarding whom the interviewees wanted to keep on relating to after their own, forthcoming deaths through burial, property sharing and beliefs in the afterlife (chapter 6).

Within the study of queer kinship, there is a considerable amount of discussion about chosen versus biological kin (e.g. Weston 1991; Weeks et al. 2001; Hicks 2011). What makes kinship queer in the context of this dissertation is not, however, the focus on chosen versus biological kin (indeed, both types of kinship came up in the interviewees' stories) but the fact that kinship can be much more complex than that, breaking the binaries of the biological and chosen kin as well as the living and the dead. Given this multi-layered nature of kinship within the stories of bereavement, I argue that this dissertation ended up becoming a study of the complex relationships of LGBTQ people among both chosen and biological kin and the living and the dead, of the complicated affects that were ingrained in those relationships and of what happened to kinship when death cut some of those relationships apart.

7.2   Rethinking Rituals and Resilience

The second question explored in this dissertation is how the lost were grieved and remembered and how the bereaved LGBTQ people kept on living after losing meaningful relationships to death. I approached both grieving and remembering through the concept of rituals. In addition, I discussed the latter part of the question in relation to support received from others, services provided by the welfare state and the idea of enduring, which I suggest better to describe personal endeavours to live with grief than a more widely circulated term: resilience.

Ritual, here, is understood as a ritualised or repeated act of significance, which differs from a mere habit due to its affectively meaningful nature and marks a transition or creates a sense of continuity and affirmation of the lost relationship (Doka 2002b, 135, 144-145). Rituals that helped the interviewees to keep on living with grief included rituals of death and remembrance.

In their stories, the bereaved LGBTQ people described traditional Finnish death rituals that aim at bidding farewell to the lost other, including funerals, burials, and publishing a death notice in a newspaper. I analysed the stories of such rituals in relation to Finnish legislation and the guidelines of the Evangelical Lutheran Church,

which regulate funerals and burials, in particular (chapter 4). Because of the cultural regulation and guidance, I argue that such rituals can be seen as part of the Finnish culture of death. The analysis revealed that these rituals were a normative and hierarchical matrix in which the official family (consisting of the family of origin and a legally recognised partner, if one existed) of the deceased was given power over other mourners. Therefore, the interviewed LGBTQ people were in differentiated positions in these rituals depending on whether they belonged to the official family of the deceased. Unofficial family members could negotiate about their role and participation in death rituals with the official family of the deceased; however, the cultural regulation and established habits favoured the official family.

Based on the analysis, I have argued that traditional death rituals had affective power, which made the question of inclusion versus exclusion in such rituals important for the bereaved LGBTQ people. In other words, it mattered to the interviewees whether they, for example, were able to participate in their meaningful other's funeral in ways that were traditionally reserved for the closest kin members (e.g. sitting in the front row in a church or being the first to lay flowers on the coffin). Although some of such rituals may seem minor, they had great significance to the interviewees in the vulnerable context of loss. Inclusion in such rituals created feelings of gratefulness, whereas exclusion caused negative emotional reactions, such as anger and a sense of not belonging. Furthermore, although the traditional death rituals were, to some extent, remouldable, altering traditions could cause negative emotional reactions in other mourners, who expected the traditions to be followed. Applying Butler's theory of ungrievability and Doka's theory of disenfranchised grief, the traditional death rituals were the context where such phenomena were most conspicuously present in the data of this study. However, when being able to participate in the traditional death rituals in meaningful ways, or when being able to alter and personalise these rituals, participation in them helped the interviewees to bid farewell to their lost meaningful others and enhanced their sense of agency and social belonging.

In addition, the interviewees described rituals of remembrance, which they had created themselves and performed either privately or with their private networks (chapter 6). These rituals complemented the traditional death rituals but, as they had different purposes, did not replace them. Instead of aiming to bid farewell, they were examples of how the interviewees kept the lost others attached to their own lives. Some of them were more explicitly ritual-like and shared with others, such as organising commemorative events, whereas some could be described as private, repeated behaviour, such as talking to the deceased person's photograph or visiting their grave. When discussing how bereaved LGBTQ people kept on living with grief, I have argued, following the theory of continuing bonds (e.g. Neimeyer et al. 2006) and queer theoretical readings of melancholia (Muñoz 1999; Cvetkovich 2003), that

the interviewees did not aspire to cut off their emotional bonds to the lost entirely (chapter 5). Instead, the lost meaningful others lived on in the memories and remembrance rituals of the bereaved LGBTQ people. This challenged the Freudian understanding of the nature of grief, aiming to get over the loss, typical for psychological and medical discourses. I have argued that the interviewees' depictions of grief can be understood, following queer theory, as melancholic attachments that are dynamic, social and beneficial to those left behind.

Moreover, when learning to live with grief, support received from others was described as central (chapter 5). Support was received from friends, in particular, but also from partners/lovers and, as less often was the case, from the family of origin. However, not everyone had supportive others in their lives to rely on in times of bereavement, and even those who had reported that support tended to decrease over time. Thus, also support services provided by the welfare state were considered important by the interviewees; yet such services were often described as inaccessible due to economic, bureaucratic or social reasons, some of which were particularly related to queer and trans lives (chapter 5). For these reasons, personal endeavours to learn to live with grief were at times pronounced in the bereaved LGBTQ people's narratives (chapter 5). Although personal coping abilities are often theorised as an inner characteristic and called as resilience, I chose to read them as examples of enduring instead. I propose that this reading highlights the activity and agency integrated in and required from such endeavours. The focus on enduring as agency points out that to keep on living after loss is not mere passive survival. Instead, it requires tremendeous personal efforts, especially if social and societal support is in different ways limited.

7.3   The Finnish Culture of Death

The final research question asked in this dissertation is how the Finnish culture of death affected the experiences of bereaved LGBTQ people – and, in particular, whether there was queer and trans culture of death to be found. Regarding the first part of the question, I have argued that there are two prioritised institutions in the Finnish culture of death – the official family and the Evangelical Lutheran Church – which influence bereaved LGBTQ people in various ways. As I have shown in the analysis, the power of these institutions operates both through state-sanctioned laws and guidelines and affectively through normative ideas (and ideals), defining which losses should and should not matter and to whom they should matter. In other words, they operate within, and participate in creating, the normative grieving rules of Finnish society. Thus, the privileged position of the official family and the Church institution formed a framework within which the interviewees had to operate in times of bereavement. As I have shown in this study, bereaved LGBTQ people not only

aspired to find their place within the Finnish culture of death dominated by these two institutions but also challenged them when necessary.

Depending on whether the interviewees were recognised as members of the official family of the deceased, they were or were not able to participate in and contribute to the planning of traditional death rituals (chapter 4). If not included in the official family themselves, the role of the interviewees in traditional death rituals was dependent upon the wishes of those who were. Being on good terms with the deceased person's official family was, therefore, crucial for the bereaved LGBTQ people in such cases.

Although the law on registered partnership (since 2002), and later the law on same-sex marriage (since 2017) has made it possible for same-sex couples to become legally recognised as official family, this was not a solution for everyone. People remaining outside the official family included those who had lost their same-sex partner earlier than 2002, those who had considered the separate partnership registration law demeaning and had wanted to avoid it, those whose close relationships were beyond the dyadic couple (including friends, ex-partners or multiple partners/lovers) and those who did not want the state to interfere in their intimate relationships. Because of the legislation, however, this interfering was inevitable at the time of death. In addition to being prominent in death rituals, this interference was particularly prominent when sharing the property of the deceased, governed by the inheritance legislation, which prioritises the official family if there is no will to change the default beneficiaries (chapter 6).

In addition, I have argued that despite Finland's reputation as a relatively secular country, the Evangelical Lutheran Church holds a monopoly in death rituals and in Finnish cemeteries. According to Finnish legislation, the worldview of the deceased must be respected after death; however, as my analysis has proved, in this regard the legislation and the church guidelines regulating death and burial are rather vague. This enables the prioritisation of Christian rituals even in the case of people who are not members of the Church, if their official family members so wish. In this sense, the prioritised position of the Church is linked to the prioritised position of the official family. Although the monopoly of the Church touches a variety of people who are not members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church regardless of sexuality and gender, I have argued that it is relevant in terms of LGBTQ people in particular because of the ongoing debates of their inclusion and acceptance within the Church institution in Finnish society. Given the active resistance the Church as an institution has demonstrated, for example, whenever the legal rights of sexual minorities have been improved in Finland from the 1980s to the 2010s, the relationship between LGBTQ people and the Church has been, and continues to be, tense. This debate has also led to mass resignations from church membership, especially during the 2010s. Thus, I have argued that it is problematic for an institution that does not

unequivocally accept LGBTQ people while they are alive to take over when they have died, even if they have chosen to resign from the said institution.

However, worldviews of the interviewees were varied, and many of them could be argued to fall within the categories of semi-seculars (af Burén 2015) or post-Christians (Thurfjell 2015). Therefore, facing the monopoly of the Church in the context of death and loss was not only, and not necessarily, a question of a violation or a neglect of a worldview, but a question of an unaccepted sexual orientation, gender, life and/or relationship. This came up in the interviewees' stories in different ways. For example, as I have shown in the analysis, even those interviewees who defined themselves, to some extent, as Christians or religious could encounter difficult situations when taking part in the death rituals of their meaningful others in a Christian setting. These included, for instance, facing heteronormative and cisnormative expectations and having to negotiate with priests about the acceptance of LGBTQ people (chapter 3). The prioritised role of the Church and its complicated attitudes towards LGBTQ people were also questioned and challenged through these negotiations.

When the deceased had not been particularly religious, the interviewees had actively aspired to minimise the role of the Church and Christian imagery within death rituals, even if the rituals had primarily followed Christian traditions (chapter 4). However, some traditions were more difficult to challenge than others. There were, for example, no explicit instances or discussion of queer monumentality found in the empirical materials of this study (chapter 6). I proposed that church regulation over monuments and symbols accepted in the Finnish gravescapes as well as the family grave tradition supported by Finnish legislation had influenced the lack of such forms of commemoration. The centrality of the Church in the Finnish culture of death also came up when discussing bereavement support services, such as peer support groups, many of which are provided by the congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and were often considered inaccessible by bereaved LGBTQ people (chapter 5).

Although I write about the Finnish culture of death in singular form, I do not see it as a monolithic culture with no internal variation. Instead, it has changed and varied over time and across locations, as illustratively pointed out by Finnish death studies scholars focusing on the history of death (Pajari et al. 2019). In addition, I propose that there is internal variation in this culture in current times as well. Thus, when writing about the Finnish culture of death, I am acknowledging that there are actually *cultures* of death within this concept, which entangle together and complement each other. I have argued, therefore, that the Finnish culture of death does not only consist of its most prominent or obvious parts (including, for instance, the traditional death rituals). Following this thinking, and regarding the latter part of the third research question, I have proposed that public rituals of remembrance taking place in Finnish

LGBTQ communities can be considered to be a part of the Finnish culture of death, too. As I suggest, these rituals represent a less discussed and less visible segment of the Finnish culture of death, in which death and loss in queer and trans lives are focused on (chapter 6). Currently, in the public activities of Finnish LGBTQ communities, this culture of death focuses on grief as a public feeling and takes the form of global solidarity with political agendas. Although such forms of public remembering are undoubtedly important and follow the internationally circulated traditions of LGBTQ communities and activism, I have argued for public forms of queer and trans culture of death that would go beyond the current forms of public commemoration and focus on death as an inevitable part of all queer and trans personal lives.

This argument is not to strengthen the trope of 'unhappy queers' emphasising the alleged tragedies of queer and trans lives (Ahmed 2010) but to acknowledge what is inevitable in all lives and to offer tools for LGBTQ people to deal with this inevitability. I propose that as a part of cultural memory, queer and trans culture of death could be an important resource for LGBTQ people in times of bereavement. Thus, instead of leaving LGBTQ people to endure their losses in private, either alone or with the help of existing private networks and often less than satisfactorily accessible support services of the Finnish welfare state, I call for public discussion and public culture around death and loss in queer and trans lives, both within and beyond LGBTQ communities. Such public forms of queer and trans culture of death could include, for example, reserving cemetery sections particularly for LGBTQ people who wish to continue relating to other LGBTQ people beyond death (as is done, for instance, in Berlin and Copenhagen),[155] allowing queer monumentality to show in the Finnish gravescapes through both the details of gravestones and the practices of grave sharing, offering information and examples of death rituals that go beyond the culturally established and hierarchical ones, and creating queer- and trans-sensitive bereavement support services that would operate either online or in person. Because all of us are eventually dying and losing our meaningful others to death, having varied cultural examples to follow, having accessible support services and having communities to back us up when that happens would, as I suggest, help LGBTQ people to live through the emotionally demanding times of bereavement.

As the answers to the research questions provided above show, the Finnish culture of death is closely linked to issues of kinship and rituals, and vice versa. Thus, the topics addressed through the research questions proved to be closely entangled, which is why the answers to the questions are entangled as well.

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155   Berlin has had a separate cemetery section for lesbians since 2014 and Copenhagen for lesbians and gays since 2008 (Ware 2014; Davis 2017).

7.4   Paths for Future Research

Death and loss in queer and trans lives is a broad yet relatively understudied topic that can be approached from many different perspectives. Needless to say, within the scope of one dissertation, it is not possible to examine all aspects of interest related to this diverse topic. I hope that my reading of death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finland, which has focused on rethinking queer kinship, rituals of remembrance and the Finnish culture of death and their mutual entanglements, will spark interest for future research of various kinds. In what follows, I suggest paths for future research. Instead of considering them as shortcomings of this study, I see them as paths for which this study may function as a starting point.

Despite the prominent role of the Church institution within my analysis, the role of Christian religion or other religions in the lives of LGBTQ people in Finland has not been the main focus of this study. However, it would be interesting to deepen the discussion of religions and different scales and types of religiosity in queer and trans lives through data that particularly focuses on such questions. As argued by Wilcox (2019), scholars of queer studies, trans studies and religious studies have not yet utilised the full potential of the intersections of these three disciplines, even though these intersections would be fruitful to examine the messy entanglements of queer, trans and religious lives. Following this argument, I propose future research to continue this study by examining the relationship between Finnish LGBTQ people and religions, in terms of both Evangelical Lutheran Christianity and the other, more established and less established religions and forms of spirituality.

In my discussion on public rituals of remembrance, I have focused on a few, most prominent examples from the late 2010s as well as one example from the early 2000s. However, I suggest that there is more to be studied within this topic. There are likely other examples of public remembering of queer and trans lives in Finland in addition to those discussed in this study. Questions for further research could include, for example, what was public remembering like in the 1980s and 1990s regarding the AIDS epidemic – did it exist and, if yes, in what form? Some forms of public remembering may leave traces for people to follow in future, and some of them may not. Even when the traces of public remembering may disappear in time, like ephemeral forms of queer monumentality tend to do, they may have nonetheless affected the people participating in such rituals in meaningful ways, making them approachable by the method of interviewing. Studying such traces is important because public rituals of remembrance can challenge cultural silence around LGBTQ people and bring into focus both local and global issues touching LGBTQ communities.

As stated in the methodology chapter, this is a study of white and Finnish-speaking LGBTQ people living in Finland and it explores death and loss within what may be called the hegemonic or mainstream Finnish culture. Therefore, future

research is needed on questions of death and loss among the LGBTQ people who belong to racialised, cultural and/or religious minorities in Finland. For example, during the Time of Researching of this study, there has been an active public discussion and an increase in research both in Finland and more broadly in the Nordic countries regarding LGBTQ asylum seekers who are fleeing death and persecution and who have, undoubtedly, experienced various forms of loss (e.g. Seta 2017b; Ilmonen et al. 2017; Akin 2018; Björklund & Dahl 2018). Indeed, studying death and loss as shaped by migration, war and asylym and as ritualised in relation to other religious traditions are both important and timely topics for future research.

Another topic of interest not covered in this study is a loss of a child among LGBTQ people. The current rainbow family discourse and contemporary studies of queer kinship are increasingly focused on queer family forms with children (e.g. Dahl 2018; Hicks 2011), and in such a setting, it is important to study how a loss of a child, or an unfulfilled wish of having a child, affects people leading queer and trans lives. Losses of this kind may occur through death, a breakup or a failure in, or a lack of access to, assisted reproductive technologies. As Christa Craven and Elizabeth Peel (2014) have argued, further research is needed on these topics.

Finally, important perspectives related to loss that go beyond the discourse of death also exist. Future projects could thus study other kinds of losses within the social world at large and among LGBTQ people in particular, including relationship dissolutions. Whereas breakups within romantic relationships among LGBTQ people are currently studied in the Finnish context (Lahti 2019b), other relationship dissolutions, such as the endings of friendships, have received less attention.

7.5   Research Contributions

In this dissertation, I have offered a multifaceted reading of death and loss in queer and trans lives in Finland based on the personal stories of loss dating from the 1980s to the 2010s and the contextualising and complementing data describing the Finnish culture(s) of death. Using an interdisciplinary theoretical approach and diverse data collected through in-depth interviewing and the scavenger methodology, I have examined the topic in ways that produce new knowledge and provide new perspectives to the study of queer kinship, rituals of remembrance and the Finnish culture of death, as my answers provided for the research questions above show. In this concluding section, I gather together the thematic, methodological and theoretical contributions of this study, bringing into focus the larger significance of this study in my main research fields.

Thematically, this dissertation contributes to the qualitative research on queer and trans lives in Finland in multiple ways. It deepens the understanding not only of death and loss among LGBTQ people but also of their conditions of living in Finnish

society within the given time frame. My analysis reveals the prioritised and institutionalised position of the official family of the deceased and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the context of death and, at the same time, challenges their unquestioned and taken-for-granted positions. Moreover, the study examines the affectively complex relationships between the interviewed LGBTQ people and their official and unofficial families by exploring their existing kinship networks and focusing on the losses of not only their loved ones but also those with whom the relationship had been affectively more complicated and at times even painful. In the course of this study, I also discuss the limits of social and societal support available for bereaved LGBTQ people in Finland and raise a discussion on the politics and purposes of public remembering of queer and trans lives in Finnish LGBTQ communities.

Although this study is focused on queer and trans lives in particular, it offers perspectives through which different types of marginalisation can be examined in relation to the Finnish culture of death in general. Thus, the results of my dissertation can also be applied when studying death and loss among other marginalised populations in Finland beyond LGBTQ people. This includes, for example, people of any sexual orientation or gender who are marginalised in terms of the state-sanctioned kinship system and/or the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

In addition, this dissertation contributes to and broadens the research conducted on LGBTQ people and bereavement, kinship and remembrance beyond its empirical context, giving tools to rethink death and loss in queer and trans lives in a global context. In this study, I have shown, for example, that instead of being entirely disenfranchised or ungrievable, the lives and losses of LGBTQ people can more often be seen as both disenfranchised and enfranchised and both ungrievable and grievable at the same time, depending on the context. Thus, rather than following Doka's (2002a) and Butler's (2004a) ways of spelling, I propose a slightly altered spelling – dis/enfranchised and un/grievable – in which the slash signifies the possibility of the simultaneous existence of both disenfranchisement and enfranchisement and both ungrievability and grievability. Furthermore, I have elaborated on the discussion by combining Doka's and Butler's theories and taking them further with feminist affect theories, pointing out how the issues of dis/enfranchisement and un/grievability are closely linked to the affects and the cultural and societal norms and ideals operating behind them. Moreover, the current study broadens the understanding of meaningful losses and relationships in the lives of LGBTQ people and sheds light on the subtle forms of inequality experienced through affects in the context of bereavement. It also contributes to the international discussions on the importance of melancholic attachments, or continuing bonds, with those who have been lost. Moreover, regarding public remembering of queer and trans lives, I have shown how grief as a public feeling can be utilised to enhance an

idea of a global LGBTQ community with shared hardships or to shed light on the global and local differences in queer and trans lives.

Methodologically, my dissertation offers a detailed description of the methods used when studying a vulnerable topic. My methodological contribution to feminist research is my discussion on in-depth interviewing as a method of inquiry when studying vulnerability, including the discussions of power and emotions, as well as my aspiration to observe and to write vulnerably (Behar 1996; Page 2017a). In addition, I have discussed at length the research ethical questions raised in feminist research when telling the vulnerable stories of (not only vulnerable) others. Acknowledging the importance of looking beyond the 'compulsory happiness' of queer existence (Love 2008; Ahmed 2010; Dahl 2014), I have argued in favour of studying the topics that can be seen as vulnerable, sensitive or even painful parts of queer and trans lives. I have also pointed out the dangers of patronising research participants and emphasised the importance of trusting in their personal agency when participating in such a study. Another methodological contribution of this dissertation is the use of the scavenger methodology, displayed in the aspirations to collect diverse material on a deeply entangled, complex and understudied topic in various and sometimes unexpected ways. Analysing the material in relation to an interdisciplinary array of theories has also been an integral part of my use of the scavenger methodology, allowing me to find multiple useful angles through which to make sense of the stories told and materials collected.

Theoretically, my dissertation contributes to feminist affect theories by discussing the affects and affective inequalities linked not only to bereavement but also to (multiple kinds of) family relations, rituals and remembrance in the stories of bereaved LGBTQ people. In so doing, I have argued that the normative ideas and ideals of what counts as a family, a good life or a good end of a life work in the background of the affects circulating around (good) death and (proper) death rituals, in particular. Moreover, I have shown in my analysis how the affective promises attached to certain norms and traditions in the context of death result in the feelings of inclusion when the norms are followed and feelings of exclusion when they are not. As I have illustrated, people leading queer and trans lives are not immune to these norms and the affects attached to them. Here, my theoretical contribution is linked to the recent discussions on norms and normativity in queer theory and studies drawing on this theoretical framework, which I wish briefly to elaborate on before reaching the end of this dissertation.

In many ways, my analysis has included critique of the rules and norms of the Finnish culture of death that support the normative, official family structure and Christian traditions. Moreover, I have drawn on theorists such as Judith Butler, Lauren Berlant and Sara Ahmed, who have been named, among many others, to represent the antinormative approach to queer theory (Wiegman & Wilson 2015).

As a result, this dissertation can be seen to join this antinormative continuum, too. However, queer theory's epistemic habit of critiquing norms and normativity has also received criticism (e.g. Wiegman & Wilson 2015; Jagose 2015). Robyn Wiegman and Elizabeth Wilson (2015), in particular, have argued that antinormativity is not only a habit of queer theory but also, ironically, an imperative that has become a new norm for studies drawing on queer theory. According to their critique, antinormative approaches immobilise norms and make them seem non-dynamic, inactive and tyrannical. I wish to question this view by showing how the inclusion of affect theory into the question of norms challenges this alleged immobility and inactivity.

In my reading, norms are dynamic and changing processes that have various effects on the social world. From this point of view, the way Wiegman and Wilson define norms and normativity is rather one-sided, simplifying and blind to the questions of power and affect (see also Duggan 2015; Halberstam 2015). For them, norms are a 'system of averaging', which merely depicts the world and functions as a means of measurement rather than a system that regulates and oppresses the people who do not fit into normative frameworks. Because 'averages don't exclude anyone', Wiegman and Wilson question the nature of norms as restrictive and exclusionary (Wiegman & Wilson 2015, 15-18). In contrast to seeing norms as mere averages, I have paid attention to the affects that are inseparably linked to norms and normativity, having both idealising and marginalising effects. Following Ahmed (2014) and Berlant (2011), I have argued that the power of norms stems from the circulation of the affects attached to such norms, making behaviour that is repeatedly named as ideal to appear as desirable. What norms do then – through the affects that are attached to them and through the normative practices, discourses and rituals that enhance and circulate such affects – is create cohesion and a sense of belonging to a social community, but also, in contrast, a lack of unity and a sense of not belonging if such norms are not followed. Thus, the antinormative perspective is not limited to seeing norms merely as inactive or tyrannical.

Furthermore, the emphasis on affects brings into focus the inherent complexity related to norms and antinormativity. As my analysis has shown, despite the radical potential and resistance of norms often linked to queer and trans lives and politics (Warner 1993; Love 2014), people living such lives may wish to stick to (some) norms and traditions because of the affective promises attached to them. This argument aligns with Licia Fiol-Matta's (2002) and Robert McRuer's (2006) observations that queer lives are not by default linked to progressiveness or antinormativity (see also Duggan 2015). Hence, because LGBTQ people are not free from affective attachments to norms and their promises in general, the interviewees of this study were not free from the norms that guide death and loss in particular. This does not mean, however, that they did not challenge these norms. Instead, as

my careful analysis has shown, the question of norms within the context of death is a multi-layered issue: whether challenging the norms or adapting to them, the existence of norms guiding the Finnish culture(s) of death did cause varying affective reactions in the bereaved LGBTQ people, which, in turn, influenced their actions and were accumulated within their experiences of bereavement.

On a final note, my research also contributes to the emerging field of queer death studies, which aims to rethink, or to queer, the existing field of death studies and the dominant stories of death and loss by focusing, indeed, on antinormative perspectives (Radomska, Mehrabi & Lykke 2019). My dissertation contributes to this field in two central ways. First, I have taken death and loss in queer and trans lives as the subject matter of this study, broadening the discussion of such lives and focusing on the experiences of death and loss that are less commonly narrated in public discourses. Moreover, I have shown how death matters in queer and trans lives not only at the very end of the rainbow but also along the way in the form of multiple losses most of us live through in the course of our lives. Being inevitable and always waiting behind the corner, death is not, after all, a marginal topic in queer and trans lives; instead, it is an 'affair intimately weaved in the tissues of everyday life' (Radomska, Mehrabi & Lykke 2019, 4). Second, I have utilised queer theoretical thinking to queer the fields of death studies and bereavement studies by looking for new perspectives and going beyond the established ones. This queering has taken place both by my use of the scavenger methodology, which has allowed me to examine death and loss from multiple perspectives complementing one another, and through my interdisciplinary analysis, in which I have looked for novel ways of combining queer theory and feminist affect theories with the theories of death and bereavement. Through these actions, I have produced a study that brings new insights to death and loss as well as to queer and trans lives. I hope these insights spark inspiration for future research both within and beyond queer death studies.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Call

Väitöstutkimus HLBTIQ+-ihmisten surukokemuksista Suomessa

Tutkimuksen esittely ja tavoitteet

Teen Turun yliopistossa väitöskirjaa HLBTIQ+-ihmisten kokemuksista koskien läheisen kuolemaa. HLBTIQ+-ihmisten, eli muun muassa homojen, lesbojen, biseksuaalien, transsukupuolisten, intersukupuolisten ja queerien, kokemuksia läheisen kuolemasta on tutkittu maailmanlaajuisestikin vasta vähän. Suomesta aiheen aiempi tutkimus puuttuu kokonaan. Etsin ihmisiä, jotka ovat halukkaita osallistumaan tutkimukseeni kertomalla omista kokemuksistaan kirjallisesti ja/tai haastattelutilanteessa.

Kuolema on aihe, josta mieluummin vaietaan mutta joka koskettaa ennen pitkää jokaista. Kuolemaan liittyy yhteiskunnallisia ja kulttuurisia käytäntöjä ja normeja, jotka säätelevät esimerkiksi sitä, kuka saa järjestää hautajaiset ja millaisia menetyksiä on lupa surra. Näissä käytännöissä kuolema mielletään usein perheasiaksi, ja perheeksi tässä yhteydessä lasketaan yleensä heteronormatiivinen ydinperhe. Tutkimukseni tavoite on kyseenalaistaa tätä kuolemaan ja suruun liittyvää heteronormatiivisuutta ja tehdä näkyväksi paitsi surun ja menetyksen, myös perhe- ja läheissuhteiden moninaisia muotoja.

Tutkimukseni kuuluu sukupuolentutkimuksen ja queer-tutkimuksen tieteenalaan, ja sen on tarkoitus valmistua vuoden 2019 loppuun mennessä. Tutkimustani rahoittaa Turun yliopiston tutkijakoulu UTUGS ja sen tohtoriohjelma Juno.

Kuka voi osallistua?

Aineistonkeruu on käynnissä 1.3.–31.5.2017.

Tutkimukseen voivat osallistua kaikki Suomessa asuvat HLBTIQ+-ihmiset, jotka ovat menettäneet läheisensä kuolemantapauksen vuoksi. Läheinen määritellään tutkimukseni kontekstissa laaja-alaisesti: kyseessä voi olla esimerkiksi kumppanin, entisen kumppanin, ystävän, lapsen, sukulaisen tai muun lähipiiriin kuuluvan henkilön tai lemmikin kuolema. Pyrin sisällyttämään tutkimukseeni myös historiallista perspektiiviä. Tutkimukseen voi siis osallistua riippumatta siitä, onko menetys tapahtunut lähivuosina vai vuosikymmeniä sitten.

Tutkimukseen osallistuminen voi aiheuttaa vahvoja tunnereaktioita, joita voi olla vaikea ennakoida. Rohkaisen jokaista pohtimaan omaa tilannettaan ja jaksamistaan henkilökohtaisesti ja tekemään osallistumispäätöksen sen perusteella. Tutkimuksesta on mahdollista vetäytyä missä vaiheessa tahansa, mikäli osallistuja tulee myöhemmin toisiin aatoksiin osallistumisensa suhteen.

Lue tarkemmat osallistumisohjeet seuraavalta sivulta. Annan mielelläni lisätietoja sähköpostitse. Halutessasi voit jättää sähköpostin kautta myös soittopyynnön.

Varpu Alasuutari
Tohtorikoulutettava, YTM
Sukupuolentutkimus
Turun yliopisto
varpu.alasuutari@utu.fi
www.hlbtiqsuru.com

Tutkimukseen voi osallistua kahdella tavalla:

1) Kirjoita kokemuksistasi

Kerro tarinasi kirjoittamalla. Tekstin pituudella ei ole ala- eikä ylärajaa – voit kertoa kokemuksistasi siinä laajuudessa kuin itse koet sopivaksi. Kirjoitusta laatiessasi voit hyödyntää seuraavia apukysymyksiä, mutta tekstin ei tarvitse rajoittua niihin:

- Millainen suhde sinulla ja läheiselläsi oli ennen hänen kuolemaansa?
- Millaista oli kuolemaa välittömästi edeltävä aika? Sairastiko läheisesi vai tuliko kuolema yllätyksenä? Millaista oli kuolemaa välittömästi seuraava aika?
- Miten koit kuolemaa seuranneet käytännön asiat, kuten hautajaisten järjestämisen ja perinnönjaon? Kuka niistä vastasi, ja saitko osallistua niihin haluamallasi tavalla?

- Oletko kohdannut puutteelliseen lainsäädäntöön tai suvaitsemattomiin asenteisiin liittyviä ongelmia läheisesi kuolemaan liittyen?
- Saitko läheisesi kuoleman jälkeen tukea suruusi? Mistä sait tukea, mistä et? Millaista tukea olisit kaivannut?
- Millaista elämäsi on ollut läheisesi kuoleman jälkeen? Millaisin keinoin olet kyennyt rakentamaan elämääsi uudelleen?

Lähetä kirjoituksesi sähköpostitse osoitteeseen varpu.alasuutari@utu.fi tai postitse osoitteeseen:

Varpu Alasuutari
Sukupuolentutkimus
Kaivokatu 12
20014 Turun yliopisto

Lähetä kirjoituksesi yhteydessä myös oheinen taustatieto- ja tutkimuslupalomake (ks. LIITE 1), jolla annat luvan tekstisi käyttöön tutkimustarkoituksessa. Halutessasi voit osallistua tutkimukseen nimettömästi, mutta liitä mielellään tässäkin tapauksessa lomakkeeseen sähköpostiosoite, josta tutkija voi tavoittaa sinut mahdollisia tarkentavia kysymyksiä varten.

2) Osallistu haastatteluun

Kerro tarinasi haastattelussa. Haastattelut ovat avoimia teemahaastatteluja, joissa haastatteluun osallistuva kertoo kokemuksistaan vapaamuotoisesti ja haastattelija kysyy täydentäviä kysymyksiä. Haastattelussa käsitellään seuraavia teemoja: suhteen taustatiedot, läheisen kuolema, hautajaiset ja muut käytännön asiat, suru ja siihen saatu tuki sekä elämän uudelleenrakennus. Haastattelun kesto riippuu siitä, missä laajuudessa haluat kokemuksistasi kertoa. Suuntaa antava kesto haastatteluille on 1-3 tuntia. Haastattelut voidaan tehdä Turussa, Helsingissä tai mahdollisuuksien mukaan haastateltavan asuinpaikkakunnalla. Haastattelu on mahdollista tehdä myös Skypen välityksellä.

Mikäli haluat osallistua haastatteluun, ota yhteyttä sähköpostitse haastatteluajan sopimiseksi.

Appendix 2: Background Information & Consent Form

Väitöstutkimus HLBTIQ+-ihmisten surukokemuksista Suomessa

Taustatiedot	
Ikä	
Asuinpaikka	
Sukupuoli	
Seksuaalinen suuntautuminen	
Läheinen, jonka kuolemasta haluat kertoa (voi olla useampia kuin yksi)	
Peitenimet, joilla haluat itseesi ja läheiseesi tutkimuksessa viitattavan (tämän kohdan voi myös jättää tyhjäksi, jolloin tutkija valitsee peitenimet)	
Sähköpostiosoite tai puhelinnumero, johon tutkija voi tarvittaessa ottaa yhteyttä	
Haluatko kirjoittaa kokemuksistasi?	
Haluatko osallistua haastatteluun?	

TUTKIMUSLUPA

Tutkimuksessa huomioidaan sensitiivisen tutkimusaiheen aiheuttamat eettiset haasteet. Osallistujat saavat valita itse, osallistuvatko tutkimukseen kirjoittamalla kokemuksistaan vai osallistumalla haastatteluun. Tutkimukseen voi osallistua myös molemmilla tavoilla. Tutkimuksen tulokset raportoidaan anonyymisti. Aineistosta poistetaan kaikki tunnistetekijät (kuten nimet ja paikkakunnat). Osallistujat saavat valita itselleen ja edesmenneelle läheiselleen peitenimet. Tutkimuksesta on mahdollista vetäytyä missä vaiheessa tahansa.

Allekirjoittamalla tämän tutkimuslupalomakkeen osallistuja antaa suostumuksensa kirjoituksensa ja/tai haastattelunsa käyttöön tutkimusaineistona.

_____   _____
Päivämäärä ja paikka   Allekirjoitus

                                 _____
                                 Nimen selvennys

Appendix 3: Interviewees

Aaro: Aaro is a gay man in his late fifties, living in a large city in western Finland. He had very recently lost his live-in partner Sami to death because of an unexpected disease. They had lived together for 35 years but were not in registered partnership. Aaro participated in the interview in 2017.

Hannu: Hannu is a gay man in his early fifties, living in a small city in southern Finland. He told about the death of his partner Juha, who died of a long-term illness in the early 2010s. They had a long-distance relationship and were not in registered partnership. Hannu had also experienced multiple losses of friends during the AIDS epidemic in the 1980s. Hannu participated in the interview in 2015.

Inka: Inka is a woman in her late thirties. She defined her sexual orientation as bisexual and unlimited. She lived in a small city in western Finland. She told about the death of her wife Tepa, who died of a long-term illness in the mid-2010s. They had registered their partnership shortly before Tepa's death. Inka participated in the interview in 2017.

Jarkko: Jarkko is a gay/queer man in his mid-forties, living in a large city in western Finland. He told about three losses: the deaths of his friend/ex-lover Tommi, his mother and his grandmother. The losses had taken place in the 2000s and 2010s. Jarkko participated in the interview in 2017.

Kuura: Kuura is a non-binary queer person in their early thirties, living in a large city in southern Finland. Kuura's pronoun is they. In the interview, they told about the loss of their unofficial father during their childhood in the 1990s. They participated in the interview in 2017. They also wrote to me after the interview to answer my further questions.

Lauri: Lauri is in his early fifties. His gender is other and his pronoun is he. When he was younger, he identified as a homosexual man, and he narrated his experiences in his youth through this identification. At the time of the interview, he defined his sexuality as gay or bi. He lives in a large city in southern Finland. He told about three losses: the deaths of his mother, father and a colleague/friend/parent figure, which had occurred in the 1980s and 1990s. Lauri participated in the interview in 2017.

Maria: Maria is a lesbian woman in her early thirties, living in a small city in southern Finland. In the interview, she told about the death of her father or *pappa*, as she called him, because she came from a Finland-Swede family. Maria

participated in the interview in 2017. She also wrote a written narrative before the interview.

Mika: Mika is a gay man in his late thirties, living in a large city in western Finland. He told about the death of his live-in partner Tapani, who died by suicide in the early 2010s. Mika participated in the interview in 2015. He also wrote a written narrative before the interview.

Pirre: Pirre is a lesbian woman in her early fifties, living in a small city in eastern Finland. She told about the death of her mother in the early 2010s. Pirre participated in the interview in 2017. She also wrote a written narrative before the interview.

Reino: Reino is a gay man in his early seventies, living in a large city in western Finland. He told about the death of his ex-partner Erkki in the late 2000s. They co-owned an apartment and had a reciprocal will. Reino participated in the interview in 2017.

Saara: Saara is a bisexual/pansexual/queer woman in her early thirties, living in a large city in southern Finland. She told about the sudden death of her male partner in the mid-2000s. They did not live together and were not married. Saara participated in the interview in 2015.

Susanna: Susanna is a lesbian woman in her early forties, living in a large city in southern Finland. She told about the sudden death of her partner Vilja in the early 2010s. Back then, they lived in a small rural town in southern Finland. They were in registered partnership and co-owned a house. Susanna participated in the interview in 2015. She also wrote a written narrative before the interview.

Tiina: Tiina is a bisexual transwoman in her late sixties, living in a small rural town in eastern Finland. She told about the death of her wife Kaarina in the early 2010s and her own gender reassignment process, which she had started after the loss. Tiina participated in the interview in 2015. She also wrote a written narrative before the interview.

Veikko: Veikko is a gay man in his late fifties, living in a small city in eastern Finland. He told about the death of his live-in partner Matias, who died of AIDS in the late 1990s. He also told about the loss of his lover to AIDS elsewhere in Europe prior to Matias's death. Veikko participated in the interview in 2017.

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